



Royal Academy of Arts  
**Ai Weiwei**

## **ROYAL ACADEMY OF ARTS' SUCCESSFUL KICKSTARTER CAMPAIGN WILL FUND MONUMENTAL COURTYARD INSTALLATION BY AI WEIWEI**

**Largest amount raised for a European art project on Kickstarter, significantly exceeding £100,000 target**

*London, 21 August 2015:* The Royal Academy of Arts announced today that £123,577 has been raised through a major crowdfunding campaign supported by Kickstarter to exhibit a monumental, site-specific installation by Ai Weiwei in the Royal Academy's Annenberg Courtyard. The Royal Academy will 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 and will coincide with the artist's exhibition at the Royal Academy, opening to the public on the 19 September.

The campaign, supported by the public, is the largest amount raised for a European art project on Kickstarter. The project was funded by 1,300 backers and exceeded the £100,000 target originally set to enable the installation of the work. Rewards ranged from limited edition prints, access to exclusive online content, to private tours by the curators of the exhibition. The Kickstarter campaign facilitated 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.

Tim Marlow, Artistic Director at the Royal Academy of Arts said: "We have been delighted by the range and depth of public support for this project and look forward to welcoming large numbers of visitors to the courtyard to contemplate and enjoy Ai Weiwei's monumental vision"

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.

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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.

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21/08/15