

## Metal cubes, North Korea handcrafts highlight Hong Kong art show

By Kelvin Chan  
The Associated Press

**H**ONG KONG — Gold-plated metal cubes, tapestries embroidered by unknown North Korean artisans, and bales of cardboard waste were among the highlights of the Art Basel Hong Kong fair.

The latest edition of the global art fair threw open its doors to media and VIP collectors in March in the southern Chinese city, which has become Asia's main art trading hub.

Some 239 galleries from 35 countries and territories exhibited works at the show, which was open to the public for three days.

Organizers shrugged off concerns about whether China's slowdown and a shaky world economy are dampening global art demand.

"Maybe I think collectors will ask a lot more questions before they agree to a sale, but I think generally speaking, it just feels like everyone is very excited about the art world," said Adeline Ooi, Art Basel's Asia director. The show is an offshoot of the annual contemporary art fair in Basel, Switzerland.

Chinese artist Zhang Ding attracted curious visitors with his "18 Cubes" installation, which consists of 18 large steel boxes plated with 24-karat gold to give them a mirror-like finish.

In a twist, Zhang invited fairgoers to scratch whatever they wanted onto the surface, using anything they were carrying with them, or black crystal shards provided for the purpose.

Coco Li, who runs a Shanghai company buying art on behalf of corporate Chinese clients, scratched the Chinese characters for "interactive art" onto one cube.

"This kind of art is better than 'quiet' art," said Li, gesturing to paintings displayed by a nearby gallery.

South Korean artist Kyungah Ham presented "Chandeliers in Five Cities," the latest in her series of embroidered works crafted with the help of unidentified North Korean workers. Ham settled on chandeliers as a reference to political power after she noticed one in a picture of world leaders meeting to divide the Korean Peninsula into north and south at the end of World War II.

She said she sends materials and digital images of her designs to the unidentified North Korean artisans through secretive middlemen who travel through China. It can take up to a year before she gets one back.

Ham said she was inspired after she found a North Korea propaganda flyer in front of the home of her parents in 2008.

"I wanted to send back these kinds of fliers in a very artistic way," she said.



**METH BUSTERS.** Thai policemen display some of the 498 pounds of crystal meth and 18 pounds of heroin during a press conference in Bangkok, Thailand. Thai police arrested 15 Malaysians trying to smuggle millions of dollars of crystal meth and heroin stashed in luggage on a train bound for Malaysia. Many of the packages were wrapped up like children's presents in paper with teddy bears and hearts. (AP Photo/Sakchai Lalit)

### Thailand arrests 15 Malaysians, seizes crystal meth on train

**BANGKOK (AP)** — Thai police reports say they have arrested 15 Malaysians trying to smuggle millions of dollars worth of crystal meth and heroin stashed in luggage on a train bound for Malaysia.

Police say the seizure included 226 kilograms (498 pounds) of crystal meth and eight kilograms (18 pounds) of heroin. The meth, also known as "ice," has an estimated street value in Thailand exceeding 452 million baht (\$13 million), said police Col. Putidej Boonkrapueh. The drugs were destined for Malaysia, where the street price is double, and for other markets, police said.

Police Lt. Gen. Thitiraj Nhongharnpitak called the seizure a "huge bust" at a news conference where the drugs were spread across large tables in a variety of packages, including many wrapped up like children's presents in paper with teddy bears and hearts.

Thitiraj, the commissioner of Thailand's Central Investigation Bureau, said authorities acted on a tip that couriers would attempt to transport a large quantity of drugs by travelling from the Thai capital to Malaysia.

He said the narcotics had come from northern Thailand, but declined to discuss other details about the operation.

Northern Thailand is a known trafficking route for drugs coming out of Myanmar, which is Southeast Asia's largest producer of methamphetamines and heroin.

### Film's dark vision of future Hong Kong unsettles Beijing

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patrolling neighborhoods on the lookout for banned words.

Social worker Thomas Choi, 36, said attempts to stop the movie from being seen would backfire. He

said he became interested in the movie after reading comments online.

"Even though it's set in 2025, the producers and filmmakers are talking about something that's happening now."



**GLOBAL ART FAIR.** A man looks at an art installation, "Face To Face" (top photo), created by Taiwan artist Peng Hung-chih, during the VIP preview of the Art Basel Hong Kong fair. Gold-plated metal cubes, tapestries embroidered by unknown North Korean artisans, and 18 large steel boxes plated with 24-karat gold were among the highlights at the art fair. Indonesian artist Tintin Wulia's collection of cardboard bales (bottom photo) was the result of a yearlong investigation into the recycling micro-economy. (AP Photo/Kin Cheung)

Indonesian artist Tintin Wulia's collection of cardboard bales is the result of her yearlong investigation into a recycling micro-economy involving scrap collectors and Filipino migrant domestic workers who spend their days off in the heart of Hong Kong's financial district.

She said the project examines how the material links seemingly unrelated groups in Hong Kong society and also symbolizes the city's widening wealth gap.



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