

Ai Weiwei

ENGLISH

258
FAKE

3 FEB – 10 JUN 2012

Dear visitor,

This year marks 25 years since the founding of Magasin 3 – an achievement of which we are incredibly proud. We have introduced a long list of artists to the Scandinavian art scene and our thorough solo exhibitions have become something of a hallmark of the institution.

Magasin 3 keeps a short 'wish list' for future exhibitions and Ai Weiwei's name has been on it. We have followed his artistic development closely, captivated by his strength, versatility, originality, and not least by his irrepressible courage. At last we are bringing his work to Sweden to give our visitors, many of whom have followed us faithfully, the opportunity to experience Ai Weiwei's greatness. Much has happened in Ai Weiwei's life during the past few years, most markedly his escalating conflict with the Chinese regime, which perceives his very existence as a threat to the nation. Under such difficult conditions it is not easy for anyone to stay focused and continue practicing one's profession, and Ai Weiwei is no exception. In the past year he has spent much of his time just surviving, and attempting to counter the false allegations directed against him. This persistence has made him an international symbol for human rights. Because his creativity is totally without compromise, he attains new ideas and visual expressions that carry a universal importance and transcend all boundaries.

We are grateful for the whole-hearted support we received during the preparation of the exhibition from Ai Weiwei and a number of his most loyal co-workers at his studio FAKE Design in Beijing, as well as our friends at the Faurschou Foundation and Galerie Urs Meile.

Welcome!

David Neuman
Museum Director Magasin 3

"Creativity is the power to reject the past, to change the status quo, and to seek new potential." – Ai Weiwei

Introduction

My meeting with Ai Weiwei in Beijing in the fall of 2010 was the starting point for our work on this exhibition. At the time Ai Weiwei had been under house arrest for a few days. He was calm but already then keenly aware of how precarious and unsafe his situation was. A lot has happened since then. In April 2011 Ai Weiwei was arrested on unclear charges and detained for three months in an undisclosed location. During the past year his situation has made him well-known far beyond the art world.

Ai Weiwei was born in 1957 in Beijing. At the end of the 1970s he co-founded the avant-garde artists' group Stars. In 1983 he moved to New York where he joined the community of exiled Chinese artists, musicians and architects, and also became a part of the American intellectual and artistic scene. Ai Weiwei returned to China in 1993 and he has since become a prominent figure in contemporary Chinese art. In recent years his activism for social change in China has consumed more of his time and he has become one of the most outspoken critics of the regime. China's development under the last century from empire to the socialist republic it is today with its single-party rule, driven by a new capitalist spirit, has largely taken place at the cost of its citizens' personal freedom. In reaction to this Ai Weiwei raises the issue of individual freedom and personal responsibility as the only way to a functioning and humane society.

Ai Weiwei's artworks are often grounded within a Chinese context, yet they remain accessible to an international audience. His visual expression has both sensitivity and enormous power and he takes up subjects that are of concern even to us in Sweden. He likes to choose

objects with great cultural or symbolic value for the Chinese and then deliberately treat them without the slightest regard for their worth. The artworks can be seen as commentary on the disdain that Mao's Cultural Revolution showed the past as well as a way for Ai Weiwei himself to dispatch with conventional notions about art and its value.

Ai Weiwei alternates between the roles of artist, blogger, political activist, architect and curator. It is precisely this broad definition of his work that makes his art so fascinating and relevant today. The events of the past year have made it even more important to recognize Ai Weiwei's activism and his commitment to freedom of speech and democratization in his country. For this reason we have set up a reading room within the exhibition space, making it possible for visitors to gain more insight into the artist's socially-engaged work, which is the motivating force behind everything he does – be it an art installation, investigative documentary filmmaking or writing on his blog. Our programming will be in focus even more than usual during the spring season. Magasin 3 is organizing a series of talks about topics such as democracy, the preconditions for contemporary art in China, Internet and the role of the social media in the struggle for freedom of speech, and the impact that totalitarian regimes have on the arts. These events are arranged in collaboration with ABF, Bio Rio, Goethe-Institut, Moderna Museet and Swedish PEN/Kulturhuset, Hotade ord.

