

Heaven for Art Lovers

World-renowned auctioneer Phillips underscores Hong Kong as a major auction hub with its recent relocation to permanent premises in the West Kowloon Cultural District.



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Jonathan Crockett
Chairman – Asia
Phillips

There is nothing quite like the thrill of a live auction. The atmosphere is electric. Under the hammer are one-of-a-kind treasures that may become future museum pieces. The excitement of competing for a slice of history is equally as compelling as the glamorous receptions, and global auction house Phillips has the hottest ticket. “There is a certain type of energy that is created at an auction,” said Phillips’ Chairman, Asia, Jonathan Crockett. “One can never predict how far someone is going to bid.”

Hong Kong – Preferred Destination on the Global Art Circuit

For well over two centuries – one of its first major deals was Queen Marie Antoinette’s paintings – Phillips has guided international collectors through auctions, private sales and exhibitions. In addition, its team of specialists consults with museums, advises private estates and corporations, and offers appraisals and valuations.

Alongside sales offices in New York, London and Geneva, its Hong Kong premises consist of 52,000 square feet across six storeys in the West Kowloon Cultural District (WKCD). The ground, first and third floors are permanent galleries devoted to showcasing 20th and 21st century art, design, editions, jewellery and timepieces. “We have developed a reputation for being the house that introduces new names to the Asia market,” noted Crockett. “Our regional headquarters in the WKCD is the first time any auction house in Hong Kong has ever

had a permanent exhibition space and an auction room.”

Remarkably, Phillips began hosting auctions in Hong Kong only eight years ago with a team of six people. Its expansion coincided with the rise of Hong Kong’s dominance as one of the world’s largest art auction hubs.

Crockett believes that there are many reasons for Hong Kong’s reputation as a hub for art auctions. He said, “Unlike many of its international counterparts, Hong Kong serves not just the local art community, but it also acts as the main pan-Asian hub for the trade in art. Dealers, galleries and auction houses in Hong Kong have long served the art collecting community both here and across the region”. Crockett continued, “Hong Kong is on the doorstep to Mainland China, the world’s second largest and perhaps soon to be the largest economy. The legal system here is robust and there is very low corruption. There are world-class logistics companies and infrastructure here in place to serve an auction market.”

Making Art Sense

Phillip’s premium Asia headquarters in Hong Kong allows the company to take its regional business to a new level. “The city is home to international galleries, auction houses and art fairs. And with the opening of world-class venues, such as M+ and the Hong Kong Palace Museum in the WKCD, it attracts art lovers from around the globe. In particular, the advent of Mainland Chinese buyers has drawn them to the city’s art trading events,” Crockett said.

“With Hong Kong’s vibrant art scene and our unique competitive advantage as the only auction house with an exclusive focus on 20th and 21st century collectors, we are positive to achieve remarkable growth in Asia.”

Phillips has already capitalised on its new synergy with the WKCD with the auction of Yayoi Kusama’s *Pumpkin*. The sale coincided with the Japanese artist’s exhibition at M+, and it was one of the highest value works by the artist to ever be offered at auction. “We are constantly looking at ways to advance and to grow our business across the region,” stated Crockett. “I would like us to be market leaders in all the categories that we operate in at some point in the near future.”

Phillips Auctioneers

- Established by Harry Phillips in 1796 in London, Phillips is a leading global platform for buying and selling 20th and 21st century collectibles. It also offers an online auction platform accessible anywhere in the world
- Set up its permanent Asia headquarters spanning 52,000 square feet in Hong Kong in 2023

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