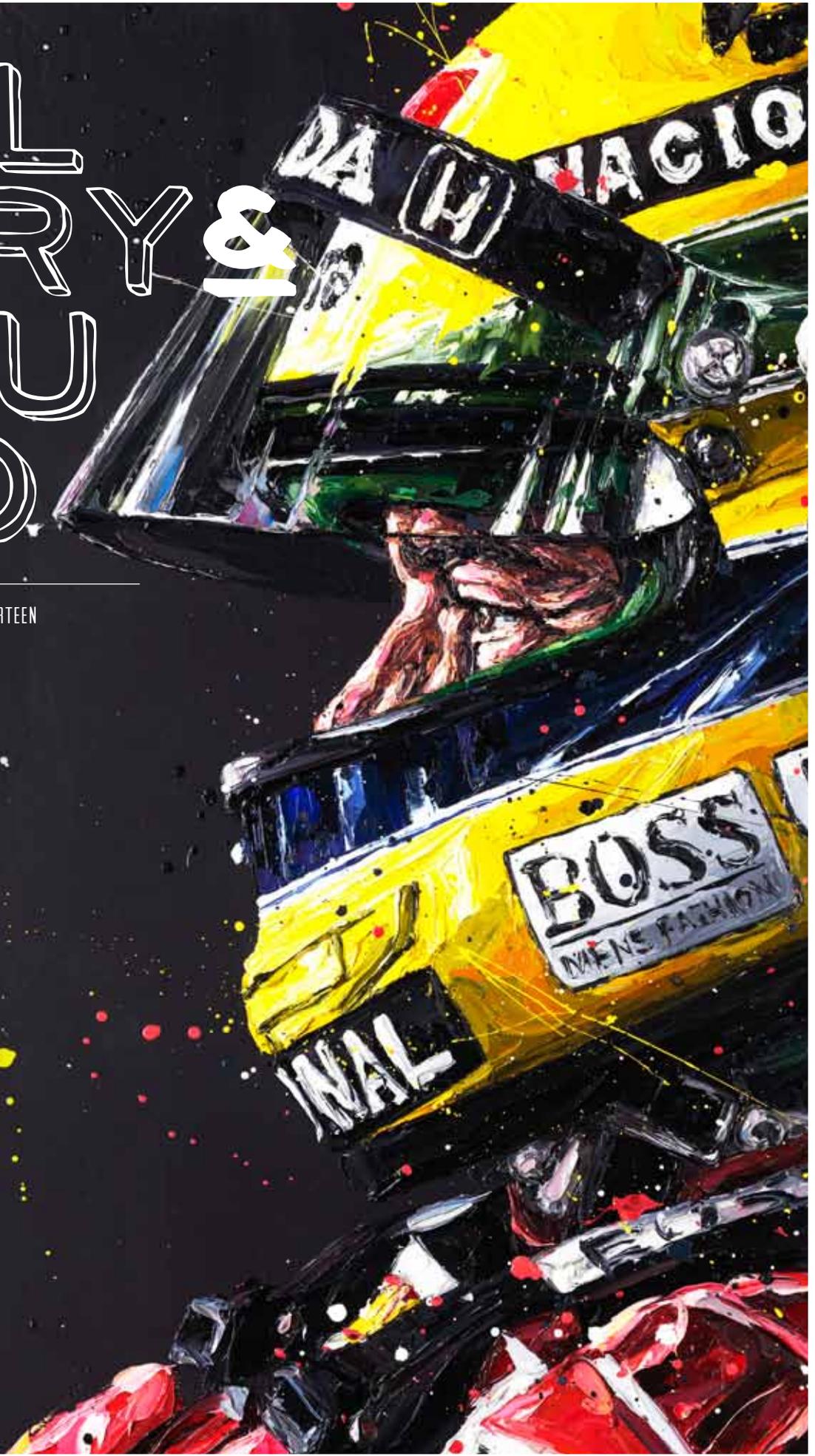


GALLERY & STUDIO

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VOLUME TWO . TWO THOUSAND FOURTEEN



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BEST OF ART BASEL IN HONG KONG

WORDS NINA STARR PHOTOS ART BASEL HONG KONG

Art Basel, the world's leading modern and contemporary art fair across three continents, returned to Hong Kong for its sophomore outing to great acclaim

Described as the largest and most highly-regarded gathering of modern and contemporary art in the world, Art Basel is art's equivalent of the Olympics. Following successful shows in Basel and Miami, it exported its brand to Hong Kong last year. Held recently from May 15 to 18, the second Hong Kong edition brought together 245 galleries from 39 different countries and drew over 65,000 visitors—artists, collectors, curators and enthusiasts alike. Strong sales were also reported across the four days of the fair, underlining Art Basel's deep commitment to the region.

