


AN ART LOVER'S GUIDE TO HONG KONG

HONG KONG'S RICH HISTORY AND VISUALLY STRIKING ARCHITECTURE HAVE MADE IT AN INSPIRATION FOR ARTISTS AND DESIGNERS, TRANSFORMING THE CITY INTO ONE OF ASIA'S PREMIER ART DESTINATIONS. HERE'S AN ART LOVER'S GUIDE TO THE CITY. **BY PRACHI JOSHI**

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After centuries of Chinese influence, 150 years of colonial rule, and decades as a cultural melting pot, Hong Kong has emerged as an exciting art powerhouse. The city is dotted with some of the region's best independent and international galleries, as well as a vibrant local art scene, not to mention some rather Insta-worthy street art. Here's where you can soak in the best of Hong Kong's art, design and architecture.

GALLERIES GALORE

Hong Kong's art scene has been firmly established on the world stage thanks to 200+ art galleries showcasing a plethora of artists and styles – there's everything from graphic art, sculpture, and photography to pop culture, comics, and graffiti art. Some of the biggest international galleries have set up shop in Hong Kong, many of them concentrated around Central and particularly in Soho.

Begin with White Cube Hong Kong, the first of White Cube's venues to be located outside the UK. The high-ceilinged space itself is impressive and gallery is spread over two floors. LA-based Gagosian is one of the world's leading contemporary art galleries and Gagosian Hong Kong carries forward that legacy. Occupying a large space in the historic Pedder Building, the gallery has hosted several solo exhibitions since it opened in 2010. H Queen's, a glittering, dedicated gallery building in Central, plays host to the 10,000 sq ft David Zwirner, the notable American contemporary art gallery's first Asian branch.



Le Galerie Paris 1839 is worth checking out



An art gallery in the glittering H Queen's building

Other galleries worth checking out include Galerie du Monde, Le Galerie Paris 1839, Axel Vervoordt, and Ben Brown Fine Arts. Sheung Wan is also another art hotspot where galleries such as Aishonanzuka (Japanese art), Artyze (graffiti art), Over the Influence Gallery (mixed media), and Sin Sin Fine Art (innovative Indonesian and international art) beckon you in.

For contemporary Chinese art, head to Tang Contemporary Art at H Queen's. The

gallery not only showcases art but also encourages dialogue between Chinese artists and international collectors and curators. Don't miss Pearl Lam Galleries in Central's Pedder Building, which often showcases artists who challenge East-West cultural perceptions. Another gallery worth visiting is Beijing-based Pékin Fine Arts' Hong Kong branch in Aberdeen, which frequently puts upcoming artists on the map. To get a handle on upcoming Hong

The Hong Kong Museum of Art has the largest collection of local art



Kong artists, head to Gallery Exit in Aberdeen, which spotlights new artists of all media. Above Second in Tin Wan is the only Hong Kong gallery that focuses on urban art and features illustrations, graffiti, pop culture-influenced artworks, and more.

MUSEUM HOPPING

Apart from the art galleries, Hong Kong also has several museums where you can get your art and culture fix. The University Museum and Art Gallery is the city's oldest museum and it houses an impressive collection of Chinese antiquities, ceramics, jade carvings, as well as historical photos and pop culture items.

The Hong Kong Museum of Art in Tsim Sha Tsui has the largest collection of Hong Kong art in the city. Built in 1962 as

part of the City Hall, this pink-tiled building is packed with Chinese paintings, calligraphy works, and antiques. The museum is undergoing extensive renovation and is expected to reopen in mid-2019.

Meanwhile, head over to the museum's branch, the Flagstaff House Museum, located in an 1840s colonial building showcasing an



Flagstaff House Museum holds regular tea ceremonies

elegant collection of tea going back to the 11th century. It also holds regular tea ceremonies.

SHUTTERSTOCK



Art Basel



HK Arts Month

WHEN TO GO

If you are planning a trip to Hong Kong, head over in October to catch the Hong Kong International Photo Festival (usually October through December) and the month-long New Vision Arts Festival (mid-October to mid-November). The latter showcases cutting-edge performances like abstract interpretations of ballet and sound design shows.

March is also a good time to catch the annual Hong Kong Arts Month, which is a citywide celebration of the arts in all forms. Things kick off with the Hong Kong Arts Festival (Feb 21-March 23, 2019) with opera, ballet, and theatre performances, followed by Art Central Hong Kong (March 27-31, 2019) with international galleries setting up shop in the city. The finale is the big daddy of all – Art Basel Hong Kong (March 29-31, 2019), which arrived in the city in 2013. Held at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre, the show features premier galleries, half of which are from Asia and Asia-Pacific region giving a major fillip to the local art scene.



In Hong Kong, art spills out into the street



Street art on Upper Station Street

STREET SMART

In Hong Kong, art is not restricted to museums and galleries but it spills out into the streets in colourful abandon. A major impetus to the city's street art scene was the advent of HK Walls in 2014. This annual street art festival began as a community project that focussed on one neighbourhood every year and transformed walls and shop fronts into vivid pieces of art. There are several street art tours that help you navigate the city like those offered by Hong Kong Street Art Tours (hongkongstreetarttours.com) and Accidental Art (accidentalart.co).

However, if you want to take a self-

guided tour, here are some of the places you should hit. Central and Sheung Wan are major street art hotspots where you will find the famous mural of old Hong Kong townhouses on a bright blue background at the corner of Graham Street, a massive Bruce Lee mural outside Cawah Arts Gallery, and a multi-coloured fox on Upper Station Street. The 'Rainbow Thief' mural on the Man Fung Building in Sham Shui Po is a must-see as is the 'Wall of Fame' in Mong Kok. The gritty Wong Chuk Hang neighbourhood in Southern Hong Kong also has some cool street art, especially on the E Tat Factory Building and on Yip Fat Street.

PMQ is a design hub and shopping space



Heritage building Tai Kwun is now a creative hub

DESIGNS ON YOU

Hong Kong is a design lover's dream with its stunning architecture. Many heritage buildings have now been repurposed into creative hubs, like the Tai Kwun Centre for Heritage and Arts in Central. A 12-year restoration project transformed the Central Police Station compound into an art and culture space that retains the 19th century

Victorian brick through which juts out a striking perforated aluminium façade that houses an art gallery and auditorium. Nearby is PMQ, the erstwhile Police Married Quarters, which has been

transformed into a design hub and shopping space rolled into one. Almost a hundred indie designers and artists have set up ateliers here and you will find everything from fashion accessories to jewellery, home ware and more. The central courtyard often hosts pop-ups and exhibitions.

Head over to West Kowloon where the M+ Pavilion stands in all its cantilevered glory with the outdoor terrace seemingly floating above the manicured lawn. This futuristic event space has a running calendar of visual arts exhibitions. The Fo Tan Industrial Area is another upcoming design hub where you will find Fo Tan Studios, a cluster of art studios run by painters, sculptors, illustrators, and other artists. The studios often run open days when the artists hold workshops so you can try your hand at ceramic pottery, abstract painting, silk-screen printing, and more.