

MAY 24 2013

HONG KONG

# BASEL KONG

BY THE EDITORS

They came, they saw, they acquired. In 2012, after a successful run of five annual editions, the homegrown Art HK fair was finally swallowed up by Art Basel's parent company, and transformed into an East Asian outpost of the Swiss art-fair giant. Amid thunderstorms and an early-morning "black rain" severe weather warning, the inaugural edition of Art Basel in Hong Kong (ABHK) opened midday on Wednesday, May 22 at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Center on Victoria Harbor. While the Swiss organization brought its reputation for clockwork management, the selection of 245 international galleries was marginally more Asian in focus than European or American. Yet the change in ownership was evident, for better and worse—depending on one's orientation—from a more commodious floorplan and spacious booth sizes, to improved dining and VIP-collector services. International buzz accompanies the Art Basel brand wherever it touches down, but here in Hong Kong, there was also a sense of wariness about the future direction of the fair since, in its lifetime as Art HK, the event had solidified its position as the premier art fair in Asia while retaining a regional character. For now, however, Art Basel in Hong Kong retains many of its predecessor's charms, as this selection of sights from around the opening days reveals.

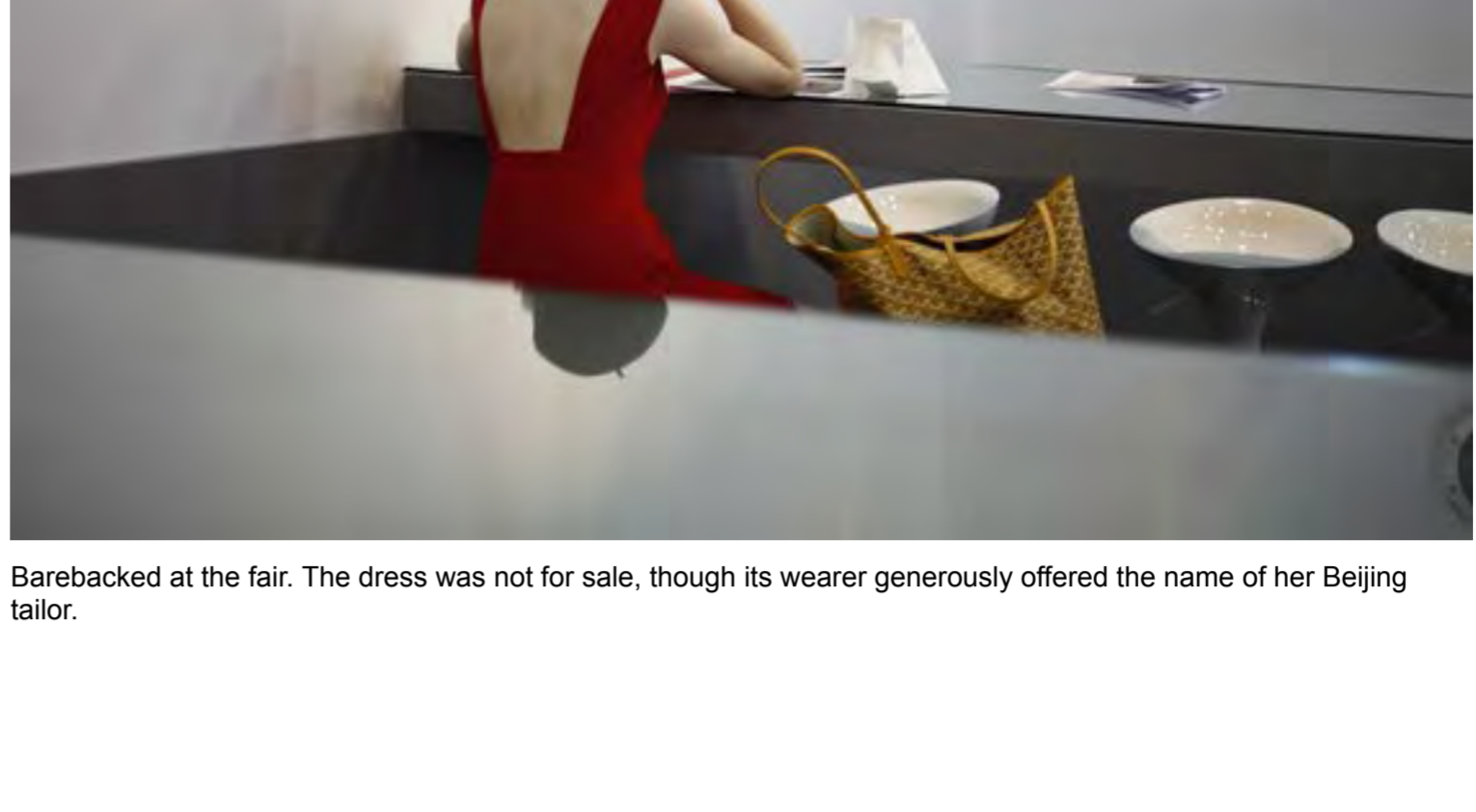


HRAIR SARKISSIAN (photographs) and RAED YASSIN (vases), installation view at Kalfayan Galleries.

Avoiding the allure of the new and the sin of the vulgar, Kalfayan Galleries paired the historical concerns of Lebanese artist Raed Yassin and Syrian photographer Hrair Sarkissian together in this understated stall. The "Yassin Dynasty" resets battles of the Lebanese Civil War (1975–1990) in the city of Jingdezhen, China's porcelain capital, where the hand-painted vases were produced. Behind, Sarkissian's large photographs document libraries and archives in Istanbul, the region his grandparents were forced to leave during the 1915 Armenian genocide.



CHIM iPOM, *Eroketel-Lybido Electricity Conversion Machine* at Mujin-To.

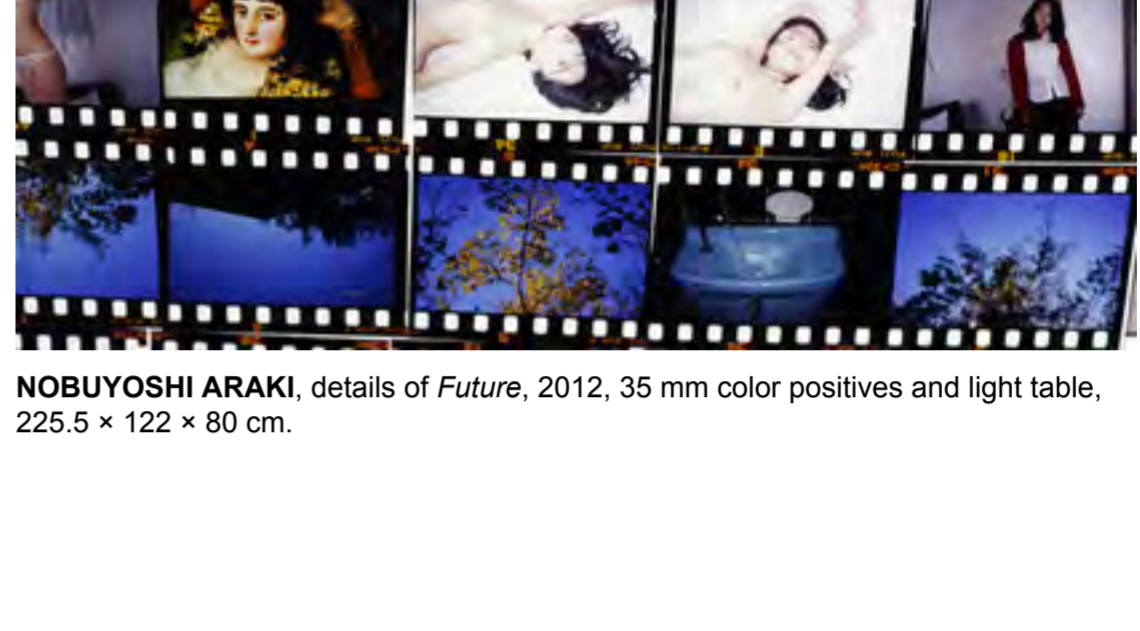


Barebacked at the fair. The dress was not for sale, though its wearer generously offered the name of her Beijing tailor.

Japanese artist collective CHIM iPOM placed erotic advertisements in local Hong Kong newspapers. When the love-line rings, a machine converts the radio waves into electricity powering a light bulb. *Lybido*, here, serves as a clean, alternate energy source.



NOBUYOSHI ARAKI, details of *Future*, 2012, 35 mm color positives and light table, 225.5 x 122 x 80 cm.



