Guggenheim Museum Presents Wang Jianwei: Time Temple, New Works by the First Commissioned Artist for The Robert H. N. Ho Family Foundation Chinese Art Initiative

First North American Solo Museum Exhibition of the Beijing-Based Artist Includes a Multimedia Installation, Film, and Live Performance

Exhibition: Wang Jianwei: Time Temple
Venue: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1071 Fifth Avenue, New York
Location: Tower Level 2
Dates: October 31, 2014–February 16, 2015
Media Preview: Thursday, October 30, 10 am–12 pm

(NEW YORK, NY, July 30, 2014)—From October 31, 2014 through February 16, 2015, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum presents Wang Jianwei: Time Temple, an immersive exhibition of new work by the Beijing-based artist and his first solo museum exhibition in North America. Wang is recognized within China for his bold conceptual practice and vital contributions to the avant-garde and experimental art movements of the reform era that spans the early 1980s to the present day. Informed by critical theory and philosophy, his work links formal concerns about art making and process with inquiries into contemporary society and the experience of time. Time Temple is the first in a series of three commission-based exhibitions through The Robert H. N. Ho Family Foundation Chinese Art Initiative at the Guggenheim Museum, which explores key ideas and core artists shaping contemporary art and discourse from China, within a global context. As a part of the initiative, the commissioned works will enter the Guggenheim’s permanent collection as The Robert H. N. Ho Family Foundation Collection.

The exhibition is organized by Thomas J. Berghuis, The Robert H. N. Ho Family Foundation Curator of Chinese Art, as part of the Guggenheim Museum’s Asian Art Initiative, which is under the direction of Alexandra Munroe, Samsung Senior Curator, Asian Art. Stephanie Kwai, Curatorial Assistant, Asian Art, has provided curatorial support.

Wang Jianwei: Time Temple is made possible by The Robert H. N. Ho Family Foundation.
About the Exhibition

Viewing art making as a continuous rehearsal, Wang Jianwei uses a process-based practice that resists interpretation and alternates between chance and iteration, fiction and reality. Theater is the basis for his work in painting, sculpture, installation, photography, video, and time-based performance. Steeped in history and social memory, Wang’s work is conceptually driven while grounded in the reality of everyday life in China today. The exhibition title, *Time Temple*, alludes to one of the artist’s central concerns, the question of how one thinks of and experiences time. For Wang, time is both abstract and real, finite and potential, still and moving. It implies a state of uncertainty that can be linked to his nuanced observation of contemporary Chinese society and resistance to absolute ideologies. The exhibition comprises three components: an installation of painting and sculpture, a film, and a live performance. Individually and collectively, these parts explore ambiguity and potential, express time and movement, and consider the ideas of metamorphosis and rehearsal through physical forms.

The installation features a series of large-scale paintings and sculptures that exemplify the artist’s practice of working across media—transposing one form into another and causing the object to transcend a single perspective. Filling an entire wall of the Tower Level 2 gallery is a monumental four-panel painting that is based on an altered set of stills from one of the artist’s videos. It is mounted in four frames of varying depth that emphasize the idea of the painting as a staged event much like theater; when viewed, this variation and repetition of content suggests both movement and the passage of time. Each panel contains elements of superimposed abstraction, playing with perception and inviting multiple interpretations. The alleged realism of this work is countered by a second, abstract painting of what appears to be an enlarged object under a microscope, showing the abstraction of scientific forms. Taken together, the paintings challenge the viewer to consider multiple concepts of the painted medium outside of traditional frameworks of perspective and into time-based viewing processes. As the curator explains, the artist is commenting on how every truth undercuts another truth, thus rendering the distinction between realism and abstraction obsolete. As the artist states, “it is futile to think about painting using traditional terms, such as style and color, but more important to think about painting as an interpretation of time.” Complementing the paintings are five monumental abstract sculptures, which the artist produced through a laborious and repetitive process of cutting, joining, and sculpting many layers of wood with the addition of metal, rubber, and paint to accentuate the forms. Viewing the time of production as a rehearsal, Wang worked without a plan for how the sculptures would ultimately appear, using only a fluid daily response to the moving angles, forms, lines, and planes made the day before. Akin to the paintings, as the viewer moves around each sculpture, the forms change and shift, evoking moments in time and revealing the process of their production.

