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HONG KONG

## HIGHLIGHTS FROM ART BASEL HONG KONG 2018

BY YSABELLE CHEUNG

Every half an hour at Art Basel Hong Kong 2018, a woman diligently scrubbed a towering pile of dishes, chopsticks and plates, the objects scaled to a size fit for a giant. Using only a worn rag and a bucket of water, she washed and polished these monstrous utensils, her labor magnified by their exaggerated dimensions. Once she finished her task and stepped off the stage, a suited man would enter the platform and read from a Dyson instruction manual next to oversized replicas of the British appliance company's famous oval-shaped air cleaner.

The work, comprising of an installation activated by regular performances, was *Refresh, Sacrifice, New Hygiene, Infection, Clean, Robot, Air, Housekeeping, www.agentbong.com, Cigarette, Dyson, Modern People* (2017) by Taiwanese artist Chou Yu-Cheng, one of the 12 large-scale Encounters that anchored the presentations at the port city's premier art fair this year. Chou's work was about extremities of sanitation, whether through automated machines or through repetitive actions of cleansing, and also seemed to touch upon the traditional roles of men and women in domestic settings.



Installation view of **CHOU YU CHENG's** *Refresh, Sacrifice, New Hygiene, Infection, Clean, Robot, Air, Housekeeping, www.agentbong.com, Cigarette, Dyson, Modern People*, 2017, performance, wood, fiberglass, dimensions variable, at Art Basel Hong Kong, 2018. All images by Ysabelle Cheung for ArtAsiaPacific.

Unofficially, it seemed one of the themes of this year's edition of Art Basel was about gender parity and the representation of women, a focus that arrives after last year's scores of cases regarding sexual harassment in art field workplaces. Outside the actual fairground itself, Asia Art Archive's booth was overtaken by the work of the feminist group Guerrilla Girls, who invited visitors to take a poll on how many women artists they saw at specific booths in the fair.

With over 248 galleries from 32 territories and countries this year, there was a lot of counting to do. First time participants included Dastan's Basement, from Tehran, and Mumbai's Tarq, while regular blue-chip galleries such as Hauser & Wirth and David Zwirner now hold a stronger foothold in the region after the openings of their Hong Kong spaces this year. As always, there were quieter, imperceptible installations amongst the loud, raucous ones screaming for attention—humongous works, both in size and price, drew crowds with lines all the way down Harbor Road.

*Ysabelle Cheung is managing editor of ArtAsiaPacific.*

*Art Basel Hong Kong runs through March 31, 2018.*

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