

## **From Asia to the world: An interview with Director Glenn Scott Wright from Victoria Miro Gallery**

“Art Basel Switzerland? It’s the best art fair in the world. Stellar line-up, fantastic infrastructure,” said Mr. Glenn Scott Wright on a sunny London afternoon. Well, I imagine such compliments do not come often from the director of a leading contemporary art gallery like Victoria Miro. They probably come as often as we get sunshine in London, if you would pardon my analogy. To supporters of the fair, this year is particularly exciting, due to the fair’s upcoming Asian debut in Hong Kong from May 23-26, 2013. Two months prior to the event, I had the pleasure of talking to Wright about the show, and the rising Asian Art market.

### **Hong Kong and Asia on the rise**

Without question, the Asian economy is booming, making it one of the vibrant new markets for contemporary art, and a sensible region for Art Basel to expand. Wright shares his observation about it. “When people start out collecting art, they usually begin with art works from their own countries, which creates an increasing demand for Asian art in Asia,” said Wright. For the same reason, Wright thinks Hong Kong is looking into an exciting future in terms of art dealing, although the city has yet to develop a stronger institutional platform for contemporary art, particularly in terms of building more professional museums. “Museums and institutions act as an educational platform for people to access contemporary art. If Hong Kong is to take advantage of the booming economy and become a prominent market for contemporary art, it is crucial that it improves its infrastructure,” said the director. Although the gallery has no plans to open up shop in Hong Kong it works with an affiliate based in Beijing to represent its interests the region.

### **Victoria Miro at Art Basel Hong Kong**

Turning to Art Basel Hong Kong in particular, Wright notes its distinctive Asian characteristics, just by the sheer number of Asian galleries participating in it compared to the fair’s Basel and Miami counterparts. “People do not come all the way to see works they see in other places. It is important for the fair to show contemporary art in the region,” Wright remarks.

The gallery itself is presenting a solo exhibition of the Japanese artist Yayoi Kusama at the fair alongside Ota Fine Art, who has long enjoyed an unparalleled status in the contemporary art world for her signature use of dots in a vast variety of contexts. The decision compliments two recent occasions. Kusama has just held her retrospective exhibition. This was the largest retrospective dedicated to Yayoi Kusama opened at the Whitney Museum New York on 12 July 2012, charting the nine decades of Kusama's truly unique life and artistic practice which have taken her from rural Japan to New York

and Tokyo. The exhibition coincided with the launch of a worldwide collaboration between Kusama and Louis Vuitton. In 2012, her work is also featured in the opening exhibition for the new Sotheby's Hong Kong gallery on the 5<sup>th</sup> floor of One Pacific Place.

Yayoi Kusama returns to Victoria Miro this spring with an exhibition of new paintings and accumulation of sculptures, from 25 April - 25 May. A major series of touring exhibitions will take place in 2013 – 2015 in Japan, Asia and South America. *Yayoi Kusama: Eternity of Eternal Eternity* opens in April at the Shizuoka Prefectural Museum of Art. In June, a comprehensive exhibition will tour South America, curated by Philip Larratt-Smith (Curator at Malba - Fundación Costantini in Buenos Aires) and Frances Morris (Tate Modern's Head of Collections) who curated Kusama's recent retrospective. An exhibition of over 100 recent works opens in July at Daegu Art Museum, Korea, before touring to Seoul, Shanghai, and Taiwan

First opened in Cork Street, Mayfair in 1985, the gallery quickly earned acclaim for its representation of established and emerging artists from the USA, Europe and Asia. With a sharp eye and intuition, the gallerist is also famed for nurturing the careers of young artists. Wright notes: "It's hard to define what Victoria Miro looks for in artists. We do not tick boxes. In a way, it is very intuitive. The decision comes out of a discussion between Victoria (founder of the gallery) and myself." In 2000, the gallery relocated to a dexterously converted 8000- square-foot former furniture factory between Hoxton and Islington in northeast London. It continues to represent artists of every age from those in their 20's to their 80's, and of various nationalities. Among them are Turner Prize winners Chris Ofili and Grayson Perry, and nominees Ian Hamilton Finlay, Peter Doig and Isaac Julien.

Straight off the plane from the Armory Show in New York, Wright is looking into another trip to the Middle-East next week before he travels to Asia in May. The future art world heads towards globalization, Asia being a visible next stop, but surely not the last.