Unfortunately, Ai Weiwei is not able to visit Stockholm in connection with his exhibition at Magasin 3. Since his release in June last year he has been forbidden to travel, to be active on the Internet or to speak to the media. To me this makes it all the more important to present Ai Weiwei in his first solo exhibition in Sweden and to continue making his voice heard.

Tessa Praun
Curator Magasin 3

Sunflower Seeds, 2009

Porcelain, 5 tons

Size varies depending on the installation

Faurschou Foundation

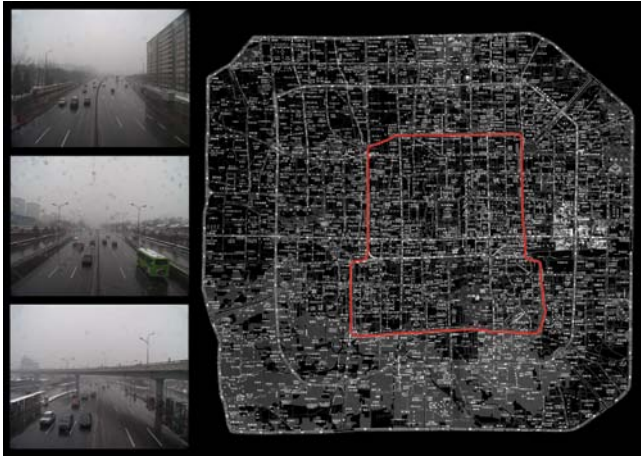
A pile of sunflower seeds. A graphic black and white installation with seemingly identical seeds that we all recognize. However, on closer inspection, it becomes clear that the seeds are inedible and made of porcelain. *Sunflower Seeds* provokes thoughts regarding the 'Made in China' phenomenon and the mass production that permeates a large part of our society. In 2010 Ai Weiwei captured the imagination of the international art world when he filled the entire floor of the Turbine Hall of Tate Modern in London with many millions of these individually made sunflower seeds. The present work at Magasin 3 is a rendition of this installation, which exists in several different versions (500 kg, 5 tons, 10 tons).

China has a long history of producing porcelain of the highest quality. The city Jingdezhen in southeastern China is known the world over for its fine porcelain and was the court supplier for many centuries. Ai Weiwei turned to the town's inhabitants and commissioned them to produce the sunflower seeds for his work using traditional methods. A total of 1600 people were actively engaged for two and a half years in making millions of sunflower seeds. Every porcelain seed was hand painted with the characteristic black and white pattern. The work is a commentary on China's status in the world as synonymous with mass production, and Ai Weiwei emphasizes the individual as an essential part of the masses.

Sunflower Seeds, detail.
Photo: Anders Sune Berg

Sunflower Seeds, 500 kg, installation view,
Faurschou Foundation, Beijing 2009.
Photo: Anders Sune Berg