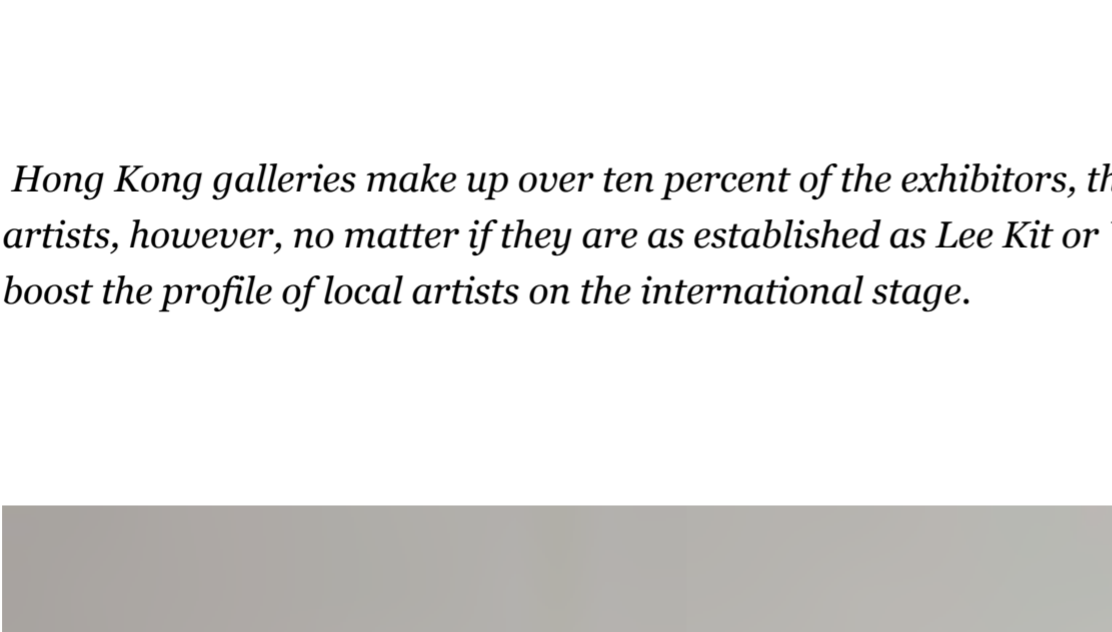
NOBUYOSHI ARAKI, details of *Future*, 2012, 35 mm color positives and light table, 225.5 x 122 x 80 cm.

Other erotic displays were dispersed across a light-box in the form of hundreds of positives made by Japanese photographer Nobuyoshi Araki.

