



# ai weiwei LIBERO

FLORENCE  
PALAZZO STROZZI

23 SEPTEMBER 2016  
22 JANUARY 2017

#AiwwFlorence #Aiww

## INDEX

- 1) *Press release*
- 2) *Fact sheet*
- 3) *Photo sheet*
- 4) *Exhibition Walkthrough*
- 5) *Catalogue essay by Fondazione Palazzo Strozzi Director General Arturo Galansino*
- 6) **A CLOSER LOOK**  
*REFRAME: 22 rubber dinghies for the façade of Palazzo Strozzi*  
*Four portraits of dissidents from Florentine history*  
*Study of Perspective. Palazzo Strozzi, Florence, Italy*
- 7) *Timeline “Ai Weiwei Story”*
- 8) *List of the works*



# ai weiwei LIBERO

FLORENCE  
PALAZZO STROZZI

23 SEPTEMBER 2016  
22 JANUARY 2017

#AiwwFlorence #Aiww

## PRESS RELEASE

*Exhibition Ai Weiwei. Libero at the Palazzo Strozzi, Florence  
Major Retrospective to Span Entire Renaissance Palace*

23 September 2016 – 22 January 2017

[www.palazzostrozzi.org](http://www.palazzostrozzi.org) / #aiweiwei @palazzostrozzi

This autumn, Palazzo Strozzi in Florence will present Italy's first major retrospective dedicated to Ai Weiwei, one of the world's most celebrated and influential contemporary artists, curated by Arturo Galansino, Director General of the Fondazione Palazzo Strozzi.

Visitors to the Palazzo will be greeted by *Reframe*, an architectural intervention covering the 2 main façades of the building with 22 bright orange lifeboats. A project that draws the attention to the lives of the refugees who daily risk their lives to reach Europe by crossing the Mediterranean Sea. The installation ensures a direct introduction to the practice of this dissident Chinese artist. Ai Weiwei is known world-wide as much for his challenging contemporary art practice as for his political activism. The full exhibition will chart the artist's practice from the '80s to date, and will include key video works, assemblage and installation pieces from the past three decades, as well as present multiple new commissions including a new Lego portrait series.

Mirroring the artist's relationship between tradition and modernity, key works will be hung in response to the architecture of the Palazzo Strozzi. The 15<sup>th</sup> century palace was built as a political statement, and is considered to embody the history of the city of Florence. The vast, five-ton work, *Refraction*, created for exhibition on San Francisco's Alcatraz island, will take over the palace's courtyard. In the shape of an enormous metal wing, based on the structure of an actual bird, the work consists of reflective solar panels originally made for use as solar cookers in Tibet. This work becomes a metaphor for constraint, using the imagery of flight to evoke the tension between freedom and confinement.

The show will not only offer a marvellous opportunity to explore Ai Weiwei's creative genius, but also to understand his personal narrative, offering critical insight to Ai Weiwei's ambiguous relationship with his native China. In his works, Ai Weiwei plays with both the ancient and the contemporary, showing an ambivalent relationship with his own country, torn between a deep sense of belonging and an equally strong sense of rebellion through the manipulation of objects, images and metaphors of the Chinese culture, denouncing the contradictions between the individual and society in the contemporary world.

Ai Weiwei will be the first artist to exhibit across the entirety of the Palazzo Strozzi spaces, presenting a series of new and major works from the façade of the building and the courtyard to the *piano nobile* and the Strozzina gallery. Works on display will span from those created in New York during the '80s and '90s, when he discovered his 'masters' Andy Warhol and Marcel Duchamp, to the large iconic assemblages from the early 2000s consisting of objects such as bicycles and stools, as well as recent works such as his portraits of political dissidents built with Lego bricks.

Of the exhibition, Arturo Galansino, Director of Fondazione Palazzo Strozzi, said, "*I have been working for almost a year to ensure that Palazzo Strozzi hosts the first major exhibition in Italy of the work of Ai Weiwei, one of the most iconic and influential personalities of our time. Ai Weiwei's work, combining political activism, autobiography and formal research as it does, speaks to us of major themes in a powerful, direct manner, using artistic vocabulary and tools that bstride East and West. Hosting a retrospective of this nature in Florence means viewing the city as a modern cultural capital, not simply pegged to the vestiges of its past but able, at long last, to play an active role out in the forefront of artistic developments in our own era.*"

Over the past twenty years, Ai Weiwei has become a leading voice on the international art scene and China's most famous living artist. Known for his political activism and meticulous artistic research, Ai Weiwei has also become a symbol of resistance against censorship. He notably initiated a series of actions and created artworks to denounce the Chinese government's censorship of the devastating earthquake in Sichuan, including the formation of a 'Citizens' Investigation' into the earthquake, and the discovery and publication of the names of almost 6,000 children who died in the wreckage of poorly constructed schools. In 2009, his personal blog, which totalled 17



MAIN  
SPONSOR



WITH THE  
COLLABORATION OF

PRESS OFFICE  
Antonella Fiori / C. +39 347 2526982  
a.fiori@antonellafiori.it

FONDAZIONE PALAZZO STROZZI  
Lavinia Rinaldi / T. +39 055 3917122  
l.rinaldi@palazzostrozzi.org

BRUNSWICK ARTS  
Grégory Fleuriel / T. +33 626542867  
gfleuriel@brunswickgroup.com

PROMOTION  
SIGMA CSC Susanna Holm  
T. +39 055 2340742  
susannaholm@cscsigma.it



# ai weiwei LIBERO

FLORENCE  
PALAZZO STROZZI

23 SEPTEMBER 2016  
22 JANUARY 2017

#AiwwFlorence #Aiww

million views, was shut down by the authorities. In 2011, Ai Weiwei himself was arrested and secretly detained for 81 days. His passport was confiscated for the following four years, during which he was banned from travelling abroad. However, these constraints had little impact on his artistic creation and growing worldwide reputation. He continued to show his work in some of the world's leading museums and galleries, quickly becoming one of the most active and popular artists on social media, which he uses as a tool for sharing his artistic and political ideas. The exhibition is promoted and organized by the Fondazione Palazzo Strozzi with the participation of the Comune of Florence, the Camera di Commercio of Florence, the Associazione Partners Palazzo Strozzi, and the Regione Toscana, with a contribution from the Banca CR Firenze/Intesa Sanpaolo and with the support of Galleria Continua, San Gimignano/Beijing/Le Moulins/Habana.

## Notes to Editors

### Ai Weiwei

Ai Weiwei was born in Beijing in 1957. In 1958, his father, the poet Ai Qing, was branded a 'rightist' and sent to Beidahuang, Heilongjiang, in north-eastern China, and shortly afterwards to the desert scrub of Xinjiang in north-western China. Ai Qing was rehabilitated after Mao Zedong's death in 1976 and the family was able to move back to Beijing, where Ai Weiwei enrolled at the Beijing Film Academy and became one of the founding members of the avant-garde Stars group. He lived in New York from 1983 to 1993, briefly attending the Parsons School of Design and discovering the work of Marcel Duchamp and Andy Warhol. In 1993, he returned to China to be with his ailing father and contributed to the creation of a community of avant-garde artists in Beijing's East Village. He co-founded the China Art Archives & Warehouse (CAAW), one of the country's first independent art spaces, in 1997. He began to develop an interest in architecture, designing his own studio-house in Caochangdi, a north-eastern suburb of Beijing, in 1999. Ai Weiwei founded the architecture studio FAKE Design in 2003.

Ai Weiwei's work has been exhibited in leading museums, including *Andy Warhol | Ai Weiwei* at the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne; *Ai Weiwei* at the Royal Academy of Arts, London; *Ai Weiwei@Helsinki* at the Helsinki Art Museum; *Evidence* at the Martin-Gropius-Bau, Berlin; and *Ai Weiwei: According to What?* at the Hirshhorn Museum of Art, Washington D.C.. He participated in *documenta 12* in 2007, bringing 1,001 Chinese citizens to Kassel for his *Fairytale* project. In 2008, he co-designed Beijing's 'Bird's Nest' national stadium with Swiss architects Herzog & de Meuron. He covered the floor of the Turbine Hall, Tate Modern, London, with 100 million porcelain sunflower seeds in 2010. Ai Weiwei was awarded the Human Rights Foundation's Vaclav Havel Prize for Creative Dissent in 2012, and Amnesty International's Ambassador of Conscience Award in 2015.

### Fondazione Palazzo Strozzi

Established in July 2006, the Fondazione Palazzo Strozzi is an independent public-private foundation who delivers a consistent high-quality programme of modern and contemporary art exhibitions in its landmark Renaissance building, the Palazzo Strozzi. The Foundation has marked a significant break in the way cultural institutions have been run in Italy, establishing itself as a leading art venue in Italy and Europe.



MAIN  
SPONSOR

WITH THE  
COLLABORATION OF



GALLERIACONTINUA



#### PRESS OFFICE

Antonella Fiori / C. +39 347 2526982  
a.fiori@antonellafiori.it

#### FONDAZIONE PALAZZO STROZZI

Lavinia Rinaldi / T. +39 055 3917122  
l.rinaldi@palazzostrozzi.org

#### BRUNSWICK ARTS

Grégory Fleuriel / T. +33 626542867  
gfleuriel@brunswickgroup.com

#### PROMOTION

SIGMA CSC Susanna Holm  
T. +39 055 2340742  
susannaholm@cscsigma.it



# ai weiwei LIBERO

FLORENCE  
PALAZZO STROZZI

23 SEPTEMBER 2016  
22 JANUARY 2017

#AiwwFlorence #Aiww

## FACT SHEET

Titolo	AI WEIWEI. LIBERO
Sede	Palazzo Strozzi
Periodo	23 September 2016 - 22 January 2017
Curated by	Arturo Galansino, Director General Fondazione Palazzo Strozzi
Promoted and organised by	Fondazione Palazzo Strozzi
With the support of	Comune di Firenze, Camera di Commercio di Firenze, Associazione Partners Palazzo Strozzi, Regione Toscana Galleria Continua, San Gimignano/Beijing/Le Moulins/Habana
Main sponsor	Banca CR Firenze Intesa Sanpaolo  Trenitalia Gruppo Ferrovie dello Stato Italiane, ATAF GESTIONI, BUSITALIA-Sita Nord, Ufficio Turismo della Città Metropolitana di Firenze, Toscana Aeroporti Spa, Unicoop Firenze, Firenze Parcheggi, Art e dossier, Rinascente
Main Media Partner	Rai
Press Office	Antonella Fiori: T. + 39 347 2526982 <a href="mailto:a.fiori@antonellafiori.it">a.fiori@antonellafiori.it</a>  Fondazione Palazzo Strozzi - Lavinia Rinaldi T. +39 055 3917122 <a href="mailto:l.rinaldi@palazzostrozzi.org">l.rinaldi@palazzostrozzi.org</a> Brunswick Arts- Grégory Fleuriet T. +33626542867 <a href="mailto:g.fleuriet@brunswickgroup.com">g.fleuriet@brunswickgroup.com</a>
Promotion	Susanna Holm – Sigma CSC T. +39 055 2340742 <a href="mailto:susannaholm@cscsigma.it">susannaholm@cscsigma.it</a>
Catalogue	Giunti Editore, Firenze
Bookings	Sigma CSC T. +39 055 2469600 F. +39 055 244145 <a href="mailto:prenotazioni@palazzostrozzi.org">prenotazioni@palazzostrozzi.org</a>
Info	T. +39 055 2645155 <a href="http://www.palazzostrozzi.org">www.palazzostrozzi.org</a>
Admission	Full price € 12,00; concessions € 9,50; Schools € 4,00

