

ART SG 2023 Report — Art & Market

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Is Singapore the next art world destination?

By A&M



Visitors at the preview and vernissage of ART SG, 2023. Image courtesy of ART SG.

ART SG closed on 15 January 2023 after its four-day run, welcoming 42,706 visitors from the region and beyond. Presented over two floors at Marina Bay Sands Expo & Convention Centre in Singapore, the first edition featured 164 galleries from 35 countries, connecting Southeast Asia to the wider art world.



Installation view of Gajah Gallery's booth at Art SG, 2023. Image courtesy of Gajah Gallery.

As the first major international event in the region since the onset of the pandemic, the mood ahead of ART SG's opening was of measured anticipation. The stakes were high for the fair's inaugural edition, having faced multiple postponements since its initial announcement in 2019. Nevertheless, the list of exhibitors was strong. Blue-chip names such as David Zwirner, Gagosian and Pace were present and reported steady sales. Reputable international galleries such as P.P.O.W. and Goodman Gallery brought exceptional works by Martin Wong and William Kentridge respectively.

For Gajah Gallery, which has spaces in Singapore and Jakarta, the fair exceeded their expectations in many ways. "Thanks to ART SG's thoughtful programming, they highlighted the dynamic and vibrant artistic connections within the region, successfully showing the international stage the best we have to offer," comments Joseph Kong, Sales Manager. He added that it "matched the quality, professionalism, and novelty of major global fairs". Gajah Gallery sold works by both established names such as I Gusti Ayu Kadek Murniasih and [Han Sai Por](#), as well as younger artists in their roster, including Rudi Mantofani, Yunizar and Erizal As.



Installation view of Yavuz Gallery's booth at Art SG, 2023. Image courtesy of Yavuz Gallery.



Installation view of STPI's booth at Art SG, 2023. Image courtesy of STPI – Creative Workshop & Gallery, Singapore.

For visitors on the ground, the energy on opening day was palpable. Yavuz Gallery, which has a presence in both Singapore and Sydney, reported strong sales during the VIP preview, placing works by Alvin Ong, Kawayan De Guia, Isabel & Alfredo Aquilizan,

and Abdul Abdullah amongst others, in private collections. Large-scale works by Pinaree Sanpitak were also acquired by Southeast Asian institutions.

