

HONGKONG ART WEEK: RETURNED WITH A VENGEANCE

Hong Kong's reinvigorated Art Week emerged with great force, as this well-established artistic ecosystem boasts a plethora of galleries, auction houses, institutions, and art fairs *By Lynda Ibrahim*

As Hong Kong loosened its strict Covid protocols, Hong Kong Art Week returned with a vengeance. An established art ecosystem, Hong Kong is home to galleries, auction houses, institutions and art fairs.

The 8-year homegrown Art Central presented 70 galleries from as far as Johannesburg this year. Laid out in an intimate setting where visitors easily had a vantage point of 3-4 galleries, the fair breathed out unassuming air, packed with young collectors and locals toting children.

Indonesian artists Dedy Sufriadi and Taufik Ermas collaborated for a 2-part installation to illustrate how future civilization might view us based on the relics they found and could interpret. Dedy worked with paper as he had for Art Jakarta 2022, while Taufik used his likeliness to form silhouettes on the panels. Presented by Artemis Art from Malaysia, the work would befit an art institution.

An arresting sight in the centre of the premises was Bev Butkow's woollen threads. Studiously woven to form delicate and colourful nets, suspended from the ceiling with parts touching the floor, the installation invoked a sense of intimate yet fragile unity. Essentially, what art fairs are—various thought processes huddled momentarily for collectors and critics to see.

Art Basel HK boasted 177 international galleries spanning across two floors: Gagosian to Lehman

Maupin, Kaikaiki to Perrotin, and White Cube to Indonesia's own ROH Projects. Beyond the instantly recognizable works of Kusama, Murakami, Hirst, Gillick and Mr., good art was found on every aisle.

ROH presented 12 Indonesian works, from Syagini Wulan's painting and Bagus Pandega's sound contraption to a wall of Agus Suwage's works, captivating visitors as they passed by.

Other renowned Indonesian artists such as Eko Nugroho, Erizal, Yunizar, IGA Kadek Murniasih, Agus Harahap, Ari Bayuaji, Wedhar Riyadi, Gatot Pujianto and Roby Dwi Antono were represented by Arario. Gajah, Mizuma, Yavuz, Pearl Lam and Nanzuka, respectively. Kemalezedine greeted visitors viewing his painting at Mizuma. Over at White Cube, gallerist Thomas Peeters confirmed Christine Ay Tjoe's work had sold during the preview.

Tromarama and Riar Rizaldi submitted films, while Mella Jaarsma presented a performance art employing bamboo and local workers for the large installation project Encounters. Built gradually, Jaarsma's finished installation could only be enjoyed on the closing day instead of the VIPs-only opening day—earning praise from Encounters curator Alexis Glass-Kantor for inclusivity.

The mood was buoyant. Louis Vuitton could've thrown a fashion show by the number of VIPs sporting the latest Vuitton x Kusama collection. Speaking on condition of anonymity, a Singaporean art insider observed there were more Asian collectors, while an

From top: Mella Jaarsma, *The Constructor* (2023). Costumes and bamboos. Performed at the Encounters section of Art Basel Hong Kong, March 2023; "Self Obliteration" installation (1966-1974), "Yayoi Kusama: 1945 - Now" exhibition, M+ Museum, Hong Kong (March 2023)



Qing dynasty vase with peach bloom gaze, a technique developed in Kangxi period. Hong Kong Palace Museum, March 2023. **Opposite page:** Lithographs by Cahyono Abdi (1980 and 1983). M+ Museum; Dedy Sufriadi and Taufik Ermas with their installation, Artemis Art, Art Central Hong Kong, March 2023



Indonesian collector mused how galleries and fair organizers went all out in welcoming collectors this year. Everyone seemed eager to leave the pandemic behind.

More art awaited across the harbour; Hong Kong Museum of Art (HKMOA) overlooking the waterfront and West Kowloon Cultural District (WKCD) on vast reclaimed land.

HKMOA offers digital mediums to savour ancient Chinese calligraphy and porcelains. "An effort to lure younger generation," Museum Director, Maria Mok, stated. WKCD holds the Chinese opera house Xiqu Center, Hong Kong Palace Museum for Chinese

antiquities and M+ for contemporary art.

The much-touted M+ was designed by Herzog & de Meuron, the duo behind Tate Modern London, under the low threshold principle to ensure everyone would feel welcome. High-ceilinged and awash with sunlight, M+ turned the airport subway tunnel crossing its building into a unique fixture used recently to stage ballet. 1980s lithographs by Cahyono Abdi adorned its wall not far from the gallery hosting Yayoi Kusama's largest retrospective exhibition outside Japan.

Indonesians typically frequent Hong Kong for food and shopping. Perhaps it's time for Indonesians to visit its vibrant art scene, too.