Given the commission-based nature of the project, the film and performance are being produced by the artist at the time of writing. Further details on both components will be announced in advance of the exhibition opening. The film, *The Morning Time Disappeared*, will be screened in the Guggenheim’s New Media Theater throughout the duration of the exhibition. Inspired by Franz Kafka’s novella *Die Verwandlung* (*The Metamorphosis*, 1915), the film explores both the transformation of contemporary China and the multiple ways of experiencing time and its disappearance. The live performance, *Spiral Ramp Library*, focuses on the gathering and circulation of people and ideas within the museum space. The artist views theater and the concept of an event as strategies to open up interaction and
conversation in what he calls a “communal moment of the staged event.” Wang sees the role of the contemporary art museum as a vehicle to not only create such spaces but also call its visitors to action by allowing them to choose how to engage. According to Wang, the work takes its inspiration from American architect Frank Lloyd Wright’s design for the Guggenheim Museum, Argentinian writer Jorge Luis Borges’s short story “La Biblioteca de Babel” (“The Library of Babel,” 1941), and notions of time and possibility. The two-part event is scheduled to take place in the museum during the course of the exhibition. The first part is a live performance, slated to involve a number of unscripted orators, each simultaneously addressing one of ten topics with an audience of listeners. The ten subjects proposed are disappearance, Gnosticism, library, map, universe, climate, Jorge Luis Borges, Argentina, Frank Lloyd Wright, and the Guggenheim. Using his characteristic process of an evolving rehearsal, the artist will use recordings of the improvised conversations as a foundation for the script of the second theater performance, which will be performed during the final weeks of the exhibition.

About the Artist
Wang Jianwei is considered one of the leading artists of the reform-era avant-garde and experimental art movements in China. Wang is also recognized as an influential thinker and cultural catalyst in China for his writings and contributions to the public discourse on contemporary Chinese art and culture. Born in 1958 in Sichuan Province (Western China), Wang pursued graduate studies at the Zhejiang Academy of Fine Arts (now China Academy of Art) in Hangzhou. Beginning in the early 1990s, Wang became a pioneer of video and installation art in China, while developing a singular practice invested in increasingly elaborate multimedia productions.


Exhibition Catalogue
A fully illustrated, approximately 128-page bilingual catalogue in English and Traditional Chinese accompanies Wang Jianwei: Time Temple. The publication features two scholarly texts and one by the artist: an essay on Wang’s practice by Thomas J. Berghuis, The Robert H. N. Ho Family Foundation Curator of Chinese Art; a look at the artist’s work in relation to contemporary art in China by art critic
and theorist Gao Shiming, Director of the School of Intermedia Art, China Academy of Art, Hangzhou; and a statement by Wang Jianwei on his concept of art practice. These texts are supplemented by an extensive section of plates, detailed chronology, and selected bibliography and exhibition history. A hardback edition priced at $40 will be available in the museum shop and online at guggenheimstore.org and distributed in the United States through ARTBOOK | D.A.P.

**Education and Public Programs**

In conjunction with *Wang Jianwei: Time Temple*, the Guggenheim will offer an array of education and public programs, including a conversation with the artist; the Inaugural Lecture of The Robert H. N. Ho Family Foundation Lecture Series; a special screening of the exhibition film *The Morning Time Disappeared*; Chinese-language tours; Curator’s Eye tours; an afterschool media arts program for middle-school students; tours and workshops for youth and families; and accessibility programs for partially sighted, blind, or deaf visitors or those with specific learning needs. Currently scheduled programs include the following:

- **Artist talk with Hans Ulrich Obrist**
  [Date to be announced]
  Wang Jianwei will be joined in conversation by Hans Ulrich Obrist, Co-Director, Exhibitions and Programmes, and Director, International Projects, Serpentine Gallery, London, and author of *The China Interviews*.