Beijing: The Second Ring, 2005

January 14 – February 11

Video, 1 hr 6 mins

Beijing: The Third Ring, 2005

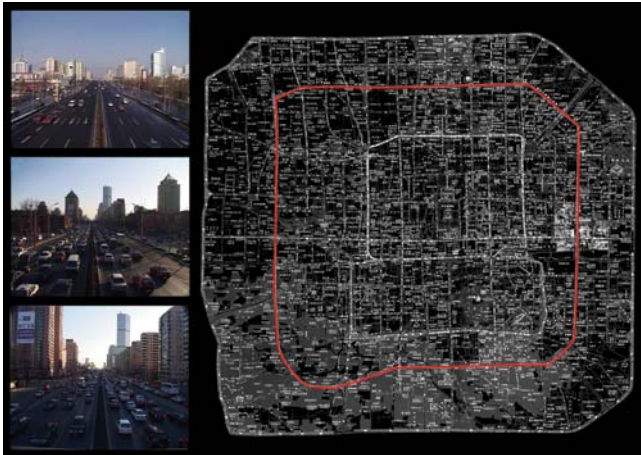
January 1 – January 9

Video, 1 hr 50 mins

Assistant photographer: Zhao Zhao

Courtesy the artist & Galerie Urs Meile, Beijing-Lucerne

The video works *Beijing: The Second Ring* and *Beijing: The Third Ring* document the two opposite views of traffic flow on 33, respectively 55 bridges along the Second and Third Ring Roads in Beijing. Ai Weiwei recorded a single frame for one minute in each direction on every bridge. *Beijing: The Second Ring* is made up of 66 segments which were shot on cloudy days. *Beijing: The Third Ring* is made up of 110 segments and was shot only on sunny days. The Ring Roads are important urban structural elements in Beijing. These circular roads govern the whole spatial organization of the city's urban fabric. Like in *Chang'an Boulevard*, the act of recording is minimal – instead the focus lies on the process of observation and letting time take its course. The film methodically documents the never-ending flow of traffic, the development of the modern city and the urban reality that defines Beijing today.



Beijing: The Second Ring, still images and map with the Second Ring Road marked in red.

Courtesy Ai Weiwei

Beijing: The Third Ring, still images and map with the Third Ring Road marked in red.

Courtesy Ai Weiwei

Beijing 2003, 2003

October 18 – November 7

Video, 150 hrs

Courtesy the artist & Galerie Urs Meile, Beijing-Lucerne

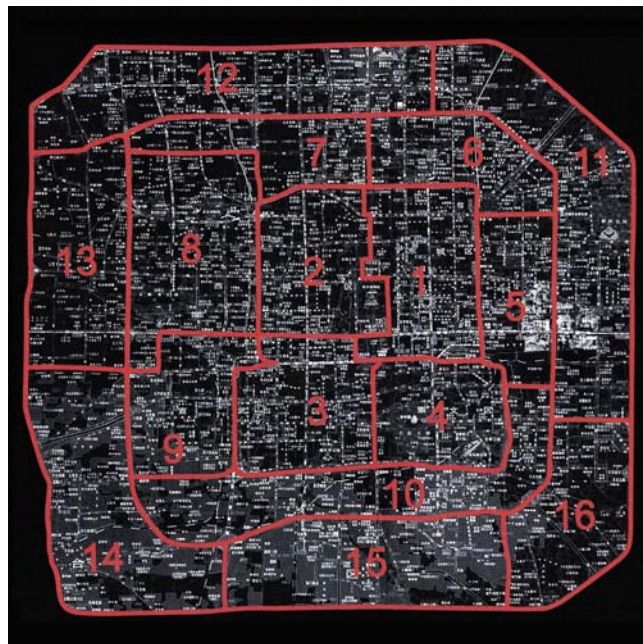
"I think what happens around us is often more massive than what we can interpret. I am Chinese. I live in Beijing. [...] This is my sense of the massive change that has happened in this city, which we are all part of. I wanted to find an almost mathematical and unemotional way to show this: to show the powerlessness of the people, and the blind nature of the redevelopment." – Ai Weiwei

Beijing 2003 is a video work by Ai Weiwei about the city he lives in and its people. Participants include assistants Liang Ye and Yang Zhichao, and driver Wu. Beginning below the Dabeyiao highway interchange, the vehicle from which the video was shot traveled along each and every road within the Fourth Ring Road of Beijing. Sixteen days, approximately 2400 kilometers and 150 hours of footage later, it ended where it began.

Through the windshield, the camera objectively recorded all the visual information that appeared before the vehicle. It recorded the mega city of Beijing through a single lens, meticulously investigating the spatial state of the city's streets, the constant change, the scenery, movements and behaviors. The sum of the entire process became the meaning of the work. The book *Beijing 10/2003* is a documentation of this video work. One still frame was captured every five minutes resulting in the 1719 images that appear in the book.