# ai.weiwei

## LIBERO

FLORENCE  
PALAZZO STROZZI

23 SEPTEMBER 2016  
22 JANUARY 2017

#AiwwFlorence #Aiww

### PHOTO SHEET

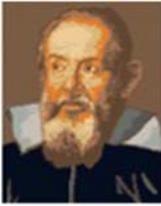
1. Façade		
1	<i>Reframe</i> , 2016. PVC plastic, PC plastic, rubber, 650 x 325 x 75 cm each. Courtesy Ai Weiwei Studio	
2. Courtyard		
2	<i>Refraction</i> , 2014. Solar cookers, kettles, steel, 222.5 x 1256.5 x 510.6 cm. Courtesy Ai Weiwei Studio	
3. Forever		
4	<i>Stacked</i> , 2012. Bicycles, stainless steel, rubber, 571 x 1214.7 x 733.9 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Galleria Continua, San Gimignano/Beijing/Les Moulins/Habana	
4. Sichuan		
5	<i>Rebar and Case</i> , 2014. <i>Huali</i> wood, marble and foam. 25 x 143 x 47 cm; 35 x 153 x 71.4 cm; 48 x 110.4 x 72 cm; 45 x 99.3 x 43.8 cm; 25 x 77.5 x 40.5 cm; 25 x 112.6 x 72 cm; 55 x 140 x 57.4 cm; 45 x 106 x 59.4 cm Courtesy of the artist and Galleria Continua, San Gimignano/Beijing/Les Moulins /Habana	
6	<i>Snake Bag</i> , 2008. 360 backpacks. 40 x 70 x 1700 cm Courtesy of Ai Weiwei Studio	
5. Wood		
9	<i>Map of China</i> , 2013. <i>Tieli</i> wood from dismantled temples of the Qing dynasty (1644-1911), 55 x 195 x 195 cm. Courtesy of Ai Weiwei Studio	

# ai. weiwei LIBERO

FLORENCE  
PALAZZO STROZZI

23 SEPTEMBER 2016  
22 JANUARY 2017

#AiwwFlorence #Aiww

12	<i>Grapes</i> , 2011. 34 stools from the Qing dynasty (1644-1911) 170 x 208 x 184 cm. Courtesy of Ai Weiwei Studio	
<b>6. Renaissance</b>		
13	<i>Dante Alighieri in LEGO</i> , 2016. LEGO bricks. 152 x 114 x 1.7 cm. Courtesy of Ai Weiwei Studio. Thanks to Accademia di Belle Arti of Florence students.	
14	<i>Filippo Strozzi in LEGO</i> , 2016. LEGO bricks. 152 x 114 x 1.7 cm. Courtesy of Ai Weiwei Studio. Thanks to Accademia di Belle Arti of Florence students.	
15	<i>Girolamo Savonarola in LEGO</i> , 2016. LEGO bricks. 152 x 114 x 1.7 cm. Courtesy of Ai Weiwei Studio. Thanks to Accademia di Belle Arti of Florence students.	
16	<i>Galileo Galilei in LEGO</i> , 2016. LEGO bricks. 152 x 114 x 1.7 cm. Courtesy of Ai Weiwei Studio. Thanks to Accademia di Belle Arti of Florence students.	
<b>9.Vases</b>		
28	<i>Han Dynasty Vases with Auto Paint</i> , 2014. Han dynasty vases (206 BC.-220 AD.) and auto paint, 46 x 42 x 42 cm; 42 x 39 x 39 cm; 51 x 48 x 48 cm; 49 x 51 x 51 cm; 53 x 46 x 46 cm; 50 x 44 x 44 cm; 47 x 42 x 42 cm; 49 x 45 x 45 cm. Courtesy of Ai Weiwei Studio	

# ai. weiwei LIBERO

FLORENCE  
PALAZZO STROZZI

23 SEPTEMBER 2016  
22 JANUARY 2017

#AiwwFlorence #Aiww



10. Study of Perspective		
30	<i>Study of Perspective</i> , 1995-2011. Colour and black-and-white photographs. Courtesy of the artist and neugerriemschneider, Berlin	
10. Blossom and grass		
31	<i>Blossom</i> , 2015. Porcelain, 8 x 80 x 80 cm each piece; 8 x 2400 x 320 cm installation. Courtesy of the artist and Galleria Continua, San Gimignano/Beijing/Les Moulins /Habana	
11. Mythologies		
33	<i>Feiyu</i> , 2016. Bamboo and silk. 60 x 320 x 200 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Galleria Continua, San Gimignano/Beijing/Les Moulins /Habana	
36	<i>Circle of Animals/Zodiac Heads: Monkey</i> , 2011. Bronze with gold patina. 69 x 33 x 38 cm. Faurshou Foundation Beijing/Copenhagen	

# ai weiwei LIBERO

FLORENCE  
PALAZZO STROZZI

23 SEPTEMBER 2016  
22 JANUARY 2017

#AiwwFlorence #Aiww

## 12. Shangai

37 *He Xie*, 2011. Porcelain. Dimensions variable. Courtesy Ai Weiwei Studio



40 *Surveillance Camera and Plinth*, 2015. Marble, 117 x 52 x 52 cm. Courtesy of Ai Weiwei Studio



## 13. New York

41 *New York Photographs 1983-1993*, 1983-1993. Black-and-white photographs, 70 x 70 cm each. Courtesy of Ai Weiwei Studio



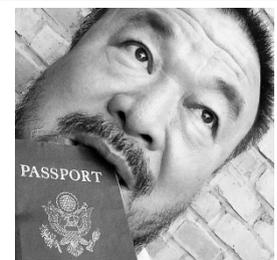
## 16. Beijing East Village

49 *Crystal Cube*, 2014. Crystal, 100 x 100 x 100 cm. Courtesy of Ai Weiwei Studio



## 20. Selfie

58 *Selfie*, 2012–present. Wallpaper. Courtesy of Ai Weiwei Studio





# ai weiwei LIBERO

FLORENCE  
PALAZZO STROZZI

23 SEPTEMBER 2016  
22 JANUARY 2017

#AiwwFlorence #Aiww

## EXHIBITION WALKTHROUGH

### Ai Weiwei. Libero

Dissident artist and an icon of the struggle for freedom of expression, Ai Weiwei is known worldwide for combining political activism and exploration of the arts to produce truly spectacular, provocative work that has been shown in exhibitions in many of the world's leading museums. He has invaded Palazzo Strozzi with both older pieces and new, site-specific work involving the building in its entirety: the façade, the courtyard, the Piano Nobile and the Strozzi undercroft. Palazzo Strozzi is being used here for the very first time as a single stage for an exhibition, providing the visitor with a unique experience and permitting Ai Weiwei to interact with an environment rich in Renaissance stimuli. The exhibition allows the visitor to explore monumental installations, sculptures and objects symbolising his career, video material and series of photographs with a powerful impact, in a voyage of total immersion in the world of Ai Weiwei stretching from work produced during his time in New York and his iconic installations of assembled material and objects to the controversial political works that have marked his most recent output, such as his portraits of political dissidents in LEGO or his work on migration in the Mediterranean.

### FAÇADE

#### 1. Façade

*Reframe*, the installation devised for Palazzo Strozzi's façade, is a product of Chinese artist Ai Weiwei's involvement with the issue of migration and refugees. Twenty-two orange rescue dinghies frame the Piano Nobile windows on the palazzo's two façades overlooking Piazza Strozzi and Via Strozzi. Thus the installation acquires the feel of a bizarre new decorative scheme for the Renaissance palazzo, creating a new frame, a new point of view based on a strong visual and cultural contrast, for what is one of the symbols of Western art history. Ai Weiwei's aim here is to shake our consciences into grasping the tragedy of those who set out on gruelling journeys towards Europe's shores, fleeing destruction and wars. But while these light dinghies slotted into the palazzo's façade recall the fragile vessels to which the refugees cling at sea, at the same time they evoke the way in which migrants attempt to slot themselves into a new location, a strange environment such as Europe.

### COURTYARD

#### 2. Courtyard

*Refraction* is an installation comprising solar cookers, assembled to emulate a wing. Presented first on Alcatraz island, the notorious prison island in the San Francisco bay, in 2014, the wing symbolizes freedom, but at the same time it imparts a sense of claustrophobia on account of its size and gravity, seeking to communicate a sense of the narrow confines within which prisoners live out their lives. Thus it becomes a metaphor for the deprivation of freedom that Ai Weiwei himself experienced when he was jailed by the police in a secret location for eighty-one days in 2011. The installation also alludes to the political situation in Tibet, where these solar cookers are used to cook and brew tea. *Porcelain Vases with Bamboo Poles* creates a contrast between two typically Chinese materials and the stone that is such a feature of Italian architecture. In particular, the use of bamboo, seemingly so fragile yet is in fact extremely strong on account of its elasticity and thus traditionally used as a building material, expands on similarities and differences in the history of architecture.

### PIANO NOBILE

#### 3. Forever

*Stacked*, an installation presented here in a site-specific version for Palazzo Strozzi, is an assemblage of nine hundred and fifty bicycles, a means of locomotion that is part and parcel of the Chinese identity. Presented in several different versions since 2003 – when it was shown under the title *Forever* –, the installation echoes Duchamp's 1913 readymade *Bicycle Wheel*. Ai Weiwei seeks to highlight the problem of transport, a major issue in China, and of its impact on the environment. But bicycles also have another meaning for Ai Weiwei because when he was young, owning a bicycle meant being free to move about, so it is also a symbol of freedom. The make used here ("Forever") has been the most popular make of bicycle in China since the 1940s and was virtually the only bike sold in Ai's youth. In separating the bicycles from their function, *Stacked* reconfigures the object as a kind of

A black and white photograph of Ai Weiwei's face, framed by his hands. He is looking directly at the camera with a serious expression. The background is a solid magenta color.

# ai. weiwei LIBERO

FLORENCE  
PALAZZO STROZZI

23 SEPTEMBER 2016  
22 JANUARY 2017

#AiwwFlorence #Aiww

labyrinth not unlike the worldwide web, but its architectural nature also hints at a triumphal arch or a monumental entrance.

#### 4. Sichuan

At 14:28 on 12 May 2008 an earthquake in Sichuan, measured at 8.0 Ms on the Richter scale, killed roughly seventy-thousand people. Thousands of students lost their lives in schools that collapsed due to the poor quality of the materials used in their construction. Ai Weiwei captured the memory of this tragedy in a series of artworks including *Snake Bag*, in which three hundred sixty school bags sewn together form a snake, recalling the young victims' belongings found in the rubble. *Rebar and Case* consists of *huali* wood cases containing reproductions, in white marble, of the twisted rebar discovered in the wreckage of the collapsed schools. The containers recall coffins, their warped shape mirroring the objects held within.

#### 5. Wood

On returning to China from the US in 1993, Ai Weiwei developed an interest in antiquities and began collecting. He collected furniture, as well as parts of temples built during the Ming (1368–1644) and Qing (1644–1911) dynasties, which were being demolished to make way for new development. In his works in wood, Ai Weiwei reinterprets and utilizes traditional Chinese carpentry techniques, involving sophisticated wood joinery without the use of nails, screws or glue. *Map of China* is a sculpture-puzzle comprising pieces of wood symbolizing the ethnic and cultural diversity of a country which, though united, is in effect the fusion of a mass of individuals. In the two tables, he highlights the nonsensical aspect by reconstructing and altering the structure, while leaving the patina untouched. *Grapes* gathers together thirty-four stools – one of the most common items of Chinese daily life – and defies gravity in a composition that proliferates by repeating the initial module, a feature of today's megalopolises. *The Animal That Looks like a Llama but is Actually an Alpaca* is an intricate wallpaper incorporating the Twitter logo, an Alpaca and CCTV cameras, chains and handcuffs, alluding to Ai Weiwei's detention in 2011. The title alludes to the slang used in China to dodge censorship on the Internet.

