

Asia Now ... and beyond: Paris Art Week 2017

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Asia Now, Paris (18–22 October 2017). Courtesy Ocula. Photo: Charles Roussel.

There was high drama at the third edition of *Asia Now* in Paris (18–22 October 2017), this year showcasing 30 galleries from Asia and the Western world. Not least because of the location where Europe's first boutique fair dedicated to contemporary Asian art is staged: the grand 19th-century Les Salons Hoche.

Screening at Choi & Lager was Kelvin Kyung Kun Park's single-channel video *Stairway to Heaven* (2016), which documents a gallery opening staged like a Korean soap opera. The performance followed two men and two women as they silently encountered one another in the white cube—it was filmed, edited, and projected onto a gallery wall in real-time. Named after a 2003 Korean television series (itself named after the Led Zeppelin song), the resulting video represents an effective distillation of the K-drama genre—here reduced to the pregnant tension that exists when archetypal bodies are caught inside a confined, stylised space, be it the white cube or the screen.



Kelvin Kyung Kun Park, *Stairway to Heaven* (2016). Single-channel video, 30 min. Edition 5 + AP. Courtesy the artist and Choi & Lager, Cologne.

Choi & Lager was one of the galleries included in Asia Now's Korean Platform, this year's geographic focus curated by Joanne Kim. (Last year it was Southeast Asia.) Other participating galleries included Gallery SoSo, presenting a cross-generational group of artists dealing with ideas of space, such as ink on paper drawings of overlapping colour blocks and a black, stainless steel sculpture from the 'Space-Less' series by Kim In Kyum, the first artist to represent South Korea at the Venice Biennale in 1995.



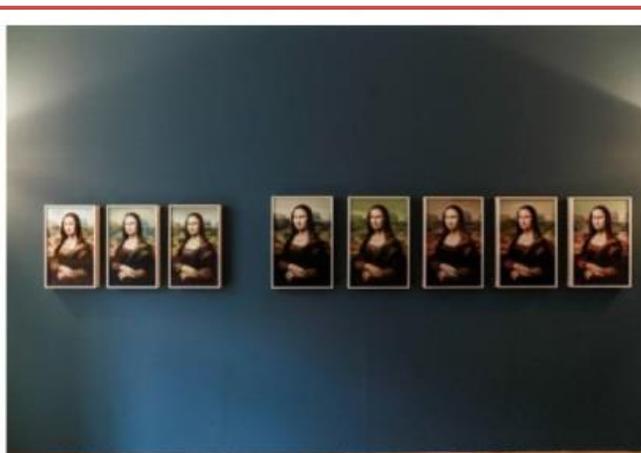
Kim In Kyum, works from the 'Space-Less' series. Installation view: Gallery SoSo, Asia Now, Paris (18–22 October 2017). Courtesy Gallery SoSo.

In another survey, Galerie Maria Lund showed illustrations and paintings that oscillate between abstraction and figuration by Min Jung-Yeon, monochrome canvas works depicting various anonymous interiors by Yoo Hye-Sook, and weird and wonderful glazed earthenware vessels and sculptures by Shoi, which take their cue from the natural world. At [Gallery Baton](#), three painters reinterpreted the monochrome, from the photorealistic oil on canvas renderings of bed sheets by Chung Chi Yung and Bin Woo Hyuk's wall studies, to Suzanne Song's acrylic and pumice on canvas geometric abstractions.



Installation view: Shoi, selection of glazed earthenware sculptures at Galerie Maria Lund, Asia Now, Paris (18–22 October 2017). Courtesy Galerie Maria Lund.

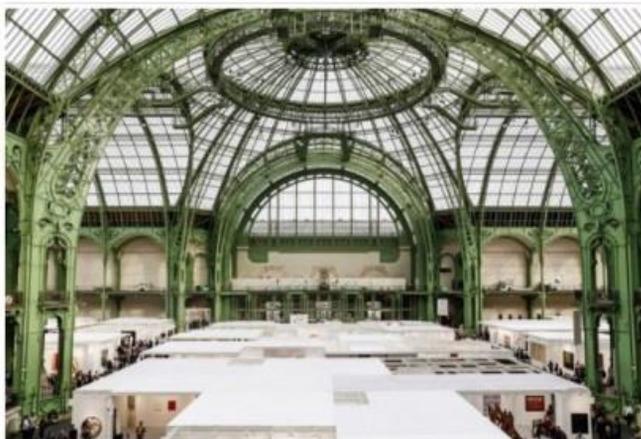
A number of special projects were incorporated into the Korean Platform. (Other projects sitting outside the region included *Bloo.Ming*, a showcase of contemporary Chinese design by Studio MVW courtesy of Christie's, the first solo exhibition of works in France by Filipino painter Marina Cruz, courtesy of Arndt Art Agency, and Zeto Art's excellent—and affordable—selection of works by young Chinese artists working in France, China and Japan, such as Yang Li, Qin Han, and Xiaoyun Li.) The 2018 curatorial team of Busan Biennale presented a solo focus on performance artist Jooyoung Kim, while [Kukje Gallery](#) staged *Mona Lisa and the others from the North*, a 2015 project by [Kyungah Ham](#) that shows various embroidered reproductions of the Mona Lisa made in North Korea alongside slow-motion video portraits of—and interviews with—North Korean defectors.



