

PHILLIPS

PHILLIPS TO OFFER AI WEIWEI'S ZODIAC HEADS AS LOT 8
OF CONTEMPORARY ART EVENING SALE IN FEBRUARY

FIRST EXAMPLE TO BE OFFERED AT AUCTION
ESTIMATED TO REALISE £2 MILLION TO £3 MILLION



EVENING AUCTION: 12 FEBRUARY 2015, PHILLIPS BERKELEY SQUARE 7PM

ZODIAC HEADS VIEWING:

2 to 6 FEBRUARY : PHILLIPS BROOK STREET GALLERY, LONDON

7 to 12 FEBRUARY : PHILLIPS, 30 BERKELEY SQUARE, LONDON

LINK TO LOT ONLINE: <http://www.phillips.com/detail/AI-WEIWEI/UK010115/8>

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

LONDON - 27 JANUARY 2015 - Phillips will offer **Ai Weiwei's** *Circle of Animals / Zodiac Heads*, 2010, at the Contemporary Art Evening Sale on Thursday, 12 February. The twelve gold-plated sculptures portraying the signs of the ancient Chinese zodiac are offered with a pre-sale estimate of £2,000,000 - £3,000,000.

"The Zodiac Heads is a seminal work by Ai Weiwei and Phillips is proud to be the first to offer a set at auction. This set of twelve heads continues Ai Weiwei's tradition of re-interpreting cultural objects whilst questioning perceptions of authenticity and value. This gold plated domestic sized version was produced alongside the large 10ft bronze edition which have been exhibited at Somerset House, Hirshhorn Museum, Grand Army Plaze and at the Sao Paulo Biennale." **Peter Sumner, Head of Contemporary Art, London.**

The zodiac heads are inspired by those which once comprised a water clock-fountain at the Old Summer Palace, the celebrated masterpiece of Chinese landscape design. Built between 1750 and 1764 by Emperor Qianlong of the Qing dynasty (1644-1911), the Summer Palace was destroyed by French and British troops in 1850 during the Second Opium War at which time the fountainheads were looted. Originally made by Giuseppe Castiglione (1688-1766), an Italian Jesuit who travelled to China and became a painter at the court of the emperor, the 12 fountainheads each represented a sign of the Chinese zodiac.

Working from the seven originals that remain, **Ai Weiwei** and his team had to creatively imagine the five heads that are missing. This forced them to draw upon other sources for 'authentic' Chinese portrayals of these creatures, such as the dragon, which is based on images from tapestry and print. In spite of this, the set as a whole maintains glorious aesthetic coherence, challenging the idea that the original group was a work of perfection whose loss is an irredeemable tragedy. The fake is invested with the power to revive the past, and the marriage that is made - troubled, yet oddly serene - offers a lustrous exhibition of what might be a brighter, less confused and more beautiful future.

Circle of Animals / Zodiac Heads was initially executed in a large scale, as an edition of 6 plus 2 artist's proofs. This edition, cast in bronze, was almost 10 feet in height and intended for outdoor display. A subsequent edition was created consisting of 8 smaller works plated with gold, intended for interior display and between 20 and 30 inches in height. The project was officially introduced by then-Mayor Bloomberg at the Pulitzer Fountain at Grand Army Plaza, New York, in May 2011, and has since shown at sites and museums throughout North America, Europe, and Asia.

The gold-plating of the legendary zodiac here carries a dual weight. The animals radiate the opulent inheritance of their ancient court setting; but the original heads - as well as Ai's larger alternate version of this work - were in fact unadorned bronze.

The sculptures of the Chinese zodiac signs (Rat, Ox, Tiger, Rabbit, Dragon, Snake, Horse, Sheep, Monkey, Rooster, Dog and Pig) will be on view at Phillips Brook Street Gallery from 2 to 6 February and at Phillips, Berkeley Square, from 7 to 12 February.



PHILLIPS:

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