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What They Said About Art Stage Singapore

By Katherine Ryder

Art Stage Singapore, the city-state's first high-profile contemporary art fair, promised a splash and didn't disappoint. The event, which closed this week, drew 32,000 visitors, placing it squarely alongside ART HK as one of the region's pre-eminent contemporary art events. (The Hong Kong fair had more than 40,000 visitors last year.)

The quality of the art was ambitious — with 121 participating galleries from 26 countries — as were some of the sales. Takashi Murakami sold his “Snow Moon Flower” triptych for US\$2.2 million. David LaChapelle, who was by all rights the show's headliner, gave a Saturday afternoon lecture on commercialism in the art world to a sold-out audience. He cashed in on the weekend, selling all his work.

Lorenzo Rudolf, the fair's director, likened his experience last week in Singapore to his early days at Switzerland's Art Basel, which is now one of the world's most prominent contemporary art fairs. No doubt Mr. Rudolf's long-standing presence in the art world helped draw the A-list of Western and Asian collectors and artists to Singapore.

His continued presence will likely be critical in Art Stage Singapore's attempts to grow its reputation in the years to come. But given the fair is backed by four prominent Singaporean government agencies, including the Singapore Tourism Board and the Economic Development Board — deeming it the “flagship” effort to turn the city-state into a contemporary-arts hub — it's likely that Mr. Rudolf has been offered strong incentives to stick around.

As a wrap-up, here's what some of the collectors and artists said about Art Stage Singapore:

Pascal de Sarthe, gallerist, who says Mr. Rudolf's role was the key factor in his decision to participate: “I'm extremely pleased with the outcome of Art Stage Singapore and am glad to announce that we have sold all of LaChapelle's works. The fair also provided us with a platform to meet many collectors from the continent and this has served us well, especially prior to the opening of our gallery [in Singapore].”

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Sylvain Levy, French collector: "I am completely surprised at how interesting and refreshing the fair was... I found the works of the Indonesian artists especially intriguing."

Shen Shaomin, Chinese artist: "Collectors' Stage, one of Art Stage Singapore's fringe events, was also a great success, with many people attending its opening... Some of my works are also currently under negotiation between potential buyers and my gallery."

Tomio Koyama, gallerist: "The context of an Asian, instead of Western, aesthetic point of view, is what makes Art Stage Singapore appeal to the entire art market."

David LaChapelle, artist, in a statement about the fair: "It did not intimidate like some art fairs can. It reminded me of the early days of the Sundance Film Festival when there was such optimism."

Don Rubell, American collector: "The fair was extremely well organized — the gallery booths were large, providing ample space to display larger works."