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## Hong Kong Contemporary Art Foundation

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The newly-formed Hong Kong Contemporary Art Foundation focuses on education and pushing boundaries, curator Lauren Every-Wortman tells Ysabelle Cheung

It's a tough, unforgiving art world out there – but there's still room for something different. As the city turns ever more aggressively towards commerciality and fair-focused activities, some movers and shakers in the industry are looking to push in other directions. One such case is the newly inaugurated Hong Kong Contemporary Art Foundation – or HOCA – which demarcates from other platforms and institutions in the city by demonstrating a strong ethic for education, aesthetic cultivation and the liminality of contemporary art in progress. A non-profit foundation, HOCA relies on funding from private and corporate benefactors, which gives it the unique privilege and advantage of financial security. Its first exhibition, launched earlier this month, celebrates the surrealist, ukiyo-e inspired work of female Japanese artist Aya Takano and invades the space of concept restaurant Bibo. Titled La Maison d'Aya, the show incorporates Takano's signature pieces from her collection as well as new works created specifically for the space. An exclusive dinner hosted on December 10 featured the modern fine French cuisine of Bibo, tweaked to compliment the aesthetic surroundings of Takano's Lolita-esque exhibition.

"For our first exhibition, we really wanted to create an immersive experience for the viewer," says Lauren Every-Wortman, HOCA curator and former manager at Above Second Gallery. "Bibo was the perfect location because of their interest in contemporary art as well as their creative culinary expertise. We hope that by crossing cultural disciplines we can draw a wider audience to our exhibitions." Originally from the USA, Every-Wortman explains that future projects might also lean towards merging cultural sectors in the city, and each exhibition is to be site-specific. Up next, in 2015, are shows by 'photographeur' JR and Space Invader, whose works were last seen on Hong Kong streets earlier this year – and notoriously torn down by the authorities. In this respect, HOCA also aims to push the envelope by framing art – and its collection and sales – in a different light.

"I think, fundamentally, art lovers approach art the same way, no matter their culture or upbringing," says Every-Wortman, who has tracked the exponential rise of the gallery and commercial art scene since her arrival in the city three years ago, not to mention the impact Art Basel has had on curatorial practice. "However, I do think, in terms of buying, the Hong Kong market differs from the international market in its focus on acquisitions that prove to be good investments rather than purchases of love." To counteract this model and way of thinking, HOCA also launches, concurrently with its visual exhibitions, a niche educational component that comprises literary publications and community outreach programmes. Schools and libraries benefit from HOCA's pedagogical texts on contemporary arts, an important facet that the art scene is currently lacking. Additionally, the still-new HOCA draws from its engagement with art lovers, practitioners and students. "For such an art market hub, Hong Kong has trouble developing and keeping its own artists," says Every-Wortman. "Because we're looking at HOCA as an educational platform, publishing and distributing texts will increase our audience and allow us to delve deeper into our curatorial practice."

**La Maison d'Aya** Until Feb 18, Bibo; [bibo.hk](http://bibo.hk).

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