

ANNIKKA OLSEN/ MAI 2026

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Asian Artists Set the Stage at Independent Art Fair 2026

Six solo booths by Asian artists embody a shifting global perspective at the New York art fair.

Annikka Olsen • May 11, 2026 • [Share](#)

Ahead of the 17th edition of **Independent**, a key trend has already emerged among the exhibitors. No less than six galleries will be presenting solo booths dedicated to Asian artists—from a rising artist making their U.S. debut to a pivotal figure of 20th-century Korean geometric abstraction. Flagging this thematic concentration to Artnet News, Founder and Creative Director of Independent **Elizabeth Dee** sees it as pointing to a greater art world inclination, one that stretches far beyond the booth and fair walls.

“As globalization’s effects reverse across Asia and the world,” says Dee, “and as America enters a set of post-empire challenges—working artists are more keen than ever to exhibit in New York right now, as a place that tackles these geopolitical divides. Independent represents a commission opportunity for gallerists and exhibition platform where cultural references have the potential to be debated in their complexity and depth.”

Evolving Inspirations

Tseng Chien-Ying (b. 1987) is making his

U.S. debut with a presentation with **Kiang Malingue**, New York, with works created both in Taiwan and at the artist residency **99Canal** in New York.

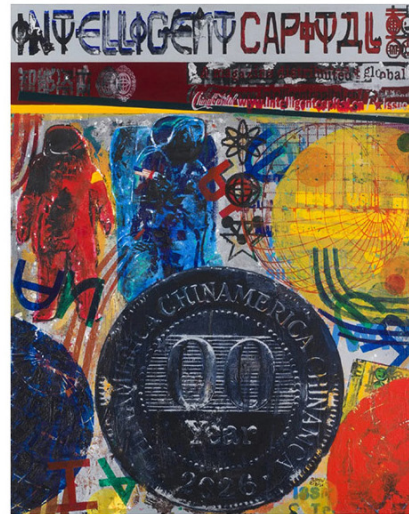
Tseng said that the residency has been “transformative.” The departure from his daily routines in Taiwan and the emotional tenor of New York itself, coupled with the necessity of having to source new materials and thus experiment with new techniques, has had a profound effect on his his work. Nevertheless, this new body of work still engages with the themes of Tseng’s ongoing practice, including mythology, desire, power, and the dichotomy between beauty and violence.

“Rather than a complete departure from my work in Taiwan,” says Tseng, “I see the works made in New York as an extension or mutation of the same psychological world, shaped by a different environment and emotional climate.”

Rika Minamitani (b. 1998) has also recently experienced technical innovation in her work. With a practice centered on the interaction between depicted narratives and interpersonal relationships depicted in reality-bending geometric spaces, her compositions frequently have a surreal sensibility.

Three works included in her presentation with **Tomio Koyama Gallery**, Tokyo, feature a new technique that Minamitani has begun experimenting with: cutwork.

“By using scissors and cutters,” Minamitani said, “a subtle sense of dissonance and slowness is introduced into the image, expanding the range of lines and forms while also adding a greater sense of depth to the flow of time within the paintings.”



Pu Yingwei, *Intelligent Capital : Year One of Cosmic Economics (2025-2026)*. Courtesy of Galerie Sator and Independent.

Cultural Cross Sections

Situated at the forefront of Chinese political conceptual art today, artist, writer, and curator **Pu Yingwei** (b. 1989) will introduce his concept of “ChinAmerica” with **Galerie Sator** at Independent. First proposed within the context of sociology around 2010, Pu aims to translate this concept into visual means. Propelled by its returned (and

growing) relevance today, ChinAmerica speaks to both the real and symbolic influence and relationship between China and the U.S. as major global powers that wield excess influence across technology, trade, military affairs, and more.

“As a Chinese artist living in this present moment,” Pu told Artnet News, “I am deeply immersed in and personally affected by the intensity of this evolving relationship. I approach this subject firmly from a Chinese subjectivity. This is not a nationalistic perspective; rather, it is the artistic transformation of lived, embodied experience. I treat China, along with its expanding global influence, as one of the most critical political and cultural issues shaping our contemporary world.”

