

ARNDT

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ARNDT's Regional Vision

As the Asian art market gains ever more momentum, German-born and Melbourne-based gallerist, collector and dealer Matthias Arndt focuses his gaze on Southeast Asia and opens a new project space in Singapore. Narelle Yabuka reports.

February 26, 2013

Moving from Berlin to Melbourne a year ago marked a new chapter in the life story of Matthias Arndt. It signified the same for his contemporary art gallery ARNDT (formerly Arndt & Partner), which has built a solid reputation through nearly 20 years as a protagonist in Berlin's expanding art scene.

While ARNDT retains its space and activities in Germany, Matthias explores the art markets of Australia and Southeast Asia, and looks to build bridges between Southeast Asia, Australia and Europe.

The 2012 'Migration' pop-up shows in Melbourne and Sydney, produced by Matthias and his Australian wife Tiffany Wood, brought the work of major international artists to Australia. Now, with ARNDT's new 'project space' in Singapore's Gillman Barracks arts compound, Matthias plans to contribute to the development of the Southeast Asian art scene – which he sees as “one of the most interesting art landscapes at the moment.”



The Gillman Barracks block in which ARNDT Singapore is housed.

"I call our Singapore location a 'project space,'" he explains, "because I don't want it to be too heavy or pretentious. I don't want the space to drive me; I want to run the space." The venue will function as ARNDT's Asian office as well as viewing rooms. ARNDT Singapore will focus on art advisory and artist agency throughout Asia.



Views of the *Light & Reflection* exhibition at ARNDT Singapore.

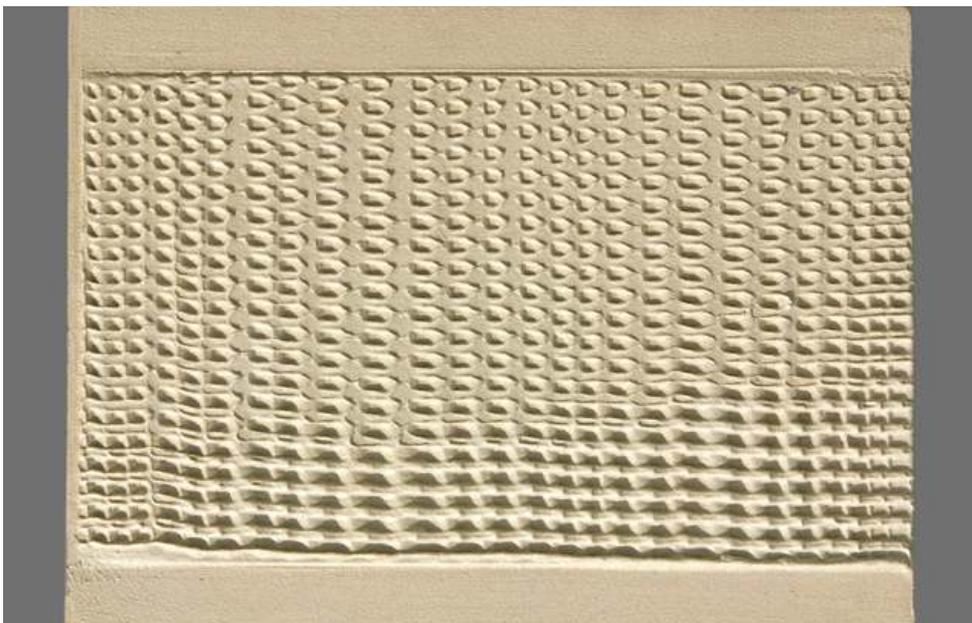
Its location has been strategically chosen. "I like this idea of a hub," he says of the Gillman Barracks context, where a cluster of conserved colonial barracks house galleries and creative businesses, and soon the Centre for Contemporary Art (CCA) (opening in 2013). "It feels a bit like Berlin, where we developed art hubs in different neighbourhoods."

But why Singapore? He explains, “My recent focus – artistically as well as commercially in terms of developing new markets – has been Asia. And that’s nothing new; I’m not the first to have this idea. Most of the people of my league would go to Hong Kong, but I’ve been building connections to Southeast Asia over the last three years. Singapore is the hub for Southeast Asia.”



Views of the *Light & Reflection* exhibition at ARNDT Singapore.

In terms of art production, Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam and Cambodia are among the countries that have captured his attention. His endeavours have not been without challenges, however. “Organisationally, [the Southeast Asian art scene] is completely different to Europe. There are very few institutions of Western design that work outside the market. It’s very commercial and competitive. It’s a money-driven market – more so than others.”



Heinz Mack, Untitled, 1959, resin on burlap on wood, 33 x 43 x 2 cm | 12.99 x 16.93 x 0.79 in

"In the West (whether it's in Australia or Europe), where I'm showing the work, the market [for Southeast Asian art] still needs to be built. Commercially, I'm making a very daring endeavour. But artistically, it's really interesting and exciting, and more people are joining me in thinking the same way. The market is definitely expanding."

He adds, "Australians are finally looking at Indonesian and Southeast Asian art, which I thought they must have done ten years ago. But no, it's happening now."

ARNDT's first Singapore show, titled *Light & Reflection*, brought Western work to Asia. It featured work by Otto Piene, Heinz Mack, Lucio Fontana and Yves Klein from the years 1958 to 2012. "We sold new work and had a huge attendance for the opening," says Matthias, "plus excellent press and a steady flow of visitors. So I feel we will do very well."



Matthias Arndt. Copyright Bernd Borchardt

ARNDT also presented work by a number of artists from the West and the East at the Art Stage Singapore fair in January: Jitish Kallat, Heinz Mack, Maha Malluh, Eko Nugroho, Otto Piene, Chiharu Shiota, Agus Suwage, Entang Wiharso, Qiu Zhi Jie and Australian artist Mike Parr. ARNDT is collaborating with Parr for a solo survey show in its Berlin gallery later this year.

ARNDT Singapore's second show, featuring Filipino painter Rodel Tapaya, will open on 5 April 2013.

arndtberlin.com/website/

gillmanbarracks.com/index.php

Top image: Otto Piene, *Struwelpeter 2*, 1990/1991, oil on canvas, 200 x 200 cm | 78.74 x 78.74 in
All images courtesy of ARNDT.

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