

Ai Weiwei

Lisson Gallery Milan

Via Zenale, 3

12 April – 25 May 2012

Lisson Gallery Milan is proud to announce an exhibition of ceramic and marble works by Ai Weiwei, focusing on an area of his boundless practice that has produced many of his best known works.

The exhibition will include a number of ceramics made by Ai Weiwei in 2006 during an intensive working residency in Jingdezhen, the heartland of Chinese ceramic production. The traditional techniques passed on to Ai Weiwei by local craftsmen sparked a radical new direction for the artist and were the genesis of his *Sunflowers Seeds* installation at Tate Modern.

The historical and cultural significance of the materials and techniques Ai Weiwei uses are an essential element of almost all his sculptures. Much of his work with ceramics has involved ready-mades: adapting, painting and destroying valuable ancient urns and vases. In contrast the exhibition at Lisson focuses on sculptures he has created by hand from scratch.

Porcelain is traditionally seen as the highest Chinese art form; Ai Weiwei has long challenged this reverence and the high financial values attached to the medium. Still his work shows deference to the craftsman of Jingdezhen and their skills, meeting the same exacting standards in their perfect finish.

Watermelons (2006) works are handcrafted, ceramic, realist representations of the natural object. As with *Sunflower Seeds*, the pieces are made following a Chinese tradition of mimicking organic forms. In a similar vein, *Oil Spill* (2006) replicates in glistening black ceramic, ominous puddles of crude oil trailing across the gallery floor. The porcelain *Pillar* (2006) stands 2.3 metres tall in the space and *Marble Plate* (2010) represents Ai Weiwei's recent work outside the medium of ceramics.

The location of the exhibition holds significance. Milan is important in the history of ceramics as the home of significant manufacturers and designers, most notably Giò Ponti whose innovative ceramic and furniture designs redefined elegance in industrial design. Much like Ai Weiwei, Ponti himself was a polymath: designer, artist, writer and architect. Ai's significance across these fields is currently celebrated worldwide. Together with Herzog & de Meuron, Ai is creating the 2012 Serpentine Gallery Pavilion in London, and he is the recipient of an Honorary Fellowship from the Royal Institute of British Architects. He has a touring exhibition of photography currently at Jeu de Paume and a career retrospective from 3 March at De Pont, Netherlands.

Notes to Editors

About the artist

Ai Weiwei was born in 1957 in Beijing, China, where he lives and works. He is one of the leading cultural figures of his generation and consistently displays great courage in placing himself at risk to affect social change through his art. He serves as an example for legitimate social criticism and free expression both in China and internationally. Previous solo exhibitions include Victoria and Albert Museum, London (2011) Lisson Gallery, London (2011); Somerset House, London (2011); Kunsthau Bregenz (2011); Stiftung DKM, Duisburg (2010); Museum of Contemporary Craft, Portland (2010); Arcadia University Gallery, Glenside (2010); Mori Art Museum, Tokyo (2009); Haus der Kunst, Munich (2009); Three Shadows Photography Art Center,

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Beijing (2009); Sherman Contemporary Art Foundation, Cambelltown Arts Center, Sydney (2008); Groninger Museum, Groningen (2008). Group exhibitions include the São Paulo Biennial (2010); Biennale Architecture, Venice (2008); Documenta 12, Kassel (2007) and Tate Liverpool (2007).

Exhibition Facts

Opening Hours: Monday – Friday, 9.30am – 1pm and 3pm- 6pm. Saturday - by appointment only

Location: Via Zenale, 3, Milan

Tel: +39 02 89050608

For Lisson Gallery exhibition press information and images please contact:

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Serpentine Pavilion Opening

The Serpentine Gallery Pavilion 2012 will open from June – October 2012.

Location: Serpentine Gallery, Kensington Gardens, London W2 3XA

Tel: +44 (0)20 7402 6075

www.serpentinegallery.org

For Serpentine Pavilion press information please contact:

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