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Fine Art Asia, 2016 edition

With 85 exhibitors from all over the world presenting a selection of works often of museum quality (6,000 works totalling \$HK3 billion), the 12th edition of the fair received 22,500 visitors, according to the organiser, Andy Hei. The visibly delighted co-president and director of Fine Art Asia was aware of "a keen enthusiasm this year, with an encouraging number of young and new collectors." Fine Art Asia is probably one of the region's very few art fairs to bring Western and Eastern antiquities and contemporary art – right up to Damien Hirst – together in one place. Covering 5,000 years of history, it offers an ideal platform for specialist art dealers and collectors with varied interests.

Impressive sales

This year, Ever Arts (Hong Kong) and MD Flacks (London), two Chinese furniture specialists, collaborated on a highly successful joint stand mingling traditional Chinese furniture with various contemporary sculptures and curiosities. They were extremely happy to have sold

one of their major pieces, a large from the late-Ming period Luohan bed with a solid balustrade in a rare form and style, together with curiosities belonging to British pop artist Clive Barker. The London dealers Gladwell and Patterson, specialising in impressionist painting and modern art, have been attending the fair since 2011. A few hours before the end of this edition, the gallery director made some notable sales, reflecting the strong interest aroused by Monet's "Aiguille d'Etretat, marée basse", a painting closely covered by the media. The preview evening proved highly satisfactory for the French landscape artists Georges Robin and Alexandre Jacob. Another noteworthy transaction involved a picture of the "Palais des Doges" by Auguste Bouvard, the painter of a timeless Venice, proposed by Glenn Fuller. He says: "Since our first appearance, we have gradually changed the genre of the paintings we offer. The public has become far more knowledgeable in Asia, and increasingly appreciates Western art." Magee told the Art Media Agency that the slowdown in the Chinese economy was not affecting sales and that galleries were seeing "a constant increase in Chinese buyers." Contemporary art was also more present at the fair. The gallery



Courtesy of Fine Art Asia



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seemed delighted with this diversity, while remaining confident and keen to maintain its ascendancy in this speciality, despite the competition.

A new sector: photography

This edition dedicated a new sector to photography, presenting a selection of galleries from Hong Kong and abroad. As the organiser told us, this was in response to the growing interest in the medium, nourished by the ever-rising number of exhibitions, museums and galleries promoting photography. It was initiated by Boogie Woogie Photography, a Hong Kong-based consulting agency, to show that, if of high quality, the medium has every chance of establishing itself in Asia as a collectible art form. One of the key works was a remarkable vintage print by the Japanese photographer Araki Nobuyoshi, presented by the Zen Foto Gallery (Tokyo). Meanwhile, Gallery 27 (Hong Kong) exhibited a series of photographs taken with an iPhone: the work of artist and gallery owner Alan Chan. The Paris 1839 gallery (Hong Kong) exhibited a work by the Chinese artist Wang Wusheng alongside pieces by a Taiwanese photographer who has won several awards, Chou Ching-Hui (his "Animal Farm #6" found a buyer). "It is never easy to approach Chinese collectors," said the gallery's representative at AMA. "Taking part in Fine Art Asia has helped extend our buyer base." In his view, the perfect timing of the fair, coinciding with Sotheby's auctions in the same venue, is a tremendous boost for the market. Undeniably, the sheer range and variety of the pieces exhibited at Fine Art Asia 2016 attracted local Chinese buyers and international collectors alike. The format of the fair, a platform of different specialities, has proved a good decision, with something for both dealers and collectors. The other great asset of the event lies in its sophisticated, muted atmosphere, which spares collectors the exhausting crowds of other international events. And lastly, the excellent sales are a positive sign, given the recent fears of the art market regarding the sluggish Chinese economy. Meanwhile, the new sector devoted to photography is a sign of the potential transformation of the fair, now moving more broadly towards contemporary creation and thus reaching out to a new class of young Chinese collectors.

Fine Art Asia 2016 was held in Hong Kong from 2 to 5 October 2016.