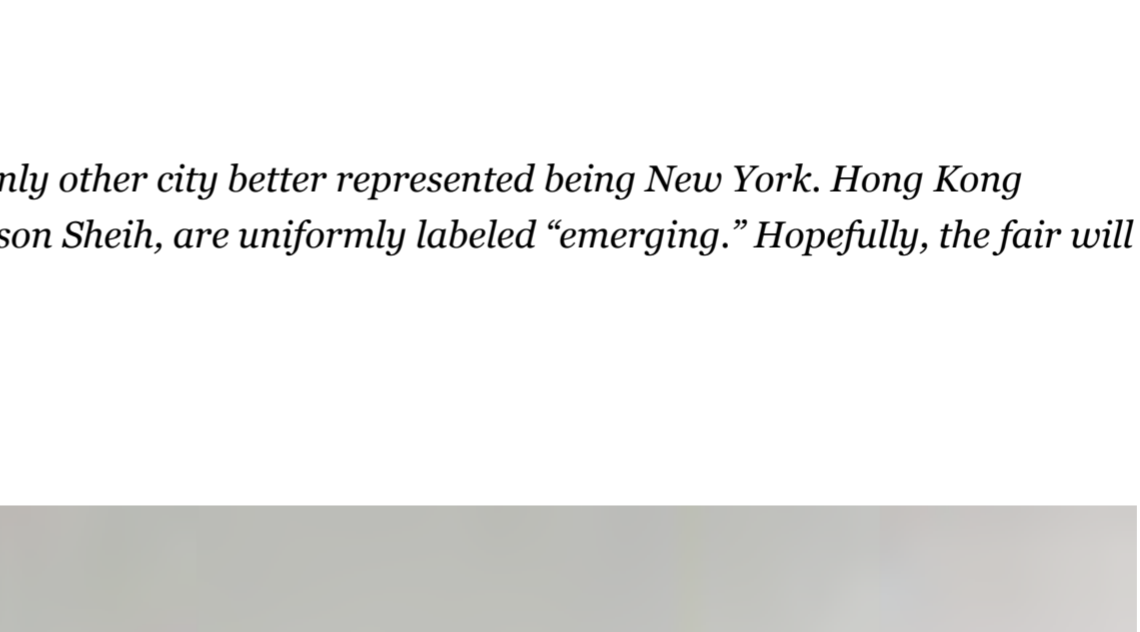


DO HO SUH, installation view of *Closet-1*, 2003, translucent nylon, 245 x 147.3 x 61 cm.

Indeed, it seems kinder to the eye to view one of MR's lurid canvases through the transparent nylon layers of a Do Ho Suh sculpture.

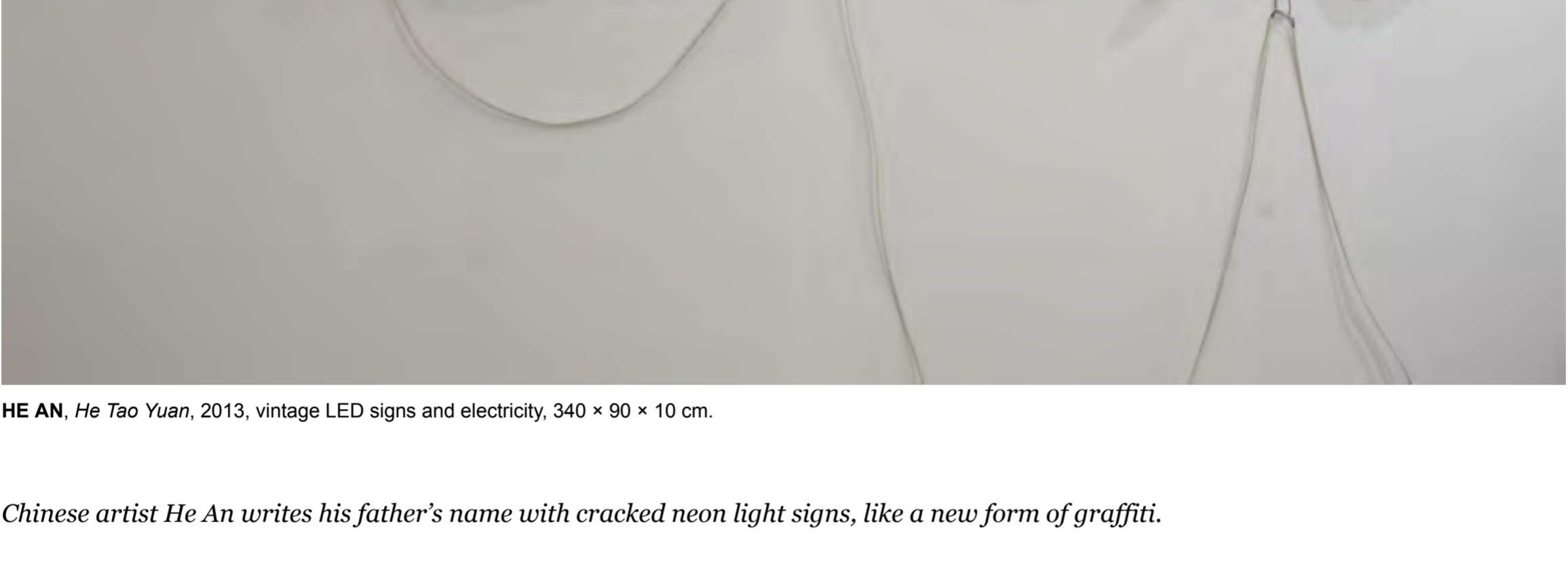


LEE KIT, installation view at Lombard Freid Gallery.



