

艾未未 | Ai Weiwei | 아이 웨이웨이

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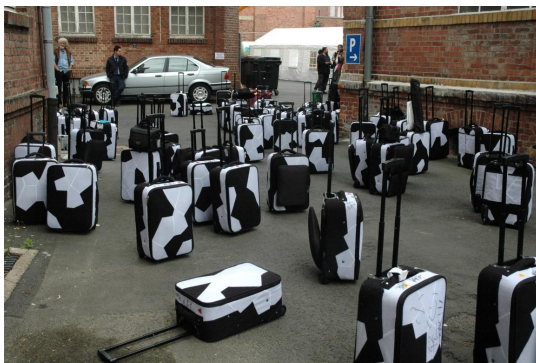
## Tang Contemporary Art Seoul

Tang Contemporary Art is honored to announce the opening of renown artist Ai Weiwei's solo exhibition at our Seoul gallery space on March 10th, 2023. This will be Ai's fifth collaboration with Tang Contemporary Art after "Ai Weiwei" (Beijing), "Wooden Ball" (Hong Kong), "Refutation"(Hong Kong) and "Year of the Rat" (Bangkok). This exhibition will display Ai's LEGO series which he began in 2007 and one set of *Twelve Zodiacs* sculpture work.

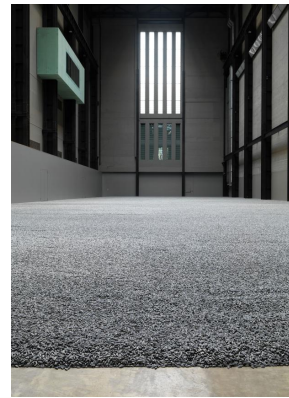
In Ai Weiwei's practice, while maximizing the possibility of human expression and communication in our digitized world, he keeps searching for poetic meanings with human dignity; this is a continuation of what his father did. It came naturally to him, for he thinks they are on the same track, together with writers and poets such as Arthur Rimbaud and Walt Whitman. Once the language is designed, one can be in command.

That is how to have a better understanding of Ai's recent works. LEGO being used to carry personal messages: those stories related to him, his childhood and his education are embedded in them. Pixels, digitization, segmentation, fragmentation and disconnection provide the unique freedom for reproduction, allowing for a qualitative and quantitative breakthrough in the formation of images that is distanced from the widely used order, method, and composition. It is similar to the use of ancient mosaics, and the presentation of fabrics (silk, wool) and carpets, which have a long tradition. Like the wooden movable-type printing during the Song Dynasty (ca. 1000 AD), the methods and means of production have replaced manual control, and this has led to a high level of accuracy and precision of the images completed.

This is the linguistic advantage of computer technology, and a figurative presentation of an intelligent logical system for the digital age. Essentially it is the same as the "production" and de-individuated expressions that Ai has tried to establish with *Fairytale* (2007) that brought 1,001 Chinese visitors to documenta 12, *Sunflower Seeds* (2010) with one hundred million hand painted porcelain seeds, *Straight* (2012) consisting of one hundred and fifty tons of rebars, and *Soft Ground* (2009), a hand-woven carpet that replicated the same patterns and textures of the museum floor. This feature is present in its entirety in *Washed* (1990), in which the images of washes and erosion of hundreds of wooden panels created alternative image effects, homogeneous splicing, multiplication, and decentralization; the work was born out of technical means of production, allowing for the precise presentation of concepts, methods, language, and composition. The mystified "artistic" tendency of individuation and the unquantifiable customary language are thus replaced.



