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Showtime

As the rivalry between Singapore and Hong Kong continues apace in the cultural arena, an array of art happenings clustered around the Hong Kong International Art Fair is set to transform the city with a week of world-class art events. It's another step toward Hong Kong's goal of besting Singapore to become Asia's regional arts hub.

Baz Luhrmann and Vincent Fantauzzo | BLINK | Candida Höfer

Keitai Girl | Tabaimo | Damien Hirst | Humberto and Fernando Campana

Simon Birch's 'Hope and Glory' | Ai Weiwei and Acconci Studio | Christie's

The fair, also known as Art HK 10, runs from May 27 to 30. In just its third year, it's not nearly as big as some of the world's more established contemporary art fairs such as Art Basel or London's Frieze Art Fair. The Frieze, for instance, draws some 60,000 visitors, and is a well-known showcase for the hottest, fastest-rising contemporary artists.

But with a lot of the air taken out of the contemporary-art bubble, and international players seeking new markets, Hong Kong—with its proximity to wealthy mainland Chinese collectors—has become a magnet. This year, there's much more to see around the fair than before. Top American, European and Asian galleries are holding special exhibitions; stars in

the performance-art world have come to do their thing; and Christie's and a slew of other auction houses—which have already turned Hong Kong into the world's third-largest art-auction center behind New York and London—will hold their annual spring auctions to coincide with the fair.

A bevy of high-profile art-world personalities is jetting in, too, including British sculptor and Turner Prize winner Antony Gormley, Guggenheim Museum curator Alexandra Munroe, Japanese contemporary artist Takashi Murakami and Tokyo Museum of Contemporary Art curator Yuko Hasegawa, to name a few.


Overall, fair attendance is expected to rise again, following the 30% jump to 28,000 last year; and a booth at the show this year was not easily had: The number of participating galleries—150 from 29 countries—was culled from a list of 300 applicants, says Magnus Renfrew, the fair's director.

"Art HK has become the fair in Asia," contends Phil Tinari, an art critic and curator.

Of course, art fairs are mainly about buying and selling—though no one at the Frieze or Art HK will talk about how much money has changed hands at past fairs. In recent years, however, fairs have become more about culture than commerce. According to Matthew Slotover, a co-founder of the Frieze art fair, about 80% of Frieze visitors are

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just there to look. Art fairs are "a great place to learn and get exposed to art," he says.

Singapore is mounting its own fair, Art Stage Singapore, next January—launched by Lorenzo Rudolf, the former Art Basel director credited with turning that understated Swiss fair into an international juggernaut—and so the region's art war will carry on.

Here, Weekend Journal Asia's list of the 10 "art week" things to see. Tickets cost HK\$200 (about US\$26) and the fair takes place at the Hong Kong Convention Centre & Exhibition Hall. Entry is free to the other events we've highlighted that are being held around the city.

Baz Luhrmann and Vincent Fantauzzo

Art HK, 10 Chancery Lane Gallery booth



10 Chancery Lane Gallery

Australian artist Vincent Fantauzzo, left, and director Baz Luhrmann at work on "The Creek, 1977"

Baz Luhrmann's films stand out for their creativity and visual flair; some even call him an artist. But the Australian director of "Moulin Rouge" and "Australia" has never had an art exhibit—until now. This year, at the Hong Kong art fair, Mr. Luhrmann (wearing the scarf), will unveil a multimedia installation piece—"The Creek, 1977"—he created with his friend and Melbourne portrait artist Vincent Fantauzzo.

Mr. Luhrmann, 47, also an opera director of good

repute (his "La Boheme" in New York was nominated for seven Tony awards), has been "interested in doing something in an art-gallery space" for a while, says 10 Chancery Lane's founder Katie de Tilly.

"Creek," a multimedia work that includes a large oil-on-linen painting, an interactive website and sound effects, tells a story—about a car accident—that is based on a boyhood memory of Mr. Luhrmann's. The two artists collaborated on the story, and then set up an elaborate photo shoot starring actors and themselves. Mr. Fantauzzo, 33, then used the photos to sketch and render the scene in oil.

In the painting, which is set in the 1970s, Mr. Fantauzzo—who was a runner-up for Australia's prestigious Archibald Prize in 2008—is a mysterious drifter who arrives in a small Australian town; Mr. Luhrmann portrays the owner of the local gas station. The pair say in a statement that this work is a "step" in a journey to remove the line between painting and cinema.

Both gentlemen will be present at the art fair—actually they'll be painting and you're invited to watch: At a booth for the Sovereign Art Foundation—a Hong Kong- and U.K.-based charity that uses the arts to help disadvantaged children—Mr. Fantauzzo and Mr. Luhrmann will recreate the murals the pair painted with street children in India during a motorcycle trip there earlier this year.

