

ART BASEL

COMMUNICATION W. GALSCHIØT AND MEP KIRA MARIE PETER-HANSEN

INVITATION FOR DEBATE

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Statement of Art Basel March 19, 2024

Dear Kira Marie Peter-Hansen and Jens Galschiøt,

Thank you for your note and please excuse the delay in coming back to you. Please find below a statement from Art Basel in response to your question. Should you wish to allude to this statement during your event, **we kindly ask that it is read out in full**, to ensure our views are accurately represented.

Statement from Art Basel:

"Art Basel Hong Kong plays a vital role for galleries, collectors, institutions and the broader arts ecosystem in the city and the wider region. The Hong Kong art scene has grown exponentially since our arrival in 2013 – from the opening of new museums such as M+ to a vibrant mixture of commercial and non-profit galleries, auction houses and artist-run spaces – and our show has become a focal point for the city's arts community. Today, Hong Kong has an unrivalled position as a cultural hub in the heart of Asia, with a strong local arts scene and a general public with a keen and growing interest in the arts.

We have never faced any censorship issues at our shows, nor have we been asked to do anything differently since the introduction of the National Security Law. As with all Art Basel shows, our Selection Committee is responsible for reviewing applications and selects galleries solely based on the quality of their booth proposal.

We are committed to Hong Kong's vibrant cultural community, and to continuing to provide a platform for the vital exchanges and conversations around art for which Art Basel is renowned."

Thank you again for extending an invitation to Art Basel.

With our very best regards,

Maria Marques

Global Head of Content and Communications, Art Basel

Reply to Art Basel by MEP Kira Marie Peter-Hansen, March 7, 2024

Subject:

RE: Invitation for a debate at the EU Parliament on March 20th from 11:00 to 13:00, Political Art Censorship in China and Hong Kong

From:

PETER-HANSEN Kira Marie <kira.peter-hansen@europarl.europa.eu>

Date:

07/03/2024, 12.50

To:

"press@artbasel.com" <press@artbasel.com>, "info@messe" <info@mch-group.com>

Dear Art Basel,

Thank you very much for your response. Needless to say, we are disappointed that you cannot participate in this debate.

We have a concept of leaving empty chairs at the meeting for those, who have been invited but cannot or will not attend. We will place an "Empty Chair" at the Art Basel meeting and disclose to the attendees your reasons for not being able to participate.

We appreciate that you believe we have assembled a *relevant panel and welcome discussions on continuing to strengthen Hong Kong's position as an art market hub*. However, we would like to correct one point: we are concerned about how the Hong Kong art market is developing, as we believe it is not strengthened but rather weakened by extensive self-censorship in the art market.

We agree that Art Basel is a very important and *active member of the Hong Kong art community*. It sounds fantastic if Art Basel is *committed to continuing to promote international cultural exchange in the city and delivering a successful event for galleries, artists, collectors, partners, and the broader arts ecosystem*.

Does this commitment mean that Art Basel can declare that they will not participate in or contribute to the censorship of China-critical art at their upcoming exhibition in Hong Kong, and that they will publicly announce this position? This would be an important signal to send to participants at Art Basel Hong Kong, ensuring that no galleries or other participants in Art Basel feel compelled to self-censor China-critical artworks.

We would greatly appreciate reading out such a statement at our meeting in the EU Parliament.

Best regards,

Kira Marie Peter-Hansen and co-organizer Jens Galschiøt

Art Basel Response to Invitation – March 5, 2024

From: press@artbasel.com <press@artbasel.com>

Sent: 06 March 2024 14:14

To: PETER-HANSEN Kira Marie <kira.peter-hansen@europarl.europa.eu>; info@messe
<info@mch-group.com>

Subject: Re: Invitation for a debate at the EU Parliament on March 20th from 11:00 to 13:00,
Political Art Censorship in China and Hong Kong

Dear Kira Marie,

We trust this message finds you well.

Thank you for the invitation to participate in the upcoming panel discussion about Hong Kong's art market.

After careful consideration, we regret to inform you that we must decline the invitation. The proximity of the upcoming edition of Art Basel Hong Kong, taking place from March 28 to 30, 2024, demands our team's full attention and engagement and on-site presence in the lead-up.

We appreciate to be considered for this relevant panel and welcome discussions on continuing to strengthen Hong Kong's position as an art market hub. As an active member of the Hong Kong art community, we are committed to continuing to promote international cultural exchange in the city and delivering a successful event for galleries, artists, collectors, partners, and the broader arts ecosystem.

We wish you a successful panel and hope that it sparks insightful and constructive discussions.

Thank you for your understanding.

Sincerely,

Isabelle Becker

Communications Associate, Art Basel

Initial Letter of Invitation from MEP Kira Marie Peter-Hansen, Feb 21

From: PETER-HANSEN Kira Marie <kira.peter-hansen@europarl.europa.eu>
Sent: 21 February 2024 2:07 PM
To: info@messe <info@mch-group.com>; press@artbasel.com <press@artbasel.com>
Subject: Invitation for a debate at the EU Parliament on March 20th from 11:00 to 13:00, Political Art Censorship in China and Hong Kong

Dear Art Basel,

We are pleased to invite you for a debate at the EU Parliament on March 20th, from 11:00 to 13:00.

The discussion will focus on art censorship in Hong Kong, and we will be addressing the responsibility of Western companies operating in Hong Kong.

