

## MASSIMODECARLO

### ROLAND FLEXNER - AI WEIWEI

Massimo De Carlo is pleased to present a unique exhibition that brings together for the first time the work of Roland Flexner and Ai Weiwei.

The two artists first crossed paths in New York in the 80s and have since developed an on-going friendship. In this exhibition, Roland Flexner's iconic ink paintings will be exhibited together with works by Ai Weiwei, which include a series of paintings tracing back to his days in New York, which have never been shown before.

The selection of works by the two artists, although very different in terms of mediums and messages, is united by a similar approach towards the notion of painting. The role of tradition, intended both as the painterly gesture and as *tradition per se*, is challenged, subtly mocked and questioned through Ai Weiwei's elusive installations and canvases and through Roland Flexner's tantalising ink drawings.

Roland Flexner's three series of drawings presented in the exhibition are part of his iconic body of work. In these carefully crafted artworks, the artist explores how chance can interfere with creation, by developing a series of unique techniques that avoids direct contact between him and the paper. Flexner uses manipulation, breath, water or gravity in order to move the ink on the paper, pushing the final results into pictorial dimensions, documenting the potential of the material and the control of the gesture. The liquid graphite and calligraphy ink drawings of Roland Flexner allude to landscapes and rely on the imagination of the viewer to make sense of the play between light and shadow.

A never seen before body of work by Ai Weiwei, that dates back to the early 90s, also addressed the question of painting. In each of the square black paintings in the exhibition Ai Weiwei's has removed parts of the acrylic painting exposing the paint below. This gesture is key in this series, where the rhythmic revealing of the paint underneath the surface questions the role of traditional painting. Ai Weiwei's work *Remains*, an intimate homage to the delicacy of the human condition and a daunting reminder of the fragility of man against power - as embodied by the cultural revolution - is composed of a set of porcelain reproduction of human bones arranged in a vitrine and will be shown alongside a new Lego work created for the exhibition. The Lego work is a large-scale sunflower seed, reminiscent of the porcelain ones shown at Tate Modern in 2010: the sunflower seed evokes the memory of the artists childhood, a delicate and simple object yet filled of meaning relating to hunger and deprivation.

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Both artists are united by an exploration of the limits of painting and of what stands beyond those limits, where gestures and different techniques broaden the horizon of material potential and the narratives embedded in the material itself.

### ROLAND FLEXNER

Roland Flexner was born in Nice (France) in 1944. He Lives and works in New York. His drawings have been showcased in prominent institutions, among others: the Centre Pompidou in Paris (2013); Albright Know Museum, Buffalo, NY, USA (2012); Shanghai Contemporary Art Museum, The Power Station, Shanghai, CN (2012), National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo, J (2010). Roland Flexner's work was exhibited at the Whitney Biennial, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, USA in 2010.

### AI WEIWEI

Ai Weiwei (b. 1957) is an artist who resides and works in both Berlin and Beijing. China's Communist Party denounced his father, the poet Ai Qing, in 1958 and his family was sent to labor camps, first near the North Korean border and then eventually in Xinjiang province. They returned to Beijing in 1976 after the end of the Cultural Revolution. Ai studied animation at the Beijing Film Academy, and then studied art in New York in the early eighties. Upon returning to China a decade later, Ai advocated for experimental artists by publishing underground books and curating avant-garde exhibitions. He has worked in many media, including sculpture, installation, photography, architecture and film. He is an outspoken advocate of human rights and freedom of speech. He is the recipient of the Václav Havel Prize in Creative Dissent in 2012 and the Amnesty International Ambassador of Conscience Award in 2015.

#### **Hard Facts:**

Massimo De Carlo, Hong Kong  
3d Floor Pedder Building, 12 Pedder Street, Central, Hong Kong  
From March 21<sup>st</sup> until May 14<sup>th</sup>, 2017  
Open Tuesday to Saturday, 10:30am – 7.00pm  
Opening: Monday 20<sup>th</sup> of January 2017

#### **For further information and materials:**

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