



Interview with Lauren Every-Wortman, Hong Kong Contemporary Art Foundation

BY DARRYL WEE | FEBRUARY 22, 2015





Lauren Every-Wortman.
(Courtesy HOCA)

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HONG KONG — Founded in 2014, [Hong Kong Contemporary Art Foundation \(HOCA\)](#) is a relatively new player among the city’s growing community of non-profit arts institutions. Bolstered by a strong base of private and corporate patrons, HOCA currently operates on a nomadic basis, organizing art exhibitions in various locations across Hong Kong.

Heading HOCA’s program is **Lauren Every-Wortman**, exhibitions manager and contemporary art specialist at HOCA. A seasoned curator who spent several years as gallery manager of [Above Second](#) in Sheung Wan, Every-Wortman organized HOCA’s first exhibition, a showcase of Japanese artist [Aya Takano](#) entitled “La Maison d’Aya,” at the French restaurant [Bibo](#) on Hollywood Road in December last year. “We approached Bibo with our idea, and they were thrilled to offer us their space. They are not only fans of her artwork — the concept of the restaurant is also closely linked to contemporary art,” says Every-Wortman. “We felt it was a unique way to launch a foundation, and hoped that having the exhibition in a non-traditional, public location would allow more people in the city to learn about our efforts.”



To coincide with this year’s Art Basel in Hong Kong, HOCA Foundation will present a survey exhibition of French artist **JR** from March 15 through April 12, featuring a wide range of his most representative works. These include his early pasted portraits in the troubled Parisian suburbs of Montfermeil, Les Bosquets from “Portrait of a Generation,” “Face2Face” (2007), which consists of paired portraits of Israeli and Palestinian citizens displayed on the security fences dividing the two territories, and “Women are Heroes” (2008), a paean to the unsung labor of women in impoverished communities worldwide.



BLOUIN ARTINFO quizzed Lauren Every-Wortman on how this new exhibition with JR came about.

The HOCA collection currently includes works by artists with a strong connection to the pop culture of their native cities, such as Takashi Murakami, Yoshitomo Nara, Banksy, and KAWS. How would you position JR’s work in this context? Do you see him primarily as an artist or a social activist?

JR is interesting in that his work fits into different contemporary art contexts: photography, street art, and public art, to name a few. Like

the other artists in our collection, JR’s work draws directly from contemporary culture. He takes portraits of living people and pastes them in the streets for everyone to see. This opens up a dialogue about the role of the individual in society. I don’t know if that makes him a social activist, as that usually implies someone with a specific cause they are fighting for or against, but I think it shows that art can change people’s views of the world.

In your previous role as gallery manager at Above Second in Hong Kong, you worked with Cyrcle to produce a mural at the Youth Outreach Center in Sai Wan Ho, and with D*Face to produce a mural for PMQ in Central. How would you describe the general environment for public installations the city of Hong Kong (sanctioned or not)?

I think Hong Kong has a very traditional view of outdoor public art. There are many sculptures, and occasionally a large temporary public installation outside one of the malls. But murals have been more accepted by Hong Kong over the past couple of years. If you take a look at the work Above Second has done, as well as the non-profit HK Walls, you can see that there has really been a push for public urban art, and that even the traditional shop owners on Hollywood Road are starting to accept the art form, allowing artists to paint on their buildings.

After this JR exhibition, the HOCA Foundation will host another two shows this year, as well as an artist-in-residence program. Can you tell us a bit more about the rest of your program for 2015? Will HOCA be occupying a permanent space?

Our next exhibition will be with another urban artist, Space Invader, at the Qube at PMQ in conjunction with Le French May. We’re really excited for this show, as it will be focusing on the artworks that the government had removed in Hong Kong after the artist’s invasion in January 2014. After that, we’ll concentrate full-time on looking for a permanent space. We hope to find something before the end of the year so we can kickstart our artist-in-residence program by the end of this year. As you know, space in Hong Kong is hard to come by, but we’re keeping our fingers crossed.

“JR: A Survey Exhibition” runs March 15 through April 12, 2015 at The Ocean, 3/F, 28 Beach Road, Repulse Bay, Hong Kong.

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