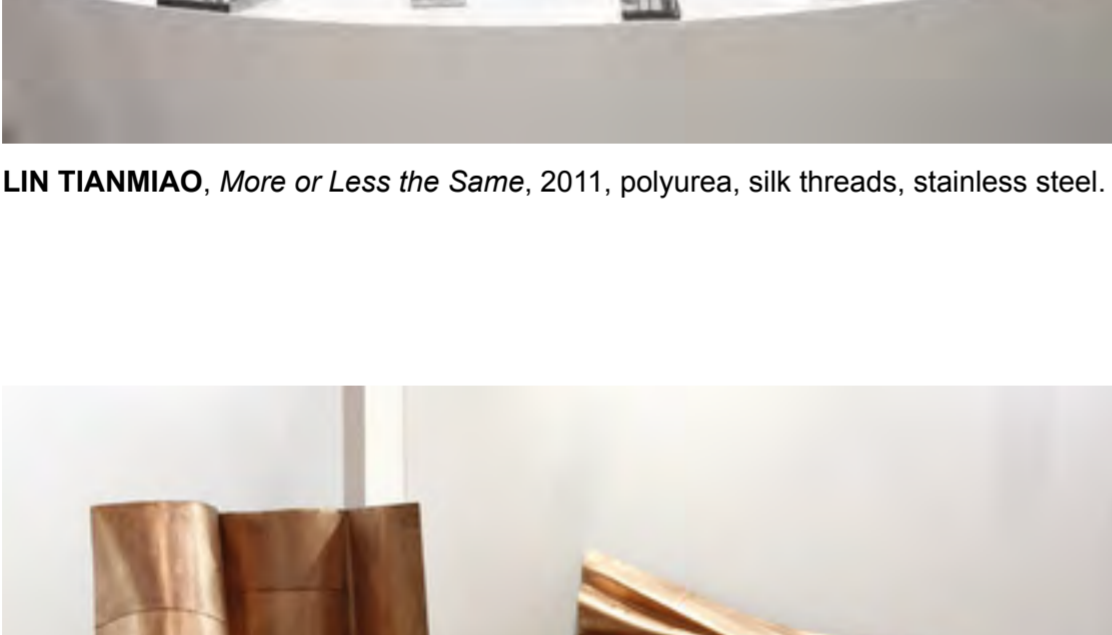
WILSON SHEIH, installation view at Osage Gallery.

Hong Kong galleries make up over ten percent of the exhibitors, the only other city better represented being New York. Hong Kong artists, however, no matter if they are as established as Lee Kit or Wilson Sheih, are uniformly labeled "emerging." Hopefully, the fair will boost the profile of local artists on the international stage.

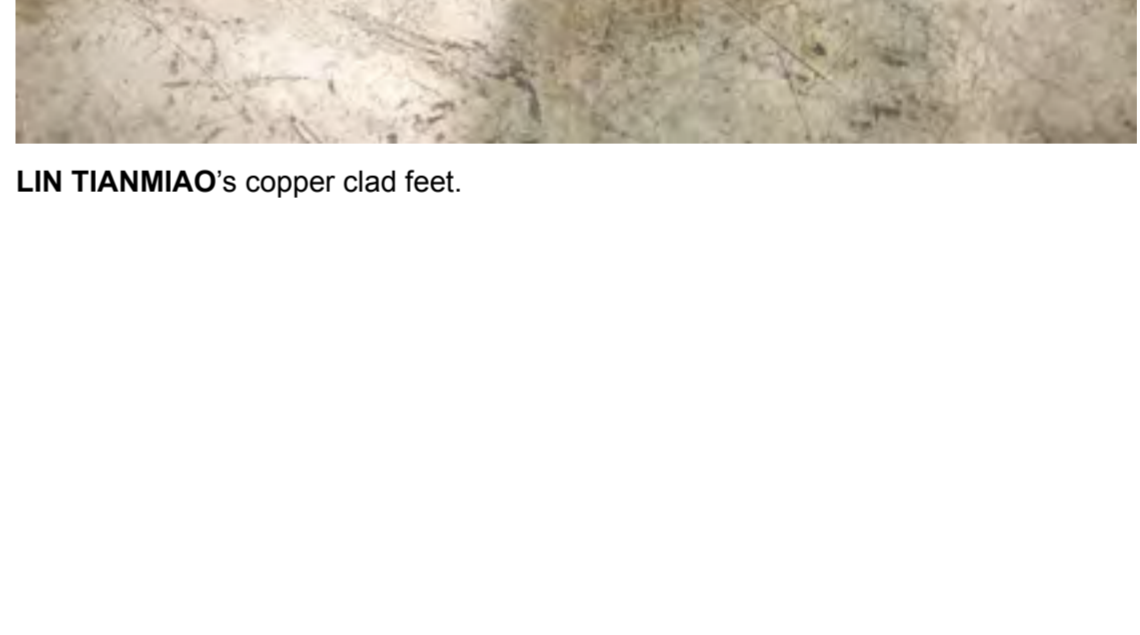


HE AN, *He Tao Yuan*, 2013, vintage LED signs and electricity, 340 x 90 x 10 cm.