Beijing 2003, still images.
Courtesy Ai Weiwei

Beijing 2003, map divided according
to the sixteen days spent filming.
Courtesy Ai Weiwei





Chang'an Boulevard, 2004

Video, 10 hrs 13 mins

Courtesy the artist & Galerie Urs Meile, Beijing-Lucerne

"The whole development of China is quite blind. We always think that growth is positive. But it also causes problems. There's no aesthetic discussion of today's growth. There's no rationality. It's like a giant monster."

- Ai Weiwei

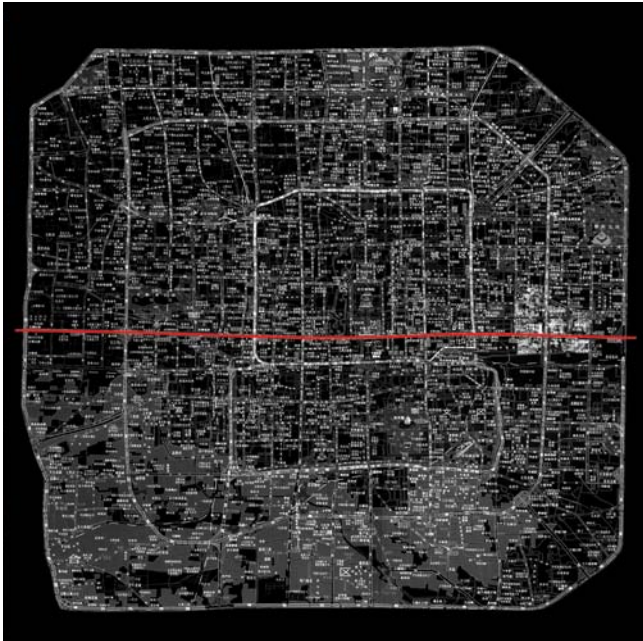
The work is recorded along Chang'an Boulevard which runs forty-five kilometers east to west through Beijing. Ai Weiwei divided the distance into intervals. At each measured increment, the artist recorded a single frame for one minute. The whole film is composed of 608 one-minute segments and the total length of the film is 10 hours and 13 minutes. Beijing, the capitol of China for over 600 years, has a clear architectonic order in its urban planning. The city is bisected by Chang'an Boulevard along its east-west axis. After 1949, Chang'an Boulevard and Tianmen Square, at the heart of the city, became China's primary landmarks and the cultural and the political centers. The film records the city through the transformation of urban landscape. The act of recording is minimal: it is filmed in a peaceful, quiet manner, focusing on the nature of time and pure observation. The work reveals Beijing as an organic whole, capturing the rhythms of the city, its social structure, cityscape, socialist-planned economy, capitalist market, political power center, commercial buildings, and industrial units as pieces of a multi-layered urban collage.

Chang'an Boulevard, still images.

Courtesy Ai Weiwei

Chang'an Boulevard, map with the boulevard marked in red.

Courtesy Ai Weiwei



Ghost Gu Coming Down the Mountain, 2005

Ai Weiwei & Serge Spitzer (1951, Romania)

Red and white porcelain, 96 vases, each 27 x 35 cm

Faurschou Foundation

The 96 vases were created in a collaboration between Ai Weiwei and Serge Spitzer, modeled after a vase from the Yuan period (1269–1368). This rare object was sold a few years ago and became the most expensive Asian artifact ever sold at auction. The vase depicts the historical person Wang Yi (5th century BC) whose nickname was Guiguzi ("Master of the Ghost Valley"). On the vase he is shown in a cart drawn by a tiger and a leopard. The motif is copied from a woodcut dated 1321 AD in which two tigers pull the cart. It is, however, unlikely that Wang Yi had such exotic animals, so one can assume that the woodcut is also a modified version of history.

Working in different parts of the world both Ai Weiwei and Serge Spitzer are interested in the fetish of historical objects and how narratives often tend to go in circles. Every vase in the installation bears a reproduction of a certain section of the motif on the ancient vase. By repeating the motif and arranging the vases in a grid the artists hint at mechanical reproduction and fakes. The work stands in opposition to the traditional experience and valuing of unique artifacts because it is only when all the vases are assembled that they form the complete original motif.

