

AI WEIWEI: AFTERSHOCK MAXXI L'AQUILA | April 29 – September 6, 2026

April 28, 2026, 5 p.m. | Talk | Ai Weiwei speaks with Tim Marlow | live stream at:
<https://bit.ly/AiWeiWeilive>

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L'Aquila, April 28, 2026 – From tomorrow, Wednesday, April 29, until September 6, MAXXI's L'Aquila branch will be hosting **AI WEIWEI: Aftershock** curated by **Tim Marlow**, director and CEO of the London Design Museum, and backed by the **City of L'Aquila**.

This solo show features the work of Chinese artist, architect and activist Ai Weiwei, a global pioneer in contemporary art. It also pays tribute to L'Aquila as the capital of Abruzzo and its recent history, marking the year of its being chosen as the Italian Capital of Culture.

AI WEIWEI: Aftershock is arranged as a dialogue between the artist and Palazzo Ardinghelli, the baroque palace housing the museum and one of the most successful examples of building restoration and repurposing after the 2009 earthquake in L'Aquila. The show features a series of powerful works created after the 2008 earthquake in Sichuan and dedicated to the memory of its losses. One of these works is *Straight*, a seminal piece for Ai Weiwei that is being shown in L'Aquila for the first time in three different spaces. This sculpture, like the other works in the exhibition, underscores the lasting impact of natural catastrophes and human-generated conflicts, highlighting themes such as corruption and tragedy. It celebrates human resilience and the power of the drive to create.

The exhibition includes almost seventy works, some of them displayed for the first time in a museum, spanning Weiwei's entire artistic career: installations, videos, photographs, sculptures conceived as paintings and iconic subjects by artists like Munch, Van Gogh and Ed Ruscha re-interpreted using toy bricks to create complex, imaginative forms. Weiwei uses a variety of materials (from steel, porcelain and marble gathered from the rubble to everyday objects) and creative processes (from traditional techniques to carvings in precious materials and constructions) to transform traditional value systems. He experiments, connects, collects, recycles and invents in a way that is never just a pure exercise in form. Through variety and the subversion of traditional values, he encourages us to look at the world from different points of view. Weiwei's work is rooted in his personal experience, yet its significance is universal.

Maria Emanuela Bruni, Fondazione MAXXI President: "the exhibition *AI WEIWEI: Aftershock* marks a key moment in the young history of the museum, established in 2021 within the splendid late-Baroque setting of Palazzo Ardinghelli. As suggested by the exhibition title, Ai Weiwei's works prompt reflection on contemporary reality: in a time when human beings themselves are responsible for conflict, corruption, and natural disasters, the artist's works function as 'aftershocks' that stir consciences and raise ever-relevant questions".

Pierluigi Biondi, Mayor of L'Aquila: "Welcoming Ai Weiwei's Aftershock in the year in which we are Italy's Capital of Culture carries particularly profound significance: his work, marked by the experience of the Sichuan earthquake, engages in an authentic dialogue with the recent history of our city, transforming pain into memory and responsibility. Ai Weiwei's work, capable of traversing languages and disciplines, powerfully reminds us of the role of art as a tool for truth, remembrance, and civic engagement, in defense of human rights and freedom of expression. L'Aquila chose to rebuild through culture after the 2009 earthquake. Exhibitions such as this one strengthen our vocation for international dialogue and convey an important message, especially to younger generations: from wounds can emerge a new awareness and a more just, shared future. I would like to thank MAXXI for its invaluable work in making this exhibition possible, offering L'Aquila a cultural event of international significance".

Tim Marlow, exhibition curator: "All the works by Ai Weiwei challenges how we might look at the world in different ways, through different objects and materials. It is rooted in personal experience but has universal resonance and his ongoing fight for the rights of individuals to express themselves freely and not to be governed by the illegal dictates of authoritarian regimes all stems from his own struggles as well as his ongoing concern for those who are powerless to resist".

TALK | Thursday, April 28, 5 p.m., at MAXXI L'Aquila, Ai Weiwei will speak with curator Tim Marlow about the themes of the exhibition. To live stream the talk, go to: <https://bit.ly/AiWeiWeilive>.

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