

# ARTnews

The Best Booths at Art Basel Hong Kong, Where Poignant Artworks Explore Various Crises

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The scene at Art Basel Hong Kong 2023. MAXIMILIANO DURÓN/ARTNEWS

Art Basel Hong Kong launched its first quarantine-free edition since 2019, with two VIP preview days beginning March 21, at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre. Reportedly its [largest edition](#) since the pandemic, with 171 exhibitors from 32 countries and territories participating in the 2023 edition, there is a lot for visitors to see.

Inadvertently, the latest edition of ABHK heightened the divisive discourse on whether Hong Kong still possesses the status of established art capital amid the rise of rival cities, not to mention the notion of soft power [wielded](#) by problematic governments across the world.

Yet proving two things can be true all at once, there were a fair number of gallery booths at the mega fair that brought something new, different, and even probed and explored the specific crises and conflicts of our time.

Below, a look at the best eight presentations on show at the 2023 edition of Art Basel Hong Kong, which runs until March 25.

**1**

## neugerriemschneider



Photo : Photo Sebastiano Pellion di Persano

Berlin's neugerriemschneider put on a blowout showcase of artworks from the roster of diverse artists they have supported even before they became household names in the art world. All packed within a modest sized booth, the juxtaposition of artworks by Thomas Bayrle, Shilpa Gupta, Rirkrit Tiravanija, Olafur Eliasson, Noa Eshkoland, Tomás Saraceno cleverly straddles the line between cluttered and immersive. However, what really sets the gallery's display apart from any other typical art fair offering is its use of Thomas Bayrle's *Chinese Motorways* (2004) and his large-scale wallpaper print *Stadt* (1976/2013) to fill the walls of the booth, drawing the visitor's eye almost immediately.

2

## Blindspot Gallery



Photo : Photo South Ho/Courtesy the artists and Blindspot Gallery

Hong Kong's Blindspot Gallery was everywhere at this edition from ABHK, participating in both the fair's large-scale art showcase, Encounters, and its film program. Nonetheless, their omniscience at ABHK did not dilute the diverse array of standout artworks exhibited at the gallery's booth on the first floor, proving its mettle as a local gallery to watch. Placed deservedly on a single wall, Yeung Tong Lung's Night Shift (2022), is a massive painting portraying a trendy local resolutely standing amid ongoing road works, against the backdrop of the tram depot along the harbor. The visual succinctly captures Hong Kong's ethos and like most works at the booth present a not so gentle but necessary reminder of the fair's locale on Victoria Harbour.

3

### STPI Creative Workshop & Gallery



Photo : Courtesy STPI Creative Workshop & Gallery

STPI Creative Workshop & Gallery was yet another Asian gallery with a well-curated selection of powerhouse artists at ABHK. While the likes of Rirkrit Tiravanija, Do Ho Suh, Charles Lim Yi Yong, Pinaree Sanpitak, Haegue Yang, and Heman Chong are not necessarily new to the art fair circuit, the pieces chosen for display and the savvy positioning of walls to create intimate nooks came across as compellingly fresh. Of special note is Tiravanija's new "Extinction" series, comprising embossed visuals of vulnerable animals that wrapped around one wall of the booth. Coming ahead of a solo show curated by Hans Ulrich Obrist at STPI, this presentation felt almost adventurous by mega art fair standards.

4

## Rasheed Araeen at Rossi & Rossi



Photo : Courtesy the artist and Rossi & Rossi

Another mainstay gallery in Hong Kong that showed its chops is Rossi & Rossi with a booth dedicated solely to one of the most iconic and relevant artists at the fair this year. Karachi-born, London-based multi-hyphenate Rasheed Araeen is primarily an artist who spent most of his life melding art and activism. Rossi & Rossi's immense booth display attempted to capture this trajectory, featuring the eye-catching metallic installation Cube as Sculpture (1966/2020), first planned by the artist in 1966 but never fully realized due to financial constraints until much later. Also on view is Izmetullah (Green 2), a vividly colorful yet heart-wrenching exploration of identity in a time of erasure, completed in 2022.

5

## Amir H. Fallah at Denny Gallery



Photo : Courtesy the artist and Denny Gallery

Denny Gallery, based in New York and Hong Kong, hit a homerun with its spectacular exhibition of Tehran-born, Los Angeles-based artist Amir H. Fallah, known for his vibrant and confrontational paintings, sculptures, and public art. The artist's capacity to command a space visually comes across even in a modest staid art fair booth. For example, To Kill A Sunrise (2023) features a figure covered entirely in detailed black-and-green prints who makes a peace sign while holding a bundle of black hair, imagery inspired by the recent "Women, Life, Freedom" protests in Iran. The artwork makes the visitor equally uncomfortable and enthralled, hopefully inciting further deliberation.

6

## Joydeb Roaja at Jhaveri Contemporary



Photo : Commissioned by Samdani Art Foundation for Dhaka Art Summit 2023. Courtesy the artist, Samdani Art Foundation, and Jhaveri Contemporary

Thanks to Mumbai gallery Jhaveri Contemporary, ABHK visitors got to experience an impressive slice of Dhaka Art Summit 2023. Bangladeshi artist Joydeb Roaja's solo presentation showcases aspects of *Submerged Dreams*, commissioned for the Summit earlier this year. The immersive, fantastical yet ultimately realistic and probing installation focuses on the construction of the Kaptai Dam in 1962, which flooded a larger portion of Chakma land including its royal palace, displacing swathes of Indigenous communities. Via five expansive paper works, the artist invites the viewer to imagine people of that land raising the palace from the depths of the lake, a simultaneously heartbreaking notion, exigently relevant in our times of climate crisis.

7

## Jakkai Siributr at Flowers Gallery



Photo : Courtesy the artist and Flowers Gallery

Flowers Gallery, with outposts in Hong Kong and London, focused on one of Southeast Asia's most impactful artists, Jakkai Siributr, known primarily for his work involving varied textiles. The main highlight of Flowers' presentation was *The Outlaw's Flag* (2017), an installation of 21 fictionalized, brightly colored flags suspended from the ceiling by hooks. Made from beads and fishing nets gathered in Sittwe, the flags allude to the displacement of the Rohingyas, the ethnic Muslim minority population in Myanmar. The curation of flags next to *Blind Faith I, II, III* (2011/2019), featuring Thai military uniforms decorated with brass bullet shells, glass beads, and ritual objects, seemed to catch the attention of even the most harried fairgoer.



8

## Layo Bright at Monique Meloche



Photo : Courtesy the artist and Monique Meloche

Yet another intriguing solo presentation was of works by Nigerian artist Layo Bright, offered by renowned Chicago gallery Monique Meloche. Taken from the artist's investigations into the influence of materials on culture and politics found within personal archives and collective experiences, the sculptures placed on the wall and pedestals evoke an immediate sense of ancient nowness. This is encapsulated best by the relief sculptures which combine the imagery of the faces of Bright's maternal grandmother and great-grandmother with vegetation, alluding to Greek Caryatids, female figures embedded into buildings as architectural support. Showing women's integral place in society played out across generations as well as the various works in the booth is a necessary provocation, especially today.