

Art Basel Hong Kong announces exhibitor list for 2017 edition

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Greater historic depth is the aim of next year's Art Basel fair in Hong Kong

Art Basel Hong Kong on Tuesday released the list of galleries that will participate in its fifth edition, which opens on March 21 next year, including two well-established Hong Kong players that have made it on to the list for the first time.

The globe-trotting dealer Sundaram Tagore, who first set up shop in Hollywood Road in 2007, will present a solo exhibition by Singaporean artist Jane Lee, who is best known for challenging preconceptions about painting through her innovative and visually striking treatments of unconventional materials. His gallery was a regular at Art HK but has never entered the highly selective Art Basel show until now.



Globe-trotting art dealer Sundaram Tagore.

As was the case last year, Asia's largest contemporary art fair received about 500 applications and about half were rejected by a judging panel composed of mostly regional dealers.

The admission of Kwai Fung Hin, the Ice House Street gallery founded in 1991, reflects fair director Adeline Ooi's interest in showing more art that addresses the richness of Asia's own art history.

For its first Art Basel show, Kwai Fung Hin will feature the works of Chinese-American artist Li Huayi.

"I think we impressed the judges because of the efforts we have put into the design of the booth," says Edward Fung, director of the gallery.

"The main showcase is a new work made on a large antique Japanese gold leaf screen. It is an ink landscape that melds Song dynasty shanshui traditions with Western perspectives and we have

commissioned a lighting designer to help draw out its true qualities.”

The way Li finds inspiration from different artistic traditions chimes with Ooi’s vision for the Hong Kong fair, which she hopes will continue to have greater historic depth.

“There is so much art history and talent that can be drawn out here. Contemporary artists dominate in Asia. But so many Asian galleries have been here for a long time and we would like them to bring more historic materials here,” she said.

One example of a more historical entry this year comes from Galerie du Monde, which plans to present works by members of Taiwan’s “The Fifth Moon” art group: Chen Ting-shih, Fong Chung-ray, Hu Chi-chung and Liu Kuo-sung.

But Art Basel is first and foremost a place where the zeitgeist of today’s art world is on display. Apart from the 241 individual booths, the “Encounters” sector will feature large installations and performances by leading contemporary artists that are chosen by returning curator Alexie Glass-Kantor. She has yet to announce her final selections.

Li Zhenhua will also return to put together the “Film” sector. Abigail Reynolds, the last recipient of the BMW Art Journey award – a collaboration between the carmaker and the art fair – will present an exhibition based on her exploration of the lost libraries along the Silk Road. In addition, Art Basel Hong Kong will introduce the “Kabinett” sector for the first time – a specially curated project displayed separately within a booth.



London gallery owner Timothy Taylor. Photo: David Wong

Ooi says Asian demand for contemporary art continues to grow quickly, with strong Chinese purchases reported from the recent Frieze fair in London. She expects next year’s attendance to be even higher than in 2016, when a record 70,000 people visited, because it would not clash with the Easter holidays. Out of the 241 galleries participating, 29 are new entries, including two returnees – Timothy Taylor, the London gallery, and Zurich’s Karma International – that were both missing last year.

The other new entries from Asia are: A+ Contemporary, Bank, C-Space, Hive Centre for Contemporary Art, Imura art gallery, Jhaveri Contemporary, Mind Set Art Centre, The Third Gallery Aya and The Third Line.

2016 participants that are not appearing next year are: Arndt, Athr, In Situ – fabienne leclerc, Poligrafa Obra Grafica and Sies + Hoke.

The fifth Art Basel Hong Kong will run from March 21-25 at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre in Wan Chai, with March 23-25 open to the public.

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