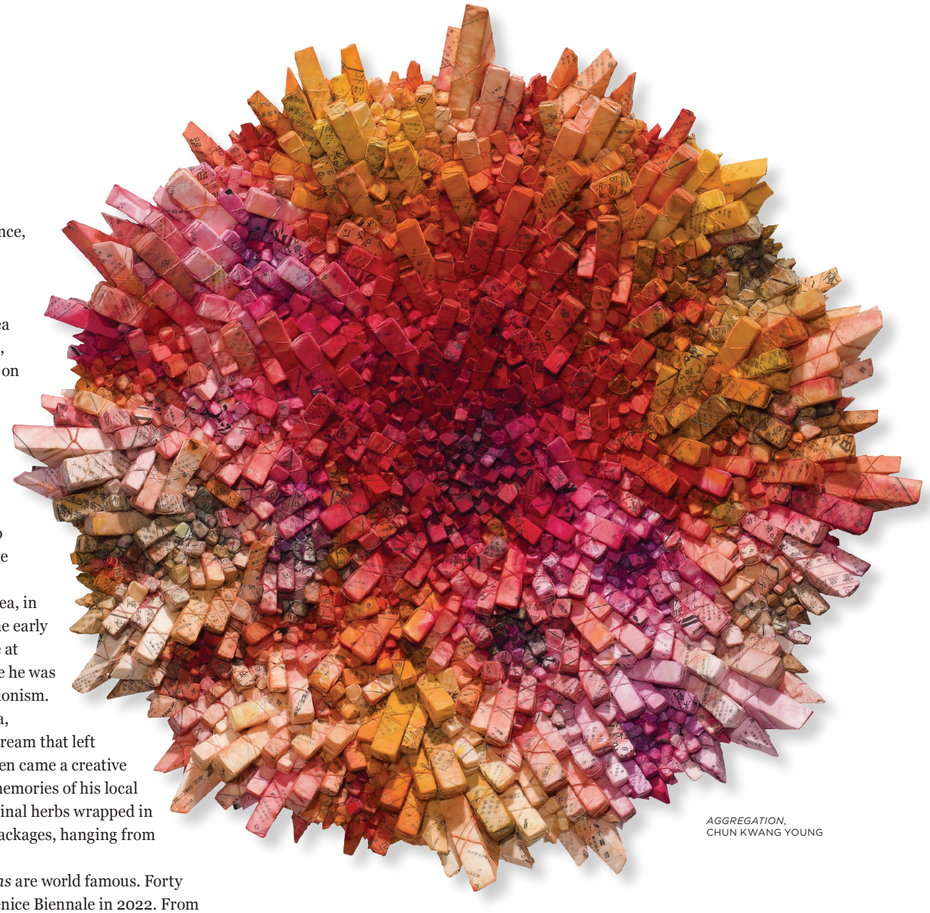


*AGGREGATION*, CHUN KWANG YOUNG

# ASIAN ART ON SHOW

Returning for its 29th edition, Asian Art in London promises exhibitions, auctions and talks from world-renowned specialists, pushing far beyond Oriental tropes to explore art spanning centuries and cultures

WORDS: WILL MOFFITT

Glimpsed from a distance, Chun Kwang Young's *Aggregations* look like constellations of spiky, luminescent sea coral dragged up from the depths, or patches of exotic fungi nesting on gallery walls.

The freestanding sculptural hangings and wall reliefs are composed of small, triangular forms wrapped in antique mulberry paper, often tinted with teas or pigment, twisted into increasingly complex and intricate totems of Korean identity.

Born in Hongcheon, South Korea, in 1944, Chun moved to the US in the early 1970s to pursue a master's degree at Philadelphia College of Art, where he was deeply drawn to abstract expressionism.

He returned to his native Korea, disillusioned with an American dream that left him feeling lonely and hollow. Then came a creative epiphany sparked by childhood memories of his local doctor's office. He recalled medicinal herbs wrapped in mulberry paper, tied into small packages, hanging from the ceiling.

