

ASIAN ART NEWS

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LIAO YU-AN

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Ideas Before Commerce

When Sundaram Tagore established his New York gallery in 2000, a dynamic new phase opened up in the East-West art dialogue.

Asian Art News: *There has been tremendous growth in art fairs around Asia in recent years and Sundaram Tagore Gallery has participated in many. How have these fairs helped you to develop interest in the works of the artists you represent?*

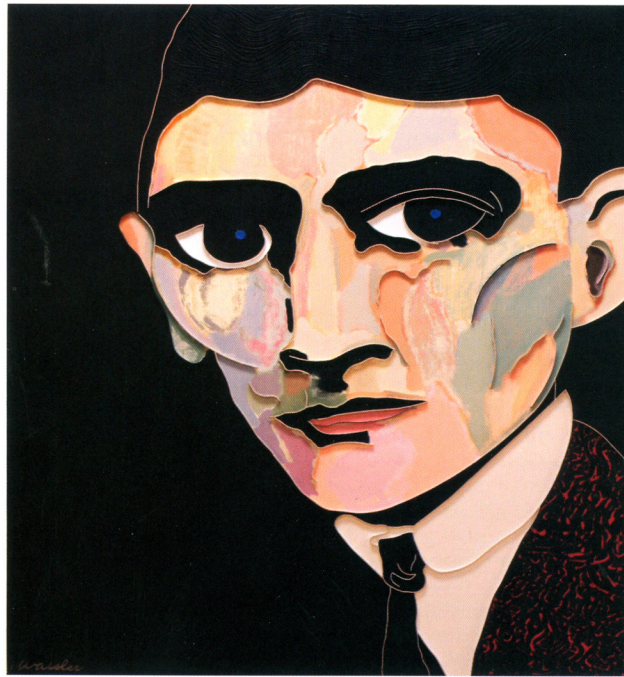
Sundaram Tagore: Yes, there has been tremendous growth in art fairs around the globe, not just in Asia. As you are aware, we represent a global community of artists with this idea of inter-change to create a dialogue between West and East. Because our gallery is both very specific, yet all embracing and people are drawn to art fairs from around the world, we have managed to expose our artists to a large audience from literally all around the globe. Art fairs have also become venues for curators, critics, and collectors, therefore we feel that art fairs are a necessary part of the art world.

You are participating in ART-Singapore for the first time. Why did you choose to do so?

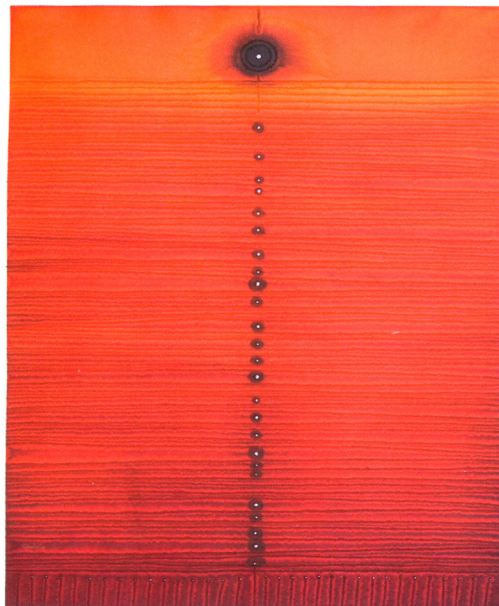
Although we are participating at Singapore for the first time, we are not a newcomer. We have a good collector-base in Singapore and are able to create a dialogue with curators and museum directors in that belt. It was just a question of time. Also, now that we have a gallery location in Hong Kong as well, it allows us access to the Singapore audience as opposed to only having a gallery in New York or Beverly Hills.

Do you have any preconceived ideas about attending a new art fair?

No. The idea of going to an art fair is to expose artists and to create new relationships in the art world. We are all very excited to participate in ARTSingapore. We don't necessarily look for sales at the very first fair. The idea is to expose our artists who are really significant in their artistic exploration. This is the reason why we always ask for a big booth, in order to create an inviting and open



Lee Waisler, **Kafka**, 2008, acrylic and wood on canvas, 60 x 48". Image: Courtesy of Sundaram Tagore Gallery, New York, Beverly Hills, Hong Kong.



Sohan Qadri, **Sunyata XI**, 2008, ink and dye on paper, 55 x 39". Image: Courtesy of Sundaram Tagore Gallery, New York, Beverly Hills, Hong Kong.

space in terms of presentation.

You work with both international Western and Indian artists. Do you see a place in Singapore for the kind of Western art that you represent?

We always represent about 22-24 artists from across the globe. At ARTSingapore, we will try to highlight a dozen or so. In Singapore, we would like to try to create a dialogue between East and West because we feel that there is a growing presence of Western nationalities living in Singapore and many Asians are traveling to the West. Our gallery should in some ways promote that dialogue to the visual arts.

With so many art fairs around at the moment it seems, at times, that the art world has become just another industry. What are the dangers of having too many art fairs?

The art world has become an industry such as the fashion or the film industry. More and more professionals are entering the field without proper art-historical training. In reality, the people who are dictating the art world are not necessarily from the field but from the banking and investment sectors. As it gets more structured, the eccentric quality gets lost and the art world just turns into another industry. The very nature of art is to promote the realm of imagination and creativity. If that is converted into a pure product, it loses vitality and the art world would no longer be an art world.

What do you think art fair organizers can do to raise standards?

First and foremost, art fairs are about galleries. Organizers need to identify intellectual art galleries, galleries that focus on culture and ideas, rather than pure commerce. I understand that people need to pay their bills; however, it is not good if art becomes a product. Δ

[Ian Findlay]