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Gimme (Tax) Shelter

BY DT

Galleries need to be increasingly attuned to the delicate financial concerns of their clients. So, many are relocating to cities known for their attractive tax benefits. Dubai is one such hub, and serves as a low-tax haven for art lovers from both sides of the Gulf. With an eye on artists and collectors of newly un-sanctioned Iran, a new wave of galleries—from as close as Pakistan and as far away as the United States—is heading to the self-billed “arts destination” of Alserkal Avenue, located in the al-Quoz industrial zone.

Meanwhile, Dubai’s existing galleries—which have survived plenty of arid years—are grumbling about all the special treatment that Alserkal developers are showering on their newly arrived,

and the business-oriented, where the tax for art is only levied at seven percent and is zero in its free port, has seen a quiet reshuffle in the art market. In December, Berlin gallerist **Michael Janssen** tiptoed out of the arts complex of Gillman Barracks—home to heavy commercial hitters such as Arndt, Ota Fine Arts and FOST.



But fret not, Singaporeans. Gillman Barracks already has a tenant lined up for the space. Sydney’s **Sullivan+Strumpf** will extend its lion’s paw. Offering some of the hottest names out of Australia, including bestselling hyperrealistic sculptures by Sam Jinks and curator-favorite Tony Albert, Sullivan+Strumpf has grown in size and reputation, and is building networks beyond the all-too-cozy Australian art market.

Still in the Lion City, this year’s Art Stage Singapore was the most professionally produced edition to date, mostly due to Indonesia’s forever smiling **Tom Tandio**, who works hard behind the scenes. He was also largely responsible for attracting the hordes of Bahasa-speaking clients prowling the halls. Although China’s stock-market gyrations might have made some potential buyers skittish, Malaysian collector **Datuk Noor Azman** was seen accumulating huge bundles of artwork at swish galleries such as White Cube. As one of the rare buyers flouting the self-imposed

austerity diet sweeping the region, Azman probably requested—and likely received—handsome discounts.

Another gallery that’s managed to find recurring success, with back-to-back sellouts, is STPI, the government-subsidized space. First, in November, **Do Ho Suh’s** delicate thread reconstructions of household fixtures sold out in minutes during the opening preview, as did an exhibition of a paper forest by Sundaram Tagore gallery stable artist **Jane Lee**. Perhaps those Gillman Barracks dealers, out in the Singaporean jungle, should take note.

One recent Singapore hire most likely cashing in, on his inventory of intel, is former Bazaar Art Jakarta (BAJ) fair director **Leo Silitonga**. Since last August, after a fiasco with the VIP cards arriving only *after* the opening of the fledgling Indonesian fair, Silitonga has found refuge and good company at the larger Art Stage Singapore. It’s even rumored that Art Stage is exploring establishing a Jakarta fair, and going head-to-head with Bazaar Art. It will be interesting to see how BAJ’s



new director, the vivacious ex-Sotheby’s and independent dealer **Vivi Yip** might respond if it does.

Moving north to China’s own tax haven, the former British colony Hong Kong, dealers from both near and far continue to be drawn into its fragrant orbit. First



Milan’s **Massimo De Carlo**—known for his work with conceptualists Maurizio Cattelan and art collective Gelitin—has dipped his spoon into the Asia bowl by taking over a portion of a space vacated by the European blue-chip photographers and modern painters of Hong Kong’s Ben Brown Fine Arts in the Central district’s now-plush Pedder Building—at roughly USD 30 per square foot per month. Elsewhere in the unintended vertical gallery complex, the Hong Kong shrine to maternity Bumps to Babes, one of the building’s oldest and most successful tenants since 2003, will vacate its 483-square-meter space. Hong Kong art folk are pregnant with expectations about who might adopt that space, as big as Gagosian’s upstairs crib in the same building.

Not surprisingly then, Chelsea’s favorite German gallerist **David Zwirner** was spotted touring prime real estate to usher in 2016. It makes sense that Zwirner would show up a mere elevator button away from his main worldwide competitor, [Larry] Gagosian. Who would have thought that a building that once flogged discount cashmere sweaters and baby formula could transform itself into the toniest art ghetto in Asia? Well, perhaps those who saw a district of concrete-factories or a remote, forested military housing complex and thought, “What a quaint place to sell art.”



flashier neighbors, such as New York dealer **Leila Heller**, with her new 1,400-square-meter cavern for Wim Delvoye and duo Shirin Neshat and Shoja Azari, as well as the French dealer **Stephane Custot**, with his raft of European secondary-market inventory. The latter will open in March, in time for the 10th edition of Art Dubai, after his temporary office, along with the construction plans, went up in flames in a mysterious New Year’s Eve fire. Fortunately, none of the goods were charred.

Dubai’s long-lost cousin of Singapore, never shy about offering favorable tax benefits for the rich