#### 6. Renaissance

This room is devoted to Ai Weiwei's revisitation of the Italian Renaissance. *Divina Proportio* and *Untitled (Wooden Ball)* are two polyhedra echoing the drawings that Leonardo da Vinci produced to illustrate Luca Pacioli's treatise *De divina proportione* published in 1497, although his primary source of inspiration was one of the toys belonging to the cats that inhabit his studio in Beijing. Juxtaposing high with low, ancient with modern and natural with technological is a typical feature of Ai Weiwei's artistic vocabulary. The LEGO portraits carry on the recent series devoted to political dissidents. For Palazzo Strozzi, Ai Weiwei has chosen four historical figures associated with Florence, who were deprived of their freedom. Dante is Italian literary history's exile *par excellence*; Filippo Strozzi was banned by the Medici for twenty years – like Ai Weiwei's father – and built the palace hosting this exhibition on his return; Girolamo Savonarola, a controversial figure, was executed for opposing the Medici family and the Borgia pope; and the scientist Galileo was jailed and tried for defending his ideas. In the unrealistic colours of the LEGO bricks, their faces acquire an almost playful, Pop Art character.

#### 7. Objects

Despite the use of valuable materials and sophisticated techniques, these objects speak of human rights abuse and censorship. The *Ruyi* was once a sceptre, a talisman. The artist interprets its form using porcelain, the most delicate material in the Chinese tradition, to broach the topic of the trade in human organs, to which the chicken gizzards allude and for which China appears to hold the tragic record. The *Hangers* and *Handcuffs* recall the imprisonment of Ai Weiwei, who was arrested by the police on 3 April 2011 and held in a secret location for 81 days. There was no room for clean underwear in his cell, so his guards gave him six plastic hangers to dry the underwear that he washed daily. Ai Weiwei was handcuffed to a chair and interrogated more than fifty times over the course of his detention. These objects that marked his time in prison were meticulously reproduced using precious materials: the hangers in *huali* wood and crystal, and the handcuffs in jade, thus elevating and memorializing these common yet symbolically oppressive objects.



# ai weiwei LIBERO

FLORENCE  
PALAZZO STROZZI

23 SEPTEMBER 2016  
22 JANUARY 2017

#AiwwFlorence #Aiww

## 8. Jingdezhen

Ai Weiwei's work combines references to Chinese history, past and present. Forging a link with the country's output of the past, he creates porcelain objects using traditional craftsmanship in Jingdezhen, the ancient Chinese capital of fine porcelain ware. The *Wave* recalls the art of the Yuan dynasty, in which water is a recurring theme, but it also harks back to Japanese wood prints, particularly Hokusai's *Great Wave*. *Free Speech Puzzle* consists of thirty-two hand-painted porcelain pendants reproducing China's division into provinces, including Hainan and the disputed province of Taiwan. Imitating the tradition of writing one's family name on pendants in various materials for good luck, Ai Weiwei repeats on every piece of the puzzle the motto "Free Speech," which thus becomes the motto of the whole of China and of each one of its citizens. *Remains* is a porcelain reproduction of human remains discovered in one of the labour camps in which dissidents such as Ai Weiwei's own father were confined during the Cultural Revolution.

## 9. Vases

The relationship between tradition and modernity plays a crucial role in Ai Weiwei's artistic vocabulary. By manipulating objects, images and metaphors, the artist displays an ambiguous rapport with his country, split between a sense of belonging and rebellion. *Dropping a Han Dynasty Urn* is an infamous and controversial performance from 1995 in which Ai Weiwei destroyed a Han dynasty urn, dating over 2,000 years old, by letting it crash to the floor. Captured in three iconic photographs, it is recreated here in a version composed of LEGO, a medium that Ai Weiwei has been using with growing frequency in recent years. One is struck by the artist's aloof expression which underscores his awareness that his action is barbarous, but on par with the destruction of China's historic heritage during the Cultural Revolution. The same approach is found in the *Han Dynasty Vases with Auto Paint* series in which the artist covers ancient vases in layers of car paint, thus erasing their historical and cultural value but simultaneously turning them into contemporary works of art.

## 10. Study of Perspective

Ai Weiwei's first in a series of photographs entitled *Study of Perspective*, taken in Tiananmen Square, Beijing, dates back to 1995. The selection of 40 photographs all have in common the artist's left arm raised and giving the finger to such global icons as the White House, the *Mona Lisa*, the Eiffel Tower, the Hong Kong and New York skylines, St. Mark's Square, the Colosseum and the Sagrada Família. With his irreverent gesture Ai Weiwei seeks to prod the observer into questioning his or her own approach to governments, to institutions and even to culture itself. The artist has produced a new photograph in his *Study of Perspective* series especially for this exhibition. It shows him giving the finger to Palazzo Strozzi. The series is associated with his *Finger* wallpaper in which he obsessively reiterates the provocation.

## 10. Grass and Blossom

With his porcelain tiles entitled *Blossom*, the artist uses the Chinese artistic technique par excellence to evoke the Hundred Flowers Movement, a brief moment during which the Chinese Government adopted a more relaxed stance on freedom of expression in 1956. Like so many of Ai Weiwei's works, it required the intervention of numerous different craftsmen – as did *Iron Grass*, a field of grass sprouts cast in iron. The Chinese word for grass, *cao*, is a homonym for an expletive, and used by netizens on the Chinese Internet to evade censors. Ai Weiwei's studio in Beijing is also located in Caochangdi, a suburb on the northeastern edge of Beijing.

## 11. Mythologies

This room is devoted to figures from Chinese culture. The silk and bamboo creatures are inspired by the *Shanhaijing* (The Classic of Mountains and Seas), a fantastical geography book over two thousand years old which Ai Weiwei was unable to read as a youngster. To produce the figures, he sought his inspiration in the drawings and kites that he used to make as a boy, but he also involved traditional craftsmen. *Taifeng* is the great wind which has human features with a tiger's tail, *Feiyu* is the flying fish and *Huantouguo* is the bird man. The *Circle of Animals/Zodiac Heads* series comprising twelve bronze heads of animals from Chinese astrology harks back to Ai Weiwei's ancestral culture. The artist has chosen to show *Monkey* to remind us that 2016 is the Year of the Monkey, the unstable sign *par excellence*. The figures, which originally formed part of a water clock devised by Jesuits for the Summer Palace in the 18th century, were subsequently moved to the Yuanmingyuan, the Garden of Perfect Brightness in Beijing. Looted by French and British troops in the course of the Second Opium War in 1860, some

A black and white photograph of Ai Weiwei's face, framed by his hands. He is looking directly at the camera with a serious expression. The background is a solid magenta color.

# ai. weiwei LIBERO

FLORENCE  
PALAZZO STROZZI

23 SEPTEMBER 2016  
22 JANUARY 2017

#AiwwFlorence #Aiww

of them have since been rediscovered and returned to China. In this work Ai Weiwei reflects on the colonial past, the destructions of the modern era, theft, restitution and the value of a work of art.

## 12. Shanghai

In 2008, Ai Weiwei was asked by the Shanghai authorities to build a studio in Malu Town, which was completed in October 2010. On account of his political activities, the same municipal government declared that the studio had been built without the proper permits and ordered its demolition. Ai Weiwei invited a host of people over the Internet to attend a party on 7 November 2010 to celebrate both the studio's completion and its demolition. To prevent the artist himself from attending the party, he was placed under house arrest in Beijing. The eight hundred guests feasted on river crabs, *he xie* in Chinese which is a homonym for "harmony", a government slogan, but which has also come to mean "censorship". For this exhibition, Ai Weiwei has piled up 1,500 porcelain crabs, reminding us of the crustacean's age-old iconographic tradition in China. The studio was torn down without warning on 11 January 2011. The authorities sought to prevent the artist from entering the area during its demolition, but he managed to salvage parts of the building which he then used to create *Souvenir from Shanghai*, composed of concrete and brick rubble framed within a Qing dynasty bed frame.

## STROZZINA

## 13. New York

Feeling the pull of the West, Ai Weiwei moved to the United States at the age of 24, with only \$30 in his pocket, in February 1981, initially to study English in Philadelphia and Berkeley, and then in New York where he enrolled in the Parsons New School for Design in Greenwich Village. He was soon to drop out, however, driven by the impatience with institutional authority that is such a strong feature of his temperament. During the decade he spent in New York, he visited countless museum and gallery exhibitions, and was greatly influenced by the works of Marcel Duchamp, Andy Warhol and Jasper Johns. The objects on display here hark back to Duchamp's readymades and to Andy Warhol's painting *Five Bottles of Coca Cola*. Also dating to his time in the United States are thousands of black-and-white photographs – a kind of blog *avant la lettre* – with which the artist recorded the moments of his bohemian life. His apartment became a focal point for the expatriate Chinese *avant-garde*, who lived or traveled in America, and Ai Weiwei embodied a link between intellectuals in the two worlds. He took a range of different jobs to make ends meet, including working as a street portrait artist in Times Square, and his skill at blackjack became something of a legend.

## 14. Disturbing the Peace

On 12 August 2009, the eve of the trial in Chengdu of activist Tan Zuoren, who stood trial due to his activities related to the investigation into the deaths of thousands of schoolchildren in the 2008 Sichuan earthquake, Ai Weiwei, who had traveled to testify in his favour, was detained by the police in his hotel room, questioned and beaten. He was not allowed to leave the hotel, which prevented him from testifying in court. All of the events surrounding this trial, which the artist either filmed or recorded, were subsequently assembled in the documentary *Disturbing the Peace*. In September of that year, while in Munich organizing *So Sorry*, an exhibition at the Haus der Kunst, he was rushed to the hospital where he underwent emergency surgery for a brain hemorrhage, likely caused by the beating he had received at the hands of the police in Chengdu.

## 15. 258 Fake

*258 Fake* comprises 12 monitors with 7,677 photographs taken between 2003 and 2011, (almost obsessively) recording his daily life and artistic output. The title refers to Ai Weiwei's Beijing studio and former architecture practice, FAKE Design, at no. 258 Caochangdi. The use of new media is one of the chief distinguishing features of Ai Weiwei's work and the Internet is the artist's most important expressive medium, a medium whose potential he grasped from the outset. Ai Weiwei embraced this new form of expression in 2005 when he began running a blog. The work also testifies to the proliferation of images in the digital media age.

## 16. Beijing East Village

On his return to China in 1993, Ai Weiwei found a very different situation following the events of 1989 and the carnage in Tiananmen Square: the liberalization led by Deng Xiaoping in the ten years between 1979 and 1989,

A black and white photograph of Ai Weiwei's 'Crystal Cube' artwork, showing a man's face framed by his hands. The background is a solid magenta color.

# ai. weiwei LIBERO

FLORENCE  
PALAZZO STROZZI

23 SEPTEMBER 2016  
22 JANUARY 2017

#AiwwFlorence #Aiww

including in the cultural sphere, had been superseded by the repression of freedom. Artists would meet in secret and Ai Weiwei was one of the founders of the East Village, a community inspired by the Manhattan original, in a Beijing suburb. Its members included photographers, musicians and performers, the pictures testifying to its, and their, activities. *Crystal Cube* is part of the series of artworks with which Ai Weiwei – taking his cue from the minimalist sculpture of the 1960s – creates metre cubes using the materials of Chinese tradition: tea, ceramic, marble and ebony. *Crystal Cube*, weighing more than two tonnes, was the most complex iteration produced to date.

