

Ai Weiwei: *Making Sense*

the DESIGN MUSEUM

Exhibition summary

7 April – 30 July 2023

This major exhibition, developed in collaboration with Ai Weiwei, was the first to present his work as a commentary on design and what it reveals about changing values in contemporary society.

Generously supported by the Reuben Foundation, the show presented some of the artist's most significant, well-known works alongside never-seen pieces and new work commissioned specifically for the exhibition. The result was a meditative show that encouraged audiences to reflect on value – what we choose to treasure and the histories and skills that have been ignored or erased over time.

Outside the ticketed exhibition, Ai's 'Coloured House' in the museum atrium - as well as two marble sculptures in the grounds - provided an experience of the artist's work free of charge.

Generously supported by the
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Key figures

Over its running period, the exhibition attracted **90,504 visitors.** The audience was culturally engaged with an active interest in art and design, with **45%** stating they visited in order to be intellectually stimulated and **10%** to be inspired.

Ticket sales notably exceeded the forecast, raising over **£1.2million, 144%** of the original income target.

The show offered a significant opportunity for cultivating onward support for the museum, and over the course of the exhibition's running period we welcomed **1,192 new members** to the museum's membership programme.



During the exhibition run, the museum celebrated reaching **500,000 followers** on Instagram, enhancing our digital engagement with audiences in London and beyond.

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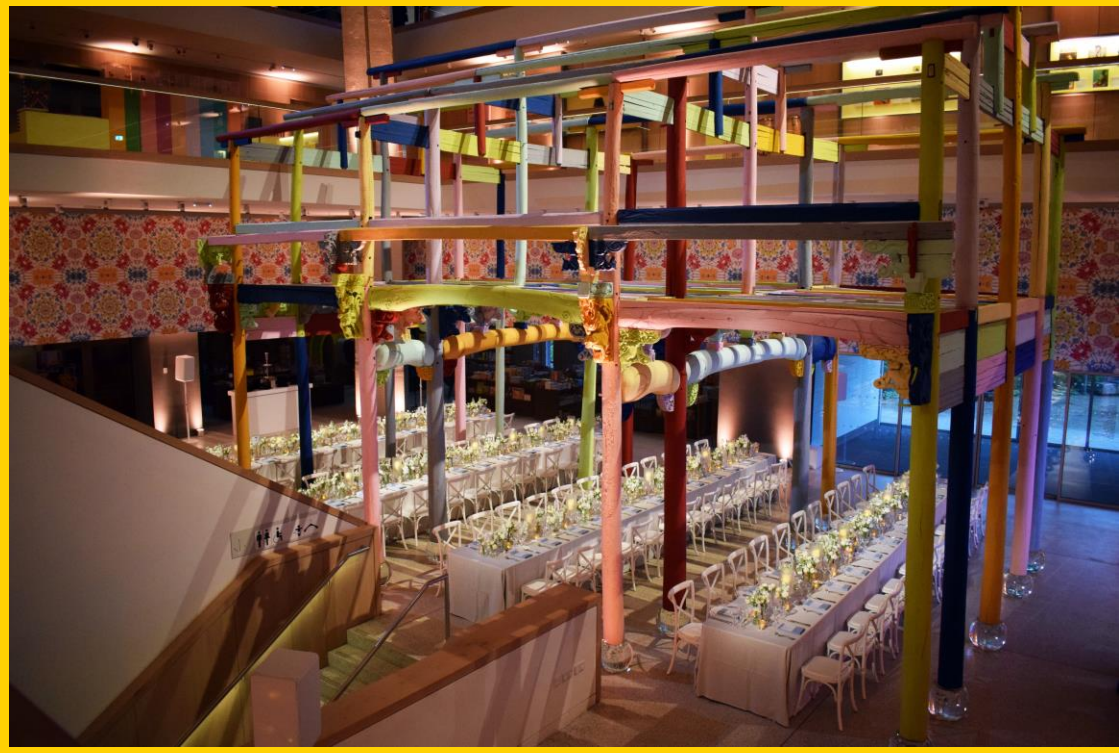
The Reuben Dinner

The Reuben Foundation provided generous support for a bespoke celebratory dinner aimed at cultivating further support for the museum.

90 guests attended the reception, private view and in-conversation, with the dinner taking place beneath Ai's *'Coloured House'*.

Following the event we welcomed three individuals into the Design Circle as Benefactors, whose contributions will generate £30,000 annually for the museum going forward.






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Press highlights

The exhibition attracted over 500 items of press coverage across a broad range of titles including: The Guardian, The Evening Standard, The Times, The Independent, CNN, The Yorkshire Post, Irish Times, Elle Decor, London on the Inside, AFP, the i, Financial Times, Design Boom, Culture Whisper, Dazed, The Daily Mail, Domus, Reuters, BBC Radio 4, Dezeen, Wallpaper, Aesthetica and ITV News.

'The master provocateur creates timeless beauty from historical objects'
★★★★ **The Independent**

'No one does it quite like Ai Weiwei'
★★★★ **The Times**

'Profoundly moving'
The Telegraph








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Learning and Engagement

The Learning team developed and delivered an extensive programme of activity dedicated to supporting new and diverse audiences to engage with the museum and exhibition, as well as a participatory programme exploring key thematic content in the exhibition.

Over the course of the exhibition we delivered:

- A programme of visits for schools, colleges and universities, attracting over 2,000 students and pupils
- Dedicated BSL and audio-described tours, facilitating an experience of the exhibition for visitors with disabilities

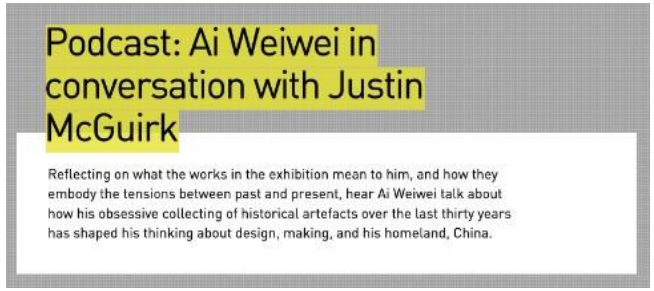
Public programme including:

- *An Evening with Ai Weiwei*
- *On Collecting,* an evening exploring radical modes of collecting, inspired by the exhibition content
- A podcast with Chief Curator Justin McGuirk in conversation with Ai Weiwei
- *Create in Clay* workshops.









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Visitor feedback

Excellent exhibition. I am always moved by Ai Wei's works. I love the way he stimulates one's own perceptions/prejudices and challenges the status quo.

It was a fantastic exhibition.

A wonderful exhibition and a super museum.

A great experience, well laid out, always felt comfortably roomy even though it was quite busy. I'll be back!

Such an incredible experience that cannot be missed!

Stunning, moving and beautiful.

The Ai Weiwei exhibition was particularly good, bringing together what first seemed like an eclectic set of artifacts under a beautiful story of construction, destruction and rebirth. Every time, it feels like the Design Museum has something meaningful to say…well worth a membership.

The Ai Weiwei exhibition was absolutely stunning.

I went to see the Ai Weiwei exhibition. It was great, moving and laid out in a way which made me understand the process and intention behind it.





Thank you

The Design Museum extends its heartfelt thanks to the Reuben Foundation for its generous support for Ai Weiwei: *Making Sense,* without which the exhibition would not have been possible.

In addition to its support for the exhibition itself, we are hugely grateful for the opportunities the support of the Foundation created to cultivate further support for the museum.

On behalf of the Design Museum, thank you for your continuing support for our work.