

# More sales, bigger turnout at art fair

This year's Affordable Art Fair saw higher sales and 4,500 more visitors

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**T**he second edition of the Affordable Art Fair drew in the crowds and made more money too.

The fair, which opened with a private preview last Thursday night at the F1 Pit Building and ended on Sunday evening, sold art in excess of \$3 million, well above its first-edition sales of \$1.75 million last year.

The number of visitors also increased from 9,000 to 13,500.

Delighted fair director Camilla Hewitson, who is in her 30s, said: "Coming to a fair like this is all about walking in and surprising yourself. We have worked very hard to get the right mix of galleries which can offer local, Asian and international art. The venue works well too, it is central enough, has free parking and despite the low ceiling height has a contemporary vibe to it."

The organisers were targeting 12,000 visitors and ended up welcoming the one millionth visitor to the Affordable Art Fair at around 5pm on Sunday. The fair started in London in 1999 and now has nine editions in cities such as New York, Brussels, Paris, Amsterdam and Sydney.

Ms Serene Chew, an arts management student at the Lasalle College of the Arts, was shocked when she found out she had a \$500 voucher to shop at the fair.

"I was dazed when they announced my name and people started clapping. I was late because of the rain. It is my first time and now there is just about an hour to spend this voucher," said the 21-year-old student.

Several galleries Life! spoke to were thrilled with the response and planned on coming back for the third edition.

Local gallery Collectors Contemporary sold more than \$100,000 worth of art.

Dr Alvin Koh, 41, who runs the gallery with his partner Gary Sng, said: "It was our first time so we did not know what to expect. We are thrilled with the sales."

Many galleries were selling art so fast



Everyone's happy: The galleries were thrilled with the sales and visitors (left) liked the diversity of works at the fair. The children's art studio (above) was a hit with youngsters. ST PHOTOS: TERRENCE LIM

'The sales have been exceptional and what I have really enjoyed is the energy at this fair. This is what is missing in London now'

Gallery owner Lucy Basset of Affordable Art Fair

that they had no time to update their books. Local gallery Utterly Art was sticking labels on a wall with the little red dot.

The gallery's busy managing partner Pwee Keng Hock, 47, said: "Last year, we sold about 40 works. This time, it is above 60. I have not had time to count. I think it will be above \$100,000."

Singaporean artist Andre Tan's canvas paintings did exceedingly well at Utterly Art. The gallery brought in 10 works and was left with one acrylic on canvas by the time the fair closed.

Many Japanese galleries sold well too. The Tolman Collection from Tokyo which had brought in print works had brisk sales, as did another Japanese gallery H-art Beat.

Another local gallery, ReDot fine art which specialises in aboriginal art, sold more than \$60,000 worth of art.

Fairfax gallery from London sold more than six paintings and sculptures in the last one hour.

"We are thrilled with the response,"

said gallery owner Lucy Basset. "We would have sold about 60 per cent of the works we brought in. The sales have been exceptional and what I have really enjoyed is the energy at this fair. This is what is missing in London now."

Spanish gallery Villa del Arte sold about 100 pieces of art. The biggest draw at its gallery were photographs by Barcelona-based Colombian photographer Willy Rojas and ceramic heads by Sweden-based artist Johan Thunell.

"We are very happy but we are born happy," joked gallery director Marcel Huisman, 45. "It has been very busy, a little crazy at times but excellent for us. You will see us again, for sure."

Gallerist Yann Bombard, 43, who runs Galerie Envie D'Art in Paris, said: "This fair seems to have become an important addition to the arts calendar in Singapore. I saw more people this year. Several of them told me they were waiting for it. We have sold more than 30 works." ▽

Apart from the sheer variety of art, the

fair had a series of talks on contemporary art and photography, some of which attracted standing-room-only crowds. There was a showcase exhibition for new graduates from the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts and Lasalle College of the Arts.

Another big hit was the children's art studio organised by art studio Art Boot Camp. This year, the studio ran themed activities inspired by modernist-art movements and its pioneering artists, and attracted more than 500 children compared to 100 youngsters in the first edition.

Teacher Ruping Tay, 27, who was there on Sunday with her 2½-year-old son Kenneth, felt it provided good exposure for young children.

"He has been enjoying looking at so many colours and shapes," she said.

The fair proved to be a happy hunting ground for seasoned as well as first-time collectors.

Banker Mustafa Asif Mahmood, 39, who bought an oil painting for about

\$4,000, called it "an eye-opening experience".

He said: "I had never been to an art fair before and found this one had different types of art to suit varied tastes.

"I bought British artist Shaun Fergusson's painting. It is a very beautiful piece. I knew nothing about the artist. The gallerists were very helpful, telling me about the artist's profile, the awards he has won and some of the exhibitions he has taken part in."

Like him, market researcher Serena Jacob had just intended to browse after a friend told her about the fair. By the end of the evening, she spent about \$8,000 on four prints and two paintings.

Said Ms Jacob, who is in her 50s: "I do go to museums and art galleries but this was my first time at this fair. I was not expecting to see such a huge diversity of works and so many people. One is almost certain to find something one likes in a price range which can fit different budgets."

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