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TheNational | **ARTS & LIFE**

Work by Superstar Artist Ai Weiwei to be shown at the new NYUAD exhibition

Anna Seaman
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Artist Ai Weiwei poses at the Museum of Cycladic Art in Athens, Greece. Michalis Karagiannis / Reuters

A work by renowned Chinese artist Ai Weiwei will be shown as part of a group show at New York University Abu Dhabi in September.

The exhibition, titled *Invisible Threads: Technology and its Discontents*, will feature 15 artists exploring the information and the benefits and pitfalls of saturated communication.

A wallpaper design Ai made last year will be showcased in the show. Titled *The Animal That Looks Like a Llama but is Really an Alpaca*, the piece is a social commentary, featuring interlocking gold

chains and a fan of surveillance cameras surrounding Twitter's Larry Bird logo. It also includes the image of the alpaca, which, in China, has developed into a symbol of defiance against internet censorship.

Known for his outspoken political views, Ai's works gained global prominence when he was detained by Chinese authorities in 2011 for 81 days without charge for criticising the country's government. This work, currently on view at the Museum of Cycladic Art in Athens, is his contribution to the continuing discussion of privacy topics and government surveillance.

This is not the first time his work has been shown in the capital. Ai's dazzling installation of steel bicycles, *Forever*, has been in the foyer of Manarat Al Saadiyat since 2014, when it was exhibited as part of Abu Dhabi Art. The piece is a comment on the lack of freedom in China

Ai's work will be shown in the new exhibition alongside that of Addie Wagenknecht, a prominent American artist who is interested in the use of new media, and Chinese performance artist and photographer Liu Bolin, who is known for immersing himself in environments for his work.

Representing the Middle East, Iraqi artist Wafaa Bilal will be showing his 2015 work *Canto III*, a golden statue of Saddam Hussein he created to underline the history of despotic leaders who seek to immortalise themselves through works of art.

Also in the show is Aram Bartholl, a Berlin-based conceptual artist known for his examination of the relationship between the digital and physical world.

His work, *Unknown Gamer*, is an installation featuring four smart phones showing videos of strangers who were filmed while playing games on their phones.

"The growing attention to the hand-held private screen in public is a typical phenomenon of the last few years," he says in his artist statement for this piece. "The attention is so big the player doesn't even realise they are being filmed from a very close distance."

Invisible Threads will present a wide range of art works that address this global topic, while also anchoring it in the region.

The show is curated by Bana Kattan, a resident curator at the NYUAD Art Gallery, and Professor Scott Fitzgerald, who is the programme head of interactive media at the university.

"In keeping with the NYUAD Art Gallery's mission to produce exhibitions that are both internationally significant and locally relevant, this exhibit showcases some of the most interesting artwork being made today around the topic of the individual's experience with technology," says Kattan.

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