

# The New York Times

## Tate Modern Buys 8 Million Works by Ai Weiwei

The Tate Modern in London announced on Monday that it had purchased one of Ai Weiwei's famous installations of life-size, hand-painted porcelain "Sunflower Seeds." It bought 8 million of the 100 million seeds that were [on view](#) in a giant installation at the museum a year and a half ago. The mini-version was bought directly from the artist, officials at the Tate said, and the remaining 92 million seeds have been returned to Mr. Ai.

When "Sunflower Seeds" was originally installed in the Tate Modern's cavernous Turbine Hall, the museum encouraged visitors to touch and even walk on the piece. But it [reversed course](#) days later after officials found that the movement of the crowds released hazardous dust. It was also determined that there were traces of lead in the paint.

The new acquisition may be less than one-tenth the size of the original, but it is still a lot bigger than a sunflower piece by Mr. Ai that Sotheby's [sold](#) in London last year, one of an edition of 10 works each composed of 100,000 seeds. That version was bought by an unidentified telephone bidder for \$559,394, or about \$5.60 a seed. The Tate would not say what it had paid for its eight million seeds, but did say that it managed the purchase with help from the Tate International Council, the Art Fund and the collectors Stephen and Yana Peel.

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