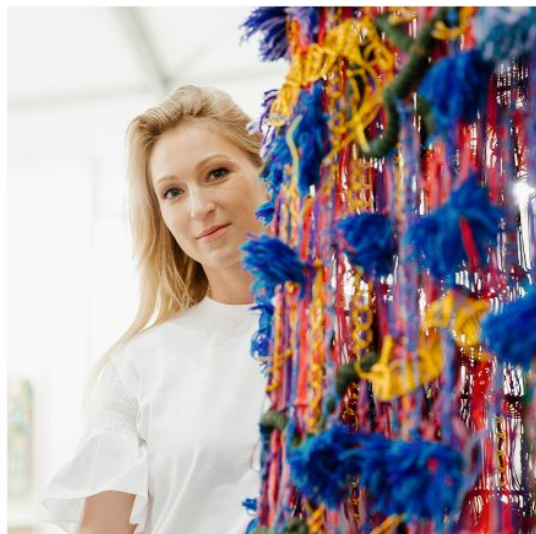


Changing the Art Game in Asia | Inna Rodchenko-Highfield of Art Central

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It's 22 hours before the opening of [Art Central Hong Kong](#) and it's chaos - but good chaos. Over 100 galleries from all corners of the world are setting up their booths, crates of artwork are arriving by the dozen - including pieces by the likes of Lita Cabellut, Afonso Tostes, Jonathan Rosen, to name a few - and champagne glasses are being polished for tomorrow's big reveal. The buzz and energy in here is awesome. Infectious, even.

"Seeing the event come together and watching visitors' response to the art program is the most rewarding thing for me," says Inna Rodchenko-Highfield, head of business development for Art Central. "I am one of those lucky people whose interest became a full-time job. I grew up going to museums and galleries. Fine art and performing arts were a staple weekend activity in our family, from opera and ballet to gallery openings and museum exhibitions."

As she strolls through the aisles of the art fair in the making, it's easy to see that she feels right at home, that this is what she lives for, and that leaving her career in finance behind was without a doubt the right move. During her time working the rat race in finance, Inna was an avid

collector. So when a close friend asked for her help on a big project for his art consulting agency, she jumped at the chance and ultimately jumped into a new career.

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“It all started from there and it's been an amazing journey of self-rediscovery,” says Inna, who began her career in art as a consultant for private and corporate collections before assisting for Art Basel and now, Art Central.

“Art Central is unique in its dynamism and forward-thinking outlook. We've come to be recognized as an international platform for discovery and experimentation, a platform for showcasing and unearthing the next generation of talent alongside established names. This year also presents a strong identity for pushing boundaries in contemporary art.”

This year, Art Central went off the wall - literally - to include a plethora of installations, performance art, video and experiential art. One of the most striking performances, and one Inna was particularly excited about, was “Red Chador” by Cambodian-American artist Anida Yoeu Ali. Alarmed and disturbed by the state of the world, she dressed in a sparkling red chador and roamed the fair carrying 99 signs, each with varying political statements chosen from events like The Umbrella Movement and Trump speeches.

“Art stimulates culture and community engagement. I see public art as a necessary and critical part of society's fabric that produces innovation and positive thinking,” says Inna. “My advice to aspiring artists is to continue to create and express with confidence and to continue to provoke thought in today's society. Especially in a place like Hong Kong that has largely been a commercial and finance center, but that has a very rich culture - it just hasn't been fully expressed in a contemporary artistic way.”

Inna's Favorite Female Artists:

Marina Abramovic: “She redefines what art is through her performances and installations.”

Sinta Tantra: “A beautiful female artist whose colorful and vibrant colors are influenced by her Balinese heritage.”

Pixy Liao: “Pixy's series of self-portraits of her and her boyfriend look at unbalanced relationships between men and women.”

Photos by: [*Stanley Cheng*](#)

