

CIRCA

EUROPE'S LARGEST DIGITAL ART EXHIBITION TO LAUNCH ON PICCADILLY LIGHTS WITH CHINESE ARTIST AI WEIWEI

London, 24th September 2020 - CIRCA, a new and independently curated platform presenting digital art on the iconic Piccadilly Circus screen, launches 1 October with a new commission by celebrated artist Ai Weiwei.

Transforming the giant 4K screen into a digital canvas, CIRCA will pause the adverts on Piccadilly Lights for two minutes each day (20:20 - 20:22 BST/GMT) until the end of the year, to present new ideas that consider our world, circa 2020. Created by artist Josef O'Connor, CIRCA commissions a different artist each month to create new work for Europe's largest screen that offers an innovative and exciting way for London to engage with art, both outside and at home, in a safe and socially distanced way.

Visitors to Piccadilly Circus will be able to connect their headphones to WWW.CIRCA.ART and receive a fully immersive audio-visual experience. The website will also stream the artwork every evening (20:20 BST/GMT). Exhibiting artists are invited to upload supporting content such as images, text and videos throughout the month, to expand on their ideas and engage a wider digital community from around the world.

The CIRCA programme inaugurates with an original work by artist Ai Weiwei: "The project begins from the year I was born through to the current, unceasing pandemic threatening the human condition globally. All visual material is produced by my studio. There will be a selection of quotes taken from my own writing, as well as from other writers and poets. We will provide a visual feast with a strong message for the public."

Recognising the lasting damage inflicted upon the UK cultural sector due to COVID-19, CIRCA will contribute to the cultural economy through the sale of exclusive limited edition prints each month. For October, Ai Weiwei has created a £100 print which will be available to purchase on WWW.CIRCA.ART/CIRCAECONOMY (from 1 October until 31 October). Circa is committed to distributing the proceeds to help struggling creatives throughout the UK.

Ahead of the launch on 1 October, a two-minute launch film by Brazilian film-director, Rodrigo Inada, will play on Piccadilly Lights. Featuring Ai Weiwei, Tracey Emin and a host of other emerging voices, the film will run every evening at 20:20BST until 30 September.

The CIRCA Advisory Council, chaired by Sir Norman Rosenthal, has been established to consult on the curatorial and compliance process, with representatives from a diverse range of backgrounds including the arts, communications, broadcasting, law and political journalism.

CIRCA has been made possible by Landsec, landlord of Piccadilly Lights, who have kindly donated media space, as a helpful boost to the cultural scene in London's West End.

Ai Weiwei: "CIRCA 20:20 offers a very important platform for artists to exercise their practice and reach out to the public. I think this is going to be a very interesting project, and it will have an impact on the arts and culture for London."

Sir Norman Rosenthal quote: "Piccadilly Lights, with its more than 100 years of famous history with electrically generated advertising, is still capable of speaking to the world. It is wonderfully exciting that now, artists young and established, will be able to use this platform for surprise and enlightenment in these most special of times."

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Josef O'Connor quote: "In our current state of emergency, artists can shine a light, creating new perspectives that can challenge, inspire and change the future. CIRCA champions the vision and collaborative mindset that is required to pull us all forward. We are honoured to be given this opportunity on such an iconic platform to present both emerging and established artists and help support the wider creative community."

Justine Simons OBE, Deputy Mayor for Culture and the Creative Industries quote: "London has a proud culture of public art, which I am glad is continuing to enable Londoners and visitors to engage with artworks in a safe and innovative way. I am delighted London is hosting this dynamic installation by Ai Weiwei - displayed at one of the capital's most famous locations, it will be accessible for all to enjoy."

Colette O'Shea, Managing Director, Landsec, quote: "Piccadilly Lights is part of the fabric of London and situated in the heart of the arts district. At a time when culture and the arts have been heavily impacted, we have donated time to CIRCA, an independently curated platform, to create an institutional collaboration as a celebration of the arts in the public space, and to support the cultural community of London's West End".

NOTES TO EDITORS

AI WEIWEI

Ai Weiwei is renowned for making strong aesthetic statements that resonate with timely phenomena across today's geopolitical world. From architecture to installations, social media to documentaries, Ai uses a wide range of mediums as expressions of new ways for his audiences to examine society and its values. Recent exhibitions include: Ai Weiwei: Resetting Memories at MARCO in Monterrey, Ai Weiwei: Bare Life at the Mildred Lane Kemper Museum in St. Louis, Ai Weiwei at the K20/K21 in Dusseldorf, and Good Fences Make Good Neighbors with the Public Art Fund in New York City.

Ai Weiwei was born in Beijing in 1957 and currently resides and works in Berlin. Ai is the recipient of the 2015 Ambassador of Conscience Award from Amnesty International and the 2012 Václav Havel Prize for Creative Dissent from the Human Rights Foundation.

SUPPORTERS

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