



December 16, 2014

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Vancouver, Canada—Internationally renowned Chinese artist and human rights activist Ai Weiwei joins the Vancouver Biennale exhibition with “*F Grass*”, a debut public art installation layered with double entendre that begs the question, “what does it mean?”

China's most internationally celebrated artist and social activist, Ai Weiwei, participates in the Vancouver Biennale with a public art installation created specifically for this exhibition and the Harbour Green Park in which it will be displayed for the next 12 months. “*F Grass*” uses industrial cast iron “grass” to shape an elegant calligraphic “F”. It’s an enigma that a Vancouver audience might interpret as symbolic of the recreational crop we’re most famous for and our laissez faire attitude towards the laws that prohibit it, but the meaning is more about the relationship between the individual and the collective and the resilience of the human spirit in the face of Chinese government censorship, control and secrecy.

“*F Grass*” is the continuation of Ai Weiwei’s large-scale installation “*Sunflower Seeds*” made for Tate Modern in 2010. Sunflower seeds share the similar identity as the grass. From seeds to grass, each individual form is simple and miniscule, but when millions crowd together they bare tremendous power and vitality. They represent countless faceless people in society and their everyday life.

and never stops growing. Grass is small and fragile, humble and flexible, yet it is strong and persistent, even rises faster for being stepped on. In *"F Grass"*, the once fragile grass is now reminiscent of an indestructible blockade of ground spikes. Only from above can you see the "F" and the individual blades of iron grass that make the shape. The courage shown by ordinary individuals in everyday acts of rebellion collectively become a force to be reckoned with. The tone of defiance is clear.

Because of a similar pronunciation, the word "grass" in China has become a tongue-in-cheek substitute for the word "f*ck". It's a way of outsmarting the censorship police monitoring social media, websites and blogs while pointing out the absurdity of it all. You can't stop people from expressing themselves, no matter how oppressive the government control. *"F Grass"* is a clear demonstration of that, with Ai Weiwei getting his message out to the world despite his continued physical detainment in a country that seems so eager to shut him up.

The year-long exhibition of *"F Grass"* will kick off with a live Twitter event and extensive online programming on the Vancouver Biennale website including a rare one-on-one interview with Ai Weiwei, two documentary films directed by the artist, and online learning resources for teachers and parents through the award-winning Vancouver Biennale BIG IDEAS education program.

The program will continue in 2015 with a full retrospective of films by and about Ai Weiwei including the Canadian premiere of *"Stay Home"* and the Vancouver premiere of *"Fake Case"*. The exhibition will end with the presentation of the Vancouver Biennale Lifetime Achievement Award to Ai Weiwei for his enormous contribution to the Contemporary arts and his courage as a human rights activist.

"F Grass" Public Art Installation

Harbour Green Park
1199 W Cordova Street, Vancouver, Canada
Open to the public starting Wednesday, December 17, 2014

Live Twitter Event

Thursday, December 18, 2014

Like the artist himself, *"F Grass"* is complex, profound, political and humorous, with many layers of interpretation. Join the discussion during a one-day Twitter event where panelists from all walks of life and areas of specialization share their views about the work, what it means to them and the role of art in public space. The more people who participate, the better the conversation!

Include [@van_biennale](#), [#van_biennale](#) and [@aiww](#) in every tweet. If your tweet opens with a mention, please use a dot . before the @ to ensure that the tweet is public (example [.@van_biennale](#)).

In Conversation With Ai Weiwei

Watch a rare and personal interview of the artist by Shengtian Zheng, Vancouver Biennale Sr. Asian Curator and Managing Editor of Yishu Journal of Contemporary Chinese Art. Sitting casually in Ai Weiwei's Beijing courtyard, the two longtime friends talk about the artist's family and childhood, early artistic influences and his time living in New York.

Watch the interview online at www.vancouverbiennale.com/in-conversation-with-ai-weiwei/

Ai Weiwei Documentary Films

"Ordos 100" follows a project involving 100 architects creating a design plan for a new community in Mongolia curated by Ai Weiwei and Herzog & de Meuron, the same architectural firm who won the design bid for the new Vancouver Art Gallery.

"Crab House" follows the government destruction of Ai Weiwei's newly built studio at the Shanghai World Expo 2010. The artist responds by throwing a crab banquet dinner attended by thousands of people to raise awareness of human rights abuses in China. Crab is the chosen meal because it is a pun on the Chinese word "harmonious" and the government's attempt to build a "harmonious society."

Watch both films online at www.vancouverbiennale.com

BIG IDEAS Learning Resources

Online inquiry-based curriculum is available for both teachers and parents interested in using “*F Grass*” as an access point for children of all ages to learn about censorship and human rights. The unit plans meet BC Ministry of Education requirements for grades 5 and 11 Social Studies and grade 12 History, but is easily adaptable for all ages and grade levels.

Visit www.vancouverbiennale.com for unit plans.

About the Vancouver Biennale

The Vancouver Biennale is a non-profit charitable organization that celebrates art in public space. Each exhibition transforms the urban landscape into an Open Air Museum, facilitating globally-inspired cultural experiences where people live, work, play and transit. The Biennale features internationally renowned and emerging contemporary artists that represent a diversity of cultural perspectives and artistic disciplines, including sculpture, new media, performance works and film. The objective is to exhibit great art and create a catalyst for learning, community engagement and social action. For more information, visit vancouverbiennale.com.

Media Contacts

Beth Miller
604-682-1289
beth@vancouverbiennale.com

Ashleigh Withall
604-682-1289
ashleigh@vancouverbiennale.com



290 West 3rd Avenue :: Vancouver BC :: Canada V5Y 1G1
P: 604 682 1289 :: Info@vancouverbiennale.com :: www.vancouverbiennale.com

