

Spotlight on homegrown talent

HK's art month brings together a rich mix of collectors, curators, art lovers and gallery owners, giving the city's own artists a chance to shine. **Liana Cafolla** reports.



City Rhapsody — Project Roseate by Angela Yuen at Art Central pays tribute to Hong Kong's toy manufacturing past.
PHOTOS BY ROY LIU / CHINA DAILY



Martin Lever's depiction of Hong Kong life in Asia Contemporary Art Show. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



A Livy Leung painting on display at Art Central. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Reni Haymond uses ball pens to make patterns.



Cheuk Wing-nam's audio installation at Art Central is a highly interactive piece of sonic art.

For Hong Kong artists, taking part in fairs like Art Central, Art Basel Hong Kong (ABHK) or Asia Contemporary Art Show (ACAS) means an opportunity to showcase works to bigger and more diverse audiences than usual. It's also an opportunity to experiment with something new, larger or show a different aspect of one's work.

The range of exposure is important for young artists, says Angela Li of Contemporary by Angela Li, which is exhibiting works by five young Hong Kong artists for the first time at Art Central. "It's really good (for the artists)," she says. "The fairs bring in Hong Kong international and regional collectors so it's a great opportunity to meet them all in one go."

"Each of them speaks to us in a particular way," she says of her Hong Kong artists, whose diversity is noteworthy. For example, Livy Leung's oil on canvas works portray her daily life and musings on events. Reni Hay-

mond uses different types of ball-point pens to create dense, cell-like patterns that seem to move in waves.

Interdisciplinary artist Cheuk Wing-nam, who works with sound and computer technology, says participation brings new challenges as well as a new experience. Her site-specific audio installation *AK7 SHOU3*, on show at Art Central, features a violin, cello, recording equipment, sensors and speakers. The sensors pick up vibrations from human movement nearby, setting off sounds, including Cantonese and Mandarin tones, when the installation is touched.

"I'm very happy to be one of the artists here. Because my work involves sounds, and in art fairs it's not very common to have sound art," says Cheuk. "For me it's like a challenge — how to put the sound in a silence."

It's her first time to show at Art Central and she hopes the fair will bring her opportunities to create

another large-scale installation elsewhere. "In previous years, I was here in the visitor's position, this time I do my work here," she says. "I think that's so cool. I want to keep it going."

Angela Yuen is showing a colorful, carousel-like piece entitled *City Rhapsody — Project Roseate*, which celebrates Hong Kong's history. The piece, with several small plastic toys attached to it, turns round in slow motion. A light source at the center casts colored shadows of the plastic animals, trees and geometry box tools, creating an impression of the Hong Kong skyline, projected onto the three surrounding walls — double-sided screens that allow for shadow play and encourage audience participation.

The piece is a tribute to Hong Kong's past as a major manufacturing center for children's toys in the 1950s and 60s, explains Yuen. "I think plastic toys are a good symbol of that era, and of that spirit as well," she explains. "I think it is the hard-

ship and the toughness that they had in the old days that nurtured the success of Hong Kong."

For tech-ink artist Victor Wong, who is also a visual effects supervisor for movies, the fair is an opportunity to introduce a new concept. His booth features a giant suspended paintbrush hanging over an LCD-tiled floor. Visitors are invited to give the giant brush a push to set it in motion and then use a small control panel to create a painting from a range of pre-set options, such as color and background. The new work is replicated and a magnified version projected on the floor and the result is printed. Every new tech art creator also gets to take a selfie with Wong and the paintbrush.

Ink has garnered less attention from younger generations, says the artist. "I want to use technology to arouse interest, so I try to combine some tech work and the ink world together," he adds. "I want to promote (the idea) that ink painting is

not that hard to do."

At ACAS, Hong Kong-based architecture and nature photographer Ziver Olmez is inspired by Hong Kong's landscapes, and plays with exposure and tones to create what he calls "inversions" that bear some similarity to film negatives. The 40-year Hong Kong resident Martin Lever is showing a series of strongly-colored impressionist paintings that pick out scenes of everyday life in Hong Kong. Both artists are among the 250 selected by ACAS.

"For these exhibitors, the show is an important fixture in their calendar. They enjoy the experience, and find success in selling their works and in building a collector base," says fair director Mark Saunderson.

Grotto Fine Arts focuses only on Hong Kong artists. At ABHK, it is showing a six-panel ink on paper work entitled *Way Down Deep* by the Hong Kong artist and water sports enthusiast Chan Kwan-lok — an underwater rendition of a diving

journey he took in Egypt. Chan graduated from the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) in 2015 and it's his third time to exhibit at ABHK.