Kyungah Ham, *Mono Lisa and the others from the North* (2015). Installation view; Kukje Gallery, Asia Now, Paris (18–22 October 2017). Courtesy Ocula. Photo: Charles Roussel.

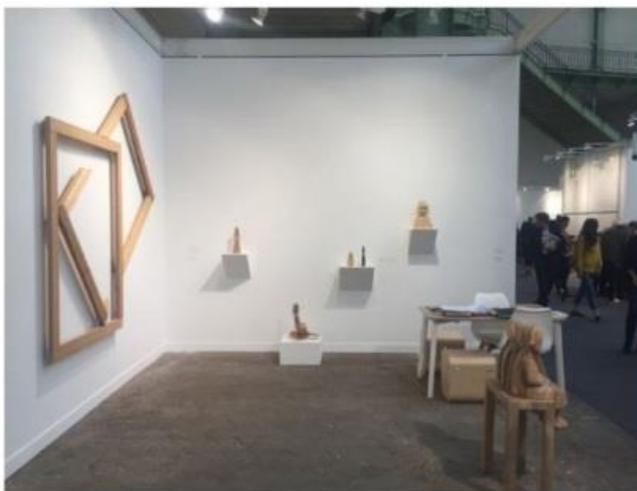
Kukje's Asia Now installation complemented the gallery's participation at [FIAC](#) (19–22 October 2017) alongside the gallery's New York affiliate [Tina Kim Gallery](#), where works by Gimhongsok, Ghada Amer, [Haegue Yang](#), Jean-Michel Othoniel and Michael Joo, among others, were on view.

Kukje / Tina Kim represented one of 17 booths featuring galleries either based in Asia or with outposts thereat FIAC this year, out of the 193 galleries participating from 29 countries, mostly from Europe and North America. (18 if you count the space [David Zwirner](#) is slated to open in [Hong Kong](#) in January 2018.) These included Gallery Hyundai, [Simon Lee](#), [SCAI The Bathhouse](#) and [White Cube](#), with [STPI](#)'s debut in the Edition sector representing the first Southeast Asian platform to participate in the 44-year-old fair. (A marked improvement from 2011, when seven booths out of 168 participating galleries were Asian-based or with Asian locations, from [Chemould Prescott Road](#) and Project 88 in Mumbai, to [ShanghART](#).)



FIAC, Paris (19–22 October 2017). Courtesy Ocula. Photo: Charles Roussel.

In FIAC's Modern and Contemporary art galleries sector, highlights included [Edouard Malingue](#) showing Su-Mei Tse, João Vasco Paiva, and Chou Yu-Cheng; Vitamin Creative Space's impressive solo presentation of ink on silk paintings by Yuan Jai; and Tomio Koyama Gallery's stunning exhibition of works by Kishio Suga, Makoto Saito, Rieko Otake, and Mika Ninagawa.



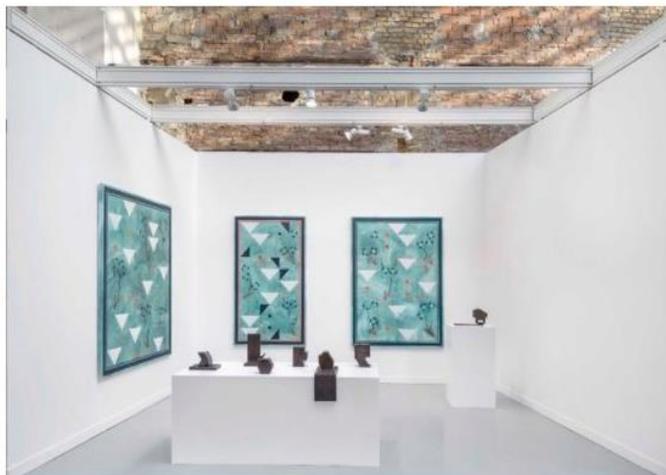
Installation view: Tomio Koyama Gallery, FIAC, Paris (19–22 October 2017). Courtesy Ocula.