We have invited a diverse panel, including art critics, artists, Members of the European Parliament (MEPs), market experts, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to contribute their perspectives, and we believe your input is crucial to getting the full understanding and to comprehend the dilemmas faced by the art market.

You will find a full programme and an official invitation letter attached.

I hereby, invite you to register participating by clicking on this Registration. **You will need to submit your registration and be accredited by the European Parliament in order to enter the buildings on the days of the event.**

Thank you very much for considering this invitation. We look forward to hearing from you soon.

Should you have any questions or require further information, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Best regards,

Kira Marie Peter-Hansen
MEP in European Parliament, SF in the Greens/EFA

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ASP 09G154, 60 Rue Wiertz B-1047 Bruxelles, Belgium

Letter for Art Basel, offering to exhibit the Pillar of Shame March 26, 2023

Letter for Art Basel, offering to exhibit the Pillar of Shame

By Artist Jens Galschiøt, March 26, 2024

Sent to: info@mch-group.com ; press@artbasel.com

Dear Art Basel,

We have now concluded the EU exhibition. Thank you very much for your statement on March 19th regarding possible art censorship at the Art Basel fair in Hong Kong. As requested, we read your statement [at our debate meeting in the EU](#), and it was incorporated into the discussion in several ways. As I have mentioned before, I do not entirely agree with your views that there is no political censorship of art at your art fairs. But I think it is self-censorship from you and your exhibitors where you leave out artworks that could be seen as critical toward China or Hong Kong.

I have just spoken with NBC regarding the art week in Hong Kong, of which you are also a part. They asked if I had offered Art Basel to exhibit, for example, a replica of the Pillar of Shame. I explained that Loretta Lau had already suggested, [on Sept. 15, 2023](#), that Art Basel could display a smaller Pillar of Shame sculpture to signify that they will not engage in political art censorship. At that time, I had agreed to lend a bronze copy, a photo, or something similar of the Pillar of Shame for this purpose. However, I am a bit unsure if I have directly made this offer to you. So, I would like to do that now. I would like to send a smaller model of my sculpture by air so that you can exhibit it at your fair to once and for all show the world, China, and the authorities in Hong Kong that you do not bow to censorship of art. Alternatively, one can download a poster of the sculpture and display it; it will probably have the same effect.

It won't cost you anything. My interest lies in ensuring that Hong Kong still has a free and uncensored art market. Please call or write to me, and I will make sure that the sculpture can be sent to Hong Kong immediately – perhaps I can get my artist contacts in the democracy movement to bring you a 3D copy of the sculpture, as they did for the event in 2021?

Sincerely,
Jens Galschiøt

Phone/whatsapp +45 4044 7058

Letter for Art Basel. Sept 15. 2023

Letter for Art Basel. Sept 15. 2023

By Loretta Lau, NGO Dei

no-reply@artbasel.com

to loretta.lau ▾

Fri, 15 Sept 2023, 18:35



The following information has been submitted via the contact form on artbasel.com:

Topic: Directors Requests

Name: Loretta Lau

Email: loretta.lau@ngodei.org

Country: Czechia

Message: Promoting Freedom of Expression: Exhibit 'The Pillar of Shame' at the Entrance to Art Basel Hong Kong Dear Art Basel Organizers, I hope this letter finds you well. I am writing as a passionate supporter of the arts and a dedicated attendee of Art Basel Hong Kong to suggest a powerful and symbolic gesture for the upcoming Art Basel Hong Kong 2024. Given the evolving climate of art censorship and restrictions on freedom of expression in Hong Kong, I believe that Art Basel can play a pivotal role in advocating for artistic freedom and human rights. I propose that Art Basel exhibit 'The Pillar of Shame' by Jens Galschiøt at the entrance to the art fair. This renowned artwork, which previously stood on the campus of Hong Kong University for over two decades before its removal in December 2021, commemorates the victims of the Tiananmen Square tragedy in 1989. It is a powerful symbol of the importance of art as a vehicle for social commentary and the preservation of collective memory. By prominently displaying 'The Pillar of Shame' at the entrance to Art Basel Hong Kong, you would send a strong message to the international art community and the world at large. You would demonstrate your commitment to upholding the principles of freedom of expression and standing up against art censorship, particularly in an environment where such freedoms are increasingly under threat. Art Basel has long been a beacon for artistic diversity, creativity, and innovation. It has celebrated artists from all corners of the globe, each with their unique perspectives and voices. By exhibiting 'The Pillar of Shame,' you would reaffirm your dedication to these core values and show solidarity with the artists, curators, and critics who are currently facing challenges to their creative expression in Hong Kong. I understand that hosting such an exhibit may pose logistical and political challenges, but I firmly believe that the art world has a responsibility to engage with the pressing issues of our time. Art has the power to transcend boundaries, spark dialogue, and inspire change. By taking this bold step, Art Basel can be a catalyst for meaningful conversations about the importance of artistic freedom, not only within the confines of the fair but also within the broader global discourse. I urge you to consider this proposal seriously and engage in a dialogue with artists, experts, and the international art community to explore the feasibility of exhibiting 'The Pillar of Shame' at the entrance to Art Basel Hong Kong 2024. Together, we can make a powerful statement about the enduring importance of art as a vehicle for free expression and the preservation of our shared history. Thank you for your attention to this matter. I eagerly await your response and hope to see Art Basel continue to champion the values that make the art world a source of inspiration and transformation. Best Regards, Loretta Lau