"At Art Basel, we can meet a lot of overseas collectors so it's very good exposure for the artists, especially local Hong Kong artists," says gallery manager Wong Tsz-ching. "It's not easy to make such a huge work and display it in the gallery spaces," she adds.

Also showing here is Hung Fai, a CUHK 2013 graduate who uses traditional Chinese ink drawing techniques in his own way. In two ink on paper works, *Vessel I* and *Vessel II*, Hung has created a 3D version of his mother's reminiscences of making paper boats as a child.

Having exhibited at ABHK several times, Hung says the fair is important for exposure and also encouraging experimentation. "It's quite different from exhibitions in a gallery space," he says. "Artists will show their most important work at Art Basel."

On the wings of the Arctic tern



Ceiling Piece with Birds (1708) by Abraham Busschop, Dordrechts Museum, Netherlands.
PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Langdon-Pole tried following the flight path of the Arctic tern like Polynesian travelers from ancient times.



The world's largest observatories compound in Mauna Kea, Hawaii.

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Zac Langdon-Pole has been travelling the last four months, making 22 stopovers across four continents. From the summit of Mauna Kea in Hawaii — home of the world's largest observatories compound — to the Paris Catacombs, Langdon-Pole's trip has taken him to locations that are, sometimes quite literally, antipodes of each other. Before the 30-year-old New Zealand-born artist returns to his current base in Berlin, this week he is making a final stopover in Art Basel Hong Kong (ABHK).

A documentary and photographs taken on his extraordinary journey — which was guided, in part, by the flight path of migratory birds — are on show at ABHK. Langdon-Pole says one of the ideas informing his itinerant art project was to follow "the Arctic tern making its seasonal migration from the Northern Arctic to Antarctica as the Earth tilts between the Northern and Southern hemispheres".

The Arctic tern, which flies approximately 90,000 km during a single migratory cycle, is known to have guided the Polynesian sailors in ancient times. Interested in geographical readings that exist outside of the Western canon, Langdon-Pole decided to take a cue out of the book — and celestial maps — of the Polynesian travelers of yore.

His aim was to tease out the narratives of people and cultures that have remained in the interstices, or fell

through the cracks, in a globalized world where the norm is to join things up and become more like each other. Hence the project name "Sutures of the Sky", drawing attention to what lies beneath the seams of the different strands of humanity that tend to get arbitrarily stitched together in keeping with the exigencies of the dominant narrative.

"Sutures of the Sky" is Langdon-Pole's award-winning project, sponsored by BMW, the multinational automobile brand, as part of the "BMW Art Journey" initiative launched in partnership with Art Basel in 2015. Langdon-Pole won the award in 2018 on the basis of his proposal which sought to read the globalized present against a framework of cultural references that had been forgotten, or were less visible.

"When I first proposed to undertake these travels I was aware of how the constellations known in the so-called 'West' had through colonization become a kind of universal blueprint for identifying the stars," he says. "I wanted to unravel this universalizing tendency by tracing the historical gaps and relations



Zac Langdon-Pole won the BMW Art Journey award in 2018. A documentary and photos of his trip spanning four continents is on show at Art Basel Hong Kong.

between European maps of the stars and indigenous perspectives from the Pacific. While cartography of the Earth's surface can predicate politics of territory, resources and conquest, maps of the stars entail the structuring of time, navigation and the making of meaning through narration."

Among the photographs taken by Langdon-Pole during his journey is an image of Marshallese constellations, shot at the Alele Museum in Majuro. In it the stars are imagined as ethnic Marshallese women with their distinctive long top knots and elongated ear lobes — a far cry from the grand figures of Greek mythology associated with constellations in the Western imagination.

"When you look upon a night-sky of stars you are looking at a multitude of different time-scales simultaneously. How those disparate points of information get assembled into a totality is akin, to me, to how we inscribe information into stories and stories into history," says the artist, drawing attention to the way the dominant narrative is constructed and validated through repeated telling.

Unsurprisingly, there were a few spectacular high points on Langdon-Pole's discovery trail. Sunrise on the Mauna Kea summit illuminated "sutures" between the skies, water and land. "As the sun rose in the east, the shadow of the mountain was projected directly onto hazy pink of the opposite horizon. It looked like a whole other massive mountain rising out of the sea," says the artist.



Minutes from landing on the atoll of Majuro, Marshall Islands, Majuro.



Masterpiece Clock in British Museum, London.