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Asian Contemporary Art Week: Celebration of Asian artists gains fervor in light of the recent events in Japan



Ian Erickson-Kery for Spectator

By [GEETIKA RUDRA](#)
March 24, 2011, 8:11pm

With news from Asia dominating headlines on a daily basis, Asian Contemporary Art Week is flourishing in New York City. From March 21 to 31, galleries, museums, and talks all around the city showcase contemporary Asian artists. Organized by the Asian Contemporary Art Consortium, the event gives a platform to artists at the forefront of the modern Asian art movement, which seeks to blend old traditions with Western influences to create pieces that reflect the struggle of preserving and protecting culture in the face of diffusion.

To increase active dialogue between Asia and the West, numerous talks were held in a series called "Dialogues in Asian Contemporary Art." It featured 25 renowned artists from the United States and Asia who sought to increase awareness of artistic communities in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Burma, China, India, Indonesia, Iran, Japan, Kazakhstan, and Pakistan. Performance art played an important role in much of the discussion. Korean artist Atta Kim created a 1300-pound, five-and-a-half-foot-tall ice sculpture of Buddha to be placed in the lobby of the Rubin Museum from March 25 through 27. The sculpture will be allowed to melt, symbolizing the growing fusion of Asian and Western cultures.

The most popular feature of Asian Contemporary Art Week is the Thursday night gallery openings of rising Asian artists. One of the more interesting exhibits that opened on March 24 showcased the work of Indonesian artist Agus Suwage whose exhibit, "The End is Just Beginning is the End," illustrates themes of death, homosexuality, and sex that are taboo in Indonesian society. Displayed at the Tyler Rollins Fine Art gallery in Chelsea, this exhibit offered a fascinating example of the modernization and liberalization of Indonesian culture. What makes Suwage's exhibit worth viewing, apart from its historical and social implications, is the fact that all the exhibited paintings are done on sheets of metallic zinc—a rare and difficult artistic feat that is commendable for the sheer skill it requires to successfully execute.

Another highlight was Chelsea's Chamber of Fine Art's exhibit, which showcases the paintings of Xiaoze Xie. This exhibit is perhaps one of the most political of the exhibitions that make up Asian Contemporary Art Week. Xie painted stacks of books that included modern Chinese literature and historical government propagandist writing. This juxtaposition speaks volumes about the current social and political upheavals affecting China and other parts of the continent today. Some of Xie's more

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riveting pieces depict the destruction and burning of Chinese literature, serving as a strong reminder of the current censorship laws that regulate culture in Chinese society.

Events still to come include a reception on Sunday, March 27 hosted by the Indo-American Arts Council at the Queens Museum of Art to commemorate the opening of the exhibit “Erasing Borders: Contemporary Indian Art of the Diaspora.” On Monday, March 28, Ushio Shinohara and Tomokazu Matsuyama will headline a talk at the Asia Society about the future course of the Japanese Neo-Dada movement. Though Asian Contemporary Art Week ends March 31, the artistic dialogue between the East and West is likely to continue uninterrupted.

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1/10/2017

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