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AI WEIWEI

D'AILLEURS C'EST TOUJOURS LES AUTRES

TEXTS BY STEFAN BANZ, BERNARD FIBICHER AND DARIO GAMBONI

This catalogue presents a selection of works by Ai Weiwei, China's most celebrated artist of the past two decades. Gathered here are recent creations as well as works created especially for Lausanne's Palais de Rumine, which once again houses the institutions that have played such an important part in the forging of the building's identity since its construction—namely the Museums of Archaeology and History, Zoology, and Geology.

Works in porcelain, wood, aluminum, marble, jade, glass, bamboo, and silk—as well as wallpapers, photographs, videos, and a film—highlight this oeuvre's inventiveness while revealing the depth of knowledge of China's cultural traditions that is wielded by this son of an eminent poet. At the same time, Ai Weiwei is at pains to subvert traditional motifs, modes of creation, and materials in a manner that can be playful or iconoclastic (somewhat in the spirit of Marcel Duchamp), and which amount to a tacit and at times overt critique of the Chinese political system. Taken together, Weiwei's most recent works constitute a reflection on the intricate knots that lie at the heart of present-day international relations (economic dependence, refugee flows, etc.).

Ai Weiwei, C'est toujours les autres presents the artist in his entirety: a refined sculptor, an encyclopedic thinker, an extraordinary communicator, and a man who takes an active interest in the world's most pressing issues. Ai Weiwei is perhaps the first truly "global" artist.

In his sculpture he revisits and reinterprets Chinese craft traditions while parodying Pop art and American Minimalism. Using film or photography, he attempts to record urban change and population shifts. Prolific and dedicated, this remarkable artist and virtuoso user of social networks exploits a skillful mix of art, personal experience, and political commitment to get his message across.

Ai Weiwei, born in Beijing in 1957, is the son of the famous writer Ai Qing. He immigrated to the United States in 1983, where he discovered Marcel Duchamp's ready-made art and Andy Warhol's Pop art. On returning to China in 1993, he became an advocate for his fellow Chinese artists by staging exhibitions (*Fuck Off*, Shanghai, 2000) and producing underground publications. Imprisoned for his criticism of Chinese policies, most notably the official concealment of the extent of the humanitarian crisis following the 2008 Sichuan earthquake, he was released in response to worldwide protests. He now lives in Berlin.