



Liu Xiaodong's
"Into Taihu."

The China Art Market Stays Hot

Although Chinese art is seeing competition in the marketplace from South Korea, Southeast Asia and Japan, China's artists and collectors continue to fuel a global market with artworks and purchasing power that dominate headlines and collections.

Poly Culture Group, based in Beijing, essentially controls mainland market sales and is the third-largest art auction house in the world, though far behind Christie's and Sotheby's, which cater to the more Western-focused Hong Kong market. But not all the action is in mainland China. Last November at Christie's in New York, Chinese taxi driver-turned-billionaire Liu Yiqian bought Modigliani's Nu Couché for \$170.4 million, report-





Zhang Xiaogang's
"Bloodline, Big Family"
series.

edly paying with an American Express card. The painting, along with the collector's other holdings, are destined for his two private museums in Shanghai that will be open to the public.

Conversely, pioneering gallerists like Christophe Mao, who once worked in finance, was one of the first to bring contemporary Chinese art to America when he opened Chambers Fine Art in Manhattan in 2000. Today, with galleries in New York and Beijing, Mao continues to showcase blue-chip and emerging art talent from China.

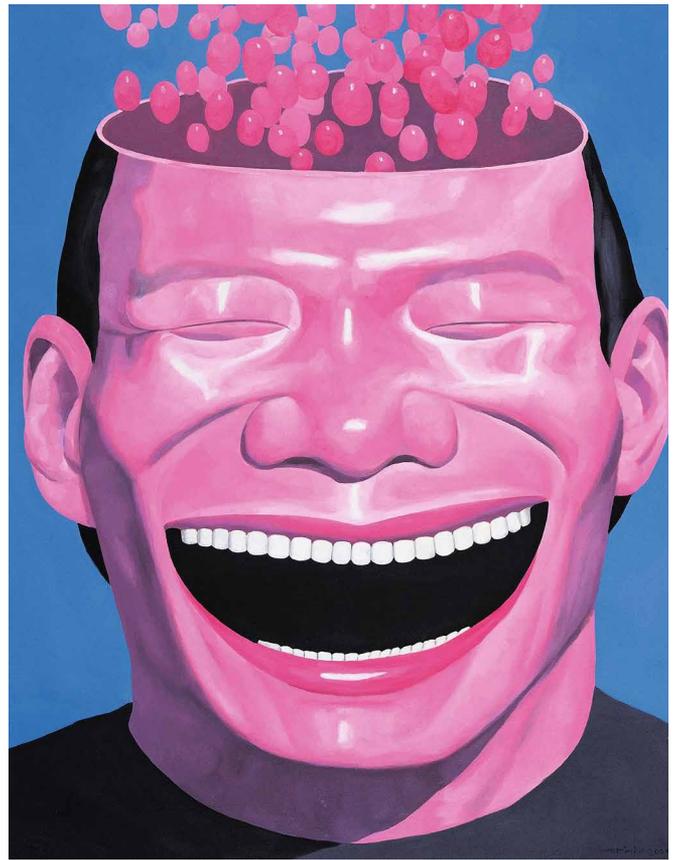
China is home to an explosive contemporary art scene. Among the notable artists in Chinese contemporary art are **Zhang Xiaogang**, whose portraits are archetypally Chinese and reference the Cultural Revolution; and **Yue Minjun**, whose grotesque self-portraits are an acquired taste but famously representative of a style that could come from nowhere else. The more painterly and substantive work by **Liu Xiaodong** is reminiscent of Lucian Freud, while **Zeng Fanzhi** paints with the ferocious intensity of German Expressionists like Otto Dix and Max Beckmann.

If such intense contemporary works are not to every art lover's taste, China's artistic past provides a rich assortment of aesthetic rewards.

Ancient jade, porcelain and bronze pieces, some more than 2,000 years old, offer collectors ample opportunity to spend a fortune on vibrant samples of cultural heritage. In 2014, when Liu Yiqian paid \$36 million for a rare tiny porcelain Ming Dynasty tea "chicken cup" adorned with a humble, hand-painted chicken, he shocked the world's curators, conservators and collectors by taking a sip of tea from his newly acquired treasure.

—ROBERT ROSS





(Left) "The Sun" from Yue Minjun's series *L'Ombre Du Fou Rire* or *The Shadow Of Giggles*. "Memory-2" (above) and "Untitled" (below).



© YUE MINJUN