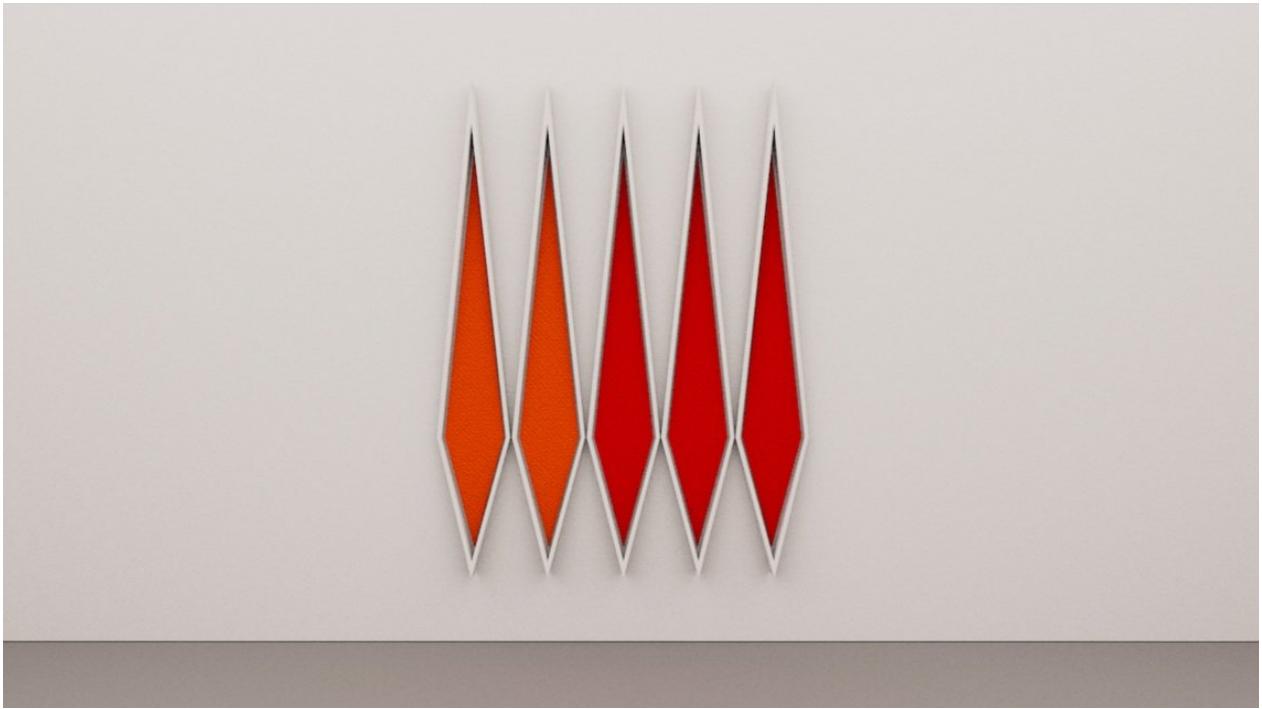
Similarly, STPI Gallery, based in Singapore, reported robust sales for the Thai artist's works. Director Rita Targui attributes the interest partly to Sanpitak's concurrent Valentino and Soho House collaboration at the Warehouse Hotel. The other artists, Han Sai Por, Genevieve Chua, Prabhavathi Meppayil, and Haegue Yang, also had works that were sold or reserved.

All three galleries expressed confidence in ART SG's position on the international art fair circuit. "Yavuz looks forward to continuing its journey with ART SG as it solidifies Singapore as a global art destination, expecting the next edition to be bigger and more diverse," remarks Caryn Quek, Director of Yavuz Gallery Singapore. Speaking about STPI Gallery's commitment to the next edition of ART SG, Targui says, "Given the wide spectrum of benefits offered in terms of sales, networking, brand profiling as well as opportunities for critical dialogue on art, it would be a shame not to."



Sinta Tantra, 'New Lovers Now', 2022, tempera and 24 ct gold leaf on linen, 120 x 100cm. Image courtesy of the artist and Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery.

Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery was quick to confirm their return to ART SG in 2024 too. “We are already thinking about which artist we will bring for next year,” says Founder Kristin Hjellegjerde. “We had great sales and fruitful conversations for the future.” The gallery sold 10 out of 13 paintings by Sinta Tantra they had on view and in the backroom. They are also discussing future commissions by the artist for private collectors and institutions.



Hu Qiren, 'Memories (Red & White)', 2022, pigment on canvas in artist frame, 182.5 x 242 x 14cm.
Image courtesy of the artist and Richard Koh Fine Art.

As the dust settles after ART SG 2023's closing, exhibitors are taking time to debrief before planning their next move. For Richard Koh Fine Art (RKFA), the fair has been an interesting experience with the emergence of new collecting trends. Founder Richard Koh commented that ART SG should capitalise on these emerging buying patterns for future editions. RKFA placed Hu Qiren's 'Memories (Red & White)', Faris Nakamura's 'Emanation of Desire', and Natee Utarit's 'Ruin of the Four Noble Truth' and 'Torso' to regional private museums and corporate collections.

Beyond its programming and exhibitor line-up, other suggestions to improve visitor experience have also surfaced amidst conversations. These include conducting more VIP tours to connect international galleries with regional collectors. Of course, the long-term viability of ART SG will rely on more than hospitality. It ultimately hinges upon a mutually beneficial relationship among international exhibitors and regional partners. Those who are able to nurture a spirit of collegiality and collaboration will make the most out of such opportunities.