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Art Basel Hong Kong 2025: New Narratives

BY LOUIS LU



Installation view at Art Basel Hong Kong, 2025. Courtesy Art Basel.

**Updated on April 24*

As Asia's art calendar becomes increasingly crowded—with Frieze Seoul's rising prominence, Singapore's Art SG finding its footing, Shanghai's West Bund Art Fair maintaining steady influence, and India Art Fair's continuous expansion—discussions surrounding Hong Kong's position as the region's premier art hub have intensified in recent years. The 12th edition of Art Basel Hong Kong, which closed on March 30, presented some intriguing insights and steady sales across sectors, indicating a measured return of market confidence.

The year's edition gathered 240 galleries from 42 countries, with Asia-Pacific galleries comprising more than half the participants—the highest representation from the region to date. With the expanded presence of Southeast Asian and African galleries, this shift mirrors the art world's increasing focus on the "Global South."

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Blue-chip galleries reported significant sales across the board. Hauser & Wirth placed Louise Bourgeois's bronze sculpture *Cove* (1988/cast 2010) with a collector in Asia for USD 2 million, coinciding with the artist's solo exhibition "Soft Landscape" at the gallery's Hong Kong space, and a touring major survey from Tokyo's Mori Museum to Taipei's Fubon Museum. The gallery also reported sales of Zeng Fanzhi's *Untitled* (2024) for USD 1.5 million, and Christina Quarles's *Push'm Lil' Daisies, Make'm Come Up* (2020) for USD 1.35 million. Two works by new gallery addition Lee Bul—an intricate leather-clad sculpture and an acrylic diptych—sold for USD 275,000 and USD 260,000 respectively, to a European foundation. David Zwirner reported one of the fair's highest sales, raking in USD 3.5 million for Yayoi Kusama's *INFINITY-NETS [ORUPX]* (2013). The gallery also sold Michaël Borremans's *Bob* (2025) for USD 1.6 million, as well as Elizabeth Peyton's *Happy Together (WKW)* (2022–24) and Felix Gonzalez-Torres's diaphanous blue curtain piece *Untitled (Loverboy)* (1989), each for USD 900,000.

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Installation view of Hauser & Wirth's booth at Art Basel Hong Kong, 2025. Courtesy Hauser & Wirth.



Installation view of David Zwirner's booth at Art Basel Hong Kong, 2025. Courtesy Art Basel.

White Cube reported sales of two of Antony Gormley's figurative sculptures, *OPEN GUT* (2023) and *HOIST II* (2019), ranging from USD 650,000 to USD 1.3 million. Also sold within a similar price range was Tracey Emin's large-scale bronze sculpture *There was so much more of me* (2019). At Pace, Lee Ufan's *With Winds* (1991) sold for USD 950,000, while two Alicja Kwade pieces, *Little Triple Be-Hide* (2023) and *Little Be-Hide* (2024), presented at the gallery's booth concurrent with the artist's first solo exhibition at Tai Kwun, traded at USD 73,400 each. Perrotin sold Takashi Murakami's new acrylic and gold leaf painting *Tan Tan Bo: Wormhole* (2025) for USD 1.35 million. Thaddaeus Ropac reported several high-value transactions, including Roy Lichtenstein's *Water Lily Pond with Reflections* (1992), an enamel screenprint on processed and swirled stainless steel, which sold for USD 1.5 million, and Georg Baselitz's seated double portrait *Luise, Lilo, Franz und Johannes* (2010), which sold for EUR 1.2 million (USD 1.3 million). Additionally, the gallery sold Robert Rauschenberg's 1989 original artwork for *First International Festival of Asian Film* to a Chinese museum at USD 200,000. At Gladstone's booth, Anicka Yi's crowd-pleasing light installation *Thorn* (2023–24) found a buyer at USD 225,000. The work is from Yi's *Radiolaria* series (2023–24), which featured both at Seoul's Leeum Museum last year and her recently opened survey at UCCA in Beijing.



Installation view of Gladstone's booth at Art Basel Hong Kong, 2025. Courtesy Art Basel.

Asian galleries and artists demonstrated a strong presence. Kukje sold a 2004 mixed-media canvas by Park Seo-Bo for between USD 540,000 and USD 648,000, while Ha Chong-Hyun's *Conjunction 22-03* (2022) fetched between USD 390,000 and USD 468,000. At Sprüth Magers, two tempera-on-canvas works by Hyun-Sook Song sold for EUR 65,000 (USD 70,200) each to an Asian collector, while two pieces by Mire Lee, fresh from her recent Tate Modern Turbine Hall commission,

fetched EUR 45,000 (USD 48,600) and EUR 30,000 (USD 32,400), respectively. Tina Kim Gallery sold two colorful Pacita Abad trapunto works, with *The Far Side of Apo Island* (1989) selling between USD 250,000 and USD 500,000, and *Twenty-Five Meters Down on Layag-Layag Reef* (1986) between USD 100,000 and 250,000.

