



John Baldessari for BMW

TIME AND Time Again

DEBORAH ISKANDAR
CONSIDERS THE LINK
BETWEEN ART AND DESIGN

Art Basel just finished its 10th edition in Hong Kong earlier this year. Most people think that Art Basel is just about strolling the aisles looking at consecutive booths of modern and contemporary art offered for sale. But, there is more than just the gallery presentations for the VIP clients. Inside the VIP lounge, Art Basel sponsors invest in specially curated exhibitions linking the artistry of their brands with contemporary art.

Audemars Piguet and BMW have been at the forefront of art sponsorship. Audemars Piguet has a long, artistic heritage since its founding in 1875 in the Vallée de Joux of the Jura Mountains on the Swiss-French border. It is the birthplace of the world's most complicated watches, which are still being crafted by hand today. Since 2013, Audemars Piguet has been commissioning interior designers and artists to create works that reflect the history and cultural heritage of its historical workshops and exhibits them in their lounge at the Art Basel fairs. The Curator's direction is to encourage the artists to work with the themes of complexity, precision, as well as the links between sci-

ence, nature and art. It is these characteristics that correlate the art with the production of an Audemars Piguet watch.

"Second Nature" was the title of this year's exhibition. It was a collaboration between the Chilean designer and artist, Sebastian Errazuriz, and Cheng Ran, a young Chinese artist that focuses primarily on film and video art. Cheng Ran likes to combine contradictory elements while also commenting on the differences between Chinese and Western cultures.

Cheng Ran's video work titled "Circadian Rhythm" interprets Audemars Piguet's home by transporting the visitors through the sights and sounds of the rugged landscape as seen through his eyes. A literal definition of "Circadian Rhythm" is the process of living beings, plants, fungus and bacteria and the patterns of sound they generate naturally over a 24-hour period. Using this scientific theory as the basis for his video, Cheng Ran transports the viewer to the Jura Mountains to contemplate the rhythmic sounds of nature in the region. Cheng's curiosity about the musical sounds of

the Jura Mountains and the patterns created in nature relate to the processes of building the most complicated watches in the world.

To complement Cheng Ran's sounds, Sebastian Errazuriz focuses on the visual and metaphysical landscape. He looks at the incongruence of replicating a tree in nature by the material itself. The main sculpture in the exhibition is carved from a block of wood. The wood originated from a live tree that was cut, sawed and then redesigned to become a tree again. It's about taking the elements in nature, moulding and distorting them, and bringing them back full circle in sculptural form. It's a comment on how Audemars Piguet can take the elements of nature - iron, steel and copper - and fabricate these elements to create complex watches by hand. But the elements of nature are still the core of the design. It is Sebastian's obsession and philosophy of the DNA of a design that can transform the materials to become art.

In Sebastian Errazuriz's eyes, to try to replicate nature beyond that is possible and it is an attempt to justify and understand ourselves. It is



Ice Cycle by Sebastian Errazuriz for Audemars Piguet Lounge



Ice Cycle by Sebastian Errazuriz

this sophisticated collaboration between these two artists that illustrates how the watchmakers at Audemars Piguet can be considered artists and shows the relevance of linking art and design. Like the sounds and elements of nature, it is the expectation that the artistry of handcrafted complicated watches will continue to be moulded and replicated to higher art forms.

BMW has a long history with the art market. The BMW Art Car series was founded in 1975 by Hervé Poulain, a French racecar driver. Poulain had two passions, art and racing. When he was recruited to drive for BMW, Poulain commissioned artist Alexander Calder to create the first art car and intended the cars to be used in competitions to showcase BMW's superiority of design. Poulain used the car in the 1975 Le Mans endurance race and subsequent cars were painted by Andy Warhol and Roy Lichtenstein. The car created by Lichtenstein was the most successful artwork in competition, finishing 1st in its class.



Circadian Rhythm Video art at Audemars Piguet Lounge

BMW has continued this tradition for over 40 years. The most recent selection, the 19th car in the series, was created by John Baldessari. John Baldessari is an 85-year-old American artist that embodies the Los Angeles art scene; he is the ultimate minimalist and conceptual artist. In his early works, he focused on billboards and how they can communicate very public messages. But, in his practice, he has taken the literal images and redefined them through coded messages of dots for faces and swaths of colour to replace literal images. He later used text in his artworks to complement the substitution of images.

His installation for BMW incorporates these artistic theories of subtlety and substitution. The car can be described as "COOL". His simplistic use of primary colours and dots and their positions on the front of the car convey an abstract face. He has installed a red dot on the top, which is meant as a metaphor for a helicopter pad, which would be useful in the crowded freeways of Los Angeles. On the side of the car, he has placed his signature text "FAST". Baldessari's mix of words and colours expresses it all, it's just "FAST and COOL".

Over the years, Audemars Piguet and BMW have been steadily reinforcing the image that their watches and cars are also art forms. As Oscar Wilde once said, "Life imitates art more than art imitates life." We see art everywhere: on our watches, our bags, and our cars. We just need to take the time to look, time and time again.

Deborah Iskandar is Principal of ISA Advisory, which advises clients on buying and selling art, and building collections. An expert on Indonesian and international art, she has more than 20 years of experience in Southeast Asia, heading both Sotheby's and Christie's Indonesia during her career before establishing ISA Art Advisory in 2013. She is also the Founder of Indonesian Luxury, the definitive online resource for Indonesians looking to acquire, build and style their luxury homes.

ISA Art Advisory
Jl. Wijaya Timur Raya No.12
Jakarta 12170 Indonesia
tel: +6221 723 3905 e-mail: enquiries@isaartadvisory.com