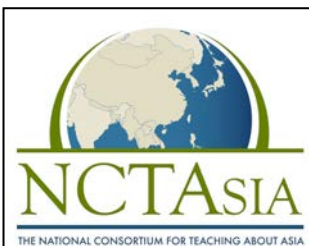




Zodiac

A Graphic Memoir Ai Weiwei

With Electra Stamboulis – illustrated by Gianluca Costantini



NCTA Book Club Resources

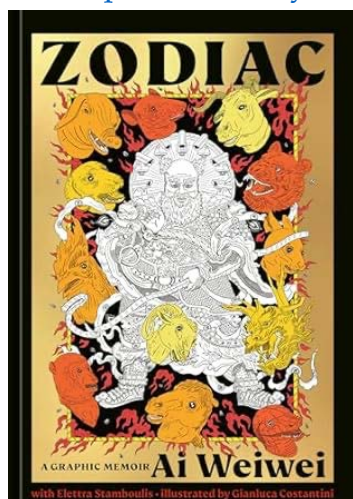
Compiled by Tese Wintz Neighbor, April 2024
National Consortium for Teaching about Asia
East Asia Resource Center, U. W.

BOOK REVIEWS

NOTE: If links do not work, please cut & paste them in!

New York Times: Ai Weiwei's Zodiac is a Mystical Memory Tour (2/7/24)

<https://www.nytimes.com/2024/02/07/arts/ai-weiwei-zodiac-memoir.html>



Interview:

Q: A zodiac cycle ago, in 2012, you were just out of jail and tired of Beijing trying to silence you. “[Twitter is my city](#),” you told me. Now you live in Berlin, Cambridge and Portugal. Where’s your city today?

A: Twitter was my city because it was the only place for my expression at that time. Since 2015, when I left China, conditions have changed. I was under such pressure in China. Suddenly, I came to the so-called free world and Twitter was not so important. It was just one of the tools.

I consider nowhere home. Not China and not outside China. It’s strange. I just came back from New York. I consider none of these cities home. Home means you close your eyes and imagine the street and recognize a few names you grew up with. None of these places have this.

Q: In *Zodiac* you teach your son, Ai Lao, the legend of the Jade Emperor creating the calendar. What did you learn by explaining time?

A: Some say time is only an illusion. The illusion can be painful, or it can be happy. Some live in the past, and some struggle in the present. Someone may have no future. It’s hard to explain what time is about. The new generation needs some kind of reference when we talk about time. I can talk about the years I lived in Xinjiang, or the time my father was dying so I moved back to China from New York. You really need events to illustrate time. My son will turn 15 soon, so his time will be in China, then Germany, then England. That’s how he’ll understand it.

Q: In a few *Zodiac* illustrations we see your son speaking with an image of your father, the poet [Ai Qing](#), at his grave. Do you speak to him too?

A: It was an awkward situation. Ai Lao is a very independent boy. Perhaps it’s due to his experiences. He has his own perspective and independent way of thinking. Sometimes we tried not to let him voice his feelings, but he bowed to my father’s image, which we never do — head down to the ground. We never had that education and we never taught him to do that. How could a child do that? This surprised me. But it was natural, to show this kind of respect.

I don’t communicate with my father anymore. Not before he passed and not after. I regret I never asked him a solid question — what did he think about China or his time? I should have and it’s too late. Each generation bears the same situation. I wouldn’t want Ai Lao to ask me those questions. [But] his world will not be the same as mine. Probably my father never tried to pass his experience to me because he realized there was not much of a lesson to give to the next generation. That’s tragic. There’s a strong sense of loss that carries more value than any material life. It’s like being cut off from the most intimate relationship.

Instagram
<https://www.instagram.com/aiww/>
Twitter
[@aiww](https://twitter.com/aiww)
Website
<https://www.aiweiwei.com/>

Q: Some of *Zodiac* looks drawn from photographs, and some seems to depict dreams. Describe the process and why you chose the graphic medium for the sequel to your 2021 [prose memoir](#).

