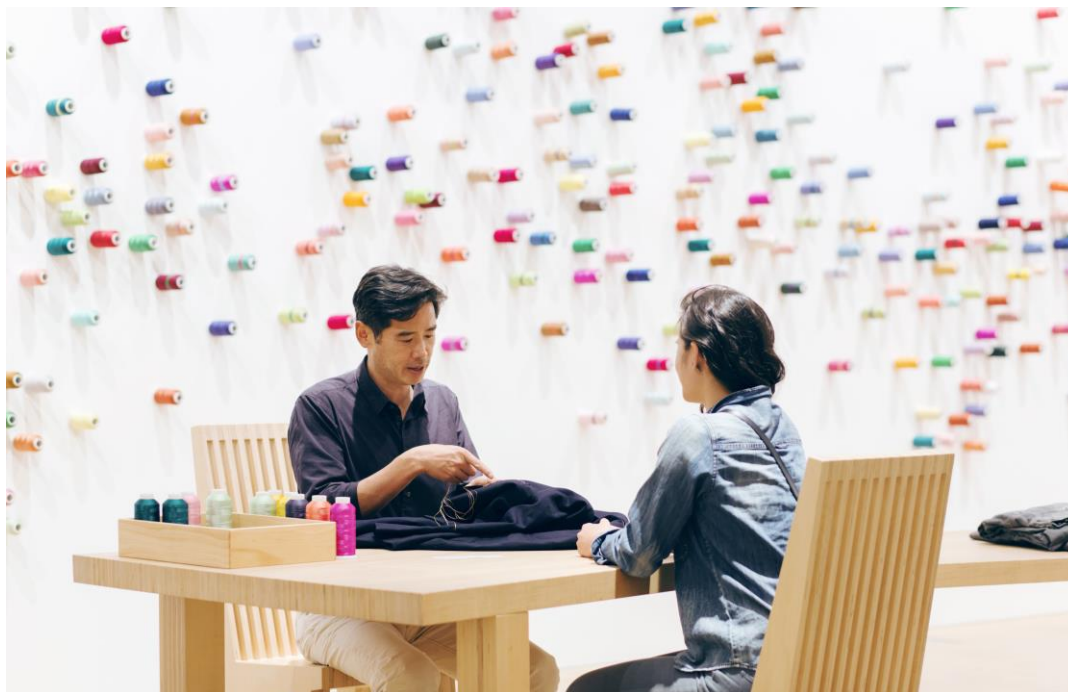


**Media Release**  
**Monday 29 August 2016**

## Lee Mingwei's art of participation comes to Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki

Sponsors



Lee Mingwei, *The Mending Project*, 2009 / 2014, (installation view), *Lee Mingwei and His Relations*, Mori Art Museum, Tokyo 2015. Photo: Yoshitsugu Fuminari. Photo courtesy: Mori Art Museum, Tokyo

Sleeping, mending, letter writing and receiving the gift of song are just some of the ways the public can experience the new exhibition *Lee Mingwei and His Relations: The Art of Participation* which opens at Auckland Art Gallery on Saturday 5 November.

New York and Paris-based Taiwanese-American artist Lee Mingwei is acclaimed internationally for connecting audiences through social and one-to-one experiences that create self-reflection and unexpected communication amongst strangers.

Gallery Director Rhana Devenport says Lee actively invites and engages the viewer and moves them from spectator to participant.

'Lee's projects are often open-ended scenarios for everyday interaction. The works therefore have an unpredictable quality that allows them to grow and change throughout the duration of the exhibition, relating to the Buddhist notion of the ever-changing present.'

Devenport says Lee harnesses ideas about intimacy in public and private spaces.

'His artworks create a highly engaging experience for visitors,' she says.

The exhibition's curator, Mori Art Museum's Chief Curator Mami Kataoka, says Lee's works allow the unconscious everyday rituals of each person to become a source of radiance and light.

“The sensations, consciousness and memories evoked by visitors’ experiences in Lee’s exhibition will help them to form a new layer of immaterial value,” she says.

