



Ai Weiwei;  
photo: Jan Stürmann

## Ai Weiwei

Ai Weiwei is an artist and activist whose work encompasses sculpture and mixed-media installation, photography, film, architecture, curation, and social criticism. One of the most prominent artists of the 21st century, Ai is also an unrelenting champion of freedom of expression and a vocal critic of government corruption. His art and advocacy often respond to conditions in his native China—from revisiting its ancient traditions, to challenging its current authoritarian regime.

Ai's work has been featured in museums, art fairs, and public spaces internationally. His major solo exhibitions include *Ai Weiwei in the Chapel*, on view at Yorkshire Sculpture Park through November 2, 2014; *Evidence* at the Martin-Gropius-Bau, Berlin, 2014; *Ai Weiwei: According to What?*, which was organized by the Mori Art Museum, Tokyo, in 2009 and traveled to North American venues in 2013–14; *Ai Weiwei: Absent* at the Taipei Fine Arts Museum, 2011; *Circle of Animals/Zodiac Heads* at the Pulitzer Fountain, New York, 2011; and *Ai Weiwei: Sunflower Seeds* at Tate Modern, London, 2010.

Ai created three large-scale installations for the 2013 Venice Biennale. He collaborated with architects Herzog & de Meuron on the design for the “bird’s nest” stadium for the 2008 Beijing Olympics, and on the design for the 2012 Serpentine Pavilion in London.

Ai actively uses digital and social media to express his views and to connect with an ever-expanding international following. He fostered a citizens’ investigation following the devastating Sichuan earthquake in 2008 in which some 7,000 government-constructed schoolrooms collapsed and nearly 70,000 people died, including more than 5,000 students. His life, art, and advocacy were the focus of the 2012 documentary film *Ai Weiwei: Never Sorry*.

On April 3, 2011, Ai was arrested by Chinese police at the Beijing Capital International Airport. He was detained for 81 days on charges of tax evasion, and released on bail on June 22, 2011. Ai's bail was lifted one year later. Although he is currently allowed to leave Beijing, he is still prohibited from leaving China.

Born in Beijing in 1957, Ai Weiwei is the son of poet Ai Qing, who was denounced during the Anti-Rightist Movement. Ai lived in Xinjiang with his family from 1960 to 1976; in 1981 he relocated to the United States, where he resided until 1993, living briefly in California and Philadelphia and spending a decade in New York.

Among numerous awards and honors, Ai won the Václav Havel Prize for Creative Dissent from the Human Rights Foundation in 2012, and was selected as Honorary Academician at the Royal Academy of Arts in London in 2011. He currently lives and works in Beijing.

