



**Palm Springs Art Museum Presents  
Contemporary Artist Ai Weiwei's Gilded Bronze Zodiac Heads**

**Palm Springs, Calif. (December 11, 2014)** – Palm Springs Art Museum will feature the exhibition *Circle of Animals/Zodiac Heads: Gold*, a group of sculptures by internationally acclaimed contemporary Chinese artist Ai Weiwei, from December 20 through May 31, 2015 at the Palm Springs Art museum.

The installation consists of 12 gilded bronze animal heads – rat, ox, tiger, rabbit, dragon, snake, horse, sheep, monkey, rooster, dog, and pig – that are each a representative symbol from the ancient Chinese zodiac. Ai Weiwei's work extends beyond the visual statement and reaches into history. These sculptures were based on the zodiac heads originally located at the Imperial retreat Yuanming Yuan (Old Summer Palace) just outside of Beijing, where they adorned the famed fountain-clock. The original head were made by Giuseppe Castiglione (1688-1766), an Italian Jesuit who executed a number of commissions for the Chinese emperor in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. When the retreat was looted in 1860 during the Second Opium War, the bronze animal heads were stolen.

Ai Weiwei reinterpreted the heads to create the *Circle of Animals/Zodiac Heads: Gold* series in both Bronze and Gold. The world tour of the exhibition was initially launched in

2011 in New York City at the historic Pulitzer Fountain at Grand Army Plaza. Measuring between 24 and 36 inches high, the heads display some striking stylistic discontinuities characteristics. The sheep, for example, is credible, almost naturalistic. Another head, the monkey, has a streamlined brow and stylized round eyes. The snarling, horned dragon is instantly identifiable as the characteristic mythical animal of ancient China.

Ai Weiwei – born under the sign of the rooster in 1957, in Beijing, China – works in a range of media including sculpture, installation, architecture, curating, photography, film, and cultural criticism. Notably, he collaborated with Swiss architects Herzog & de Meuron as the artistic consultant on the Beijing National Stadium for the 2008 Olympics, known as the “Birds Nest.”

As a political activist, he has been openly critical of the Chinese government’s stance on democracy and human rights. Ai has investigated government corruption and cover-ups, and was detained for 81 days at an undisclosed location in 2011. His current exhibition @Large in San Francisco, a series of seven site-specific installations in four locations on Alcatraz Island, offers a new cultural lens through which to experience the notorious military and federal penitentiary turned national park. According to the Chinese Foreign Ministry he is currently prohibited from leaving Beijing without permission and the government remains in possession of his passport at this time, preventing him from traveling outside of China.

This exhibition is organized by Palm Springs Art Museum, on loan courtesy of a Private Collection.

For more information about Palm Springs Art Museum and the exhibition, please visit [www.psmuseum.org](http://www.psmuseum.org) or call (760) 322-4800. The museum is open Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Thursday 12 p.m. to 8 p.m., and closed Monday.

### **About Palm Springs Art Museum**

Palm Springs Art Museum is the largest cultural institution in the Coachella Valley and includes three locations in Palm Springs and Palm Desert. The flagship building is located in downtown Palm Springs and features compelling art exhibitions, a vast permanent collection, and the 433-seat Annenberg Theater, all in a 150,000 square foot, architecturally-significant building. Palm Springs Art Museum Architecture and Design Center, Edwards Harris Pavilion features exhibitions and programming that explore the rich topics of architecture and design. Palm Springs Art Museum in Palm Desert is an 8,400 square foot, Silver LEED-certified building named The Galen that presents rotating exhibitions and special collections. It is surrounded by the four-acre Faye Sarkowsky Sculpture Garden featuring important sculpture works. Admission to the Palm Desert location is now free to the public, generously underwritten by Helene V. Galen. For more information, call 760-322-4800, visit [www.psmuseum.org](http://www.psmuseum.org), and follow the museum on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram