

# Ai Wei Wei Vancouver sculpture symbolizes resilience and defiance

## Chinese artist and activist joins Vancouver Biennale with cheeky art installation "F Grass"

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A new art installation by internationally renowned Chinese artist and human rights activist Ai Wei Wei is making Harbour Green Park in Coal Harbour its home for the next 12 months.

The sculpture, called "F Grass" is part of the Vancouver Biennale and is a continuation of Ai's most recent works such as "Sunflower Seeds" and "@Large". "F Grass," shaped like a giant letter F, is made up of hundreds of cast iron spikes that are meant to look like grass.

Biennale marketing director Miriam Blume spoke with *The Early Edition* about the symbolism behind "F Grass."

## The resilience of the human spirit

"Grass is ubiquitous — we barely even notice it in the landscape but yet it's quite resilient," said Blume.

"You look at a piece of grass and it looks fragile, it looks alone. But you try to stomp it and you try to weed it out, grass keeps coming back. In that sense, it's a really beautiful and powerful metaphor for the human spirit."

## The power of the collective

"Very often Ai Wei Wei turns the lens on everyday people who in their everyday lives are acting in defiant ways, in ways that support freedom of speech and democracy and are showing a kind of bravery that we often don't acknowledge," said Blume.

"So again, the grass, you can look at it both in terms of individual pieces showing a kind of resiliency in ordinary lives with ordinary people. And then you also look at it in terms of the collective because as you approach the sculpture, it almost looks like a cast iron road block."

## Democracy and defiance

"In Chinese, the character for grass sounds very similar to the f-word obscenity, so if you follow Ai Wei Wei, he's done a lot of somewhat cheeky, clever yet powerful defiant acts on the Internet where there are censorship police...that is looking for, among other things, obscenity," said Blume.

"So in lieu of saying the f-word, there is an entire movement — Ai Wei Wei included — using the character of grass. So again, it's humorous and cheeky, but it's also very poignant, saying an 'f-you' to the censors, (and saying), 'We're going to get around you.'"