A: Gianluca, the illustrator, and his wife, Elettra, and I sat together. The idea was to gather things from my memory, like a timeline, and offer mystical stories from China's past. I explained it as a mix of memory and mythology. We thought this would relate not just my experience but general knowledge for whoever was interested. It's a story with so much related to my situation that the publisher called it a memoir, but it's not. Memory is subjective. We choose some things to remember and lots to forget. Most images in the book are related to photos because I post all my images on [Instagram](#). They did the research. They asked questions and I answered. I never wrote a sentence but I did edit. All the dialogue in the book is based on my interviews.

Q: So it's a collection of things you've said?

A: Yes. It's almost like an A.I. work.

PBS Interview (18 minutes): Artist Ai Weiwei on His New Graphic Memoir *Zodiac* (1/30/24)

<https://www.pbs.org/wnet/amanpour-and-company/video/artist-ai-weiwei-on-his-new-graphic-memoir-zodiac-e64etf/>

Exiled Chinese dissident and renowned artist Ai Weiwei is known for challenging authoritarian politics through his work, and was even detained in China for 81 days on charge of state subversion back in 2011. But has not deterred his fight for intellectual freedom. A noble pursuit passed down to him by his late father, a celebrated poet. Now, Ai Weiwei is exploring that relationship and his own life story in a new graphic memoir, *Zodiac*. He tells Hari Sreenivasan how those memories connect to stories of Chinese astrological signs.

Comix Experience Graphic Novel of the Month Club (180 minutes) Ai Weiwei, Gianluca Costantini and Elettra Stamboulis (2/25/24)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MLx7_GxQQj8

Legendary artist and activist Ai Weiwei brings us his memoir in comic form. With collaborators Gianluca Costantini and Elettra Stamboulis, we bring you *Zodiac*. Ai Weiwei masterfully interweaves ancient Chinese folklore with stories of his life, family, and career and we cover it all in this installment of the Graphic Novel Club interview series.

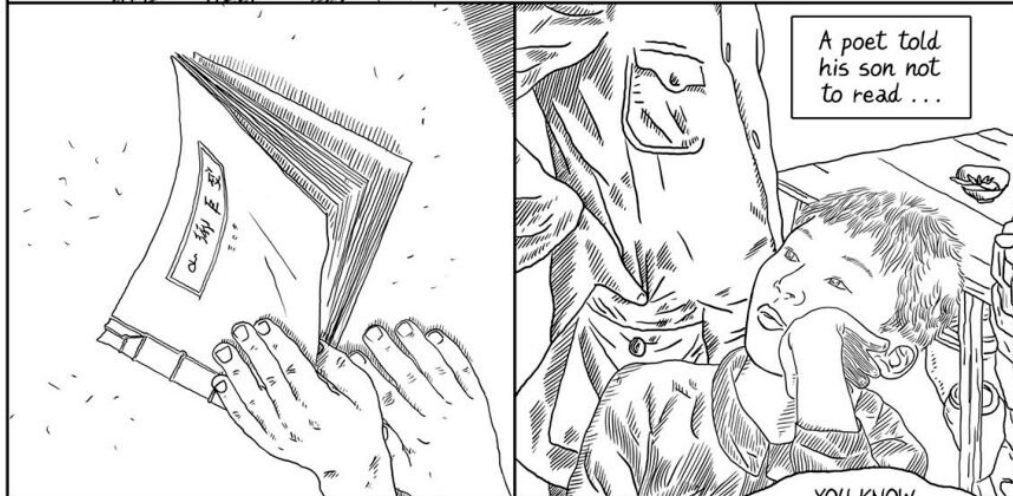
EXCERPT: China Books Review: A Game of Cat and Mouse (2/8/24)

<https://chinabooksreview.com/2024/02/08/a-game-of-cat-and-mouse/>

In this graphic novel rendition of his life, the acclaimed artist reflects on the Chinese zodiac, its connection to his own family story, and the power games us animals play. Conceptual artist Ai Weiwei teamed up with Italian cartoonist Gianluca Costantini, and Greek-Italian graphic novelist Elettra Stamboulis, to produce a different kind of memoir to his *last*. The comic book delves into Ai's personal story, from his formation as an artist to his detention by the authorities for challenging the system. This story also crosses generations; from his father's own political persecution to his son's curiosity about the legacy he inherits.