## 17. Leg Gun

In June 2014, Ai Weiwei posted a photograph on Instagram showing himself in black socks and briefs, holding his leg as though it were a rifle with the caption: “Beijing Anti-Terrorism Series”. His gesture went viral, with thousands of followers mimicking the pose and applying their own political, ironical or artistic twist, continuing a trend of online protests in China in which dissent is voiced indirectly, through innuendo

## 18. Surveillance

*Photographs of Surveillance* comprises a series of photographs published in issue #43 of the periodical FOAM – “Freedom of Expression under Surveillance” – which Ai Weiwei guest-edited. The photographs taken over the years are a record of his daily life. The pictures depict the close monitoring conducted by the Chinese authorities, but they also inversely highlight Ai Weiwei’s determination to keep an eye on those who were keeping an eye on him. A recurring theme in his work is the reinterpretation – in the style of Duchamp – of everyday items, which become symbols and icons when translated into such precious materials as marble and crystal. *Taxi Window Crank*, a window crank from a Beijing taxi akin to those removed to prevent demonstrators from throwing leaflets out of car windows, also alludes to politics’ monitoring of the man in the street. *Mask*, another work inspired by contemporary issues facing China, is an intricate gas mask carved into a block of marble, a gravestone hinting at the appalling pollution caused by China’s rapid industrialization. *Tyre*, on the other hand, a product of Ai Weiwei’s most recent research, recalls the discarded lifebuoys discovered on the beaches of Lesbos.

## 19. The Fake Case

Danish director Andreas Johnsen’s film records Ai Weiwei’s battle with the Chinese Government. Abducted by the police and detained for over two months without a trial, the artist was finally released in June 2011 after his FAKE Design studio was charged with tax evasion and he was fined millions of dollars. Sympathisers organised a crowd fund to collect the money to pay the fine. Ai’s passport was also confiscated and he was forbidden to leave Beijing, to post articles on the Internet or to speak with the media. The film’s title alludes both to the name of the studio and to the word “fake” in the sense of a phony charge levelled by the government for a non-existent crime. The documentary film also tells the story of *S.A.C.R.E.D.*, a work presented for the first time at the Venice Biennale in 2013 using large dioramas to recount Ai Weiwei’s detention.

## 20. Selfie

In 2005, Ai Weiwei adopted a new form of expression: responding to a request from Chinese web portal Sina, he began to operate a blog, posting photographs to document both his work as an artist as well as his personal life, using the platform to express his thoughts on art, architecture, politics, and culture. His criticism of the Chinese government would increase in both volume and frequency, especially after the devastating earthquake in 2008. In May 2009, he published a list of names of the children killed in the earthquake, but the blog – which attracted over 100,000 hits a day – was shut down by the Chinese authorities. He would then begin to use Twitter and, over the next four years, would post over 100,000 tweets, reaching a global audience of hundreds of thousands of followers. His posts on social media – he has also been highly active on Instagram since 2009 – have acquired the value of a new art form over the years, and he has said: “I don’t think art will have any kind of future unless it manages to adapt to the technology and the life of today”.

## 21. Uffizi

The exhibition *Ai Weiwei. Libero* reaches out into the city with two of Ai Weiwei’s works on display in the Galleria delle Statue e delle Pitture degli Uffizi: *Surveillance Camera* and *Self-Portrait*, the latter a donation to the gallery’s collection of self-portraits. The two works are associated with the Vasari Corridor (the raised and enclosed walkway linking Palazzo Vecchio and the Uffizi to the Pitti Palace) which was built in only five months in 1565 to



# ai weiwei LIBERO

FLORENCE  
PALAZZO STROZZI

23 SEPTEMBER 2016  
22 JANUARY 2017

#AiwwFlorence #Aiww

mark the wedding of Francesco de' Medici, heir to the Grand Duchy of Tuscany, to Archduchess Joanna of Austria. This shrewd piece of town planning joining the two banks of the Arno allowed the grand duke and his family to walk safely and discreetly above their subjects' heads, but it was also the perfect spot from which the Medici could keep an eagle eye on those very subjects. Thus the *Surveillance Camera* harks back to this raised walkway's political implications, reminding us of the Chinese government's close monitoring of Ai Weiwei for his activities as a dissident. *Self-Portrait* joins a collection begun by Cardinal Leopoldo de' Medici in 1664, the largest and most important of such collections in the world, which stretches right up to the present day with numerous donations from contemporary artists.



MAIN  
SPONSOR

WITH THE  
COLLABORATION OF



GALLERIACONTINUA

SAN CUSCUMANO BEIJING LES MULLINS HONGKONG



**PRESS OFFICE**

Antonella Fiori / C. +39 347 2526982  
a.fiori@antonellafiori.it

**FONDAZIONE PALAZZO STROZZI**

Lavinia Rinaldi / T. +39 055 3917122  
l.rinaldi@palazzostrozzi.org

**BRUNSWICK ARTS**

Grégory Fleuriel / T. +33 626542867  
gfleuriel@brunswickgroup.com

**PROMOTION**

SIGMA CSC Susanna Holm  
T. +39 055 2340742  
susannaholm@cscsigma.it



# ai. weiwei LIBERO

FLORENCE  
PALAZZO STROZZI

23 SEPTEMBER 2016  
22 JANUARY 2017

#AiwwFlorence #Aiww

**CATALOGUE ESSAY BY FONDAZIONE PALAZZO STROZZI DIRECTOR GENERAL  
ARTURO GALANSINO**

### Libero

The idea of an exhibition of Ai Weiwei's work at Palazzo Strozzi was the result of a meeting I had with the artist in late 2014, before taking up my post as Director General of the Fondazione Palazzo Strozzi. Given that I was eager to bring contemporary art to Florence, I thought it might be really interesting to invite the man who has been called the most influential artist of our time to "invade" every area of the Palazzo, from the façade and the courtyard to the Strozzina and the Piano Nobile. In addition to producing Ai Weiwei's first major exhibition in Italy, I also wanted to bring contemporary art out of the Strozzina undercroft in which it has been confined hitherto, allowing the art of today to enjoy equal dignity with the art of the past in the cradle of the Renaissance.

A choice of this kind transcends purely art historical reasons, because Ai Weiwei is not an artist like any other. After denouncing government corruption and lack of respect for human rights in China, he was arrested, beaten, placed in isolation and deprived of his basic freedoms. His activity as a dissident has gone hand in hand with his artistic career and he has continued to produce work testifying to his political beliefs, while at the same time allowing plenty of room for creativity and experimentation. Ai Weiwei has become a symbol of the struggle for human rights – a role pointed up by Amnesty International's decision to name him an "Ambassador of Conscience" – and his voice resonates outside the confines of the world of art, addressing the whole of mankind and speaking of issues intrinsic to man's very existence.

When I issued my invitation, which he immediately accepted with enthusiasm, Ai Weiwei was still unable to leave China so I thought it would be another exhibition with the artist involved only at a distance. In view of this, I arranged to visit his studio in Beijing a couple of times to break the ice, to tell him why I wanted to host the exhibition and to familiarise him with Palazzo Strozzi. I had seen so many pictures of his legendary studio in the Caochangdi district in northeast Beijing that I almost felt as though I had been there before. I saw the iron gate, the bicycle with fresh flowers in its basket, surveillance cameras crowding the street outside and what were clearly "unmarked" cars. Inside, the simple grey brick building was a hive of activity with curators, journalists and collectors all there to meet the great recluse and with dozens of cats taking part in every discussion and every project. In that totally unique environment it was not easy to convey to the artist either the spirit of Palazzo Strozzi or the innovative quality of the operation on which we were about to embark. The return of his passport in the summer of 2015, however, changed all that. He would be able to track the exhibition's organisation from the outset and our meetings thereafter would be held (and recorded on his extremely popular Instagram account) in far more convenient Berlin, where he has an extraordinary studio – a huge underground labyrinth in a disused brewery. His regained freedom to travel marked a watershed, a new beginning in Ai Weiwei's career, and it coincided with an expansion of his art's horizon towards issues stretching well beyond the borders of China. It was this that was responsible for the choice of the exhibition title, *Libero* (Free), but the use of that adjective is also intended to highlight the total freedom allowed to the artist in his interaction with Palazzo Strozzi and its spaces, enabling him to turn it inside out and to use it for the very first time as a single

exhibition space. With his new passport, Ai Weiwei travelled to Florence to inspect the premises at the end of last year. It was the first time that he was interacting with this kind of architecture – after all, Palazzo Strozzi is one of the most important 15th century civic buildings in Florence – and his incredible elasticity in grasping and interpreting its spaces revealed his lengthy experience as an architect and artist. His visit triggered an endless round of discussions and exchanges of views on the nature of the exhibition, resulting in this major retrospective covering the thirty-year career of one of the most controversial figures of our time and allowing visitors to explore his ambivalent rapport with the culture of his own country, torn between a deep-rooted sense of belonging and an equally strong urge to rebel. Ai Weiwei's work speaks to us of important issues in a powerful and direct manner, using tools and artistic vocabularies that partake of East and West alike. Showing his work at Palazzo Strozzi has provided the artist with a unique opportunity to interact with the Renaissance, the founding moment of Western culture. It became immediately apparent that the exhibition represented a challenge on both the cultural and technical levels. It would mean having to bring contemporary installations into an infinitely more fragile and complex structure than the large buildings for which contemporary art is designed, and many of the works were simply too heavy or too cumbersome. Thus my choice as curator was specifically devised and sized for the spaces



MAIN  
SPONSOR



BANCA  
CR FIRENZE



INTESA SANPAOLO

WITH THE  
COLLABORATION OF

GALLERIA CONTINUA  
SAN CINCIBARE BEIJING LES MURLES ORSAY

#### PRESS OFFICE

Antonella Fiori / C. +39 347 2526982  
a.fiori@antonellafiori.it

#### FONDAZIONE PALAZZO STROZZI

Lavinia Rinaldi / T. +39 055 3917122  
l.rinaldi@palazzostrozzi.org

#### BRUNSWICK ARTS

Grégory Fleuriel / T. +33 626542867  
gfleuriel@brunswickgroup.com

#### PROMOTION

SIGMA CSC Susanna Holm  
T. +39 055 2340742  
susannaholm@cscsigma.it



# ai. weiwei LIBERO

FLORENCE  
PALAZZO STROZZI

23 SEPTEMBER 2016  
22 JANUARY 2017

#AiwwFlorence #Aiww

in the Palazzo, to offer visitors an exhibition comprising as exhaustive an overview as possible of Ai Weiwei's output from the start of his career right up to and including his most recent work.

The exhibition also hosts new work specially produced for Palazzo Strozzi. In particular, four LEGO portraits of historical figures carry on his famous gallery of political dissidents from all over the world while anchoring it solidly in Florentine history by portraying Dante, Italian literary history's exile *par excellence*, Galileo, a figure who embodies the ideals of truth and oppression against the progress of science, Savonarola, a preacher who incarnates morality pitted against power (a controversial figure, but for that very reason of special interest to the artist) and, to further seal the bond with our institution, Filippo Strozzi, the man who built the Palazzo and who was one of the Medici family's most fervent opponents. The four portraits form a section devoted to the Renaissance along with *Divina Proportio*, a polyhedron recalling Leonardo da Vinci's drawings for Fra Luca Pacioli, although Ai Weiwei's primary source of inspiration was one of the games for the cats that inhabit his studio in Beijing. Ai Weiwei has had little contact with the Italian Renaissance before now but I was amazed, during a visit that we paid to the Uffizi together, to see the artist who is usually so closed and controlled, almost moved at the sight of the *Birth of Venus* and *Spring*. It transpired that Botticelli's two masterpieces were illustrated in one of the few books with pictures that he had as a child in exile in the Gobi Desert in the years when his father, the poet Ai Qing, was sentenced by Mao's regime to be re-educated through hard labour. The artist has decided to donate a self-portrait in LEGO to the Uffizi to join the gallery's collection of self-portraits – the largest such collection in the world – and for the duration of the exhibition the Uffizi is hosting an iconic marble *Surveillance Camera* associated with the Vasari Corridor, the symbol of the grand duke's power and control over the city. Nor is that the only joint venture that the exhibition has spawned. Florence's Mercato Centrale also hosts an installation of huge photographs from his *Study of Perspective* cycle, while CAMERA, the Italian Centre for Photography in Turin will be hosting a documentary and photographic exhibition on Ai Weiwei in November.