*Ghost Gu Coming Down the Mountain, installation view,
Faurschou Foundation, Copenhagen 2011.
Photo: Anders Sune Berg*

*Ghost Gu Coming Down the Mountain, installation view,
Ai Weiwei's studio courtyard, Beijing 2006.
Courtesy Ai Weiwei*





Stool, 2008

Stools from the Qing Dynasty (1644 – 1911)

68 x 38 x 65 cm

The Zagury Collection

Though grounded in references to China, Ai Weiwei's work speaks to an international audience by exploring the tensions between juxtaposing elements: old and new, stability and change, control and freedom. One aspect of the artist's working method is the playful manipulations of existing objects. Ai Weiwei is fascinated by the materials and techniques of traditional craftsmanship, and has a vast knowledge of Chinese antiques. In a series of sculptures Ai Weiwei re-used building materials from old houses and temples; doors and window frames from the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644) were used in new structures. Antique tables, chairs and stools were taken apart and re-assembled into new objects using traditional methods. The original function has disappeared and the new objects have their own inner logic.

Stool is composed of two stools from the Qing Dynasty (1644–1911). The stools have been freed from their original historical value and in the new object functionality and the laws of physics no longer hold. The work is not created from a sense of nostalgia for the past but rather created in order to shake up conventional notions about culture and to question established values. The artist's actions are a commentary on the often bizarre reality of contemporary Chinese society, with modern China having come about at the cost of the personal freedom of its citizens.

Stool

Photo: Anders Sune Berg

Reading Room

"Creativity is the power to reject the past, to change the status quo, and to seek new potential. Simply put, aside from using one's imagination - and perhaps more importantly - creativity is the power to act. Only through our actions can expectations for change become reality, and only then can our purported creativity build a new foundation, and only then is it possible to draw out human civilization." - Ai Weiwei

Ai Weiwei does not make distinctions between his role as artist, blogger, and political activist. The driving force behind everything he does is his commitment to social change in China. To represent this within the exhibition, we have created a reading room with books, magazines, and documentary films about and by Ai Weiwei. In interviews filmed before his arrest in the spring of 2011 Ai Weiwei speaks about his on-going fight for freedom of speech and democracy. There will also be a listening station with a selection of personal anecdotes and reflections on Ai Weiwei. During the course of the exhibition, additional material from Magasin 3's events series (see pp. 30-31) will also be made available.

A broad selection of materials will also be available on Magasin 3's website with regular updates and additions during the exhibition.
www.magasin3.com/aiweiwei





World Map, 2006–2009

Cotton and wooden base

120 x 800 x 400 cm

Faurschou Foundation

"China is blindly producing for the demands of the market... My work very much relates to this blind production of things. I'm part of it, which is a bit of a nonsense." – Ai Weiwei

Although dealing with complex issues Ai Weiwei's artworks are often beautifully simple in their visual expression. *World Map* is a three-dimensional work made of thousands of layers of thin cotton cloth. The map is created in a way that makes it extremely labor-intensive to install, illustrating China's status as a platform for cheap labor in the clothing industry. The challenge lies in getting the thousands of pieces to fit together as perfectly as possible.

The work focuses on the individual as opposed to the masses, thereby also emphasizing the country's leading roll in global trade. China is the world's largest producer of cotton and a leading manufacturer of textiles and clothes. The difficulty of assembling the parts that make up the work also provokes thoughts regarding national and international unity.



World Map, detail.

Photo: Anders Sune Berg

World Map, installation view.

Faurschou Foundation, Beijing 2009.