Woven through it all is the folklore of the Chinese zodiac, whose twelve animals name each lunar new year.

Xinjiang Province, 1967. Near the Gobi Desert.

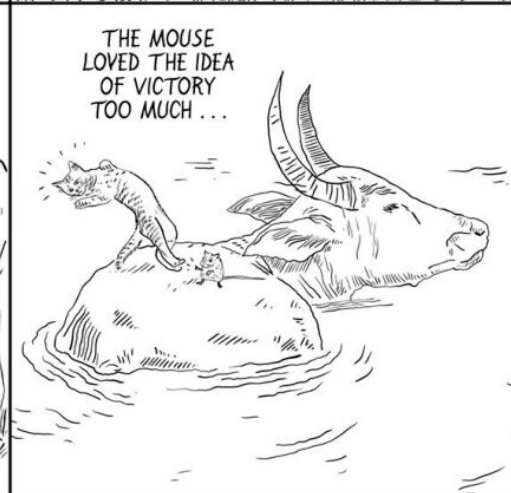
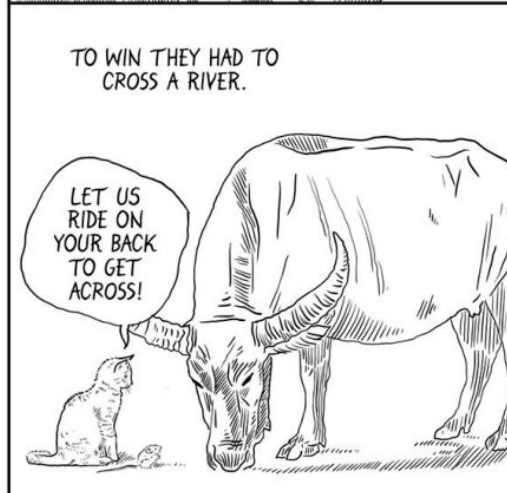
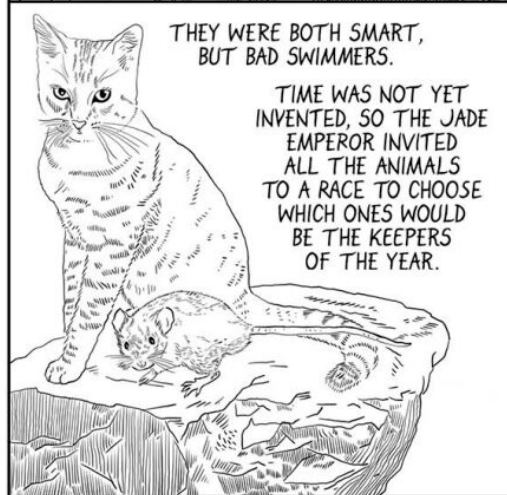
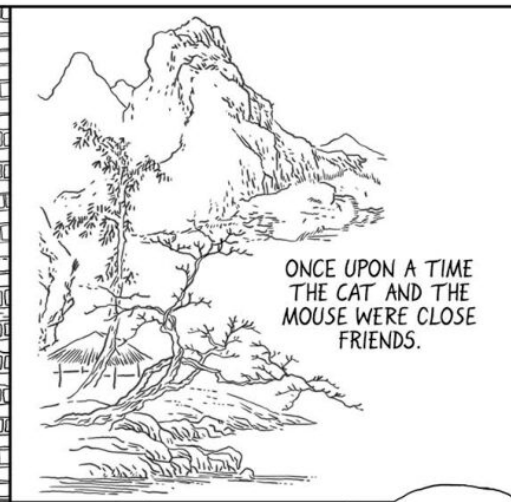




* Enver Hoxha was the Secretary of the Party of Labour of Albania from 1941 until 1985.

** Nasreddin Hodja was a satirist and philosopher who lived in 8th century in the Ottoman Empire.









THEY
ARE AWAKE
WHEN EVERYBODY
IS ASLEEP ...

THE MOUSE DID
WHATEVER IT COULD TO
ARRIVE FIRST ...

IT WILL DO WHATEVER
POSSIBLE TO MAINTAIN
THIS POSITION.



