



Ai Weiwei Exhibition Brings Monumental Installations to Israel Museum

Opening June 2, *Ai Weiwei: One and the Multitude* Features Iconic Works That Explore Relationship of the Individual to Society

Jerusalem (December 20, 2016) — Uniting monumental works by one of the most prominent cultural figures of the 21st century, a new exhibition at the Israel Museum will feature a series of installations by artist and activist Ai Weiwei that examine notions of the one and the multitude and of the individual's relationship to his or her broader social culture. *Ai Weiwei: One and the Multitude* will premiere the artist's new monumentally-scaled *Iron Tree*—towering over 8 meters tall and weighing 14 tons—which will greet visitors along the Museum's promenade as they enter its landmark campus. Inside, a procession of iconic installations—including *Sunflower Seeds*, *Trees*, and *Soft Ground*—will be presented together with complementary works by the artist. The exhibition will be on view June 2 through October 28, 2017.

“Ai's profoundly metaphorical body of work links contemporary Chinese culture with its past in ways that take on even deeper meaning in the setting of Israel, with its similarly ancient heritage. By shifting contexts—from China to Jerusalem—these installations reflect commonalities between these two civilizations, whose cultures developed concurrently over several thousand years on the eastern and western edges of Asia,” said James S. Snyder, Anne and Jerome Fisher Director of the Israel Museum. “Our collections, covering a million and a half years of human creativity from around the globe, also offer a resonant setting for the universality of Ai's work, centered on interconnections among history, place, and human experience.”

Installed throughout the Museum's Upper Galleries—and including examples of Ai's signature wallpaper combining timely subjects and traditional motifs—the exhibition features the following large-scale works, among others:

- ***Sunflower Seeds (2010)***: This sprawling and iconic installation is comprised of millions of porcelain sunflower seeds, handcrafted and painted by artisans from Jingdezhen, China's porcelain capital, whose history traces back to the Han dynasty. Appearing together as a unified field, each seed reflects the individuality of its creator as compared with the mass production often associated with Chinese manufacturing. Eating sunflower seeds is ubiquitous across both China and Israel, and the discarded husks that dot each landscape give testimony to centuries of common social behavior.
- ***Trees (2010)***: Referencing the ancient tradition of collecting dry wood in appreciation of its form, Ai's grove of tree sculptures is comprised of dead roots, trunks, and branches the artist gathered in the mountains of southern China. The work combines different species to create a semblance of a tree, whose artifice is apparent only upon closer inspection. These towering structures encourage an appreciation for the individual elements that combine to make a whole, a recurring motif in Ai's practice. In Jerusalem's olive tree-dotted landscape, *Trees* creates a special resonance with the religious and social meanings of trees in Israel.

Extending this concept is Ai's *Iron Tree* (2016), situated among the olive trees that line the Museum's promenade and adorn its campus. Cast from nearly 100 fragments, held together by nuts and bolts, this sculpture is the most ambitious outdoor work the artist has created to date.

- ***Soft Ground* (2009):** Covering 250 square meters, this hand-woven carpet replicates in full detail the floor of the Haus der Kunst in Munich, commissioned by the Third Reich for the display of Nazi-approved art. Created in a weaving mill in Hebei province, it becomes a focal point for the intersection of the history of Chinese craftsmanship under imperial rule, modern history during the Nazi era, and labor practices in China today. Installed in the Israel Museum, *Soft Ground* also references the layering of Israel's history from antiquity to the present.

About Ai Weiwei

Ai Weiwei is renowned for making strong aesthetic statements that also resonate with timely phenomena across today's geopolitical world. From architecture to installations, social media to documentaries, Ai uses a wide range of mediums as expressions of new ways for his audiences to examine society and its values. Recent exhibitions include: *Ai Weiwei. Libero* at Palazzo Strozzi in Florence, *#SafePassage* at Foam in Amsterdam, *translocation - transformation* at 21er Haus in Vienna, *Andy Warhol / Ai Weiwei* at the National Gallery of Victoria in Melbourne, *Ai Weiwei* at the Royal Academy of Arts in London, and *@Large: Ai Weiwei on Alcatraz* in San Francisco.

Ai was born in Beijing in 1957 and currently resides and works in both Beijing and Berlin. Ai is the current Einstein Visiting Professor at the Berlin University of the Arts (UdK), and he is the recipient of the 2015 Ambassador of Conscience Award from Amnesty International and the 2012 Václav Havel Prize for Creative Dissent from the Human Rights Foundation.

Exhibition Organization

Ai Weiwei: One and the Multitude is curated by Mira Lapidot, Yulla and Jacques Lipchitz Chief Curator of the Fine Arts.

The Israel Museum, Jerusalem

The Israel Museum is the largest cultural institution in the State of Israel and is ranked among the leading art and archaeology museums in the world. Founded in 1965, the Museum houses encyclopedic collections ranging from prehistory through contemporary art and includes the most extensive holdings of Biblical and Holy Land archaeology in the world, among them the Dead Sea Scrolls. Over its first 50 years, the Museum has built a far-ranging collection of more than 500,000 objects through an unparalleled legacy of gifts and support from its circle of patrons worldwide.

The Museum's 20-acre campus, which underwent a comprehensive renewal in 2010 designed by James Carpenter Design Associates and Efrat-Kowalsky Architects, features the Billy Rose Art Garden, the Shrine of the Book, and more than 225,000 square feet of collection, gallery, and temporary exhibition space. The Museum also organizes programming at its off-site locations in Jerusalem at the Rockefeller Archaeological Museum, where it presents archaeological artifacts from the ancient Land of Israel, and at its historic Ticho House, a venue for exhibitions of contemporary Israeli art.

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