Chinese artist He An writes his father's name with cracked neon light signs, like a new form of graffiti.



LIN TIANMIAO, *More or Less the Same*, 2011, polyurea, silk threads, stainless steel.

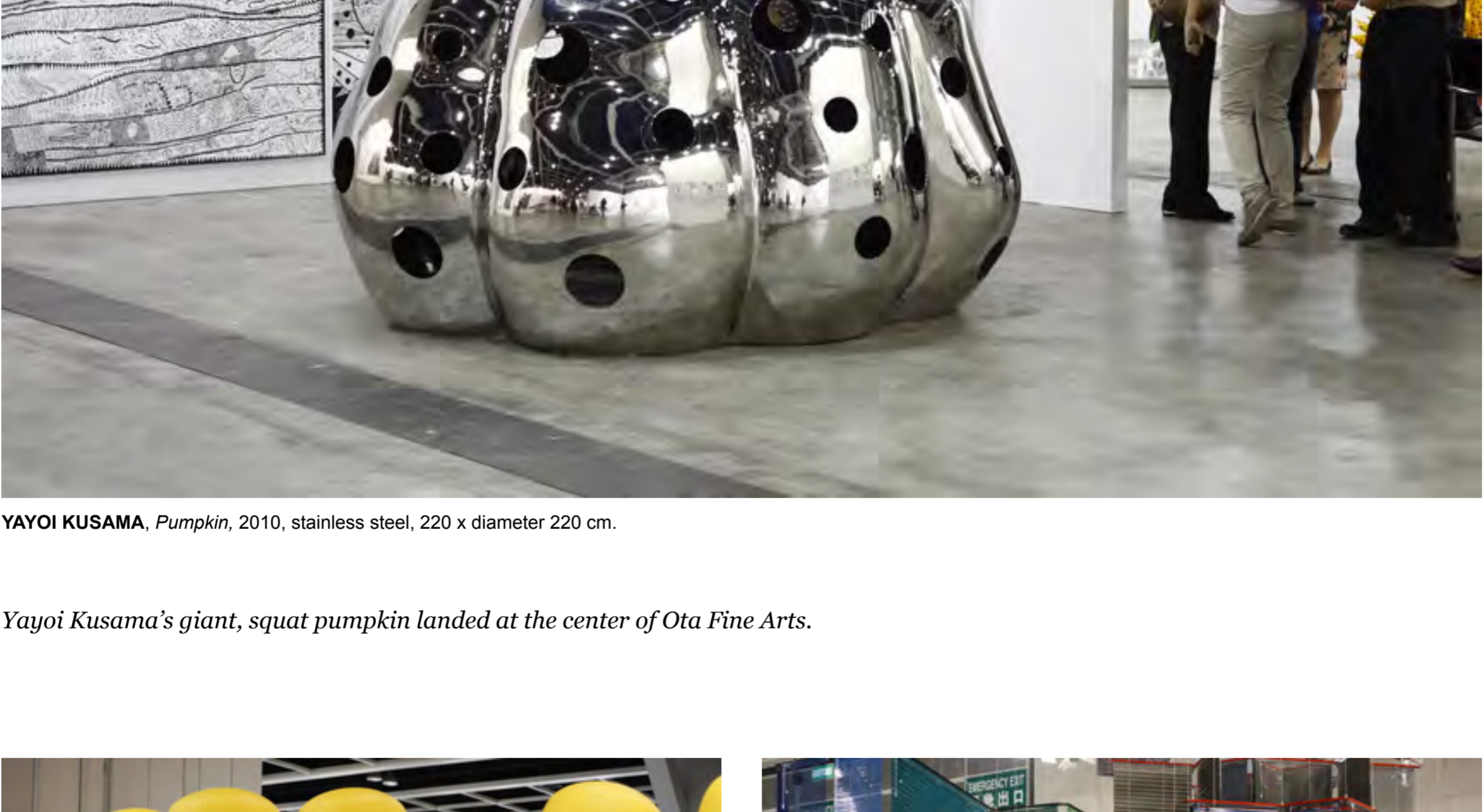


LIN TIANMIAO's copper clad feet.



