

Collectors snap up works at Swiss fair Art Basel while Asian artists, including Hong Kong's Samson Young feature

Event showcasing 286 galleries has bucked pessimistic predictions caused by gloomy economic outlook

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Art lovers from the region have enjoyed a shopping spree at the world's largest art fair in Switzerland this week, despite the gloomy economic forecast, with several multimillion dollar sales to Asian collectors.

Some of the mainland's best known collectors, such as founders of Shanghai's Long Museum Liu Yiqian and Wang Wei, were spotted at Art Basel, while Asian artists, including Samson Young from Hong Kong, had a prominent presence at the Swiss fair.

Jiangnan Wang, an art consultant based in Berlin, said many mainland collectors' had a good taste in art and many Western galleries had cultivated a strong relationship with them, drawing them to art fairs outside of Asia.

"Traditional collectors such as Liu will continue to buy the most expensive blue-chip works. But the younger ones are looking at more diverse and experimental pieces," Wang said.

Western galleries – such as Sprüth Magers, which sold Frank Stella's *Olyka Ito* to a private Asian collection for US\$1.1 million – said they did good business with clients from Asia.

New York-based gallery David Zwirner, which has been showing at Art Basel in Hong Kong and will open a branch in the city next year, also sold a number of works to collectors in Hong Kong, Shanghai and Beijing.

The owner of Galerie nächst St. Stephan in Vienna, Rosemarie Schwarzwaldner, said "a major sale" had been made to a Hong Kong collector.

Schwarzwaldner said showing at the fair in Hong Kong had brought Asian collectors to Europe and helped connect them with young Asian artists.

Hong Kong artist Young's *Canon* was shown at the fair's Unlimited section – a platform for monumental artworks aimed at museums or institutional collections. Young also performed during the fair – dressed as a Hong Kong policeman, he stood behind a sound cannon and whistled bird songs on an elevated platform.