In *Sonic Blossom* (2013 – present), most recently performed at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney and The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, a vocalist approaches a visitor to offer them a gift of song. If the visitor accepts, the singer then performs a Lied (art song) by Schubert. *Sonic Blossom* will be performed by singers, in partnership with The University of Auckland’s School of Music.

*The Letter Writing Project* (1998 – present) will offer three illuminated booths in which visitors may write a letter, offering previously unexpressed gratitude, forgiveness or apology. Visitors may then seal and address their letters for Auckland Art Gallery to post or leave them unsealed, to be read by later visitors.

In *The Sleeping Project* (2000 – present), Gallery visitors will enter a ballot to spend the night in Auckland Art Gallery with Lee Mingwei or a Gallery representative. Although sleeping is typically seen as prosaic and commonplace, in a museum setting sleep and conversation become heightened encounters.

‘Because of the role played by the visitor, the artworks have an unpredictable quality that causes them to grow and change throughout the duration of the exhibition,’ says Devenport.

Alongside further projects such as *The Mending Project* (2009 – present) and *100 Days with Lily* (1995), additional artworks related by theme provide an artistic and philosophical context to Lee Mingwei’s practice. These include works by artists Hakuin, John Cage, Allan Kaprow, Yves Klein and Lee Ufan, as well as William Blake, Colin McCahon and Dane Mitchell from Auckland Art Gallery’s collection. Together they act as reference points to the ideologies and sensibilities that inform Lee Mingwei’s intimate way of working.

Devenport says this exhibition expands the Gallery’s commitment to showcasing exceptional art from the Asia Pacific region.

The exhibition is organised by Auckland Art Gallery and Mori Art Museum, Tokyo, with Curator Mami Kataoka, Chief Curator of Mori Art Museum, Tokyo. It was previously shown at Mori Art Museum and the Taipei Fine Arts Museum in Taiwan.

Mami Kataoka, a former Walters Prize Judge in 2012, was recently named the Artistic Director of the 21st Biennale of Sydney to be held in 2018. She is the first curator from Asia to be appointed to the position.

*Lee Mingwei and His Relations: The Art of Participation* is the first large-scale retrospective survey of the artist’s practice to be presented in Australasia and the first time his work will be experienced in Auckland.

(ends)

**Exhibition details:**

*Lee Mingwei and His Relations: The Art of Participation*

When: Saturday 5 November 2016 to Sunday 19 March 2017  
10am to 5pm daily except Christmas Day

Where: Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki  
Corner Kitchener and Wellesley Streets  
Auckland, New Zealand

General admission: \$12.50, Members and children 12-and-under free

**Lee Mingwei bio**

Lee Mingwei was born in Taichung, Taiwan in 1964 and currently lives and works in New York and Paris. Lee's works explore interpersonal relationships through participatory installations that examine issues of trust, intimacy and self-awareness. Involving participation from gallery visitors that may occur before, during and after the exhibition, works are relational and rely on audiences to bring them to life and create individual meaning. Lee's projects are often open-ended scenarios for everyday interaction. The works therefore have an unpredictable quality that allows them to grow and change throughout the duration of the exhibition, relating to the Buddhist notion of the ever-changing present through self-reflection.

Lee received an MFA from Yale University in 1997, and is a graduate from the California College of Arts. Lee has exhibited widely, including in solo shows and projects at The Metropolitan Museum of Art (2015); the Museum of Modern Art (2003), the Whitney Museum of American Art (1998), all in New York, as well as the Museum of Fine Arts Boston, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Taipei Fine Arts Museum, Queensland Gallery of Modern Art, Mori Art Museum, Tokyo; and Ullens Center for Contemporary Art, Beijing. His work has featured in biennials in Venice, Lyon, Liverpool, Taipei, Sydney, the Asia Pacific Triennial (Brisbane) and the Whitney Biennial (New York).

**For more information, high-res images and interview requests contact**

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