Another important signal is *Reframe*, a site-specific work that has taken over two sides of Palazzo Strozzi's façade, comprising a row of twenty-two large orange rescue dinghies grafted onto the Palazzo like a decoration, a new frame made of alien objects installed on the Palazzo's pure Renaissance architecture. The work is part of Ai Weiwei's new line devoted to the issue of migrants and migration. Over the past year he has travelled to Greece and the Middle East, tracking and studying the phenomenon with the aim of producing a major documentary. Having this set of dinghies on our building today takes on a clear symbolic significance for Palazzo Strozzi, turning a symbol of Humanist culture into a kind of island of safety inspired by values whose importance is amplified by the migration currently rocking the very foundations of Europe. So *Reframe* is intended as a warning, a cry of alarm, but at the same time as a cry of hope that a solution to the problem can be found. This exhibition marks an important moment in Palazzo Strozzi's history. Hosting a retrospective of this kind in Florence today means seeing our city as a modern cultural capital not bound solely to the splendour of its own past but finally able to play an active role in today's artistic and cultural debate.

Arturo Galansino

Director general of the Fondazione Palazzo Strozzi and curator of the exhibition



MAIN  
SPONSOR

WITH THE  
COLLABORATION OF



GALLERIA CONTINUA  
SAN CINCIBARDO BEIJING LES MURLES HENRI



PRESS OFFICE

Antonella Fiori / C. +39 347 2526982  
a.fiori@antonellafiori.it

FONDAZIONE PALAZZO STROZZI

Lavinia Rinaldi / T. +39 055 3917122  
l.rinaldi@palazzostrozzi.org

BRUNSWICK ARTS

Grégory Fleuriot / T. +33 626542867  
gfleuriot@brunswickgroup.com

PROMOTION

SIGMA CSC Susanna Holm  
T. +39 055 2340742  
susannaholm@cscsigma.it

# ai. weiwei LIBERO

FLORENCE  
PALAZZO STROZZI

23 SEPTEMBER 2016  
22 JANUARY 2017

#AiwwFlorence #Aiww

## A CLOSER LOOK

### REFRAME: 22 rubber dinghies for the façade of Palazzo Strozzi



*Reframe* is Ai Weiwei's major new installation, produced thanks to a generous contribution from the Ente Cassa di Risparmio di Firenze, involving two of Palazzo Strozzi's façades: twenty-two large orange rescue dinghies grafted onto Palazzo Strozzi's windows draw the public's attention to the fate of refugees who place their lives in jeopardy every day by crossing the Mediterranean to reach Europe.

The installation, a product of the artist's personal involvement and commitment as an activist in the refugee humanitarian crisis, offers the city of Florence a major opportunity to use culture to focus attention on the migrant issue.

### THE WORK

*Reframe* (2016), of which this artist's impression offers an exclusive preview, comprises a series of rescue dinghies framing the windows of Palazzo Strozzi's Piano Nobile like some out-of-the-ordinary decorative scheme grafted onto an existing structure, in this case the austere and solid façade of a Renaissance Palazzo. It is a work that prompts us to stop and think. This time Ai Weiwei's criticism is not directed at China but at the West, recalling the tragedy of those who set out on a gruelling and an almost hopeless journey towards Europe's shores. But while these lightweight dinghies on the façade hark back to the fragile vessels to which the refugees cling while at sea, at the same time they evoke the way in which migrants attempt to graft themselves onto a new location, a strange environment such as Europe with its very different social and cultural makeup.

Through his action and through such works as *Reframe*, Ai Weiwei shows us that he sees the world in a different perspective and he acquaints us with a vision of art bent on seeking out the deeper significance of the human being. In fact, that is one of the reasons why he has been called a latter-day "Renaissance man", an artist who, employing different artistic genres ranging from architecture, film and photography, to poetry, sculpture and painting, can turn an artefact or an inert object (such as a rubber dinghy) into the heart-rending cry of mankind. Ai Weiwei is not just one of the contemporary art system's many stars, nor is he simply an activist; rather, he is a free thinker who is convinced that art should play an extremely important social and political role in the noblest sense of the term.



# ai weiwei LIBERO

FLORENCE  
PALAZZO STROZZI

23 SEPTEMBER 2016  
22 JANUARY 2017

#AiwwFlorence #Aiww

## FOUR PORTRAITS OF DISSIDENTS FROM FLORENTINE HISTORY

The exhibition is linked to its venue in Florence by the presence of four portraits of dissidents in the city's history, purpose-built using LEGO bricks. The portraits carry on the series devoted to political oppositionists, but this is the first time that Ai Weiwei has tackled historical figures. The faces he has chosen are those of Dante, Italian literary history's exile *par excellence*; of Filippo Strozzi, who was exiled by the Medici family and returned to Florence after spending twenty years far from home, and who also built the Palazzo that hosts the exhibition; of Girolamo Savonarola, a controversial figure considered a "martyr to freedom" in the 19th century and a bothersome friar who was executed for opposing the Medici family and for preaching sermons against the Church of Pope Alexander VI Borgia; and of Galileo, the revolutionary Tuscan scientist and symbol of the struggle for freedom of thought, who was jailed and put on trial for defending his own ideas. In the unrealistic colours of the Lego bricks, their faces acquire an almost playful, Pop Art character. Ai Weiwei's project provides for the LEGO portraits to be assembled by volunteers in the individual exhibition venues. They were assembled in Florence by students from the Accademia di Belle Arti di Firenze, to whom go our heartfelt thanks.

### Dante Alighieri

Dante (Florence, late spring 1265–Ravenna, September 1321) was born to the Alighieri family, members of the city's lesser nobility. He began composing poetry at an early age but also entered politics, filling a variety of different posts. From 15 June to 15 August 1300 he was one of the priors elected to oppose the interference of Pope Boniface VIII, who was seeking to extend his rule over Tuscany. It was during his priorate that the leaders of the city's two factions, the "White Guelphs" (of which he was himself a member) and the "Black Guelphs" were exiled. His politics were openly anti-Angevin and anti-papal. He was sent as an ambassador to Boniface VIII, but following the victory of the Black Guelphs he never set foot in his home town again. He was permanently banished in 1302 and faced death if he ever dared return. In was probably in around 1307 that he wrote the Comedy, one of the greatest masterpieces of Italian literature and which Boccaccio was later to christen the Divine Comedy. He died far from home after spending twenty years in exile.



*Ai Weiwei's model: Sandro Botticelli, Portrait of Dante, c. 1495, wood, private collection.*

### Filippo Strozzi

Filippo Strozzi (Florence, 4 July 1428–14 May 1491) grew up amid the tribulations and the uncertainty occasioned by the exile enforced on his father, Cosimo de' Medici the Elder's adversary Matteo Strozzi, in 1434.

Banished himself, Filippo took up residence in Naples in 1446, becoming a leading businessman, merchant and esteemed banker. His shrewd professional approach allowed him to settle his differences with the Medici and to forge profitable business ties with the Medici bank, eventually prompting Piero de' Medici to lift the ban and allow him to return home in 1466. Filippo devoted his latter years to commissioning magnificent projects designed to seal his social and economic success in the city. The projects included a funerary chapel in Santa Maria Novella with frescoes by Filippino Lippi and marble sculpture by Benedetto da Maiano, the hermitage at Lecceto and the huge Palazzo, the finest yet built in Florence, that is the venue of this exhibition of Ai Weiwei's art.



*The artist took his inspiration for the LEGO portrait from: Workshop of Domenico Ghirlandaio, Predella of the Lecceto Altarpiece, detail, 1487–8, wood, Rotterdam, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen.*

# ai. weiwei LIBERO

FLORENCE  
PALAZZO STROZZI

23 SEPTEMBER 2016  
22 JANUARY 2017

#AiwwFlorence #Aiww

## Girolamo Savonarola

Though born in Ferrara in 1452, it was only when this Dominican friar moved to Florence that he began to preach against the Medici, calling for a reform to safeguard and defend justice and campaigning for a free, grass-roots government of the city with broad citizen representation. To implement his vision of a city in which the will of God could be made manifest, however, he enforced stringent austerity and extremely strict rules, to which a part of the populace took exception. While Savonarola's thinking primarily attracted the poorer members of society, it fell foul of those who took issue with his fundamentalism. The friar repeatedly hurled his verbal thunderbolts in the direction of Pope Alexander VI Borgia and the corrupt papal court. He was excommunicated but continued to preach, organising two "bonfires of vanities" in Piazza della Signoria, in which works of art and books that he deemed immoral were burnt. Brought to trial three times (twice by the city's Signoria and once by the Church), he was tortured and sentenced to death along with his two closest fellows in 1498.



*Ai Weiwei's prototype is the most iconic portrait of the friar from Ferrara: Fra Bartolomeo, Portrait of Savonarola, c. 1499–1500, tempera on wood, Florence, Museo di San Marco.*

## Galileo Galilei

Galileo (Pisa 1564–Florence 1642) built the first telescope in 1609 and in 1610 he revealed his discoveries, which dismissed the Aristotelian-Ptolemaic system based on the earth's centrality and confirmed the vision of Nicolaus Copernicus, placing the earth, and consequently also mankind, in a decentralised position (thus not a position of crucial importance) in the universe created by God. Galileo argued in favour of the independence of science over a theological interpretation of Holy Scripture but he was reported to the Inquisition and brought to trial in Rome. In 1633 he was forced to utter the words: "I abjure, curse and detest", thus recanting on his convictions as a scientist and pledging never to investigate the earth's movement or other cosmological issues again. The Catholic Church condemned the Copernican system, and any works illustrating it were included on the list of proscribed books. The ban on reading such works was only lifted in the 19th century.



*The painting on which Ai Weiwei based his portrait is: Justus Sustermans, Portrait of Galileo Galilei, 1636, oil on canvas, Florence, Gallerie degli Uffizi.*

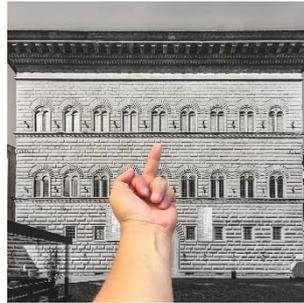
# ai weiwei LIBERO

FLORENCE  
PALAZZO STROZZI

23 SEPTEMBER 2016  
22 JANUARY 2017

#AiwwFlorence #Aiww

## *STUDY OF PERSPECTIVE PALAZZO STROZZI, FLORENCE, ITALY*



Ai Weiwei  
*Study of Perspective*  
*Palazzo Strozzi, Florence, Italy*  
2016  
Black-and-white photograph  
Courtesy of Ai Weiwei Studio

The first cycle of photographs in the Study of Perspective series, set in Tiananmen Square in Beijing, dates back to 1995. The photographs in this cycle all share the gesture of the artist raising his left arm and giving the middle finger to such global icons as the White House, the Mona Lisa, the Eiffel Tower, the Hong-Kong and New York skylines, St. Mark's Square, the Colosseum or the Sagrada Familia. Ai Weiwei's purpose in making this irreverent gesture is to attract people's attention in order to get them to question their own attitude towards governments, institutions and even culture. This cycle presents itself as a continuation of the first controversial and irreverent photographs depicting the artist and his wife Lu Qing adopting disrespectful and vulgar poses in proximity of the symbols of political power in China.

