

On April 3rd, Ai Weiwei was detained by Chinese authorities in Beijing. All demands made to the Chinese government regarding his right to a transparent and fair legal process have thus far been ignored. We are very concerned about the well-being of Ai Weiwei, as well as that of his family, staff, and friends. Yet, the massive international protests against Ai Weiwei's detention provide some hope that those responsible in China will be moved to concede. Among many actions, the public solidarity leading museums have taken with Ai Weiwei is communicated by a petition initiated by the Guggenheim Foundation (for further information, please see www.change.org).

Ai Weiwei's expressed desire has always been to move forward with planned projects. Conceived by the artist for the gallery space at neugerriemschneider, the porcelain works and the wood sculptures - entitled *Rock* (2011) and *Tree* (2011) respectively - were executed using ancient Chinese handcraft traditions. The porcelain stones were made in the Chinese city of Jingdezhen, where porcelain production originates. They surround two trees that have been built from fallen trunks collected in the mountainous regions of southern China. Similar to the construction of Ai Weiwei's previous wood sculptures, the tree fragments have been interlocked using a classic Chinese technique. Combining both natural and crafted elements, the installation of the works calls to mind a traditional Chinese garden, a meditative space where one might feel inclined to linger.

I always remember my father saying before he passed away: 'This is your country. You don't have to be so polite. You can do whatever you want to.' So I had to adapt.

Ai Weiwei

See: *Ai Weiwei. Works: Beijing 1993 - 2003*, Beijing, 2004, p. 27.

Ai Weiwei was born in 1957 in Beijing. Beginning in 1979, he was a member of the artists' collective Star Group, which questioned the prevailing tradition of social realism and turned its focus instead to artistic individuality and experimental approaches. In 1981, Ai Weiwei moved to New York where he spent a total of twelve years. His confrontation with Western Modern and Postwar art made a lasting influence on him; the work of Marcel Duchamp and the concept of the Readymade have been of particular significance to the artist. After his return to the People's Republic of China in 1993, he initiated one of the first alternative art spaces in Beijing and began writing and publishing texts, including *Black Cover Book* (1994), *White Cover Book* (1995), and *Grey Cover Book* (1997), which each seek to redefine art. In 2005, Ai Weiwei began to publish a large amount of texts on his blog. His posts about art and architecture, as well as his questioning of the political system and society in China, were blocked by authorities in 2009. Since designing the plans for his own studio in Beijing in the late 1990s, Ai Weiwei has been working regularly on

architectural projects, many of which have been carried out by FAKE Design, a collective he founded in 2003. Among such projects is the National Stadium (informally referred to as the “Bird’s Nest”) for the Olympic Games in Beijing in 2008, which was conceptualized together with Herzog & de Meuron. In 2007, Ai Weiwei contributed several works to *documenta 12*, including *Fairytale*, which brought 1001 Chinese citizens to Kassel over a period of 20 days. In 2009-10, the Haus der Kunst in Munich presented a survey exhibition of Ai Weiwei’s works, entitled *So Sorry*. The artist’s installation *Sunflower Seeds* (2010) will be on view in the Turbine Hall at the Tate Modern in London until May 2, 2011. A prolific artist, architect, author and activist, Ai Weiwei is known as a vocal critic of his country’s regime and respected as one of the most versatile and influential artists of our time.

Berlin, April 19, 2011

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