Humberto and Fernando Campana

Louis Vuitton, 5 Canton Rd., Tsim Sha Tsui



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Luis Calazans/Campana Brothers

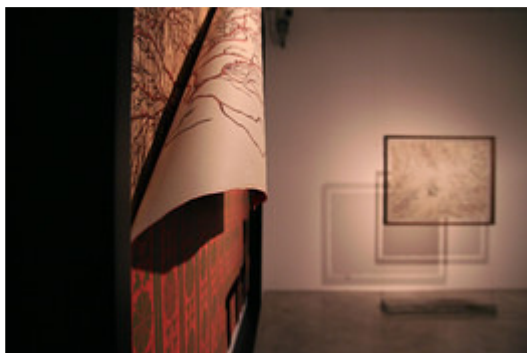
2006 Pandas Chair by Humberto and Fernando Campana

Brazilian brothers Humberto and Fernando Campana, 56 and 48 years old, respectively, have captured the imagination of art and design elites the world over with their irreverent work. Their Vermelha chair, made of 457 meters of cotton rope, and "Broken Dreams," a wall lamp made of discarded Murano glass parts, are fixtures of shows at venerable institutions such as New York's Museum of Modern Art and London's Victoria & Albert Museum.

During Art Week, the duo will have their first Hong Kong exhibit ever on the second floor of Louis Vuitton's flagship Hong Kong store on Canton Road. The gallery space has recently mounted small but provocative art exhibitions—the art displayed is never for sale—of local artists such as Simon Birch and Tsang Kin-wah, who created a now-famous wallpaper (the elegant flower pattern is drawn with artfully written foul language in English and Chinese characters). The Campana brothers exhibit, nine pieces in all, has a short run, from May 28 to June 6, and will include their famous "Panda" chair constructed of plush toy bears.

Tabaimo

Art HK, Singapore Tyler Print Institute booth



Tabaimo

A 'wallpaper' by Tabaimo

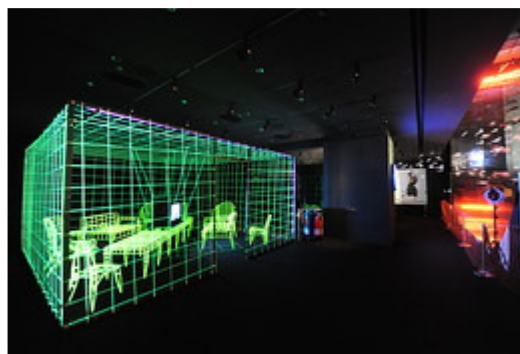
Tabaimo, a 35-year-old artist based in Nagano—her legal name is Ayako Tabata—is known for her fine-line drawings and her animation. Her work is sometimes described as creepy and disturbing. At Chanel's Mobile Art show in Hong Kong two years ago, her video installation "At the Bottom," which viewers peered down on after climbing some steps so they could see into the "well," featured larger-than-life projections of indiscriminate insects in black and white. Crawly.

At the art fair this year, this fast-rising multimedia star is getting her own show at the booth of the Singapore Tyler Print Institute, which often features important Asian contemporary artists such as Indonesia's Agus Suwage and China's Qiu Zhijie, as well as established American artists such as Donald Sultan and Ashley Bickerton. STPI has priced the Tabaimo works at the fair between \$10,000 and \$30,000.

One of the pieces on display will be "skinspots," a series inspired by the stress-induced eczema the artist suffers from, a condition she likens to having insects crawl under her skin. In the works she created on cream-colored papers, round holes reveal fragments of insect drawings—butterflies and flies among them. Less crawly—her line drawings here are more akin to a naturalist's lithographs.

Simon Birch: "Hope and Glory"

ArtisTree, TaiKoo Place, Quarry Bay



The Birch Foundation

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A 'Hope and Glory' installation by Simon Birch

This spectacle, amid the office and residential towers of Quarry Bay, has been open for more than a month—it closes May 30—so you may have heard of it already.

If you haven't seen it yet, make time next week. Simon Birch, a British-born, Hong Kong-based artist, is probably better known for his "blurry" portraits—he has an uncanny ability to capture movement and raw emotion in his paintings (though some critics find them just plain blurry).

"Hope and Glory" includes some of his distinctive paintings and mixed-media sculptures, but it's mostly art of a different sort: A mix of 20 different installations sit in a 20,000-square-foot space. One full-scale room is designed to look like a 3-D rendering, until you realize, wait, it's real. In another, a large sphere hanging from the ceiling is a clump of trophies. Some critics say the exhibit makes contemporary art fun and accessible; others in the Hong Kong art world snicker silently to each other and wonder what it's all about.