For the Ai Weiwei Libero exhibition, the artist has added a new photograph to the cycle, in which he is giving the finger to... Palazzo Strozzi.



# ai weiwei LIBERO

FLORENCE  
PALAZZO STROZZI

23 SEPTEMBER 2016  
22 JANUARY 2017

#AiwwFlorence #Aiww

## TIMELINE "AI WEIWEI STORY"

艾未未

### THE BEGINNING 1957–81

#### 28 August 1957

Ai Weiwei is born in Beijing to poets Ai Qing (1910–96) and Gao Ying (1933).

#### 1958–61

The "Great Leap Forward" – the name given to the economic and social plan adopted by the People's Republic of China in an effort to transform the country's traditional economic system based on agriculture into an industrialised society – causes widespread famine and results in millions of deaths.

#### 1958

The Chinese Communist Party brands Ai Qing a "triple criminal" against the party, the state and the country. His family is exiled to Beidahuang, in Heilongjiang Province on the country's northeast border. Ai Qing and his family are moved to a military re-education camp in Shihezi, in Xinjiang Province in northwest China. They are later moved to an even more isolated village and live in an underground room in the Gobi Desert for five years. Ai Qing is sentenced to hard labour and tasked with cleaning the town's latrines. They are allowed back to Shihezi in 1972.

#### May 1966

Mao Zedong announces the great Chinese proletarian Cultural Revolution in May 1966. The Communist Party is steered by what was later to become known as the Gang of Four.

#### 9 September 1976

Mao Zedong dies, the Gang of Four are brought to trial and found guilty. Ai Qing is rehabilitated and returns with his family to Beijing.

#### 1978

The Beijing Spring, a name intended to echo the Prague Spring, ushers in a season of liberalisation with Deng Xiaoping. People are allowed to express their views and to criticise the regime in *dazibaos*, or *tazebaos*, hand-written posters with large characters posted on the Wall of Democracy. The country's art academies reopen and Ai Weiwei enrolls at the Film Academy of Beijing, where he studies animation in the first class to take in students since the Cultural Revolution. He was to quit studying the following year. Ai Qing is in the running for the Nobel Prize for Literature.

#### 27 September 1979

The Stars collective, of which Ai Weiwei is one of the founding members, holds a collective exhibition on the pavement of the China Art Gallery in Beijing. The exhibition is declared illegal the next day and forced to close on 29 September. The collective wished to see the development of artistic expressions different from the socialist realism of Soviet inspiration enforced by the government.

#### 1 October 1979

To mark the thirtieth anniversary of the People's Republic of China, members of the Stars collective stage a protest march calling for democracy and artistic freedom.

#### 23 November–2 December 1979

The authorities permit a second venue, the Hua Fang Zhai in Beihai Park, to host the Stars exhibition in Beijing. Ai Weiwei shows watercolour landscapes.

#### 6 July 1980

Having failed to achieve recognition from either the Ministry of Culture or the Beijing Artists' Association, the collective forms the "Stars Painters Society" with twelve founder members including Ai Weiwei.



# ai weiwei LIBERO

FLORENCE  
PALAZZO STROZZI

23 SEPTEMBER 2016  
22 JANUARY 2017

#AiwwFlorence #Aiww

## 20 August–7 September 1980

The authorities allow the "Stars Painters Society" to hold an exhibition at the China Art Gallery in Beijing for a period of two weeks only. The first ever exhibition of contemporary art to be held in a museum, it draws some 200,000 visitors.

## AMERICA 1981–1993

### February 1981

Ai Weiwei moves to the United States and studies English in Philadelphia and in Berkeley.

### January 1982

The Asia Foundation Gallery in San Francisco hosts Ai Weiwei's first one-man exhibition, comprising thirty pictures painted in China.

### December 1982

Ai Weiwei moves to New York.

### January 1983

He enrolls in Parsons The New School for Design in Greenwich Village, studying with Sean Scully and others, but drops out after six months. He also studies at the Art Students League in New York with Richard Pousette-Dart, Bruce Dorfman and Knox Martin. He visits museums and galleries and is influenced by such artists as Marcel Duchamp, Andy Warhol and Jasper Johns.

### 1983

*Hanging Man* is an *objet trouvé* representing a tribute to Duchamp, involving the transformation of a coat-hanger into the French artist's profile, while the sunflower seeds filling a part of the profile allude to the plant's seeds which play a crucial role in the Chinese diet.

### 14 August 1983

The Chinese authorities close the Stars exhibition in Beijing after five days. Ai Weiwei starts using photography to record his life in New York.

### 1980s

Ai Weiwei lives in Queens, then Brooklyn, and finally moves into an unfurnished apartment on Manhattan's Lower East Side, but a chauffeur drives him to the casino in a limousine on account of his skill in blackjack. He covers the eighty miles to Atlantic City with his friend Vinnie, nicknamed "Snake Eyes", several times a week. Vinnie says of their first meeting: "I was playing and losing bad, and then this Asian guy with a beard right out of the Kung Fu movies, playing next to me, starts telling me when to hit, split or stay. I don't listen to nobody but every time I don't listen to him, I lose the hand. So I start listening. I was up a few grand that night. I always listened when he explained smart strategies".

### 1985

He makes friends with Beat Generation poet Allen Ginsberg (1926–97), who had met his father in China in 1984.

### 1987

He paints portraits in Times Square.

### March 1988

He holds his first and only one-man exhibition at the Art Waves/Ethan Cohen gallery in New York.

### 1989

Students protesting in favour of democracy occupy Tiananmen Square in Beijing. The protest, which was staged after the fall of communism in Eastern Europe, ends in a bloodbath on 4 June. A young man, nicknamed "the unknown rebel" by TIME magazine, takes up a stance in front of the tanks in an effort to stop them in their tracks even though he is alone and unarmed. Ai Weiwei joins in a hunger strike outside the United Nations in June as a mark of solidarity with the Tiananmen Square demonstrators.



# ai weiwei LIBERO

FLORENCE  
PALAZZO STROZZI

23 SEPTEMBER 2016  
22 JANUARY 2017

#AiwwFlorence #Aiww

## BACK IN CHINA 1993–2008

### 1993

Ai Weiwei hears that his father is ill and returns to China. Working with his partner (later his wife) Lu Qing, he explores the world of "Apartment Art", an art form in which artists conceive and show their often radical art in their own homes. He starts to collect antique furniture and ceramics.

### 1994

*Han Dynasty Urn with Coca Cola Logo* is a Han dynasty vase to which he has added the Coca Cola logo to highlight the problematic relationship between historic memory and consumerism in a capitalist economy.

### June 1994

In the photograph entitled *June 1994* taken in Tiananmen Square on the fifth anniversary of the carnage, Lu Qing raised her skirt as a mark of scorn for the symbols of power.

### 1994–7

He publishes three books – the *Black Cover Book*, 1994; *White Cover Book*, 1995; and *Grey Cover Book*, 1997 – containing interviews and works by contemporary Chinese artists. The books are considered a manifesto of Chinese avant-garde art.

### 1995

He turns the destruction of a Han urn over 2,000 years old into a work of art in *Dropping a Han Dynasty Urn*. Begins a series of photographs entitled *Study of Perspective* in which he gives the finger towards various symbols of power.

### 5 May 1996

Ai Weiwei's father dies at the age of eighty-six.

### 1997

Ai Weiwei co-founds the China Art Archives & Warehouse (CAAW), one of the country's first independent spaces for art.

### 1998

His friend Uli Sigg, an industrialist, the Swiss ambassador in Beijing and an authority on and collector of Chinese art, introduces Ai Weiwei to Harald Szeemann, the curator of the Venice Biennale, in 1999.

### 1999

Ai Weiwei moves to the village of Caochangdi in the northeastern suburbs of Beijing. He starts to take an interest in architecture, designing his own house and studio, building them in grey bricks in sixty days.

### 5 June 1999

He shows his work at the Venice Biennale: 48th International Art Exhibition, curated by Harald Szeeman, titled *APERTO over ALL*.

### 2000

He co-curates *Fuck Off* – an exhibition introducing forty-six emerging artists – which ran alongside the Third Shanghai Biennale.

### 2002

He accepts Swiss architects Jacques Herzog and Pierre de Meuron's offer of a role as artistic consultant on their project for Beijing's National Olympic Stadium ahead of the Games. The stadium is scheduled to open in 2008. He designs the Ai Qing Memorial at the Ai Qing Cultural Park in Jinhua (the city where his father was born) in Zhejiang province. He also invites seventeen architects from seven different countries to take part in designing the Jinhua Architecture Park.

### 2003

He founds his own studio called FAKE Design, an architectural practice run by his wife Lu Qing, producing roughly seventy designs for buildings and landscape projects over the years. The name is a play on words based on the



# ai weiwei LIBERO

FLORENCE  
PALAZZO STROZZI

23 SEPTEMBER 2016  
22 JANUARY 2017

#AiwwFlorence #Aiww

Pinyin pronunciation of the word (Fa.'KE), which bears more than a passing resemblance to the English word "fuck".

### April 2003

Herzog & de Meuron's practice wins the international competition for the design of Beijing's National Olympic Stadium.

### 2003

*Map of China* is a sculpture comprising pieces of wood that were once part of temples erected in the Qing dynasty (1644–1911) and destroyed to make way for new development

### 2003

*Forever*, an installation consisting of “Forever” brand bicycles conceived in 2003, echoes Duchamp’s 1913 readymade *Bicycle Wheel*.

### 30 March 2004

Ai Weiwei's first major solo exhibition is held at the Kunsthalle Bern in Bern, Switzerland.

### October 2005

Chinese web portal Sina invites Ai to start a blog. He uses the platform to share his thoughts and photographs of art and daily life. The blog becomes a vibrant outlet for commentary on social and political events.

### December 2006

Ai Weiwei takes part in the Fifth Asia-Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art in Brisbane, Australia.

### 2006

Ai Weiwei starts to design porcelain objects which are then manufactured by artisans in Jingdezhen, China's porcelain capital from time immemorial.

### March 2007

He produces *Fountain of Light* for the exhibition entitled *The Real Thing: Contemporary Art from China* at the Tate Liverpool.

### 16 June 2007

Official inauguration of Documenta 12 in Kassel, Germany. His *Template* installation, displayed outdoors, collapses during a storm on 20 June. The artist decides not to rebuild the work, which he considers to be "better now than before, because you can read the forces of nature in it".

### 1 September 2007

The *Fairytale* project produced for Documenta 12 comes to an end. The artist invites 1,001 Chinese citizens of varying ages and backgrounds to visit the show in Kassel, filming them, photographing them and interviewing them.

### March 2008

The authorities in Shanghai ask him to build a studio in Malu Town, in the Jiading District, as part of an initiative to turn the area into an artists' neighbourhood.

## PROVOCATEUR 2008–11

### 12 May 2008 at 14.28

An earthquake in Sichuan, measured at 8.0 Ms, kills approximately 70,000 people. Thousands of students die in the collapse of schools, raising questions concerning the buildings' safety and the poor quality of the materials used.

### 8 August 2008

The Beijing Olympics get under way in the Bird's Nest, the city's Olympic stadium designed by Swiss architects Herzog & de Meuron, in which Ai Weiwei collaborated as artistic consultant. Ai Weiwei declines to attend the opening ceremony in protest against the government's forcible deportation of urban migrants, expropriation of land and exploitation of workers ahead of the Olympic Games.