Artworks by heavyweights like Picasso, Modigliani, Brancusi, Zao Wou-Ki, Damien Hirst, Yayoi Kusama and Anish Kapoor made an appearance at Art Basel Hong Kong (ABHK), alongside pieces by rising stars such as Nadim Abbas, Choy Chun Wei, Zhao Jinhe, Gao Weigang and Ronald Ventura. Standout pieces included Shanghai-based Yang Yongliang's Wintery Forest in the Night light box, part of his Artificial Wonderland II series, a modern take on traditional Chinese landscape paintings where modern features take shape on a mountainous landscape; Iván Navarro's new socio-politically charged mirrored neon work, Open Ended, which repeats infinitely; Spanish sculptor Jaume Plensa's meditative Rui Rui's Frozen Dream in Murano glass that explores perspective and illusion

through the flattening of form; and Japanese conceptual artist Aiko Miyanaga's Letter, where keys in naphthalene (a material that disintegrates at room temperature) captured in transparent resin suitcases appear as if frozen in time.

The show also saw the Asian debut of Art Basel's popular Film sector – a three-day programme of 49 films by 41 artists – a special audio-visual installation, α (alpha) pulse, by German artist Carsten Nicolai that sent light patterns pulsating across the façade of Hong Kong's tallest building. The extensive program also saw more than 150 fringe events hosted by galleries and cultural organisations throughout the city, including the openings of two new international galleries: Pace and Axel Vervoordt.

With the art world's glitterati in attendance, Hong Kong was buzzing with activity. The general consensus was that the show had improved from the previous year in terms of the art on offer, sales, organisation and quality of attendance, with collectors from near and far making the trip over. The fair also proved to be an excellent platform for networking, and galleries affirmed that they would be back next year in March.

French art dealer and collector, Mikaël Kraemer, who acquired his first contemporary artwork at the age of 20, says, "You can't compare any fair in Asia with Art Basel. It took some years for Miami to become a destination art fair



in America, and I can clearly see that after just two years in Hong Kong. I've been based in Hong Kong since Chinese New Year, and I could tell that everybody in town, even people who weren't collectors, waited the whole year for Art Basel. It's an art celebration week and very positive for Hong Kong, Asia and, of course, for the art world and culture."

Galleries also were convinced that ABHK is the most important art fair in Asia, even though local Hong Kong collectors were missed. Gallerist Pascal de Sarthe notes, "I've been dealing in Asia for 30 years. I've established a collector's base in

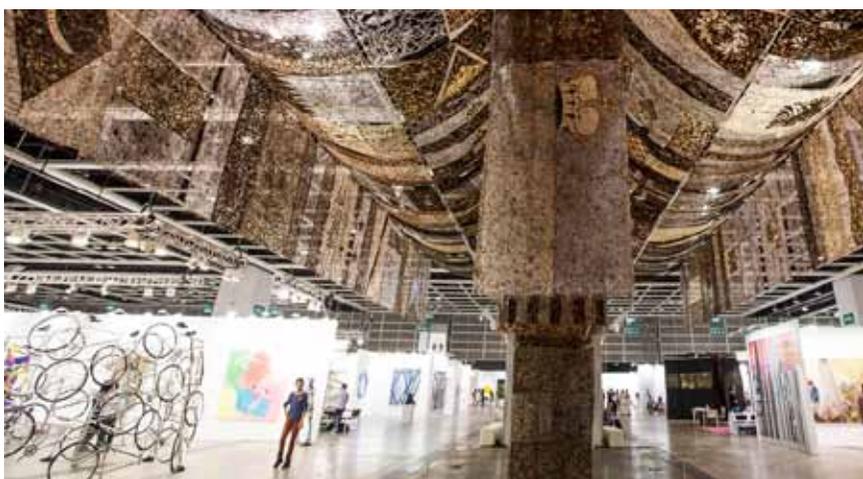
Asia, but Hong Kong is not a place where I have many collectors. I would love to change that. Hong Kong is a kind of paradox for an art scene because first in order to have an art scene, you need to have a lot of artists. And Hong Kong is a very expensive place for artists: Life is expensive and real estate is expensive. But Hong Kong is a business place, so it attracts people to events like this art fair. The market is here so everybody comes and spends a few days; it's good for the auctions showing high-end works and for galleries like us doing contemporary works, forming dynamic synergy in the city."