Photo: Anders Sune Berg

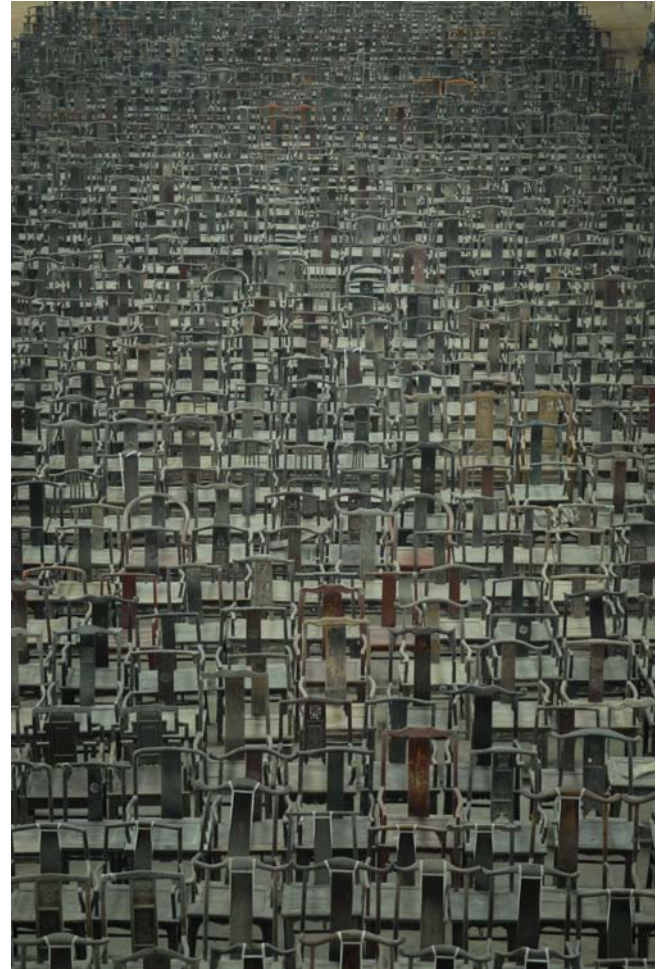
Fairytale

In 2007 Ai Weiwei created the project *Fairytale* for Documenta 12 in Kassel, Germany (considered to be one of the world's most important art events.) Documenta started in 1955 and has taken place every five years since 1972. Ai Weiwei wanted to work outside of conventional art forms and create instead something with people. He arranged for 1001 Chinese citizens of different ages and backgrounds to travel to Kassel free of cost over the period of the exhibition. Two hundred people at a time spent a week in the city and could visit a unique art event while at the same time being part of it.

The project was inspired by the Brothers Grimm who were from the region of Kassel and whose collections of fairytales still are read to this day. In order to further emphasize the presence of the Chinese in the city Ai Weiwei had 1001 antique Chinese chairs from the Qing Dynasty (1644–1911) transported to Kassel. The chairs were placed throughout the Documenta exhibition spaces for visitors to use, thus representing the Chinese visitors. Ai Weiwei's *Fairytale* is a contemporary story that challenged the preconceptions and attitudes of the participants themselves and the people who were in Kassel in the summer of 2007.

Different parts of this project can be seen in the exhibition at Magasin 3 (lower level).

Antique Chinese chairs, arranged in
the artist's studio, Beijing 2007.
Courtesy Ai Weiwei





Fairytale People, 2007

C-prints, 100 x 100 cm

Courtesy the artist; Leister Foundation, Switzerland; Erlenmeyer Stiftung, Switzerland; Galerie Urs Meile, Beijing-Lucerne

"Fairytale is apparently different from my previous works, as it deals with living individuals, their lives, as well as their hope and imagination."

– Ai Weiwei

Ai Weiwei initiated his most talked about project, *Fairytale* (see p. 20), by writing in his blog that he was thinking of inviting 1001 people to travel with him to Kassel to experience and become part of the art event Documenta 12. This generated an enormous response – within just a few days over 3000 people expressed an interest in participating. Ai Weiwei shortened the application period in order not to refuse too many interested people. Everyone had to fill in an application with some one hundred questions. Then 1001 people from different parts of China and ranging in age from 2 to 70 years and from diverse backgrounds were selected from all over China. Ai Weiwei and his team of co-workers set up a temporary travel agency to help the participants with passports, insurance and tickets. Before their departure each participant was photographed in surroundings similar to where they came from.