*Fairytale* (2007), Kassel documenta 12



*Sunflower Seeds* (2010) , Tate Modern



*Sunflower Seeds* (detail)



*Straight* (2012) , Brooklyn Museum



*Soft Ground*(2009), Israel Museum



*Washed* (1990)

The existence and logic of using LEGO as structure are strikingly consistent with the logic of Ai's social media expression including tweets and Instagram images. Both encompass the temporal and spatial factors, the flattening, fragmentation, and dispossessed continuity of media and reality, including the existence itself, ideologies, politics and happenings, linguistic approaches of culture and dreams. The same qualities can be seen in his documentary films *Beijing 2003* (2003), *Chang'an Boulevard* (2004), *Beijing: the Second Ring* (2005), *Beijing: the Third Ring* (2005), and *Rohingya* (2022), his writings on social media platforms starting from Weibo in 2005 to Twitter and Instagram today, the large volume of documentary materials, photographic documentations and interviews. The logic of the formation of LEGO is in line with the relationship between print, photography, mechanical production, pop art, digital technology, modern media and widespread online games.



*Beijing 2003* (2003)



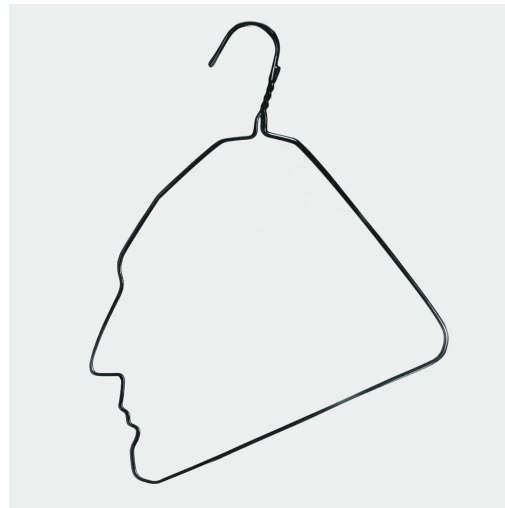
*Rohingya* (2022)

Ai had a purer intention for *Untitled (After Pollock)* (2020), made for the painting itself. Jackson Pollock's technique of pouring and dripping paint on his canvases on the floor created the mythology of the feelings of colors, physical movement, and abstract expression. In parallel, digital pixels are results of human action and work in a different way. Unlike paint drops and brush strokes, pixels are homogeneous; there is no beginning, no end, no direction, and no human mediation. It is therefore ironic to present Pollock's masterpiece in this way. It's surely not for its beauty. It is probably the furthest he could go in the opposite direction of expressionism or any-ism.

In *Untitled (After Munch)* (2020), referencing Edvard Munch's *The Scream*, Ai inserted an image of himself leaping in the air and covering his genitals with a caonima (alpaca) puppet. When it was revealed that financier Leon Black, who purchased *The Scream* at auction by Sotheby's in Manhattan in 2012 and lent it to the MoMA, paid \$158 million to Jeffrey Epstein, New York Times asked him if MoMA should have a higher aesthetic standard. Together with other artists, Ai made a statement that Leon Black should step down as MoMA's chairman.

At first glance, *Untitled (After Van Gogh)* (2020) looks like Van Gogh's painting *Le semeur au soleil couchant* with a man scattering seeds on the earth, but it actually comes from the combination between the painting and a news image of the locust plague in Pakistan in 2020. Ai added a panda to Peter Paul Rubens' *The Rape of the Daughters of Leucippus* in *Untitled (After Rubens)* (2020). His father liked Rubens' paintings because of their powerful composition, and the vividly drawn muscles and nudity. While panda represents China's presence, *Untitled (After Rubens)* juxtaposes a masterpiece of European painting with an image of contemporary China's state power.

Ai added a hanger next to Venus, the Roman goddess of fertility and prosperity, in *Sleeping Venus (After Giorgione)* (2022). In the past, before abortion was made legal, tools including wire coat hanger was used by women who needed to self-induce an abortion, a brutal act out of desperation. Ai made an artwork with a wire coat hanger a long time ago: back in the 1980s, he twisted a hanger into the contours of Marcel Duchamp's profile - *Hanging Man* (1985).



*Hanging Man* (1985)

The events of human history play out in turns, fragmenting during the flow of time. Here, Ai Weiwei's LEGO works become a new form of visual communication, systematically and meticulously building up a form of poetic linguistics that is continually deconstructed by time and space .