Staged for a staggering cost of US\$2 million, with some of the funding coming from Hong Kong's government, the videos are slick, the scale is impressive, and the ambience is big. Like we said, the spectacle's the thing.

Christie's Hong Kong

Convention Hall, Hong Kong Convention Centre & Exhibition Hall



Christie

A five-carat heart-shaped blue diamond ring

Christie's brings some of its biggest bling here for its twice-a-year auctions. The reason: In recent years, Chinese buyers have pushed the company's Hong Kong office to the top spot in the world in terms of sales in this category.

This year's spring sale will take place May 28 to June 2, and the collection will be on show to all comers at the auction preview starting May 26.

Although the crowd in the jewelry section can sometimes rival Causeway Bay on a Saturday afternoon, two lots should not be missed: a five-carat heart-shaped blue diamond ring surrounded by pavé diamonds (estimate: \$4.5 million to \$7 million) and a flawless 10-carat round diamond ring (\$1.3 million to \$1.9 million). Both rings are a size 5 3/4. (Yes, you can try the baubles on—just elbow your way to the counter.)

In addition to jewelry, there will be antiques, art and wine on the block for the five-day sale, which is expected to pull in \$190 million.

The main highlight is a delicate eight-panel ink work by 17th-century Ming Dynasty master Shitao (1642-1707). "Landscapes Inspired by Du Fu's Poetic Sensibilities" depicts scenes from nature and has been estimated at \$15.5 million. That would make it the most expensive Chinese painting ever to be offered at auction; most likely it will not be seen in public for years after it is sold. Shitao's works are highly coveted due to his skill and his reputation as an innovator, and also because for centuries they've been collected by famous figures.

Damien Hirst

Art HK, White Cube booth

Even those less in the know have probably heard of Damien Hirst, that "Young British Artist" of formaldehyde-shark fame, who notably sold \$198 million of his works at a two-day auction in 2008. (The auction ended just hours before the collapse of Lehman Brothers kicked off a U.S. stock market

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crash, bringing on a global financial crisis.) It was the largest haul for a one-artist auction ever, and today Mr. Hirst is rumored to be the richest living artist in the world.

At the art fair, the London gallery White Cube will devote one of its two booths to the 44-year-old Mr. Hirst, (he will also be represented at the fair by other galleries, including Gagosian). Ten of his works, with prices ranging from \$150,000 to \$3.75 million, will share the 1,100-square-foot space, a display that is designed to provide visitors with "an experience" of Mr. Hirst's art, says White Cube director Daniela Gareh. One work, "The Five Stages of Dying" (2008-9), from his well-known series of butterfly paintings, features five cases of dead butterflies. At past art fairs, Mr. Hirst has drawn both plenty of curious visitors and the occasional animal-cruelty protester.

Another eye-catcher will be a 2005 work entitled "The Inescapable Truth." A large, three-dimensional glass-and-metal box containing a dove frozen as if in flight and a human skull soaking in formaldehyde, it's prettier than it sounds.

BLINK

Hong Kong Cultural Centre, Tsim Sha Tsui



Simon Boswell

Bruce Lee as he blinks

The split second it takes for a person to blink can make for a revealing portrait—that's the idea

behind "Blink," an audio-visual installation piece by British artist Simon Boswell, which will be projected cinema-size on the facade of the Hong Kong Cultural Centre in Tsim Sha Tsui, May 25 to 28, from 8:15 p.m. to 11 p.m. nightly.

Likely to be a crowd pleaser, "Blink" plays ultraslow-motion footage of movie stars and celebrities in the moments that they close their eyes. Local stars such as Tony Leung, Bruce Lee and Jackie Chan are included, along with Marilyn Monroe and David Beckham, among others. Each segment is set to specially created music—Mr. Boswell is an accomplished film-score composer and musician whose punk-rock band once toured with Blondie.

The installation, commissioned by Hong Kong's Home Affairs Bureau, is Mr. Boswell's second rendition of "Blink." A first edition in 2002 featured Muhammad Ali, Tony Blair, Osama Bin Laden and the Queen of England and ran continuously on four massive screens at the Institute of Contemporary Art in London.

Keitai Girl

Around town



Noriko Yamaguchi

'Keitai Girl' with her troupe in Paris

Japanese performance artist Noriko Yamaguchi's alter ego is "Keitai Girl" (mobile-phone girl), a white-faced female who poses, dances and marches while clad in a bodysuit covered with cellphone keypads.