Museums and institutional acquisitions appeared to focus on works by Asian artists. Hong Kong's M+ museum acquired Yibei Zhang's *There is everything in our bonfire* (2024) from Shanghai's BANK Gallery for USD 25,000. A Chinese museum acquired Lee ShinJa's textile piece *Joining* (1981) from Tina Kim Gallery for USD 200,000. The gallery, together with Silverlens, also sold Pacita Abad's *Through the Looking Glass* (1996) to a Southeast Asian museum for a reported sum of USD 500,000. Abad's work was one of three large-scale paintings presented in the fair's Encounters sector.



Installation view of PACITA ABAD and PIO ABAD's *The Sk is the Limit*, 1996-2000, mixed media, dimensions variable, at Art Basel Hong Kong, 2005. Courtesy Art Basel.

Singapore's Ames Yavuz Gallery reported strong interest in Thai artist Pinaree Sanpitak's works. Her two large-scale pieces from 2003, *Silver Offering I* and *Silver Offering II*, feature the artist's iconic breast shape in silver leaf against shimmery opal-hued acrylic backgrounds, each went for USD 350,000. The gallery also placed three works by First Nations artist Betty Muffler in the USD 40,000 to 60,000 range. ShanghART sold Mengyun Han's ink, acrylic, white gold leaf on canvas entitled *Fruit of Tranquility* (2024) to an Asian museum for USD 60,000.

Throughout the fair, textile-based works drew attention across multiple booths, suggesting growing interest in craft-based approaches. Notable presentations included Igshaan Adams at Blank Projects' Kabinett booth, Samuel Nnorom at Retro Africa, Josep Grau-Garriga at Sabrina Amrani, Lin Tianmiao at

Vanguard Gallery, and Duyi Han at BANK. As a medium that bridges traditional craftsmanship and contemporary expression, textile-based works emphasize materiality and labor, offering an intriguing counterpoint to digital and AI-driven artworks.

This dialogue between the tactile and the virtual was evident in the Encounters sector, which showcased large-scale projects. Alexie Glass-Kantor, who has curated the Encounters since 2018, concluded her final edition with a selection of works focusing on the pressing issues shaping human experience today. These ranged from indigenous sovereignty and environmentalism to contemporary digital culture. Highlights included Movana Chen's *Deconstructing* (2004-08), which transformed old printed matters into a monumental tapestry, as well as Chinese artist Lu Yang's large-scale multimedia installation *DOKU the Creator* (2025), including affordable NFTs, which drew large crowds. Presented by De Sarthe and COMA, *DOKU the Creator* postulates a cyber dystopia through AI-driven animation, exploring themes of human civilization, commodification, and technological spectacle.



Installation view of LU YANG's *DOKU the Creator*, 2025, blind boxes, LED wall, flexible LED display film, LED scrollers, shelves, sofa, fabric, wood, dimensions variable, at Art Basel Hong Kong, 2025. Courtesy Art Basel.

Hong Kong galleries brought diverse presentations to the fair. Blindspot Gallery's booth featured videos, photography works, sculptures, and installations, including works by Sin Wai Kin, who had a solo exhibition at the gallery's space, and Wing Po So, whose solo exhibition was at nonprofit Para Site. Empty Gallery celebrated its tenth anniversary with works by Jacqueline Kiyomi Gork, Doris Guo, Tishan Hsu, Taro Masushio, Henry Shum, Rafael Vunkwan Tam, and Cici Wu. Kiang Malingue presented works by over 20 artists, including new works by Brook Hsu, the late Cho Yong-Ik, Nabuqi, Miao Ying, Su-Mei Tse, and Yu Ji. Brook Hsu's ink-on-canvas work sold to an Asian foundation for USD 45,000. Rossi & Rossi

dedicated its booth to the late Iranian American artist Siah Armajani and modestly priced canvases on corridors by Hong Kong artist Szelit Cheung, while first-time participant PHD Group showcased Michele Chu's solo presentation "Kitchen," a meditation on food, ritual, memory, and loss. Chu's sensorial installations transform personal objects into an intimate memorial to her late mother.

Among the Chinese galleries participating in Art Basel Hong Kong was Antenna Space, whose booth presented a new generation of female artists from the gallery program, including Korean artist Mire Lee, as well as Shuang Li, who had a solo exhibition at Shanghai's Prada Rong Zhai in 2024. The booth also featured a series of works by Evelyn Taocheng Wang, who was recently awarded the Wolfgang Hahn Prize. Beijing Commune showcased work by a broad range of Chinese artists, including Song Dong, Yin Xiuzhen, and Zhang Xiaogang, among others, with a special curation of Wang Guangle's abstract paintings in their Kabinett sector.

Beyond the familiar narrative of "cautious optimism" reflected in sales figures and crowd energy, it may be time to explore a more nuanced perspective. From Singaporean artist Ho Tzu Nyen's AI-generated homage to Hong Kong cinema on the M+ facade to the fair's engagement with the "Global South" narrative, and nonprofit spaces and local galleries showcasing the city's vibrant art scene, Hong Kong's perceived competition with Seoul and Singapore might be less relevant than its evolving role as a platform for meaningful dialogue among a diversity of art worlds—local, regional, and global. What we are witnessing could be more than just a market recovery; it may signify the emergence of a robust cultural ecosystem.

Louis Lu is an associate editor at ArtAsiaPacific.

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