

SoHOLLYWOOD

Works cross boundaries

MODERN

Russian and international galleries in the area feature contemporary touch. Reports by Tara Loader Wilkinson

From life-size polyurethane angels to 18th-century Buddhist sculptures, when it comes to art and antiques, Hollywood Road has it all.

In this area, traditional art and antiques bazaars rub shoulders with chic bars and restaurants, contemporary art galleries and designer fashion brands. And, despite the extortionate rent, many galleries insist on doing business in the area, simply because there is no address like it.

In addition to world famous oriental art and antiques, contemporary art is now a popular theme here. One of the latest additions is Russia's Erarta Galleries. When Erarta (a play on "era of art") opened at 159 Hollywood Road in November last year, it made waves as the largest gallery on Hollywood Road – it's a 300-square-metre duplex – and the city's first Russian contemporary art space.

"The opening in Hong Kong was preceded by a two-year hunt for the perfect space, but only on Hollywood Road," says gallery manager Gillian Au. "We had to be on Hollywood Road, because it is the hub for the art community in Hong Kong."

The brainchild of Russian art collector Marina Varvarina, Erarta has a presence in St Petersburg, New York, London and Zürich. The galleries are overseen by Varvarina's 28-year-old son, Vadim Varvarin. "Our group also includes museums in Russia. Chinese mainlanders are a main source of visitors, with an annual increase of 20 to 30 per cent," Au says.

Art here is priced between



Oil on canvas works by Anastasia Bazanova on display at Erarta Galleries. Photo: Edmond So

HK\$35,000 and HK\$400,000, featuring around 150 established and new Russian artists from 30 different regions. "They all have different styles, offering a wide spectrum of creative treasures," Au says. Here, find colourful collages from Pavel Brat, the filigree mosaics of artist collective the KGB Art Group, polyurethane sculptures by Dmitry Shorin, and tranquil 40-minute video installations of gently undulating palm trees.

"It will take some time for the concept of Russian contemporary art to take off," Au says. Most buyers are international, including a well-known Hollywood actress who purchased several pieces and shipped them back to the United States.

A few minutes away at No 57-59

is the Sundaram Tagore Gallery. Calcutta-born Sundaram Tagore comes from an aristocratic Indian dynasty that, as the country modernised, fell into financial ruin. He was part of the first generation that had to work for a living.

He launched his first eponymous gallery in New York, opened in Hong Kong in 2007, and now also has a presence in Singapore. His mission is to explore the exchange of ideas between Western and non-Western cultures. "When I first opened on Hollywood Road, there wasn't a contemporary art scene here," Tagore says. "I recall conversations with people that were limited to the Impressionists and modern masters such as Picasso and Matisse. Beyond that, very few people were conversant with the contemporary

artistic language." Visitors will find blue-chip international contemporary artists ranging from Annie Leibovitz to Tom Doyle and Golnaz Fathi. Tagore recommends the work of Brazilian photojournalist Sebastião Salgado,

and award-winning Japanese painter Hiroshi Senju, who is known for his monumental waterfall and cliff images.

Business is good, he adds. "There has been a major artistic shift, and Hong Kong is blooming now."

Love for Indonesian art

A few moments away in bohemian Sai Street lies a very different gallery. Sin Sin Fine Art and Atelier is a 12-year-old gallery with creativity at its core. "I'm not really a gallerist, I'm a curator," says the owner, Sin Sin-man. "I'm many things – an artist, a weaver, a dancer – but my love for Indonesian art is where the gallery began."

In the '80s, Sin designed prototypes for Disney, Warner Bros, MTV and Billabong, a job that allowed her to travel for half the year. Her journeys took her to Bali where she bought a 40,000 sq ft plot of land in Kerobokan, to build her dream home. During the time, Sin fell in love with Indonesian art and started exporting it to Hong Kong.

Today, the best sellers remain contemporary Indonesian artists, including S Teddy D, Abdi Setiawan, Andy Dewantoro, Bob Sick Yudhita, Putu Sutawijaya and Eddie HARA. S Teddy's self-expressive Chinese ink series on paper was a big hit.

"He engages with his inner child ... but there is an unmistakable serious undertone," Sin says.

She is now showing her first solo exhibition, which includes her minimalist floaty apparel and statement jewellery. Later this year, she will be exhibiting at Start Art Fair in London, dedicated to Asian emerging-markets art, run by the Saatchi Gallery.



Sin Sin-man



Ricardo Mazal's 'Kailash: Black Mountain' series at Sundaram Tagore Gallery