The exhibition shows a selection of fourteen of these portraits in conjunction with *Fairytale Dormitory* and the film that documents the project (lower level).

Fairytale People, a selection.

Courtesy Ai Weiwei

Fairytale Dormitory (1 unit), 2007

Wood, steel, textile, plastic, bamboo

(10 beds for women) 200 x 781 x 545 cm

Courtesy the artist; Leister Foundation, Switzerland; Erlenmeyer Stiftung, Switzerland; Galerie Urs Meile, Beijing-Lucerne

Ai Weiwei attracted a lot of attention with his project *Fairytale* in Kassel in 2007. He invited 1001 Chinese people to travel with him to the German city in order to experience the international art event that takes place every five years, as well as to encounter another culture (see p. 20). Each participant received a special *Fairytale* suitcase and t-shirt, spending money and a memory stick in the form of a bracelet containing useful information for their stay.

A former warehouse on the outskirts of Kassel was converted into a dormitory that could accommodate 200 people at a time. Ai Weiwei redesigned the space using a system of drapes to divide it into smaller sections, each furnished with bamboo mats, beds and specially designed bedding. Next to every bed there was a curtain concealing an antique Chinese chair that the participants could use as a bedside table.

A section of the dormitory and its furnishings has been installed on the lower level of Magasin 3 together with a selection of photographic portraits of the participants, and the film documenting the project.



Dormitory in the Gottschalk Halls, Kassel 2007.

Part of *Fairytale*.

Courtesy Ai Weiwei

Fairytale Dormitory, installation view,
Faurschou Foundation, Beijing 2009.

Photo: Anders Sune Berg



Fairytale, 2007

Video documentary, 2 hrs 32 mins

Courtesy the artist; Leister Foundation, Switzerland; Erlenmeyer Stiftung, Switzerland; Galerie Urs Meile, Beijing-Lucerne

For Documenta 12 in Kassel Ai Weiwei created a project that enabled 1001 Chinese to travel to the German city to experience and be part of the art exhibition (see p. 20). This film documents the preparations for this unique project – the challenges confronted by Ai Weiwei and the participants, the time spent in Kassel and the artist's insights about the project.

Through interviews we are able to follow the whole process that in itself became part of the work. The thoughts, worries and hopes of the participants, as well as their frustrations and expectations often reflect different social, political and economic factors prevalent in China today. Through the project Ai Weiwei offered these 1001 people (the number is partly a reference to the Arabic collection of tales *Thousand and One Nights*) something completely new and previously unimaginable for them. A fairytale became real and it will live on through their own recollections and other peoples' stories. The project shows how art can influence and change people's lives and attitudes through personal experiences.

The film is shown at Magasin 3 on the lower level.



Fairytale, still image.

Courtesy Ai Weiwei

Suitcases, part of the *Fairytale* project.

Courtesy Ai Weiwei

Fairytale T-shirts, 2007

Courtesy the artist; Leister Foundation, Switzerland; Erlenmeyer Stiftung, Switzerland; Galerie Urs Meile, Beijing-Lucerne

"Each participant is a single person, and that's why our logo is 1=1001 - that means that in this project 1001 is not represented by one project, but by 1001 projects, as each individual will have his or her own independent experience." - Ai Weiwei

The Magasin 3 staff in the exhibition halls and the lobby are wearing the t-shirts designed by Ai Weiwei for the participants of the *Fairytale* project. (Read more about the project on p. 20.) The cotton t-shirts come in black and in white with long sleeves and seams sewn in different colors. The neckline bears the project's logo, 1=1001, which is also to be found on the linen in the *Fairytale Dormitory*, installed on the lower level (see p. 24).

The t-shirts can be ordered from Galerie Urs Meile's website:
www.galerieursmeile.com



Fairytale T-shirts, drawing and detail.
Courtesy Ai Weiwei

Events

In connection with the exhibition Magasin 3 is organizing a series of events in collaboration with ABF, Bio Rio, Goethe-Institut, Moderna Museet and Swedish PEN/Kulturhuset, Hotade ord. With the generous support of Kulturrådet and Svenska PostkodLotteriet. Special thanks to the Culture Without Borders Foundation.