# ai. weiwei LIBERO

FLORENCE  
PALAZZO STROZZI

23 SEPTEMBER 2016  
22 JANUARY 2017

#AiwwFlorence #Aiww

## October 2008

An ambitious architecture project, Ordos 100, in wealthy Inner Mongolia, comprising 100 villas each 1,000 square metres in size, designed by 100 young designers from 27 countries selected by Herzog & de Meuron.

## December 2008

In response to the government's lack of transparency over the names and the number of students killed when schools collapsed during the earthquake, Ai Weiwei promotes a grass-roots enquiry on his blog in an effort to compile a list of the students who died.

## 28 May 2009

Ai Weiwei's blog carries a list of over 5,000 names of children killed in the Sichuan earthquake.

## 29 May 2009

Ai Weiwei's blog is shut down by the Chinese authorities. The blog had garnered over 100,000 views per day.

## July 2009

The exhibition entitled *Ai Weiwei: According to What?* is inaugurated at the Mori Art Museum in Tokyo.

## 12 August 2009

Ai Weiwei is due to testify on behalf of Tan Zuoren, an activist who published an enquiry into the deaths of over 5,000 schoolchildren during the earthquake. On the eve of the trial, in Chengdu, he is woken up by the police in his hotel room, questioned and beaten, and prevented from leaving the hotel to testify at the trial.

## 14 September 2009

While setting up his exhibition entitled *So Sorry* in Munich, he visits a hospital and undergoes emergency brain surgery. Ai Weiwei suffers from a cerebral hemorrhage, a result of the beating suffered in Chengdu.

## 2009

Ai Weiwei opens a Twitter account.

## 2009–10

Ai Weiwei employs 1,600 artisans from Jingdezhen, a city in southern China known for its porcelain production, to produce and hand-paint some 100 million porcelain sunflower seeds, each individual seed different from the next.

## September 2010

*Circle of Animals / Zodiac Heads* is shown at the 29th Bienal Internacional de Arte de São Paulo.

## 12 October 2010–2 May 2011

Ai Weiwei's *Sunflower Seeds* installation opens at the Turbine Hall in London's Tate Modern. It comprises 100 million hand-painted porcelain sunflower seeds forming a 1,000 sq. mt. grey expanse. 10 cm. deep and weighing 150 tonnes.

## October 2010

The Shanghai municipal government rules that the Malu Town studio has been built without the proper permits and orders its demolition. Ai Weiwei goes online to urge the public to attend a party on 7 November, to commemorate the completion and planned demolition of the studio.

## 5 November 2010

Ai Weiwei is placed under house arrest in Beijing in order to prevent him from going to the party.

## 7 November 2010

The 800 guests eat river crabs, or *he xie* in Chinese, which sounds similar to the word for "harmony", a government slogan that has taken on the meaning of "censorship" in the language of the Internet.

## 11 January 2011

Ai Weiwei's studio in Shanghai is demolished without warning. The authorities try to prevent him from accessing it during the demolition, but the artist manages to gain possession of parts of the original building.



# ai weiwei LIBERO

FLORENCE  
PALAZZO STROZZI

23 SEPTEMBER 2016  
22 JANUARY 2017

#AiwwFlorence #Aiww

### 3 April 2011

Ai Weiwei is arrested at the Beijing International Airport and held in a secret location. His family and friends are not permitted to visit. His wife, Lu Qing, is briefly permitted to meet him after 43 days in detention.

### DISSIDENT 2011-2015

### 22 June 2011

Ai Weiwei is released after 81 days in detention. He is fined over 12 million yuan (\$2.36 million) on a charge of tax evasion in connection with FAKE Design. His passport is confiscated and he is banned from publishing articles on the Internet or speaking to the media. CCTV cameras are installed on the buildings and electricity pylons around his home and secret police begin to monitor his activities. He is forbidden from leaving Beijing for one year.

### 2011

*Art Review* magazine names him "the most powerful artist in the world."

### 2012

*Souvenir from Shanghai* is a block of concrete and brick framed in wood, the sole remainder of the studio that the city of Shanghai first commissioned from him and then demolished.

### January 2012

The documentary *Ai Weiwei: Never Sorry* by American director Alison Klayman is entered in the Sundance Film Festival and wins the jury's special prize.

### 9 May 2012

Ai Weiwei is awarded the Human Rights Foundation's Vaclav Havel Prize for Creative Dissent.

### June 2012

He works with Herzog & de Meuron on the 2012 Serpentine Gallery Pavilion in London.

### 24 October 2012

With *Caonima Style* Ai Weiwei turns Korean pop-singer Psy's viral song into a collective cry of protest against all repression of freedom of speech.

### 2008–12

*Straight*, consisting of 150 tonnes of rusty steel rebar, recovered from the wreckage caused by the Sichuan earthquake and straightened by hand, are laid out on the ground like a telluric wave, as a memorial to the over 5,000 students who lost their lives in the poorly built schools. Ai Weiwei discovered the identities of those lost to the earthquake through a 'Citizens' Investigation'.

### May 2013

His installation entitled *S.A.C.R.E.D.* is presented at a parallel event at the 55th Venice Biennale in the church of Sant'Antonin in Castello. Ai Weiwei cannot leave China, but he is represented in Venice by his mother. Six large dioramas inside the church reproduce scenes of his daily life while imprisoned in 2011.

### 21 May 2013

He releases his first single entitled *Dumbass*, for which he wrote the lyrics and his friend, rockstar Zuoxiao Zuzhou, wrote the music. The music video, with cinematography by Christopher Doyle, shows surreal scenes of his detention. The single is followed in June by an album entitled *The Divine Comedy*.

### June 2013

He takes part in the 55<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale with *The Encyclopedic Palace*, curated by Massimiliano Gioni. His installation entitled *Bang* is displayed in the German pavilion, which has traded its display area with France.

### 13 November 2013

Ai Weiwei begins placing a bouquet of fresh flowers in the basket of his bicycle, which sits in front of his studio entrance. He vows to continue this action every day until he receives his passport back and his right to freely travel is restored.



# ai weiwei LIBERO

FLORENCE  
PALAZZO STROZZI

23 SEPTEMBER 2016  
22 JANUARY 2017

#AiwwFlorence #Aiww

## 20 November 2013

*Ai Weiwei: The Fake Case*, directed by Danish filmmaker Andreas Johnsen, is presented at the International Documentary Film Festival in Amsterdam

## 3 April–7 July 2014

An exhibition entitled *Evidence* is held at the Martin-Gropius-Bau in Berlin.

## 27 September 2014

The exhibition *@Large: Ai Weiwei on Alcatraz* opens on Alcatraz island in the San Francisco bay. One of the works exhibited was *Trace*, consisting of one hundred and seventy-six portraits of prisoners of conscience, made out of LEGO building blocks. Over 1.2 million blocks are used to reconstruct the faces of such personalities as Nelson Mandela and Aung San Suu Kyi.

## 21 May 2015

Ai Weiwei is awarded Amnesty International's Ambassador Of Conscience Award 2015 for his work in defense of human rights. His young son, Ai Lao, collects the award on his behalf in Berlin.

## 6 June 2015

*Ai Weiwei*, a dual exhibition and his first solo exhibition in China, opens at the Galleria Continua and Tang Contemporary Art Center, in Beijing

## FREEDOM 2015–PRESENT

## 22 July 2015

Ai Weiwei's passport is returned to him after four years.

## 30 July 2015

Ai Weiwei arrives in Munich, where he is reunited with his son and partner.

## 2015

Ai Weiwei establishes a studio in Berlin.

## September 2015

LEGO refuses to supply Ai Weiwei with the bricks he needs for a planned installation on the basis that they could not support the work "for political purposes". The refusal prompts the hashtag #legosforweiwei.

## 19 September–13 December 2015

The Royal Academy of Arts in London hosts Ai Weiwei's first major solo retrospective in London, showcasing forty-five works of art created between 1993 and 2015.

## November 2015–December 2016

Ai Weiwei takes up his post as Einstein-Gastprofessor at the Universität der Künste in Berlin.

## 11 December 2015–24 April 2016

*Andy Warhol / Ai Weiwei*, an exhibition at the National Gallery of Victoria in Melbourne, Australia, showcases over three hundred works by the two artists, including installations, paintings, sculptures, silk-screen prints, films, photographs and publications. They include an installation of portraits in LEGO-style building blocks devoted to Australian activists.

## 22 December 2015 morning

Ai Weiwei is in Florence, at Palazzo Strozzi, to visit the area where his solo exhibition is due to open in September 2016. Arturo Galansino gives him a guided tour of the current exhibition, *Divine Beauty from Van Gogh to Chagall and Fontana*.

## 22 December 2015 afternoon

Ai Weiwei and Arturo Galansino visit the Uffizi. The artist recalls that when he was confined to a labour camp with his family as a child, the only thing he had with him was an art book with pictures of two of Botticelli's paintings, *Spring* and the *Birth of Venus*.



# ai. weiwei LIBERO

FLORENCE  
PALAZZO STROZZI

23 SEPTEMBER 2016  
22 JANUARY 2017

#AiwwFlorence #Aiww

### 30 December 2015

Ai Weiwei visits the camp of Moria on the Greek island of Lesbos. Using his smartphone, he reveals the plight of refugees from the areas of the Middle East devastated by wars, who have survived the dangerous journey to Greece.

### 13 January 2016

LEGO backtracks over the use of its building blocks "for political purposes". The blocks can now be shipped without restriction to anyone who orders them.

### 16 January 2016

The exhibition *Er Xi, Air de jeux* opens at Le Bon Marché on the Left Bank in Paris.

### 27 January 2016

Ai Weiwei closes his *Ruptures* exhibition at Copenhagen's Fauschou Foundation early – it opened in March 2015 and was due to run till the end of April 2016 – in protest against a Danish Government decision to confiscate the property of refugees and asylum-seekers.

### 30 January 2016

To recall the tragedy of the immigrants fleeing countries at war, Ai Weiwei is portrayed by Rohit Chawla, a photographer with the weekly *India Today*, in a pose echoing the shocking picture of Alan Kurdi, a three-year old Syrian boy who lost his life on the attempted passage from Turkey to Greece.

### 13 February 2016

Ai Weiwei installs *Safe Passage* at the Berlin Konzerthaus. The work consists of over 3,000 lifejackets, from the island of Lesbos, wrapped around the ionic columns of the building, highlighting the refugee crisis.

### 15 February 2016

Ai Weiwei intervenes with a performance for a collective photograph at the Berlin Film Festival gala dinner, in which each guest is asked to don a golden space blanket as a mark of solidarity with the refugees.

### 11 may 2016

Using his mobile phone, Ai Weiwei films Palestinians crossing the Gaza Strip's only international border with Egypt at Rafah, which had been opened for a few days after a three-month closure. The waiting list consisted of over 20,000 names

### 13 July 2016

*Ai Weiwei. translocation – transformation* opens at 21er Haus Museum of Contemporary Art in Vienna.



