



## Israel Museum Extends Run of *Ai Weiwei: Maybe, Maybe Not* Through March 4, 2018

### Exhibition Features Monumental Works That Explore Relationship of the Individual to Society

**Jerusalem (October 23, 2017)** — Due to popular demand, the Israel Museum has announced that it is extending the dates for *Ai Weiwei: Maybe, Maybe Not* through March 4, 2018. To date, the Museum has welcomed more than 350,000 visitors since the exhibition opening, marking an increase of nearly 20% in overall attendance.

“The overwhelming response of visitors in Israel to the exhibition has been very gratifying. They contribute an important perspective on the work, given the fragility of life in their region,” said Ai Weiwei. “Connections between people resonate throughout the exhibition, which poses critical questions on human rights, free expression, and the challenges facing refugees everywhere today. Thousands of visitors of all ages are grappling with these subjects in their own ways. Will this experience change how they think about the world around them? Maybe, maybe not... Will their lives be richer from this experience? I hope so.”

Uniting monumental works, the exhibition features a series of installations that examine notions of the one and the multitude and of the individual’s relationship to his or her broader social culture. *Ai Weiwei: Maybe, Maybe Not* premieres the artist’s monumentally-scaled *Iron Trees* – towering over 8 meters tall and weighing 14 tons – which 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* – are presented together with complementary works by the artist.

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 are Ai's *Iron Trees* (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, these sculptures the most ambitious outdoor work the artist has created to date, premiered in the landmark setting of the Museum's Sculpture Garden, in front of its iconic Shrine of the Book, housing the Dead Sea Scrolls.

- ***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 and how this layering can change softly yet profoundly the meaning of place.

*Maybe, Maybe Not* is presented concurrently with the debut of the Public Art Fund's citywide initiative *Ai Weiwei: Good Fences Make Good Neighbors*, a multi-site, multi-media exhibition for public spaces, monuments, buildings, transportation sites, and advertising platforms throughout New York City. The exhibition is informed by Ai's own life experience and by the plight of displaced people worldwide today, as documented in his newly released film *Human Flow*.

### **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: *Hansel and Gretel* at Park Avenue Armory, *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: Maybe, Maybe Not* is curated by Mira Lapidot, Yulla and Jacques Lipchitz Chief Curator of the Fine Arts, The Israel Museum, Jerusalem.

### **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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