These days Chun's *Aggregations* are world famous. Forty of them were showcased at the Venice Biennale in 2022. From October 9 they will adorn the walls of Sundaram Tagore, the contemporary art gallery in Pall Mall.

Launched during Asian Art in London (AAL) – the capital's collective initiative for the Asian art trade – the show marks a significant development in Chun's decades-long exploration of memory, history and time. Formerly composed of paper sourced from classical Chinese characters, or Hanja, his latest works are inscribed in Hangul, Korea's modern writing system.

The show is a highlight in AAL's multifarious programme of specialised exhibitions, auctions and talks by eminent dealers, auction houses, museums and galleries.

BONHAMS



Starting life in the late 1990s as an unusual cultural experiment – AAL is the world's first city-based Asian art season – the programme has endured and evolved over almost three decades.

Strategic partnerships with major cultural institutions have helped. AAL's new link-up with Lapada, which holds an art and antiques fair in Berkeley Square, promises "collaborative initiatives and special experiences".

As the initiative approaches its 30th anniversary, Mark Slaats, AAL's chair, has talked of his ambition to "deepen collaboration, broaden our reach across markets and strengthen London's standing as a leading international centre for Asian art".

The sharing of specialist knowledge, acquired through decades of academic study and first-hand experience, is a cornerstone of AAL, and specialists don't come more specialised than Giuseppe Eskenazi.

Regarded as the world's most important dealer in Chinese art, Eskenazi has sold to more than 80 museums worldwide. His rigorous and compelling scholarship has transformed the west's appreciation for Asian art. He was an early adopter of thermoluminescence testing to determine the age of ceramics and cast bronzes, and including catalogue information in Chinese.

This prestigious heritage makes Eskenazi's exhibition, Chinese ceramics, furniture, scholar's objects and metalwork. (October 29 to November 13) a seminal event for collectors and enthusiasts of ancient Chinese artefacts.



BRONZE INCENSE BURNER, CHRISTIE'S



*WIND CHIME*, TOM VATTAKUZHY, ASTAGURU

Auctions held last autumn suggested London was attracting international demand for exceptional Asian material with provenance. A highlight was the sale of paintings from the personal collection of Prince and Princess Sadruddin Aga Khan at Christie's, which totalled £45.76 million. Achieving six times the presale estimate, it established a world auction record for a classical Indian or Islamic painting.

This year Christie's will host two auctions: Fine Asian Art, and Art of the Islamic and Indian Worlds including Rugs and Carpets. After a spectacular summer auction that achieved the highest-value sale of south Asian modern and contemporary art ever staged at Christie's London, both will be eagerly monitored.

Last year Sotheby's recorded some strong results for sales of Chinese materials, a highlight being a sale of a Zhou bronze that had an imperial association with the Qianlong emperor. The auction house will present a range of Chinese art, spanning Neolithic to Republican periods, and Arts of the Islamic World & India. Meanwhile, Bonhams, on New Bond Street, will host sales including The Marsh Collection: Art for the Literati (Part V), Fine Chinese Art, Japanese Swords, and Islamic and Indian Art.

For those with more contemporary tastes, AstaGuru, the Mumbai-founded digital auction house, which opened its first international auction venue and gallery in Kensington this year, is hosting a solo exhibition by Tom Vattakuzhy. Shifting Ground, the iconaclastic painter's first London show, opens on October 14 in partnership with the Institute of Contemporary Indian Arts.

Vattakuzhy's solitary figures, animals and interiors glow in a perpetual twilight, caught in a liminal realm somewhere between imagination, memory and reality. His native Kerala appears less as a backdrop to his subjects and more as a social and psychological condition shaped by layered histories of labour, caste and displacement. His work may be rooted in his specific Indian context, but the tensions and tenderness he evokes are universal.

*Asian Art in London runs from October 29 to November 10*