# ai weiwei LIBERO

FLORENCE  
PALAZZO STROZZI

23 SEPTEMBER 2016  
22 JANUARY 2017

#AiwwFlorence #Aiww

## LIST OF THE WORKS

### 1. Façade

1  
*Reframe*, 2016. PVC plastic, PC plastic, rubber, 650 x 325 x 75 cm each. Courtesy of Ai Weiwei Studio

### 2. Courtyard

2  
*Refraction*, 2014. Solar cookers, kettles, steel, 222.5 x 1256.5 x 510.6 cm. Courtesy of Ai Weiwei Studio

3  
*Porcelain Vases with Bamboo Poles*, 2008. Bamboo, porcelain, Length of bamboo variable, 43 x 28 x 28 cm (blue vases), 28 x 35 x 35 cm (white vases). Courtesy of the artist and Galleria Continua, San Gimignano/Beijing/Les Moulins/Habana

### 3. Forever

4  
*Stacked*, 2012. Bicycles, stainless steel, rubber, 571 x 1214.7 x 733.9 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Galleria Continua, San Gimignano/Beijing/Les Moulins /Habana

### 4. Sichuan

5  
*Rebar and Case*, 2014. *Huali* wood, marble and foam, 25 x 143 x 47 cm; 35 x 153 x 71.4 cm; 48 x 110.4 x 72 cm; 45 x 99.3 x 43.8 cm; 25 x 77.5 x 40.5 cm; 25 x 112.6 x 72 cm; 55 x 140 x 57.4 cm; 45 x 106 x 59.4 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Galleria Continua, San Gimignano/Beijing/Les Moulins /Habana

6  
*Snake Bag*, 2008. 360 backpacks, 40 x 70 x 1700 cm. Courtesy of Ai Weiwei Studio

7  
*Straight*, 2015. Colour video with sound, 15' 03". Courtesy of Ai Weiwei Studio

### 5. Wood

8  
*The Animal that Looks like a Llama but is Really an Alpaca*, 2015. Wallpaper. Courtesy of Ai Weiwei Studio

9  
*Map of China*, 2013. *Tieli* wood from dismantled temples of the Qing dynasty (1644-1911), 55 x 195 x 195 cm. Courtesy of Ai Weiwei Studio

10  
*Table with Three Legs*, 2015. Table from the Qing dynasty (1644-1911), 87 x 116 x 162 cm. Courtesy of Ai Weiwei Studio

11  
*Table with Two Legs on the Wall*, 1997. Table from the Qing dynasty (1644-1911), 122 x 90.5 x 118 cm. Courtesy of Ai Weiwei Studio

12  
*Grapes*, 2011. 34 stools from the Qing dynasty (1644-1911), 170 x 208 x 184 cm. Courtesy of Ai Weiwei Studio

### 6. Renaissance

13  
*Dante Alighieri in LEGO*, 2016. LEGO bricks, 152 x 114 x 1.7 cm. Courtesy of Ai Weiwei Studio. Thanks to Accademia di Belle Arti of Florence students.



# ai weiwei LIBERO

FLORENCE  
PALAZZO STROZZI

23 SEPTEMBER 2016  
22 JANUARY 2017

#AiwwFlorence #Aiww

14

*Filippo Strozzi in LEGO*, 2016. LEGO bricks, 152 x 152 x 1.7 cm. Courtesy of Ai Weiwei Studio. Thanks to Accademia di Belle Arti of Florence students

15

*Girolamo Savonarola in LEGO*, 2016. LEGO bricks, 152 x 114 x 1.7 cm. Courtesy of Ai Weiwei Studio. Thanks to Accademia di Belle Arti of Florence students.

16

*Galileo Galilei in LEGO*, 2016. LEGO bricks, 152 x 114 x 1.7 cm. Courtesy of Ai Weiwei Studio. Thanks to Accademia di Belle Arti of Florence students

17

*Divina Proportio*, 2014. Copper, 278 x 278 x 262 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Galleria Continua, San Gimignano/Beijing/Les Moulins/Habana

18

*Untitled (Wooden Ball)*, 2010. *Huali* wood, 60 x 60 x 60 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Galleria Continua, San Gimignano/Beijing/Les Moulins/Habana

## 7. Objects

19

*Ruyi*, 2012. Porcelain, 10 x 41 x 16 cm. Courtesy of Ai Weiwei Studio

20

*Hanger*, 2013. Crystal, 1 x 51 x 23 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Galleria Continua, San Gimignano/Beijing/Les Moulins/Habana

21

*Hanger*, 2011. *Huali* wood, 0.8 x 50 x 24 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Galleria Continua, San Gimignano/Beijing/Les Moulins /Habana

22

*Sex Toy*, 2014. Jade, 2.7 x 31 x 7.5 cm. Courtesy the artist and Galleria Continua, San Gimignano/Beijing/Les Moulins/Habana

23

*Handcuffs*, 2012. Jade, 2 x 28 x 8 cm. Courtesy of Ai Weiwei Studio

## 8. Jingdezhen

24

*Free Speech Puzzle*, 2014. Hand painted porcelain in the Qing dynasty imperial style, 0.8 x 51 x 41 cm. Courtesy of Ai Weiwei Studio

25

*The Wave*, 2004. Porcelain, 25 x 40 x 40 cm. Courtesy of Ai Weiwei Studio

26

*Remains*, 2015. Porcelain, 10 x 16 x 14 cm; 9 x 18 x 13 cm; 10 x 20 x 15 cm; 3 x 30 x 4 cm; 6 x 12 x 11 cm; 3 x 12 x 5 cm; 2 x 14 x 5 cm; 4 x 11 x 9 cm; 4 x 7 x 5 cm; 15 x 8 x 3 cm; 2 x 5 x 2 cm; 3 x 6 x 4 cm; 1 x 7 x 4 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Galleria Continua, San Gimignano/Beijing/Les Moulins /Habana

## 9. Vases

27

*Dropping a Han Dynasty Urn*, 2016. LEGO bricks, 191.9 x 153.5 x 3 cm each . Courtesy of Ai Weiwei Studio. Thanks to Accademia di Belle Arti of Florence students



# ai weiwei LIBERO

FLORENCE  
PALAZZO STROZZI

23 SEPTEMBER 2016  
22 JANUARY 2017

#AiwwFlorence #Aiww

28

*Han Dynasty Vases with Auto Paint*, 2014. Han dynasty vases (206 BC-220 AD) and auto paint, 46 x 42 x 42 cm; 42 x 39 x 39 cm; 51 x 48 x 48 cm; 49 x 51 x 51 cm; 53 x 46 x 46 cm; 50 x 44 x 44 cm; 47 x 42 x 42 cm; 49 x 45 x 45 cm. Courtesy of Ai Weiwei Studio

## 10. Blossom and Grass

29

*Finger*, 2014. Wallpaper. Courtesy of Ai Weiwei Studio

30

*Study of Perspective*, 1995-2011. Colour and black-and-white photographs. Dimensions variable. Courtesy of the artist and neugerriemschneider, Berlin

31

*Blossom*, 2015. Porcelain, 8 x 80 x 80 cm each; 8 x 2400 x 320 cm installation. Courtesy of the artist and Galleria Continua, San Gimignano/Beijing/Les Moulins/Habana

32

*Iron Grass*, 2014. Cast iron, 421.5 x 269.4 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Galleria Continua, San Gimignano/Beijing/Les Moulins/Habana

## 11. Mythologies

*The Animal that Looks like a Llama but is Actually an Alpaca*, 2015. Wallpaper. Courtesy of Ai Weiwei Studio

*Study of Perspective*, 1995-2011. Color and black-and-white photographs. Courtesy of the artist and neugerriemschneider, Berlin

33

*Feiyu*, 2016. Bamboo and silk, 60 x 320 x 200 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Galleria Continua, San Gimignano/Beijing/Les Moulins/Habana

34

*Taifeng*, 2015. Bamboo and silk, 200 x 170 x 86 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Galleria Continua, San Gimignano/Beijing/Les Moulins/Habana

35

*Huantouguo*, 2016. Bamboo and silk, 250 x 400 x 170 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Galleria Continua, San Gimignano/Beijing/Les Moulins/Habana

36

*Circle of Animals / Zodiac Heads: Monkey*, 2011. Bronze with gold patina, 69 x 33 x 38 cm. Fauschou Foundation Beijing/Copenhagen

## 12. Shanghai

*Finger*, 2014. Wallpaper. Courtesy of Ai Weiwei Studio

37

*He Xie*, 2011. Porcelain. Dimensions variable. Courtesy of Ai Weiwei Studio

38

*Souvenir from Shanghai*, 2012. Concrete and brick rubble from the artist's destroyed Shanghai studio, set in a wooden frame, 260 x 380 x 170 cm. Courtesy of Ai Weiwei Studio

39

*The Crab House*, 2015. Colour video with sound, 14' 31". Courtesy of Ai Weiwei Studio

40

*Surveillance Camera and Plinth*, 2015. Marble, 117 x 52 x 52 cm. Courtesy of Ai Weiwei Studio



# ai. weiwei LIBERO

FLORENCE  
PALAZZO STROZZI

23 SEPTEMBER 2016  
22 JANUARY 2017

#AiwwFlorence #Aiww

## 13. New York

41

*New York Photographs 1983-1993*, 1983-1993. Black-and-white photographs, 70 x 70 cm each. Exhibition copy courtesy of Ai Weiwei Studio

42

*Suitcase for Bachelors*, 1987. Suitcase, soap, toothpaste tube, brush, 20 x 30 x 40 cm. Courtesy of Ai Weiwei Studio

43

*Untitled*, 1988. Raincoat, coat hanger, 190 x 60 x 60 cm. Courtesy of Ai Weiwei Studio

44

*Coke*, 1982-1983. Ink on paper, 91 x 63.5 cm. Courtesy of Ai Weiwei Studio

45

*Three Clothes Hanger as a Star*, 1983. Clothes hangers, wooden frame, 69 x 69 x 6 cm. Courtesy of Ai Weiwei Studio

46

*Tongue*, 1987. Part of a shoe, wood, 32 x 25 x 7 cm. Courtesy of Ai Weiwei Studio

## 14. Disturbing the Peace

47

*Disturbing the Peace*, 2009. Video with sound, 79'. Courtesy of Ai Weiwei Studio

## 15. 258 Fake

48

*258 Fake*, 2003-2011. 7677 images and 12 monitors. Courtesy of the artist and Galleria Continua, San Gimignano/Beijing/Les Moulins/Habana

## 16. Beijing East Village

49

*Crystal Cube*, 2014. Crystal, 100 x 100 x 100 cm. Courtesy of Ai Weiwei Studio

50

*Beijing East Village Photographs*, 1993-2001. Black-and-white photographs, 70 x 70 each. Exhibition copy courtesy of Ai Weiwei Studio

## 17. Leg Gun

51

*Leg Gun*, 2014. Wallpaper, monitor. Courtesy of Ai Weiwei Studio

## 18. Surveillance

52

*Photographs of Surveillance*, 2010-2015. Colour photographs mounted to PVC. Courtesy of Ai Weiwei Studio

53

*Tyre*, 2016. Marble, 50 x 85 x 72 cm. Courtesy of Ai Weiwei Studio

54

*Mask*, 2013. Marble, 30 x 80 x 80 cm. Courtesy of Ai Weiwei Studio

55

*Taxi Window Crank*, 2012. Crystal, 3.6 x 11.5 x 4 cm. Courtesy the artist and Galleria Continua, San Gimignano/Beijing/Les Moulins/Habana



# ai weiwei LIBERO

FLORENCE  
PALAZZO STROZZI

23 SEPTEMBER 2016  
22 JANUARY 2017

#AiwwFlorence #Aiww

56

*Discard the old path of closed doors and rigidity and reject evil attempts to change the Party's banner, 2012.*  
Colour video with sound, 18'35". Courtesy of Ai Weiwei Studio

## 19. Fake Case

57

*Ai Weiwei: The Fake Case, 2013.* Colour video with sound, 87'. Directed by Andreas Johnsen. Courtesy the artist and Andreas Johnsen

## 20. Selfie

58

*Selfie, 2012-present.* Wallpaper. Courtesy of Ai Weiwei Studio

## 21. Uffizi

59

*Surveillance Camera, 2010.* Marble, 39.2 x 39.8 x 19 cm. Milan, private collection

60

*Self-Portrait, 2014.* LEGO bricks, 77 x 77 x 4.5 cm. Courtesy of Ai Weiwei Studio