

## Art Review: West Bund Art & Design Exhibit

By Frances Arnold, Sep 30th, 2014 | In Art

Of the four art fairs to grace Shanghai in the recent months West Bund Art & Design Fair is, hands down, the highlight of the lot. It's slick, concise, professional, and the feedback from gallerists has been resoundingly positive. Better yet, the whole shebang reopens this Wednesday 1 October in the form of a not-to-be-missed exhibition. If it's top-notch art in a stunning setting you're after this Golden Week, take note.



Renowned artist Zhou Tiehai co-organized this debut. His experience spans the best of both worlds: having overseen the first-ever SHContemporary back in 2007, and more recently, directing Minsheng Art Museum. West Bund Art & Design Fair strikes a happy medium with a somewhat unique set-up of "fair plus exhibition," a win-win formula. During fair days, bigwig collectors can browse at their leisure, while gallerists can focus on actually selling. Meanwhile, the rest of us can enjoy almost the same content for far less; tickets are 40rmb online.



The venue alone makes this show worthy of a visit. Just like the Yuz Museum next door, it's a renovated hangar at the old Longhua Airport. Unlike its highly polished neighbor, however, this space is refreshingly rougher around the edges, retaining fascinating traces of its former function. It's an ideal venue for showing contemporary art: with high ceilings and big spaces. And it's far less distracting than Shanghai Exhibition Centre, the ostentatious setting of both the recent Photo Shanghai and SHContemporary. Still, this new venue has its shortcomings—namely an uncomfortable lack of ventilation. Right now, that's a problem. Give it a couple of weeks and things will have mercifully cooled down.



Comprising almost the same content as the fair, the exhibition lacks one or two key names. London's Hauser & Worth gallery, for example, isn't sticking around for the 20-day show; while Shanghai's Bank plans on replacing especially fragile pieces with more robust ones. Those omissions aside, it's still well worth seeing.

In particular, seek out Tokyo-based Ota Fine Arts. They're exhibiting a handful of works by Japanese superstar Kusama Yayoi. If you missed her MoCA blockbuster earlier this year, this is another chance to catch her otherworldly Infinity Mirrored Room, as well as a bunch of sculptures and paintings.

Local galleries are also well represented, like James Cohan and Leo Xu. The former is showing a series of video works by American artist Bill Viola (here's what we had to say about them during the 2012 exhibition). They see anonymous figures pass through walls of water, accompanied by a hauntingly detached soundtrack. Leo Xu, meanwhile, presents a disconcerting installation by Leandro Erlich that's essentially a wall of elevators with apparent "mirrors".

Challenging the whole gallery get-up is Wang Xin. Her Gallery Project is a temporary structure that invites artists to submit work for exhibition for a period of just two hours. It's all tracked by a massive digital clock. She welcomes submissions via her website and social media. Get involved.



A highlight of the show and a real treat for China-based audiences is a selection of sculptures by the late, great Hans Josephsohn. The Swiss artist worked in plaster and bronze to create beautiful, rough and non-figurative statues of the human form. Don't miss the accompanying documentary either, which was filmed during the artist's later years. It offers a fascinating insight into the creative mind.

The upstairs mezzanine level comprises the lesser design element of the exhibition. Think: chairs by designer Claudio Colluci, "melting" furniture by Martin Baas, and highlights from the recent Switzerland Design Prize. It's less impressive than what's on show downstairs but still worth a look.

*West Bund Art & Design runs 1 – 26 October. For a full listing, [click here](#).*

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