DANH VO, detail of *We The People*, 2011–13, copper, 204 x 152 x 34 cm.

Chinese artist Lin Tianmiao wraps objects—skulls, garden tools, femurs—with silk. At the opening, she sported copper shoes that almost outshined her exhibited work. Meanwhile, Galerie Chantal Crousel showed Vietnamese artist Danh Vo's sheets of copper from his series *We The People* (2011–13).



YAYOI KUSAMA, *Pumpkin*, 2010, stainless steel, 220 x diameter 220 cm.

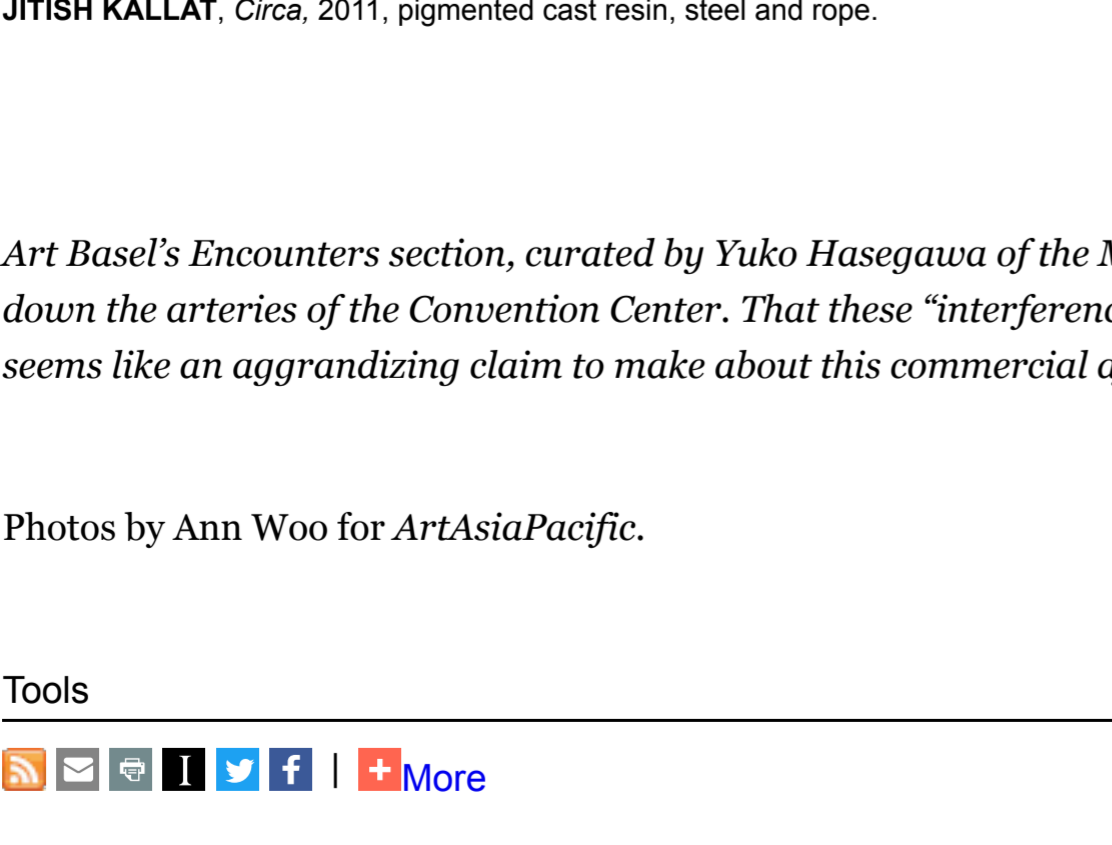
Yayoi Kusama's giant, squat pumpkin landed at the center of Ota Fine Arts.



SEUNG YUL OH, *Periphery*, 2013.



HAEGUE YANG, *Journal of Mundane and Uncertain Days*, 2012.



JITISH KALLAT, Circa, 2011, pigmented cast resin, steel and rope.

Art Basel's Encounters section, curated by Yuko Hasegawa of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo, scatters large-scale sculptures down the arteries of the Convention Center. That these "interferences" exist in public space, as the curator said in a press conference, seems like an aggrandizing claim to make about this commercial affair.

Photos by Ann Woo for ArtAsiaPacific.

Tools



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