- **The Inaugural Lecture of The Robert H. N. Ho Family Foundation Lecture Series**
  Tuesday, December 2, 6:30 pm
  Inaugural lecture by exhibition curator Thomas J. Berghuis, The Robert H. N. Ho Family Foundation Curator of Chinese Art, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum

- **Film screening of *The Morning Time Disappeared* with introduction by John Rajchman**
  Saturday, November 1, 5 pm
  A special screening of *The Morning Time Disappeared* in the Peter B. Lewis Theater with an introduction by John Rajchman, Adjunct Professor, Department of Art History and Archaeology, Columbia University, New York.

Details and registration information will be available at guggenheim.org/calendar in the coming weeks.

**About The Robert H. N. Ho Family Foundation Chinese Art Initiative at the Guggenheim Museum**

Made possible by a major grant from The Robert H. N. Ho Family Foundation and launched in early 2013, The Robert H. N. Ho Family Foundation Chinese Art Initiative at the Guggenheim Museum has been established to expand the discourse on contemporary Chinese art by commissioning major works from at least three artists or a group of artists born in mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, or Macao, which will enter the Guggenheim Museum’s permanent collection, and to present a series of exhibitions in conjunction with scholarly publications, notable lectures, and education programs. The commissioned works will enter the Guggenheim’s permanent collection as The Robert H. N. Ho Family Foundation Collection.
About The Robert H. N. Ho Family Foundation
Established in Hong Kong in 2005 by Robert Hung Ngai Ho as a private philanthropic organization, The Robert H. N. Ho Family Foundation works to foster and support Chinese arts and culture and to promote a deeper understanding of Buddhist teachings and their application in everyday life. The Foundation supports efforts that make traditional Chinese arts accessible and relevant to audiences worldwide. The Foundation also supports the creation of new works that bring innovative perspectives to the history of Chinese art, and that improve the quality and accessibility of scholarship on Chinese art. Guided by a belief that the insights of Buddhism have a vital role to play in approaching the challenges facing contemporary society, The Robert H. N. Ho Family Foundation has committed substantial resources to expanding the understanding, interpretation, and application of Buddhist philosophy.

About the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation
Founded in 1937, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation is dedicated to promoting the understanding and appreciation of art, primarily of the modern and contemporary periods, through exhibitions, education programs, research initiatives, and publications. The Guggenheim network that began in the 1970s when the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, was joined by the Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice, has since expanded to include the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao (opened 1997) and the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi (currently in development). Looking to the future, the Guggenheim Foundation continues to forge international collaborations that take contemporary art, architecture, and design beyond the walls of the museum, including the Guggenheim UBS MAP Global Art Initiative and The Robert H. N. Ho Family Foundation Chinese Art Initiative. More information about the Guggenheim Foundation can be found at guggenheim.org.

VISITOR INFORMATION

Admission: Adults $22, students/seniors (65+) $18, members and children under 12 free. Available with admission or by download to personal devices, the Guggenheim’s free app offers an enhanced visitor experience. The app features content on special exhibitions, access to more than 1,500 works in the Guggenheim’s permanent collection, and information about the museum’s landmark building. Verbal Imaging guides for select exhibitions are also included for visitors who are blind or have low vision. The Guggenheim app is sponsored by Bloomberg Philanthropies.

Museum Hours: Sunday–Wednesday, 10 am–5:45 pm; Friday, 10 am–5:45 pm; Saturday, 10 am–7:45 pm; closed Thursday. On Saturdays, beginning at 5:45 pm, the museum hosts “Pay What You Wish.” For general information, call 212 423 3500 or visit the museum online at:

- guggenheim.org
- guggenheim.org/connect

For publicity images visit guggenheim.org/pressimages.
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