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The artist's playful yet pointed work as Keitai Girl—presented in real life as well as in drawings, videos, prints and photographs—grapples with sexual politics, identity and the man-vs.-machine paradox in the iPad age. A graduate of Kyoto University of Art and Design, the 27-year-old artist from Kobe is part of an emerging generation of Japanese performance artists whose fresh yet carefully choreographed work has attracted critical scrutiny and praise.

Bart Dekker, founder of artinasia.com and an Asian art collector, helped organize her visit to Hong Kong along with MEM, the Osaka gallery that represents Ms. Yamaguchi. MEM will have a booth at the fair, where there will be Keitai Girl photos for sale, priced at about \$2,500 each.

But the real-life version is the thing to see.

Keitai Girl will be making small-scale, invitation-only appearances at the Kee Club (dates not yet announced at press time), and a performance at the fair's vernissage—the invitation-only opening night of Art HK 10—on May 26. But you might catch Keitai Girl, and the similarly attired troupe of girls that often accompanies her, on Hong Kong streets.

"Any time during the week, the Keitai Girls may march through the streets of Hong Kong," says Mr. Dekker. That's what they did in Paris two years ago: During an international photography show there in 2008, Keitai Girl and her retinue caused a stir by parading along the city's thoroughfares in full costume.

Candida Höfer

Ben Brown Fine Arts, Central

There's something slightly haunting but beautiful about the empty architectural spaces that German photographic-art star Candida Höfer captures in her images. Her shot of the interior of the Teatro Nacional de São Carlos, for instance—the opera house in Lisbon—is blazingly alight; it looks alive but no one's in the theater.

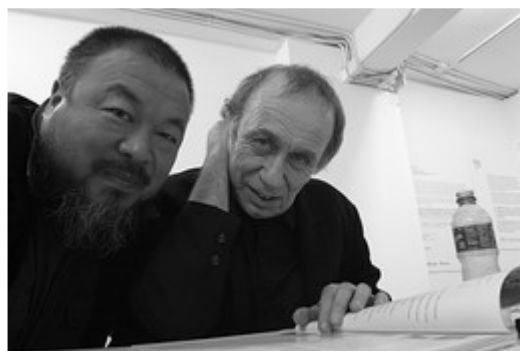
Starting May 25, Ben Brown Fine Arts, a London-based gallery with an elegant space in Hong Kong's Pedder Building, will feature Ms. Höfer's images—priced between €50,000 and €60,000 (US\$60,000 to \$73,000) each—in a solo exhibit. The photographs on show—all of Italian interiors—are supersize and dramatic, the opposite of the diminutive and soft-spoken 65-year-old German artist.

"Museo di Capodimonte I 2009," for example, depicts an ornate ivory-and-Jasper-blue hall in a Naples palace that once belonged to the Bourbons, a family that ruled great swaths of Europe starting in the 19th century. An imposing crystal chandelier hangs from the ceiling, anchoring a room swirling with opulent details, curves and lines. But Ms. Höfer captures the space so completely that you feel as though you're suspended in the room—you can practically touch the painted, arched ceiling. The image, two meters tall and 2.7 meters wide, is powerful, befitting the dynasty that once lived there.

An exhibit like this—with Ms. Höfer in attendance for the May 24 opening—illustrates how much the Hong Kong art scene has changed. City galleries have long been able to attract big-name Asian artists, such as Ju Ming, but Ms. Höfer is an eminence grise in fine-art photography and a European superstar.

Ai Weiwei and Acconci Studio

Para/Site Art Space, Sheung Wan



Para/Site Art Space

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Ai Weiwei, left, and Vito Acconci

This is not your usual art exhibition. Let's call it an art "happening." What makes it worth mentioning are the artists involved: Chinese contemporary artist Ai Weiwei, of Beijing's Olympic "Bird's Nest" stadium fame, and Vito Acconci, an American architect and installation artist who pioneered performance and video art in the 1970s.

Separate from Art HK, the Sheung Wan District gallery Para/Site Art Space has been hosting a "conversation" between Mr. Ai, 52 (with the beard), and Mr. Acconci, 70, since April. On three mornings during art week, the public will get a chance to eavesdrop and even participate. The talks will continue through July 4.

Those three exchanges between the artists—about how they work, about Hong Kong, about cities—will begin at 9 a.m. on May 26, 27 and 28, with Mr. Ai talking via Skype from Beijing with Mr. Acconci at his Acconci Studio in Brooklyn. They will be aired live in the Sheung Wan gallery, which also will display 128 photos that document the time the pair spent together in Hong Kong in mid-April.

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