

Thai contemporary art prospers among Asia's best in Hong Kong

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THE NATION

THAI contemporary art has been sharing the spotlight at Art Basel Hong Kong, Asia's biggest art gathering, though the focus is diffused among announcements of upcoming events in Bangkok and South Korea and the individual artists represented at the fair.

With Art Basel ending today, the Thais are offering attendees much more to look forward to.

Apinan Poshyananda, artistic director of the Bt150-million Bangkok International Art Biennale kicking off in October, was in Hong Kong to unveil the full roster of 75 artists from 33 countries who will be participating.

They include Marina Abramovic, Yayoi Kusama, Huang Yong Ping, Yoshitomo Nara and Fiona Hall, and pieces by two deceased artists, American Jean-Michel Basquiat and Thai Montien Boonma, will be displayed.

Professor Dr Apinan said the theme

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of the debut Bangkok event continuing into February 2019 would be "Beyond Bliss", and 50 foreign artists and 35 Thais would create new works accordingly.

"We live in a state of fear, protest and delusion," he said, "and we have invited these artists to comment on this lack of bliss. Bliss is a temporary and ephemeral experience, and our artists will seek to interpret different variants and intensities."

Apinan said Huang Yong Ping would create new works at Wat Pho, and Michael Elmgreen and Ingar Dragset would construct a giant swimming pool in front of the East Asiatic Building.

Kusama will be presenting luminous pumpkins and Heri Dono will release flying angels over the Chao Phraya River. Nara will set a bronze sculpture in Lumpini Park and Choi Jeong Hwa will have a massive plastic installation at the



Thai artist Korakrit Arunanondchai has been drawing crowds with "History in a room filled with people with funny names 4 (with stage for extinction) 2018", his latest film in an ongoing series. Arty.net listed his corner of Art Basel Hong Kong as one of the top 10 booths to visit.

Bangkok Art and Culture Centre.

Wat Arun will host a video installation by Sakarin Krub-On and a "sacred enclosure" designed by Sanitas Praditassnee.

Elsewhere at Art Basel, Gridthiya

there will be seven separate exhibitions assembled by 11 curators.

Dr Gridthiya, who is artistic director of the Jim Thompson Art Centre in Bangkok, will present a show exploring beliefs that have emerged from border conflicts and the patterns of mass migration within Southeast Asia and beyond since the colonial era.

Five of the 20 artists she's selected for her show are Thai – Apichatpong Weerasethakul, Sutthirat Supaparinya, Ina Phuyuthanon, Nipan Oranniwesna and Piyarat Piyapongwiwat.

"I'm interested in my generation's time period, those of us who grew up during the Cold War, at the beginning of globalisation," she said. "It was a turning point in history, dividing the world into the free world and the communist world, and this was the socio-political context that shaped our generation."

Asian collectors in general seem keen on Thai contemporary art. It was given the spotlight at Singapore Art Stage in January and there was a lot of chatter

about it at Art Basel. "The market for Thai art is growing fast," said Lorenzo Rudolf, who directs Art Stage in Singapore and Jakarta. "Moreover, the infrastructure of Thailand's art scene is also growing, with new private museums, more seriously managed art galleries opening, private companies investing and art advisors appearing."

Four globally renowned Thais are among the 5,000-plus artists from around the world represented at Art Basel – established conceptual artists Rirkrit Tiravanija, Araya Rasdjarmrearnsook and Pinaree Sanpitak and fast-emerging talent Korakrit Arunanondchai – all under the auspices of overseas galleries.

Korakrit, represented by London's Carlos/Ishikawa Gallery, has been drawing crowds with "History in a room filled with people with funny names 4 (with stage for extinction) 2018", his latest film in an ongoing series. Arty.net listed his corner of the fair one of top 10 booths to visit.

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