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The 9 Best Booths at Frieze Seoul, From the Ancient to the Bracingly Contemporary

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The scene at Frieze Seoul.

ANDREW RUSSETH FOR ARTNEWS

By 2 p.m. on Friday, when Frieze Seoul began its preview at the Coex Convention & Exhibition Center, the line of VIPs waiting to get in was already enormous. All week in the South Korean

capital, there have been parties and performances, exhibitions openings and pop-ups. Now we have the main event.

About 110 exhibitors from around the world are filling the cavernous halls of Coex for Frieze (and another 160-plus exhibitors are on hand for Kiaf—the Korea International Art Fair—in a hall below). The place is jam-packed with people, and it no doubt will be through the event's end on Monday: the appetite for art here is voracious, and the material is strong.

There are revered modernists, young guns, and even some ancient items, thanks to a small Frieze Masters subsection: a booth for everybody. Below, the nine best presentations on offer.

Egon Schiele at Richard Nagy Ltd.



Photo : Andrew Russeth for ARTnews

In the fair's 18-exhibitor Frieze Master, London gallerist Richard Nagy has stuffed his booth with some 40 Egon Schiele works, most of them done on paper, in what is said to be the first-

ever major solo presentation in South Korea of the fated Austrian artist, who died in 1918 at age 28. This is an absolute erotic fantasia, with nude women conjured from pencil, charcoal, and watercolor, and it handily proves that Schiele can still shock. (Behold the unflinching and frankly titled *Reclining Nude, Masturbating*, from 1914). There are surprises, too, like a 1915 aerial landscape with plenty of blank space that seems to harbor secrets.

Gallery Hyundai



Photo : Andrew Russeth for ARTnews

Seoul's Gallery Hyundai, also in Masters, has put together a blowout display of three 20th-century Korean legends who used stones in their work—Park Hyunki, who incorporated them into ingenious, meditative and pioneering video assemblages; Seung-Taek Lee, who bound them with rope and wire; and Quac Insik, whose *Untitled 1976* (1976) is a speckled rock sitting atop a pedestal. It is a presentation that is at once smart, sharp-looking, and accessible. Some of the many museum curators in town from abroad should open their checkbooks (or phone a patron), snap up these works, and bring them home.

Axel Vervoordt



Photo : Andrew Russeth for ARTnews

One more Masters standout: the black-walled booth of Belgian legend Axel Vervoordt, which has works that span continents and centuries. There's a tall, narrow 1959 Ad Reinhardt black painting, with a cross barely visible within it; an utterly tranquil stone Buddha head from the Northern Qi Period (6th century) in what is now China; a 1976 Lee Ufan drawing, just quick graphite marks on paper; and—why not?—a ca. 1900 sketch by Paul-César Helleu of a woman and a child riding in a boat as the waves pick up. The presentation radiates a brooding masculinity, suggesting the handsome apartment of a luxury minded philosopher-king.

Tina Kim



Photo : Andrew Russeth for ARTnews

Four joyously patterned, riotously colored paintings by the great Filipino artist Pacita Abad (1946–2004) hold one corner of the booth of New York’s Tina Kim, the largest made of a curiously stitched and padded canvas that she adorned with plastic buttons. That alone would make the stand an essential stop, but here, too, is a stunner of a new Suki Seokyeong Kang wall-hung piece (a bewitching array of purple-painted steel, a dyed Hwamunseok mat, and more), and some early works by Kim Tschang-yeul (1929–2021)—oozing, organic abstractions from before he adopted his signature “water drop” motifs: pleasures for the both the eyes and the mind.

Hejum Bä at Whistle





Photo : Andrew Russeth for ARTnews

The Seoul-based painter Hejum Bä, who is 35 this year, has taken over the stand of local emerging-art specialists Whistle with a show of her vividly toned abstractions, and it is a stunner. (Even in reproductions, they pack a punch.) Built from loose, flat planes of color, these paintings seem to be just slightly unsettled, like they are coming into focus or finding their final form. One might detect traces of landscapes or even fragments of people, but it is impossible to identify them with certainty. Like some special people, they draw you in, challenge you, and become more alluring, the more time you spend them.

Sadie Coles HQ





Photo : Andrew Russeth for ARTnews

What in the world? In this kinetic sculpture, two men—each bearing the face of their maker, Swiss artist Urs Fischer—pull back and forth on the arms of a small child, who also appears to be Urs Fischer. Certainly we have all felt this way at some point. But only rarely do we see a sculpture that is so unrepentantly distasteful that it spills over into high pleasure. Other delights at Sadie Coles include new Laura Owens paintings, a Rudolf Stingel insulation board, and a handsome little Elizabeth Peyton portrait of artist Jonathan Horowitz. A group display can be deadly (bland, boring) at a fair, but the piquant variety of work here operates like intricate polyphony.

Sprüth Magers





Photo : Andrew Russeth for ARTnews

Living legend Rosemarie Trockel delivers one of the fair's knockout moments on the stand of fellow German heavyweights Sprüth Magers, with this nearly 10-foot-square 2016 wool piece, *A Bush is a Bear*, and a small study for it from the same year. It's a glorious craft monochrome that promises warmth, and an embodiment of how simple but meticulous repetitions can generate outsized aesthetic results. Other highlights here include quiet, ultra-spare paintings by the Korean-born, Hamburg-based Hyun-sook Song and a super-sized Andrea Gursky photo, who currently has a show in the city at the Amorepacific Museum of Art. There is also a menacing George Condo painting: a reminder that we are, indeed, at an art fair.