AI WEIWEI'S ARTISTRY

Venue: Bio Rio, Hornstulls Strand 3

February 21, 6 pm

Tessa Praun, Curator at Magasin 3 for the Ai Weiwei exhibition.

Ulrich Wilmes, Chief Curator at Haus der Kunst, Munich.

THE POWER OF MICROBLOGS – WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF AI WEIWEI AND OTHER NET ACTIVISTS FOR FREEDOM OF SPEECH IN CHINA?

Venue: Kulturhuset/Hotade ord, Café Panorama, Sergels Torg

In collaboration with Swedish PEN

March 13, 7 pm

Michael Anti (Zhao Jing), Chinese journalist, blogger and net activist known for his posts about freedom of the press in China.

Marina Svensson, Sinologist and China expert at Lund University with a focus on human rights, justice and the Chinese media.

Christian Christensen, Professor at the Department of Media and Communication Studies at Uppsala University.

Moderator: *Ulrika K. Engström*, Swedish PEN and Enact consulting firm, where she works with sustainable strategies for business development with a focus on China and human rights.

FREEDOM OF SPEECH, DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS – CHINA IN RELATION TO THE REST OF THE WORLD

Venue: ABF, Zetasalen, Sveavägen 41

March 27, 6 pm

Timothy Garton Ash, Professor of European Studies in the University of Oxford, Isaiah Berlin Professorial Fellow at St Antony's College, Oxford, and a Senior Fellow at the Hoover Institution, Stanford University.

Susan Shirk, Director of the University of California system-wide Institute on Global Conflict and Cooperation and professor of political science at University of California, San Diego.

AUTHORITARIAN REGIMES AND THE ARTS – IN EUROPE OVER THE PAST 50 YEARS

Venue: Goethe-Institut, Bryggargatan 12 A

April 26, 6 pm

Folker Skulima, legendary Berlin gallerist, writer.

Biljana Srbljanović, Serbian playwright and politician.

Moderator: *Berit Schuck*, dramaturge and independent curator based in Berlin.

PRECONDITIONS FOR CONTEMPORARY ART IN CHINA

Venue: Moderna Museet, The Auditorium, Skeppsholmen

May 8, 6 pm

Lars Nittve, Museum Director, M+, Hong Kong.

Jérôme Sans, independent curator, former director of Ullens Center for Contemporary Art, Beijing.

Uli Sigg, collector of Chinese contemporary art.

Karen Smith, curator and art historian, Beijing.

Moderator: *David Neuman*, Museum Director at Magasin 3.

All talks will be held in English. The program is subject to change. Please consult our website for up-to-date information.
www.magasin3.com

Collaborators

The series of talks in connection with the exhibition is organized by Magasin 3 in collaboration with:



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MODERNA MUSEET

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Special thanks to the Culture Without Borders Foundation.

Colophon

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Program Curator: Sara Källström

Museum Director: David Neuman

Deputy Director/Chief Curator: Richard Julin

Curator: Tessa Praun

Curator Program & Education: Sara Källström

Curatorial Assistant: Lisa Boström

Registrar/Assistant Curator of Collection Research: Bronwyn Griffith

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Technicians: Joel Nylow, Peter Wiklund

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SPRING 2012

AI WEIWEI

February 3 – June 10

Curator: Tessa Praun

MUSEUM MAGASIN 3

– presentations from the collection

Cosima von Bonin, Per Kirkeby and Tal R

September 24, 2011 – June 10, 2012

Curator: David Neuman

GUIDED TOURS

Every Saturday at 2pm we offer a guided tour of the exhibitions (in Swedish).
Tickets can be collected at the entrance desk the same day.

OPENING HOURS & ENTRANCE FEE

Exhibitions and Café, during the season:

Thu 11am–7pm, Fri–Sun 11am–5pm

60/40 SEK (includes a season pass).

Free admission for those under 20 years.

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