



PAUL CHAN — *Waiting for Godot in New Orleans* (2007) Photo by Paul Chan, courtesy Creative Time, New York

A BILL OF GOODS

China's contemporary art explosion in 2007 could not have been more dramatically underscored than when a 14-part gunpowder drawing by pyrotechnic specialist Cai Guo-Qiang exploded for an astounding USD 9.5 million at Christie's in Hong Kong in November (SEE AUCTIONS). The sale capped a banner year for contemporary Asian art prices. Chinese smiley-face historical painter **Yue Minjun** (SEE FIVE FOR 2007) paved the way through record territory when his *Execution* (1995) made GBP 2.9 million (USD 5.9 million) at Sotheby's in London in October. At the same sale, Kolkata-born **Raqib Shaw's** *The Garden of Earthly Delights III* (2003) set a record for an Indian artwork at £2.7 million (\$5.49 million).

The market's strength is beginning to have broader ramifications. Pioneering Chinese contemporary collector **Howard Farber** put 44 paintings including seminal works by Fang Lijun, Wang Guangyi and Xu Bing back into circulation at Philips de Pury & Company in London in October (SEE AAP 55), while Sotheby's launched a sale of **Modern and Contemporary Arab and Iranian Art** there (SEE AAP 56).

But higher stakes have brought unsavory practices to light. A purported **Bhupen Khakar** work, *I, Me, My Village* (1978), was withdrawn from Christie's September 20 sale at in New York after doubts emerged about its authenticity (SEE AAP 56). Six works were pulled from Christie's Dubai October 31 sale, including a painting by Egyptian **Mahmoud Said**, *La Fille aux Yeux Verts* (1932), that was supposed to be hanging in the Egyptian Embassy in Washington, DC. Australian couple **Ivan and Pamela Liberto** were each sentenced to three years in jail by Victorian County Court (11/2) for forging paintings by Indigenous master Rover Thomas (1926-98) that they then sold at Sotheby's and Christie's and the domestic Lawson-Menzies and Allunga Trading for a total of more than AUD 300,000 (\$260,000).



Artist **Yue Minjun**, photo by Alis Atwell/ArtAsiaPacific



Gallerist, collector and ShContemporary 07 artistic director **Pierre Huber**, courtesy ShContemporary 07



Sotheby's **Roxane Zand**

Scandal touched the primary market when Paris dealer **Enrico Navarra**, an exhibitor at the inaugural ShContemporary (9/6-9, SEE CHINA & AAP 55, 56), accused the fair's artistic director, gallerist and collector **Pierre Huber**, of abusing his position to promote his own artists. It was uncertain whether this came as a surprise to anyone; nevertheless the fair organizers have taken prompt action to distance themselves from conflicts of interest. ShContemporary, which brought top international and Asian galleries to Shanghai, was only one of several new fairs to spring up this year. In March the **Gulf Art Fair** (now Art Dubai) launched in Dubai with a strong contingent of galleries from India (3/8-10, SEE AAP 53). In November, the **Asian Contemporary Art Fair** billed itself as the first fair dedicated to contemporary Asian art (11/8-12, SEE AAP 56). Japanese art impresario Takashi Murakami reconfigured his twice-yearly GEISAI competition into a juried exhibition at Miami Beach's PULSE art fair (12/5-9, SEE AAP 56).

All the excitement has attracted interest from the mainstream, as London mega-collector **Charles Saatchi** has started snapping up Chinese art, Manchester's **Frank Cohen** is buying Indian alongside French luxury magnate **François Pinault**, a backer of star sculptor Subodh Gupta (SEE P. 182, ALMANAC 1 & AAP 41, 48). The trendy Serpentine Gallery is covering the spread, having organized "China Power Station: Part I" in 2006 and "India Calling" (working title) for 2008. The forthcoming third part of the series will focus on the Middle East. Offering a palliative to all the money talk, Sydney's leading commercial outfit, Sherman Galleries, shut down at the end of the year to reemerge as the non-profit Sherman Foundation in 2008 (SEE AAP 53).

OPEN DOORS

Gene Sherman, director of Sherman Galleries and founder of the Sherman Foundation, has made it her mission to promote patronage in Asia, organizing a series of symposia on the issue (SEE P. 148). Heeding her calls, Sydney investor and sports lover Basil Sellers started the annual **Basil Sellers Art Prize**, awarding AUD 100,000 (\$86,000) to an artist working with sports themes, with the first winner to be

named in 2008. In Singapore, the Asia Pacific Breweries Foundation partnered with Singapore Art Museum to create the competitive **APB Foundation Signature Art Prize**, conferring a top award of SGD 45,000 (\$30,000). Already ahead of the game, the **Emir of Kuwait** donated EUR 5 million (\$7 million) to the Louvre and €1 million (\$1.5 million) to the Institut du Monde Arabe on a recent trip to France.

One of the year's biggest events was the opening of the private Ullens Center for Contemporary Art (UCCA) in Beijing (11/5, SEE P. 164 & AAP 50, 56). Ostensibly built to house the nonpareil Chinese contemporary collection of **Guy and Myriam Ullens**, UCCA will pursue a strong focus on education and encouraging experimental practice under the guidance of artistic director Fei Dawei and deputy director and chief curator Colin Chinnery.

Other landmarks included the January unveiling of the **National Art Center** (NAC) in Tokyo, among the last projects of seminal architect **Kisho Kurokawa**, who died in October (1934-2007, SEE JAPAN).



Colin Chinnery, copyright Ullens Center for Contemporary Arts, Beijing

NAC announced that two million visitors passed through its gates in seven months of operations. However, another new institution, the **National Art Gallery Islamabad** (NAG), practically turned away the crowds after its scheduled March opening was postponed due to a conflict in President General Pervez Musharraf's schedule (SEE PAKISTAN & AAP 54). Instead, NAG launched on August 25 as part of commemorations for Pakistan's 60th independence anniversary. Across the border, India is not far behind. Plans for a **Kolkata Museum of Modern Art** are underway, with a fund-raising auction at Sotheby's in New York raising \$1.51 million (7/17, SEE AAP 55), and collectors Lekha and Anupam Poddar (SEE ALMANAC 2) launch their **Devi Art Foundation** in March 2008. Meanwhile the Herzliya Museum of Contemporary



SUBODH GUPTA — *Very Hungry God* (2006) Installation view, "Sequence 1: Painting and Sculpture from the Francois Pinault Collection" at Palazzo Grassi, Venice, 2007, photo by Yvan H.



Front view of **The National Art Center Tokyo**, courtesy the National Art Center, Tokyo

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