Experimenter offered a solo focus on Ayesha Sultana at the Lafayette sector, dedicated to ten emerging galleries, where other standout booths included Geneva's Truth and Consequences' pairing of inkjet mounted on aluminium prints of funerary urns by Kim Seob Boninsegni (part of the ongoing 'Perfect Bodies' series) and paintings by Seyoung Yoon, as well as Cairo-based Gypsum Gallery's solo booth showing Basim Magdy's 2014 Art in General commission, *The Everyday*



Installation view: Edouard Malingue Gallery, FIAC, Paris (19–22 October 2017). Courtesy Ocula. Photo: Charles Rousset.

The relatively small number of Asian galleries at FIAC was compensated by the presence of artists from the region in various international booths. At Galerie Nathalie Obadia, pieces by Rina Banerjee, Wang Keping, Shahpour Pouyan and Sarkis mingled with works by Laure Prouvost and Mickalene Thomas, among others, while Sudarshan Shetty and Waqas Khan were on view at Galerie Krinzinger alongside artists including Martha Jungwirth and Meret Oppenheim. In other sightings, Dubai's Green Art Gallery showed paintings by Kamrooz Aram and cast-iron sculptures by Seher Shah, both inspired by architectural forms; Shane Campbell Gallery presented rich red stoneware vases by Shio Kusaka alongside large works on paper by Tony Lewis; works from the 1970s by Tetsumi Kudo were seen at Galerie 1900-2000 and Galerie Natalie Seroussi; and [Lee Ufan](#) was spotted at Sèvres and Pace Gallery, where Raqib Shaw's large painted bronze sculpture *Moon Howlers* (2009–2013) proved a showstopper.



Installation view: Green Art Gallery, FIAC, Paris (19–22 October 2017). Courtesy Green Art Gallery.

But it was Takashi Murakami's *Flame of Desire-Gold* (2013–15)—a giant Carbon fibre, urethane paint, gold leaf, and Corian base sculpture of a skull wrapped in a flurry of flames—that represented FIAC 2017's most show-stopping (read: most instagrammable) artwork. On view at [Galerie Perrotin](#), the work stretched up towards the dramatic ceiling of the ornate Grand Palais, where FIAC is staged, with the largest glass roof in Europe, built for the Universal Exposition in 1900.



Installation view: Galerie Perrotin, FIAC, Paris (19–22 October 2017). Courtesy Ocula. Photo: Charles Roussel.

Offering a contrast to the Grand Palais, which frames FIAC's expansive focus on both modern and contemporary art, was the very contemporary Paris Internationale (18–22 October 2017). This year the fair (founded in 2015) was staged for the first time in the former premises of *Libération* (a newspaper founded by Jean-Paul Sartre in 1973), which was later converted into a multi-storey carpark. With 55 galleries and 8 project spaces from 17 countries, highlights included Beirut-based Marfa' Projects' double presentation of paintings by Tamara Al-Samerraei and sculptural pieces by Stéphanie Saadé; the pairing of ceramic busts by Francesco Barocco with oil on canvas paintings by Salvo at Norma Magione; Bodega's fantastic group of works by Sam Lipp, Orion Martin, Alexandra Noel, Em Rooney, and Hayley Silverman; and an installation of works by Pepo Salazar at Paris-based Galerie Joseph Tang.



Installation view: Bodega, Paris Internationale, Paris (18–22 October 2017). Courtesy Paris Internationale.

Asian-based galleries consisted of Aoyama | Meguro, showing a series of black and white photographs documenting the underground scene of 1960s to 1970s Japan by Mitsutoshi Hanaga in collaboration with Gallery Kochuten, and [Shanghai's](#) Antenna Space, presenting a dynamic assemblage of pieces by Allison Katz, Nancy Lupo, Yu Honglei, and Zhou Siwei.



Installation view: Antenna Space, Paris Internationale, Paris (18–22 October 2017). Courtesy Paris Internationale.

Elsewhere, ceramics by Candice Lin at Ghebaly Gallery were perfectly grouped with, among other works, paintings by Lila de Magalhaes and sculptures by Kelly Akashi; drawings by Evelyn Taocheng Wang complemented an installation of new pieces by Steve Bishop at Carlos/Ishikawa; an LED light screen by Ei Arakawa was shown alongside Nicolás Guagnini's *Twelve Rules for a New Academy* (2017), 12 vitrified glazed ceramic heads each resting on a copy of *Donald Judd: Writings* at Galerie Max Mayer; and two 1980 acrylic on board portraits (one of Rita Hayworth, the other of Danielle Darrieux) by Harumi Yamaguchi stood out at Project Native Informant.



