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Sundaram Tagore:
Tradition and Transcendence.

By Remo Notarianni

Madama Amelina Robert Polidori, Cabinet, Crivo de Madame Adguide, (65 C, Chateau de Versailles, France, 1986, archival inkjet print, 33 x 43 inches.)
PORTFOLIO: Market Voices

“We are encircling both Western and Eastern artists who bring in that dialogue between figuration and abstraction.”
— Sundaram Tagore

The gallery has supported Fine Art Asia since the fair started in 2006. It has branches in Hong Kong, New York and Beverly Hills. The gallery specialises in artwork that interweaves the modern, the cultural and the abstract. TPAG talked to founder Sundaram Tagore on the importance of the gallery at the fair and its enduring role in the context of a changing art world.

**TPAG:** How has Sundaram Tagore appealed in Asia?

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**TPAG:** How has Sundaram Tagore appealed in Asia?

I established the first gallery in Soho in New York in 2003. From the very beginning, Sundaram Tagore Galleries devoted itself to examining the exchange of ideas between Western and non-Western cultures. The galleries focus on developing exhibitions and hosting not-for-profit events that engage in spiritual, social and aesthetic dialogue. In a world where communication is instant and cultures are colliding and melding as never before, the goal is to provide venues for art that transcends boundaries of all sorts. With alliances across the globe, our interest in cross-cultural exchange extends beyond the visual arts into many other disciplines.

**TPAG:** What is the importance of Fine Art Asia and the significance of the work at the fair?

Sundaram Tagore Galleries is devoted to examining the exchange of ideas between Western and non-Western cultures. We focus on developing exhibitions that engage in spiritual, social and aesthetic dialogue. We only want to present art that is enduring and universal. Initially, it was the universal style and language that was the reason for my growing towards Abstract art. But in Asia, figurative art is tantamount to being the basis of culture, and the human figure is the foundation of most Asian cultures and arts. It would be wrong to deny that. So we are encircling both Western and Eastern artists who bring in that dialogue between figuration and abstraction. They speak a language much more universal and still maintain their roots, which gives them their validity.

**TPAG:** What do you think is driving art sales in Asia and globally at the moment?

Art has been in existence for 60,000 years, since the earliest cave paintings, and will continue to exist as a spiritual diet. In addition to that point of view, economies in the Asian context are growing fast and Asian countries are rapidly developing and changing along with that, a new taste for acquiring contemporary art has developed. A certain segment of people are still buying art for spiritual purposes. Those are the most cultivated of all and the ones we are looking for as our clients. However, we cannot deny the fact that new collectors are people who have success in their business and have started collecting art, but they are more interested in collecting art as an investment opportunity. Generally, we do not encourage that part of the story, we are not speculating with our artists.

**TPAG:** Do you think that it is good to buy art for investment purposes?

The concept of collecting art has developed differently in Asia and the West. The West has had a head start of over 500 years of serious collecting. However, in the East, the collecting of contemporary art is more recent. When collectors in the West decide to spend millions of dollars, they are very careful about...
the artist they choose. These collectors are both educated and accustomed in the art context and they tend to buy art they like and not necessarily for investment reasons. In Asia, it feels like people are more interested in talking about art as a commodity although that is quickly changing and the aesthetic reasoning is coming to the front in their needs for acquisition.

What are the advantages and disadvantages of Hong Kong and Singapore as art markets?

Obviously, the current advantages of Hong Kong are that it is Asia's world city with a perfect transportation network, low taxes, free trade, and a great pool of potential clients. The disadvantage may be that Hong Kong is becoming oversaturated. It has to rise to the challenge of being a chosen destination for many international and local galleries, for art collectors, and for art aficionados. There is the risk of having too many galleries in a small place, and the system could implode. We need to hope that Hong Kong will develop further into an internationally renowned and important artistic center as we were among the first ones who helped initiating this process.

Hong Kong is becoming more a consumer center whereas I have the feeling that Singapore is becoming more and more of a production center. Whether this is true or not and whether both cities are able to fulfill these, their aspirations or not, only time will tell.