

Taipei Dangtai A Nice Discovery – Virginie Puertolas-Syn

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Taipei Dangtai turned out to be a pleasant surprise when I visited mid of January.

I had missed the first edition in 2019, so I made sure I attended the 2nd edition in 2020. Taking place right before the Art Basel Hong Kong drama this year and after the Art Stage Singapore fiasco last year, Taipei is proving it can definitely rival the other two regional centres, with its liberal and diverse culture, and its multiple exposures to mainland China, Japan and the USA. Taiwan has a vibrant art scene, free from censorship, with knowledgeable and sophisticated collectors and one of the most important biennales in Asia.

Puertolas-Syn, Virginie. “Taipei Dangtai A Nice Discovery.” *Artlyst*, 5 Feb. 2020, www.artlyst.com/features/taipei-dangtai-nice-discovery-virginie-puertolas-syn/.

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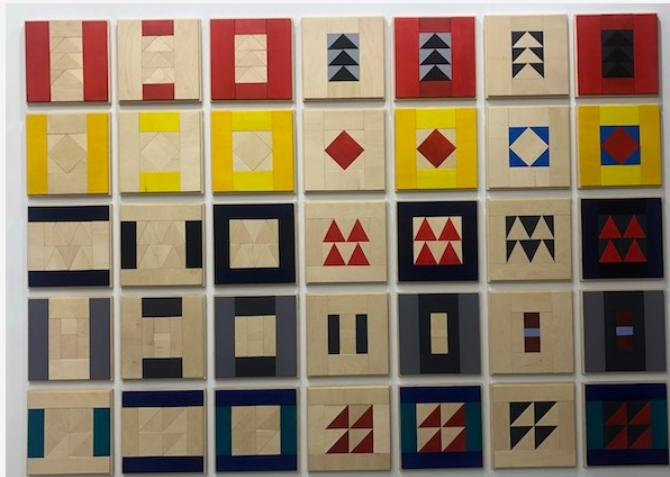
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Magnus Renfrew, who is at the helm of Taipei Dangtai, has a proven track record as the former Director of both Art Hong Kong and Art Basel Hong Kong. He is highly respected, so no wonder that UBS is the lead sponsor of the fair. Far from being a gigantic Art fair, Taipei Dangtai with 99 international galleries is a medium-sized regional fair with collectors from Indonesia, Korea, Japan, Hong Kong and Singapore coming to visit.

Throughout the four days, the fair was well attended and there was a vibrant energy in the alleys, and not just on the VIP day. I enjoyed the talks programme as well: the two mega dealers, Brett Gorvy and Tina Keng gave insightful talks about their careers while Bernard Frize shared on his artistic process.

Pace had a very elegant booth with noticeable sculptures from Yoshitomo Nara. I was particularly drawn towards Prabhavathi Meppayil's work. Her subtle craft and process-based art combine Indian culture and Minimalist and Postminimalist concepts. (Top Photo)

Chambers Fine Art, Beijing and New York, was one of my favourite booths with a concise and impactful presentation of Ai Wei Wei's work, including *Law of the Journey* (2017). The monumental representation of a populated raft in black rubber is a reference to the Mediterranean migrant crisis. It is one of the art projects that the artist conceived while visiting refugee camps on the Greek island of Lesbos.



Gallery Sabrina Amrani had a beautiful body of work from the Egyptian artist Chant Avedissian



Tu Hongtao on Levy Gorvy booth

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Levy Gorvy presented a solo exhibition of Pat Steir's new body of work "Taipei series". The new colourful work is the latest development in her celebrated Waterfalls series. In a collateral event, Levy Gorvy presented the vast, striking and mesmerising abstract landscapes of Chinese painter Tu Hongtao. They were both lyrical and profoundly contemporary, yet rooted in Chinese pictorial tradition.

I was pleased to see new works from Su Xiao Bai exhibited at Sean Scully gallery. The Shanghai artist who is already very well-established in Taiwan thanks to his historical gallery Tina Keng, now has a well-deserved American exposure.

Gallery Sabrina Amrani had a beautiful body of work from the Egyptian artist Chant Avedissian. The simple abstract geometric composition synthesises the colours, architecture and geometric patterns that are repeated all along the Silk Route. The artist's aesthetic research through geometric and colour patterns create musicality in the work.

At Albertz Benda, I discovered the street artist Timothy Curtis. A self-taught New York-based artist, he was exhibited in 2017 at Kaikai Kiki's Hidari Zingaro Gallery in Tokyo curated by Takashi Murakami. His signature style is recognisable with the playful repetitious faces.

Anne Mosseri-Marlio Gallery had a beautiful exhibition of Susan Hefuna's minimalist yet poetic and sensual multiple-layer drawings. Her unique and abstract artistic language has references to architecture and cityscapes.

One of the highlights of my Taiwanese stay was the performance of Taiwanese artist Yahon Chang and his calligraphic painting. Using large ink brushes, Yahon Chang creates powerful strokes on Chinese paper. He combines classical Chinese techniques and aesthetics of painting and calligraphy with the influence of Western expressionism. The core principle of his expressive calligraphic paintings is the hardness with the softness of Tai Chi martial art.



Timothy Curtis on Albertz Benda booth Taipei Dangtai

Last but not least, on my last day in Taipei, I went to visit the National palace museum, which houses the world's most extensive collection of priceless Chinese art treasures. The museum's over 600,000 art objects were part of the Chinese imperial collection.

I left Taipei full of enthusiasm for the city, its people and the art scene. In the light of the recent events in Asia, it is more likely that Taiwan and the Taipei art fair will play an increasing role in the regional art landscape.

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