



Royal Academy of Arts

Ai Weiwei

ROYAL ACADEMY OF ARTS INVITES THE PUBLIC TO SUPPORT MONUMENTAL COURTYARD INSTALLATION BY AI WEIWEI

Supported by Kickstarter crowdfunding campaign

London, 15 July 2015: The Royal Academy of Arts announced today plans to exhibit a monumental, site-specific installation by Ai Weiwei in the Royal Academy's Annenberg Courtyard, to coincide with the major exhibition opening to the public on the 19 September 2015. The Royal Academy proposes to display Ai Weiwei's *Tree*, consisting of eight individual trees, each measuring around seven metres tall. This will be the largest installation of the work to date.

To enable the installation to be displayed, RA has launched a Kickstarter crowdfunding campaign with a target of £100,000. With rewards ranging from limited edition prints, access to exclusive online content, to private tours by the curators of the exhibition, the Kickstarter campaign will facilitate a global audience to collaborate and be part of the project.

Ai has been working on the *Tree* series since 2009. In order to create each individual element or tree, Ai purchases parts of trees that have died naturally on the mountains of southern China, which are sold in the markets of Jingdezhen, Jiangxi province. Ai has them transported to his studio in Beijing where, during a process lasting several months, these disparate parts – whether root, trunk or branch – are painstakingly pieced together to create 'complete' trees. As Ai says, "It's just like trying to imagine what the tree looked like". A black marble couch will complete the installation, which will be open to the public to explore.

Stephen Fry, Trustee of the Royal Academy of Arts said: "I am incredibly excited that the Royal Academy will be showing the work of Ai Weiwei, one of the world's most celebrated and extraordinary artists, social critic, sculptor and video artist. This Kickstarter project is a unique opportunity to get involved in bringing incredible new works here to London."

Tim Marlow, Artistic Director at the Royal Academy of Arts said: "The very first thing that visitors will experience is a monumental, eight-part tree sculpture built site-specifically in the courtyard and it will be free for all visitors to enjoy."

Although Ai is one of China's leading contemporary artists, his work has not been seen extensively in Britain and the Royal Academy will present the first major institutional survey of his artistic output. The exhibition will include significant works from 1993 onwards, the date that marks Ai Weiwei's return to

China following more than a decade living in New York. Ai Weiwei will create new, site-specific installations and interventions throughout the Royal Academy's spaces.

Biography

Ai Weiwei was born in 1957 in Beijing where he lives and works. He attended Beijing Film Academy and later, on moving to New York (1981–1993), continued his studies at the Parsons School of Design. Major solo exhibitions include Martin Gropius Bau (2014), Indianapolis Museum of Art (2013), Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington D.C. (2012), Taipei Fine Arts Museum, Taiwan (2011), Tate Modern, London (2010) and Haus der Kunst, Munich (2009). Architectural collaborations include the 2012 Serpentine Pavilion and the 2008 Beijing Olympic Stadium, with Herzog & de Meuron. Among numerous awards and honours, he won the lifetime achievement award from the Chinese Contemporary Art Awards in 2008 and the Václav Havel Prize for Creative Dissent from the Human Rights Foundation, New York in 2012; he was made Honorary Academician at the Royal Academy of Arts, London in 2011. Most recently, he was awarded the Ambassador of Conscience Award from Amnesty International in 2015.

KICKSTARTER

To donate to the Kickstarter campaign please go to: www.kickstarter.com

SOCIAL MEDIA

Sign up to Royal Academy of Arts social media channels.

[www.twitter.com](https://www.twitter.com/royalacademy) @royalacademy #AiWeiwei

www.facebook.com/royalacademy

ABOUT THE ROYAL ACADEMY OF ARTS

The Royal Academy of Arts was founded by King George III in 1768. It has a unique position in being an independent, privately funded institution led by eminent artists and architects whose purpose is to be a clear, strong voice for art and artists. Its public programme promotes the creation, enjoyment and appreciation of the visual arts through exhibitions, education and debate.

HONORARY ROYAL ACADEMICIANS

Each year the RA appoints Honorary Royal Academicians who are distinguished artists that reside overseas. These currently include Georg Baselitz, Frank O. Gehry, Prof Arata Isozaki, Jasper Johns, Anselm Kiefer, Per Kirkeby, Jeff Koons, Daniel Libeskind, Mimmo Paladino, I. M. Pei, Renzo Piano, Julian Schnabel, Cindy Sherman, Frank Stella, William Kentridge, Jim Dine and Ai Weiwei.

For public information please print 020 7300 8000 and www.royalacademy.org.uk

Royal Academy of Arts, Burlington House, Piccadilly, London W1J 0BD

For further press information, please contact Alexandra Bradley at the Royal Academy Press Office on 020 7300 5615 or email press.office@royalacademy.org.uk

15/07/15