The endeavor follows “China Capital” and “ChinAfrica,” which respectively took the vantage of China’s reform and approach to globalization and the Belt and Road Initiative that aims to develop global infrastructure that connects Asia with Africa and Europe.

Where “ChinAmerica” departs from these prior projects is, as Pu describes, “in the hybridity of its visual language, which has become far more sensory and expressive.” Incorporating elements of Pop, 20th-century Chinese realism, and the creative vernacular of artists like Robert Rauschenberg and Philip Guston, and more, the execution of this new body of work reflects the artist’s own creative exposure.

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“In many ways, I myself am such an ‘example’ of globalization. ‘ChinAmerica’ is a global concept articulated through my unique lived experience rooted in China. It represents a deeper, more organic fusion of the internal heterogenous experiences that exist within me.”

In contrast to Pu’s focus on the wide lens view of geopolitics, Kentucky-based artist **Dianna Settles** (b. 1989) homes in on the minutiae and subtle nuance of local community, though still tapping into greater concerns around culture, politics, and ideology.

Presented by **March**, New York, Settles uses a diverse range of starting points—from technical challenges to historical events, personal experiences both in the South and her father’s native Vietnam—as well as a variety of disparate reference photos, “collapsing” these inspirations within the frame of her work. With a background in printmaking, Settles nimbly navigates the flatness of her support, leading to a highly recognizable execution of space.

“My work is in many ways an attempt to elaborate ways that people (including myself) try to build a life worth living for themselves, their loved ones, and the ever-widening community of beings that surround us all,” Settles commented. “I think this often involves fighting against false but insidious narratives about different groups of people through the world, both discursively and through collective action.”

There is a unique balance between specificity and universality in Settles’ work. Rather than be prescriptive or allude to an immutable, underpinning moral theme, her compositions approach representation unselfconsciously, as space for the viewer to bring their own background and lived experience.

“I hope that audiences of all kinds will find things that are both recognizable and surprising in my work,” say Settles, “and that the experience of viewing my paintings will make them think more purposefully about the way their own lives are constructed in relationship to their friends, surroundings, and the communities they participate in.”

Tracing Asian Abstraction

During the late 1970s and early ‘80s, the practice of South Korean artist **Kyojun Lee** (b. 1955) was largely informed by experimental and conceptual modes of artmaking, and saw the artist engage with a diverse range of mediums, including photography and installation. The introduction of postmodernist theory into the Korean art world in the 1980s catalyzed a new phase of experimentation for Lee, and he began to produce paintings in the tradition of geometric and even hard-edge abstraction, works that focused almost exclusively on the flatness of the support and dividing that space.

In his presentation with **PIBI Gallery**, Seoul, a satisfying breadth of Lee’s work—from

early career experiments in photography to new sculpture—illuminates his seemingly inexhaustible explorations into the core tenets of art itself.

Speaking to the synthesis of Eastern and Western traditions, the work of Japanese painter **Masanori Maeda** (b. 1963) has pioneered a new, personal abstract vernacular that leverages approaches and techniques from both.

A graduate of the exclusive **Tokyo University of the Arts**, in the years following his graduation the artist’s career faltered. Recently, however, Maeda reemerged with a bold new focus on abstraction, the range of which will go on view with **A Lighthouse called Kanata**.

Employing Nihonga techniques—a style of Japanese painting that emerged at the turn of the 20th century utilizing mineral pigments and ink on paper and typically associated with figuration—Maeda’s abstractions recall Color Field painting and Post-painterly abstraction, but with their own distinct, material quality. While Maeda’s paintings at first appear quiet and contemplative, the subtle cadence of visible brushstrokes and idiosyncratic arrangements of balanced form and color reveal the new opportunities for abstraction within the realm of contemporary art.

Independent will be held May 14–17, 2026, at Pier 36, 299 South Street, New York.