Installation view. Ghebaly Gallery, Paris Internationale, Paris (18–22 October 2017). Courtesy Paris Internationale.

At Union Pacific, X-rated, zoophilic stoneware vessels by Urara Tsuchiya were on display with paintings by Ulala Imai, and quilted textile works that reference a cross-cultural identity between East and West (Korea, Canada, and the UK, to be exact)—including a giant fan (*Asian Gucci*, 2016)—by Zadie Xa. Discussing their booth, directors Grace Schofield and Nigel Dunkley talked about the gallery's programme in London, which tries to avoid being 'self-referential' (read: UK-centric) in favour of a positive kind of cultural exchange. (This spirit of international give-and-take was reflected not only in who galleries show, but in how things sold; apparently works at Union Pacific's booth went to collectors in France, the UK, Switzerland, and Turkey, while mother's tankstation limited, showing Maggie Madden, Mairead O'hEocha, Matt Sheridan Smith, Sam Anderson, Sebastian Lloyd Rees, sold exclusively to collectors from the East.)



Zadie Xa, *Asian Gucci* (2016). Hand stitched and machine sewn leather and fabric on wood. 203 × 356 cm. Installation view. Union Pacific, Paris Internationale, Paris (18–22 October 2017). Courtesy Union Pacific.

Still, centric perspectives seem unavoidable in a city like Paris, where FIAC appears more interested in diversifying the floor with American galleries, if one *New York Times* report is anything to go by. ('The overall dealer makeup is approximately a quarter French and two-thirds European,' notes the article, with FIAC director Jennifer Flay noting: 'it's getting more American every year'.) But issues surrounding representation are not simply due to reasons associated with the decolonial struggle. The cost to participate in an art fair in Europe for galleries

located outside the continent might also explain the lack of presence for some regions—a problem Amina Diab speculated on in her [Ocula report about 1:54 in London](#). This brings to focus the inherent issues with how the term 'international' is being used by art fairs to describe their floors; an issue of representation that also extends to the limited space given to younger galleries and their artists at premier fairs, with the Lafayette sector only offering ten subsidised slots in FIAC's hallowed (and expensive) hall.



Installation view: *Bloom* at Asia Now, Paris (18–22 October 2017). Courtesy Ocula. Photo: Charles Roussel.

Thus, it is understandable why Paris Internationale and Asia Now both launched in 2015. The former, a not-for-profit initiative founded by five emerging galleries based in Paris in response to the lack of opportunities for younger galleries to promote their programmes and their artists in the art fair circuit, aims to develop 'an appropriate model for fostering new advanced initiatives in contemporary art'. The latter seeks to break open preconceived notions of Asian art, often tainted by 'fantasy and Western projections' and defined by a 'closed domain of media-propagated names and stereotypes', as co-founder [Alexandra Fain](#) explained in a recent interview with *Forbes*.

In a short period of time, both platforms are living up to their intentions, with Asia Now offering 'a real-time picture of a rich, active and constantly-changing Asian scene', where the landscape of Asia itself is expanded. (In a similar way that 1:54 in London offers a wider view of the world in tandem with Frieze London and Frieze Masters.) In 2017, strong presentations came from Vanguard Gallery (with a focus on Tang Chao); Chi-Wen Gallery (showing 2014 single-channel video, *Sonnet 27*, by Jawshing Arthur Liou); Richard Koh Fine Art (with Anne Samat, Hasanul Isyraf Idris, Haffendi Anuar and Yeoh Choo Kuan); and the The Drawing Room (featuring Isabel & Alfredo Aquilizan, Gaston Damag, Louie Talents, Manuel Ocampo, Issay Rodriguez, and Robert Gutierrez).



Installation view: Anne Samat and Haffendi Anuar at Richard Koh Fine Art, Asia Now, Paris (18–22 October 2017). Courtesy Richard Koh Fine Art.

But there is more work to be done. Even with Parisian institutions such as Pompidou staging exhibitions like *Memories of the Futures—Indian Modernities* (18 October 2017–9 February 2018), featuring Goutam Ghosh, Gauri Gill, Sosa Joseph, K Benitha Perciyal, Ram Rahman, Seher Shah, and Pablo Bartholomew, and a solo show dedicated to pioneer of video art, artistic performance and installation art in India, Nalini Malani (10 October 2017–8 January 2018). As with other regions, there remains a need to develop knowledge of both contemporary and modern art from Asia beyond the territory, not to mention a market for it. Just as there is a need to create opportunities for emerging galleries to show, promote and sell their artists' work (no matter where they come from). In Paris, these needs appear to be driving an expansion of the frame beyond FIAC's floor. An expansion that is only just getting started.-[O]