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ART BASEL HONG KONG'S HIGHLIGHT REEL:

CITIZENS WANTED

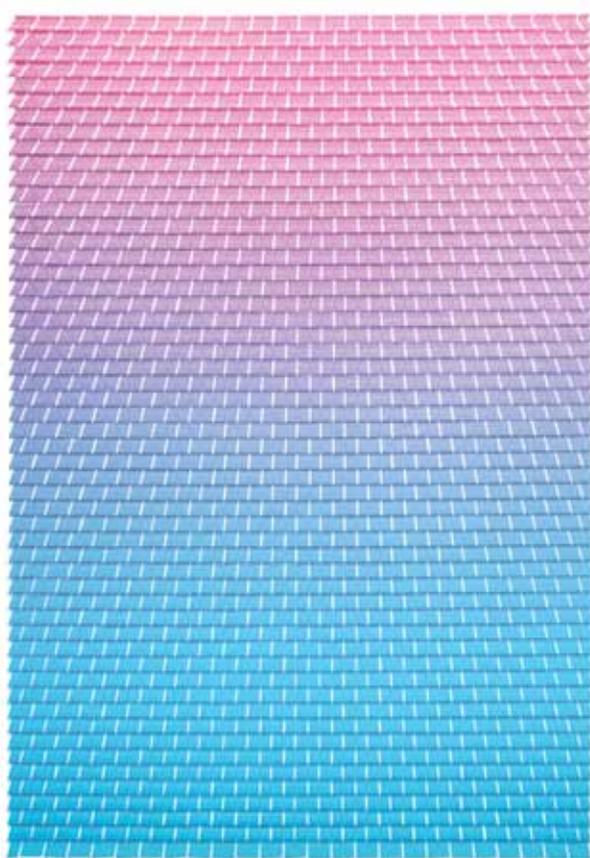
You couldn't miss Singapore-based print workshop and gallery STPI's Encounters booth with its giant flags and almost nine-metre long, six-panelled Divine Landscape of Jing Bang made from ink, cast paper and cotton pulp. This is Chinese video artist Sun Xun's fictional country, Jing Bang and he was inviting registrations for citizenship and visas. Participants were 'rewarded' with a custom-made aluminium briefcase (100-piece limited edition) carrying a hand-printed and bound book of Jing Bang, passport, identity card, monotype, national flag and animation in DVD and digital Betacam. Short-term visa applicants though, got a print on paper.

REDWHITEBLUE

In the redwhiteblue series, advertising and design guru Stanley Wong deconstructs, reassembles and recombines the ubiquitous red-white-blue textile often found in construction sites into his photography, poster designs, installations and objects to showcase the spirit of perseverance and resilience of the people in Hong Kong.

CHILD'S PLAY

Visitors were able to take a break and play a match of table tennis with the interactive mixed media installation Ping Pong Go-Round featuring a real-life ping pong table made by Singaporean multidisciplinary artist Lee Wen. Lee reinvented the structure and rules of the game by enlarging



the table and shaping it like a doughnut so more than four can play at a time. This alternative model of interaction overcomes boundaries and opens multiple avenues for broader dialogue among many people at once, regardless of gender or age.

PASSAGE OF TIME

Working exclusively in black and white, Japanese artist Youki Hirakawa's conceptual works explored different perspectives of time. A 24-channel silent video, *Fallen Candle*, depicted candles in various stages of burning, all recorded from above. Nature-inspired *Vanished Tree* had two opposing videos: one a tree stump and the other the sky when looking up. A disarming way of exploring the perspective of space. A third work, *Frozen*

Leaf represents crystallised ice melting on a leaf, gradually darkening as it absorbs the water before disappearing completely into darkness.

HAIR TODAY, GONE TOMORROW

At once objectionable and intriguing, you couldn't help but be repulsed yet inexplicably attracted – it was impossible to stand back as the body instinctively reacted – to New York-based pioneering Chinese experimental ink artist Gu Wenda's monumental installation, *United Nations: Man and Space*, comprising 188 national flags made of burlap, white glue and human hair, which he had collected from people of different countries, customers of barbershops. The vitality of hair exemplifies the power of the masses, while parodying the role of the cultural colonialist.