

# HK ARTIST SET FOR SHOW IN TOP NEW YORK GALLERY

**Guggenheim Museum exhibition** showcases best of contemporary art from around China, with Tsang Kin-wah the sole Hong Kong finalist

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A Hong Kong visual artist will be among the first contemporary Chinese artists to create works commissioned by the Guggenheim Museum in New York, the renowned institution has announced.

Tsang Kin-wah, a Chinese University graduate with numerous accolades under his belt, starting with the 2005 Sovereign Asian Art Prize, is the only Hong Kong-based artist among 10 mainland and Taiwan finalists under the Chinese Art Initiative at Guggenheim funded by The Robert H. N. Ho Family Foundation.

Robert Yau Chung Ho, chairman of the foundation, which provided US\$10 million in funding for the programme, said the initiative served to "advance artistic achievement of contemporary Chinese artists of our time", and that it "fosters understanding of Chinese culture globally".

"The fact that this global initiative is a collaboration with a Hong Kong-based foundation is just part of a growing role for the city in the world of global art and culture," he added.

The official news release said the selected artists were "unified by their distinctive and independent practices that poetically balance politics and aesthetics".

Yet Tsang, communicating with the *Post* via email, said he "didn't really think about how to make the balance consciously".

He said he was happy to be selected but did not "think too much about what it meant to me". Instead, the 40-year-old said he would rather spend time developing his work, an undertaking he deemed "more important".

Born in Shantou (汕頭), and a Hong Kong resident since the age of six, Tsang said his work reflected everything but Hong Kong.

"I don't think my work contains any 'Hong Kong elements'," he explained, adding that this had not been his primary interest or focus in recent years.

He said that although he was based in Hong Kong, the city did not define him.

"Identity is something that often bothers me, so I don't really know how to define myself most of the time," he said.

His debut work for the Guggenheim was still being developed and having its underlying concept refined, Tsang said. Nevertheless, the associate curator who selected him expects something "heavy" from him.

Weng Xiaoyu, an organiser of

the exhibition under the Chinese Art Initiative, called Tsang "very sensitive" and praised him for "artfully manipulating the relationship between text and image, meaning and visual".

Weng, 31, a Shanghai native who joined the Guggenheim last August to oversee its Chinese art programme through to 2018, recalled Tsang's video installation at an exhibition in San Francisco in 2014, and the dark and emotional atmosphere he created.

"He is one of the few artists whose work gives me goosebumps," she said.

As for what she hoped Guggenheim visitors would experience when encountering Tsang's work, she volunteered her view that "art should be able to produce in the audience a visceral, emotional, and even physical reaction".

Weng, who visited Hong Kong last October for the selection and returned this week, said there was no quota of finalists for each of the places representing the region.

"Our criteria are that the candidate must be an intellectual artist that shows a long-term commitment in the arts and is able to deliver and install the project by the time of the exhibition in November," she said.

From past experience, Weng said, Tsang's installation work was easy and straightforward to grasp, and he was a man of few words.

"Compared to other artists, such as the Yangjiang Group from Guangdong (廣東) province, which will feature organic materials in their project, Tsang's work is neat and clear," she said.

"I am confident that his project will be one of the strongest pieces in the exhibition."



Hong Kong visual artist Tsang Kin-wah, below, will be among the first Chinese artists to create works for an exhibition at the Guggenheim Museum in New York, which Weng Xiaoyu, above is overseeing. Photos: Nora Tam

