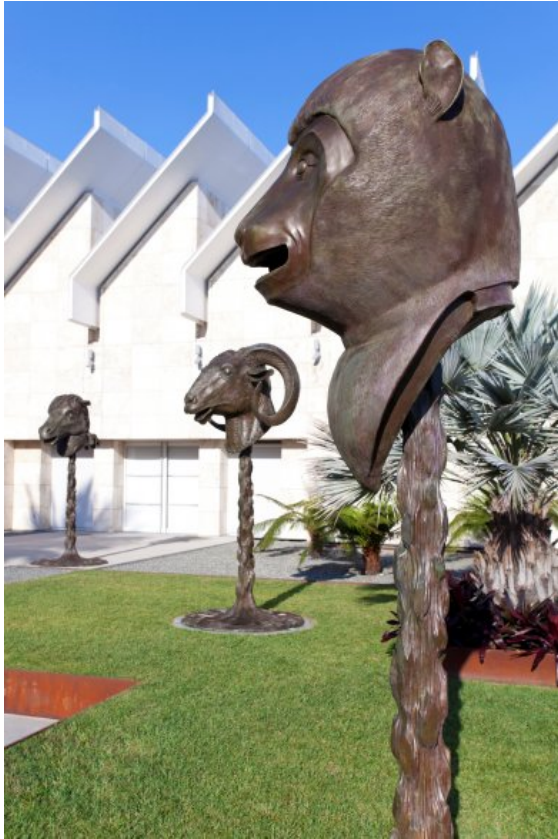




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## AI WEIWEI: CIRCLE OF ANIMALS/ZODIAC HEADS

North Piazza  
August 20, 2011–February 12, 2012



The Zodiac Project is Ai Weiwei's first major public sculpture. For this monumental new work, Ai has recreated the famous twelve bronze animal heads that once adorned the Zodiac Fountain in Yuan Ming Yuan, the Old Summer Palace, in Beijing. Cast around 1750, the original heads were looted by Anglo-French troops who took part in the destruction of Yuan Ming Yuan in 1860 during the Second Opium War. The heads remain a potent trigger for Chinese nationalist sentiments. Ai's new work suggests a dialogue about the fate of art objects that exist within dynamic and sometimes volatile cultural and political settings. With his subversive wit, the artist adapts objects from the Chinese material canon going back to antiquity, twisting traditional meanings toward new purposes. Ai's continuous exploration of the historical object finds great resonance with the encyclopedic collection of LACMA, which includes Chinese art from the Neolithic to the Qing Dynasty period.

Ai Weiwei grew up the son of acclaimed poet Ai Qing and spent several years as a child exiled in the countryside during the Cultural Revolution. For more than a decade, he lived and worked in New York, returning to China in 1993. He was detained in April, 2011 for close to three months, causing an international outcry. He is currently prohibited from leaving Beijing. He has become an international symbol of the ongoing struggle for freedom of expression and dissent.

### Buy the Book

Support for this exhibition is provided by Phillips de Pury & Company and Honorable Vicki Reynolds Pepper and Murray Pepper, Sue Tsao, with additional support from Vera Tsai and Anne Wu. Official Global Art Logistics Partner: Crozier Fine Arts.

Image: Installation view, *Ai Weiwei: Circle of Animals/Zodiac Heads*, August 20, 2011–February 12, 2012, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, © Ai Weiwei, Photo © Museum Associates/LACMA.

### Video



### East and West, Past and Present: Ai Weiwei's Zodiac Heads

September 23, 2011

In ancient China one's Zodiac sign was fixed by the position of the planet Jupiter during the year of one's birth (it takes twelve years for Jupiter to orbit the sun). On this level, Ai Weiwei *Circle of Animals/Zodiac Heads* represents a system of measuring time and distinguishing characteristics of the human psyche linked to the heavens above...

### Circling Back with Ai Weiwei

February 7, 2012

As I take the elevator up from the parking garage every morning to go to work, I have enjoyed being greeted by twelve large animal heads for the last six months. Ai Weiwei's Circle of Animals/Zodiac Heads will be leaving LACMA at the end of this week on February 12, but the sculptures' connections to the museum's collections will live on. As a decorative arts and design curator working in a department with objects dating to the fifteenth century, I am always looking for the present in past and vice versa. Believe it or not, N-V à-c-à-\$ Y| æää ([| "ää" ää\ ' äáb ç| | ' ää@] ^ä ä-ä^ ää\ ^ ää" | [ç-ä] ^ ää" | | \ æææ