

**The Art Market Collecting****Business as usual for Sotheby's auctions in Hong Kong**

Plus: Frieze's augmented realities; dismal figures for female artists; how Albert Oehlen is testing painting's limits



'Nude' (1965) by Sanyu, for sale at Sotheby's Hong Kong

Melanie Gerlis YESTERDAY

Pro-democracy protests are taking their toll on Hong Kong's economy, with consumer spending down and the cancellation of events including the annual WTA Hong Kong Open tennis tournament, which was due to start on October 5. Kevin Ching, chief executive of Sotheby's Asia, insists it is still "business as usual" for the five-day series of sales that begin in the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre on October 3-4. He notes that historically, "economic and political conditions can be quite different from what happens in the art market". He adds that he has been encouraged by "pan-Asian" interest ahead of the auctions. Ching still expects people to come to the salerooms, but admits the auction house has an additional "20 to 30" phone lines ready, and that more online bids are expected than usual.

Several consignments were finalised during the city's summer of high disruption, Ching says, including the last nude painted by the Chinese-French artist Sanyu, which comes to auction for the first time since it was made in 1965, and with a low estimate of HK\$150m (\$19m, October 5). Sotheby's also offers a rare enamelled glass vase from the early Qing Dynasty (1736-95) that sold in 2000 for HK\$24.2m (\$3.1m) and now comes with a low estimate of HK\$200m (\$25m, October 8).

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**There are a couple** of mind-bending late entries to the Frieze fairs that open in Regent's Park in London this week. Viewable at a few points in the sculpture park is the fair's first augmented reality work ("No shipping," quips Frieze director Victoria Siddall). By downloading the Acute Art app and scanning signposts, visitors can see Koo Jeong A's "density" (2019), which resembles a large block of ice hovering among the trees.



AR in action with Koo Jeong A's 'density' (2019) © Acute Art

Inside the tent, the Frieze Live performance programme revives Oskar Schlemmer's "Bauhaustänze" or "Bauhaus Dances" (1925-29). The experimental multimedia artist composed the music, directed the dance and designed the costumes as part of the Stage Workshop that he ran for students at the Bauhaus Schools, founded 100 years ago this year. Schlemmer's grandson, C Raman Schlemmer, will direct proceedings at Frieze, where we are told that three dancers will "mathematically explore space, form and materials against a black gridded stage". I am told by gallerist Thaddaeus Ropac, who is co-producing the performances, that the pieces are not for sale. He does, however, have some very buyable Schlemmer works on show at his London gallery (until December 20).

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**It may seem crazy** to launch another art fair in London but Nazy Vassegh, an art adviser who was chief executive of the Masterpiece fair between 2013 and 2017, may have hit on a winning idea. She plans to open Eye of the Collector in a venue that she can't yet disclose but describes as "a historic building and a grand domestic setting". Her fair, which she is funding herself, will open on May 13, to coincide with Photo London and the Draw Art Fair. The point, she says, is to show works of art and design, across all periods, in a space "that could be someone's home". "You don't have to walk through aisles, booths or a converted warehouse all day to find interesting pieces," Vassegh says. Food for thought this week.

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**Some more sobering (depressing) statistics** about the share of female artists at auction came courtesy of In Other Words and Artnet News this month. Looking at the \$196.6bn spent on all art at auction between January 2008 and May 2019, their study found that just 2 per cent (\$4bn) was spent on art made by women. Of this, £1.6bn (40.7 per cent) came from only five artists: Yayoi Kusama (\$552.9m), Joan Mitchell (\$417.4m), Louise Bourgeois (\$258.5), Georgia O'Keeffe (\$227.2) and Agnes Martin (\$172m). For context, the report notes that work by Pablo Picasso alone generated \$4.8bn at auction over the same period.

"It's a cyclical thing that is not changing. It's like we're crabs: if one or two of us get out of the bucket, it feels so exciting. But what are we cheering? We should be protesting!" says artist Mickalene Thomas in the report. Guerrilla Girl Frida Kahlo offers an alternative perspective: "We're more interested in having our posters on every college dorm wall than hanging over some collector's white sofa."

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**The art market is** going mad for the German artist Albert Oehlen who, not entirely coincidentally, has a solo exhibition that opens at London's Serpentine Galleries on Wednesday, sponsored by Sotheby's. Other supporters include Gagosian and Max Hetzler galleries and art dealer Per Skarstedt.



Albert Oehlen's 'Sachen aus Glas' (2002) © Archive Galerie Max Hetzler

Oehlen (b1954) is a complicated artist who, says Sarah Horner, director at Max Hetzler, “tested painting and its layers to its limits”. Her London gallery has just opened the first part of an exhibition of Oehlen’s early “Spiegelbilder”, or Mirror Paintings (1982-90) (until November 16). Further works from this series form the second part of the show, at Nahmad Contemporary in New York, from November 5. Also in New York, Skarstedt has a show of Oehlen’s so-called “Fn” (short for footnote) series of 1990 (until November 2), while in Hong Kong, Gagosian hosts new paintings by the artist in his first Asian exhibition (until October 26). A 2005 installation by Oehlen is also the starting point for Lévy Gorvy’s three-artist show in London this week (October 2-December 7).

Oehlen’s work still trades at a discount compared with some of his German counterparts. His auction record was smashed in June when Skarstedt bought his “Self-portrait with Empty Hands” (1998), a tribute to his friend Martin Kippenberger (1953-97), for £5.3m (£6.2m with fees). Kippenberger’s auction record stands at \$22.6m.

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