Max Hooper Schneider and Hun Kyu Kim at High Art

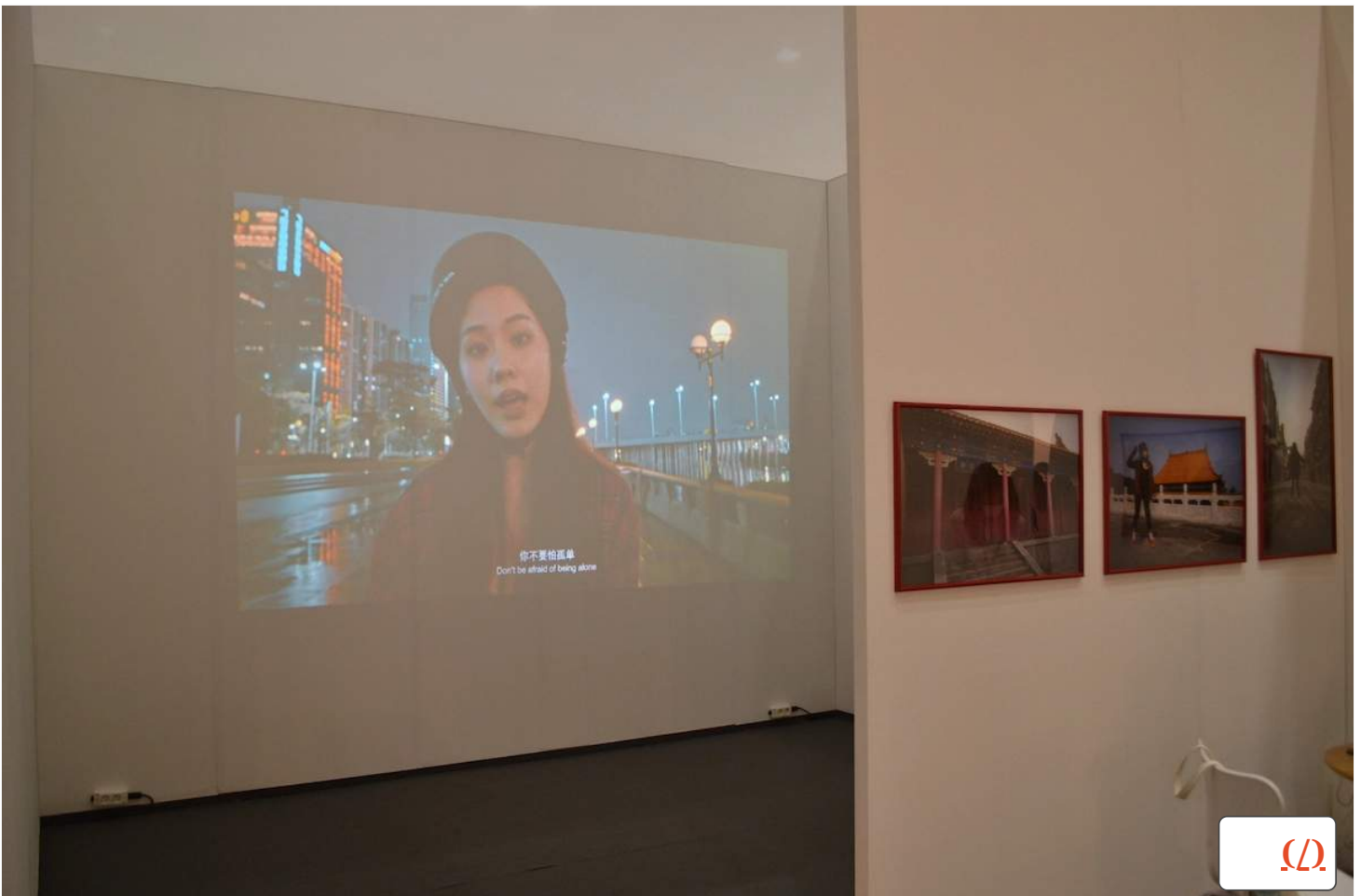




Photo : Andrew Russeth for ARTnews

The Parisian outfit High Art has paired the effervescent sculptural boxes by Los Angeles's Max Hooper Schneider (think Paul Thek goes electric) with the absolutely deranged paintings Hun Kyu Kim, a Korean artist based in London, who steals the show. Painting on silk, Kim presents action-packed scenes in which animals seem to have taken over the world. They are so dense and filled with life that they make Hieronymus Bosch seem subdued. A mother cat and her daughter stroll, upright, down the street. A fish leaps through a flaming ring. A bunny feeds a carrot to a giraffe. We could go on like this for a long time. How will they age? I am not certain, but right now, they seem to encapsulate the unhinged state of our natural world.

Tao Hui at Kiang Malingue



It takes a brave art dealer to devote their art-fair booth to a video work (besides being difficult to sell, they often go unwatched by on-the-run visitors), but Hong Kong outfit Kiang Malingue took the risk, clearing knowing that they had a winner on their hands: Tao Hui's *Being Wild* (2021), a moving, charismatic 12-minute wonder. It has the Chinese artist, who was born in 1987, as a roller-skating flaneuse, gliding through different environs as she talks to viewers about life, and about wanting to be elsewhere. Sometimes she sings bits of songs by Taiwanese folk-singer Tai Chao-Mei. "I once imagined staying in a different small town every night," she says at one point. If she slept in every small town in China, she goes on, "it would take 53 years." Spending even 60 seconds at 110 or so art-fair booths still takes two hours, so we look, take notes, and then press on.