SO THE MOUSE
LOVES WINNING?

INDEED.

I ALSO LIKE
TO WIN.

I LOVED IT,
TOO, WHEN I WAS
YOUR AGE.

Xinjiang Province 1967. Near the Gobi Desert.









* The prediction was that he would be the cause of the household's demise.





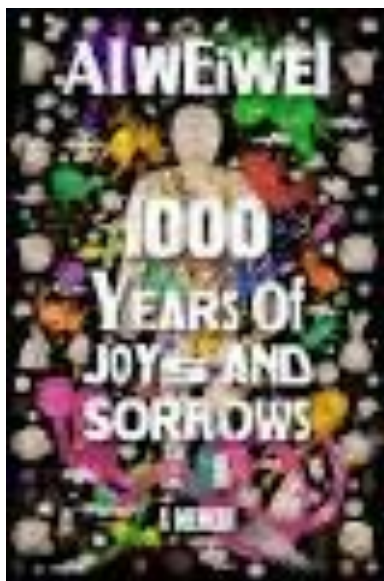
* Verses from Ai Qing's poem "Dreams" in *The Red Azalea: Chinese Poetry Since the Cultural Revolution*. Edited by Edward Morin; translated by Fang Dai, Dennis Ding, and Edward Morin. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, November 1990.





* The prediction was that he would be the cause of the household's demise.

BOOK REVIEWS: *1000 Years of Joy and Sorrows*



New York Times (10/30/21) For His Father and His Son, Ai Weiwei Is Determined to Leave a Trace

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/30/books/review/1000-years-of-joys-and-sorrows-ai-weiwei.html>

“You’re just a pawn in the game, you know,” a public security officer summarily informs Ai Weiwei, China’s most controversial — and to the Chinese Communist Party, its most dangerous — artist. It is 2011 and Ai, suspected of “inciting the subversion of state power,” has recently been held captive for 81 days; soon after his release, he is slapped with a tax bill equivalent to \$2.4 million. According to the officer, Ai’s high profile has made him an expedient tool for Westerners to attack China, but “pawns sooner or later all get sacrificed.” Of course, it’s obvious that Ai also regards the officer as a pawn, one who, in serving an oppressive regime, has sacrificed his freedom to speak for himself.

In his first memoir, *1000 Years of Joys and Sorrows*, Ai recounts this and other showdowns with the state — confrontations that, alongside his iconoclastic art, have both forged his status as an international icon and forced him to work in political exile. The book takes its title from verses that his father, the famed poet Ai Qing, wrote while visiting the ruins of an ancient city on the Silk Road: “Of a thousand years of joys and sorrows / Not a trace can be found.” During his months in detention, Ai became determined to leave a trace; regret about the unbridgeable gap between himself and his late father, and the fear that his young son might never know who his father really is, gave rise to the idea of a book.

...In the final pages of the book, Ai writes that “advocacy of freedom is inseparable from an effort to attain it, for freedom is not a goal but a direction, and it comes into being through the very act of resistance.” Remembering, too, is a form of resistance. In documenting the past, he is also repudiating the country’s generations of imposed amnesia. “After all the convulsions that China had experienced, genuine emotions and personal memory were reduced to tiny scraps and easily replaced by the discourse of struggle and continuous revolution,” Ai writes. In “1000 Years of Joys and Sorrows,” Ai does not allow his own scraps to remain buried. To unearth them is an act of unburdening, an open letter to progeny, a suturing of past and present. It is the refusal to be a pawn — and the most potent assertion of a self.

The Guardian (10/24/21) A Life of Dissent

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2021/oct/24/1000-years-of-joys-and-sorrows-by-ai-weiwei-review-a-life-of-dissent>

The artist’s memoir reveals a rebellious spirit, inherited from his persecuted poet father, which sustained him through detention by Chinese authorities.

...While Ai undoubtedly inherited his father's stoicism, the defiance that would characterize his later activism was all his own. It initially took the form of a blog that first appeared towards the end of 2005. The first post read: "To express yourself needs a reason, but expressing yourself is the reason." For the Chinese authorities, who would take time to come to terms with and control the internet, this was the first of many transgressions that would lead to his blog being shut down in 2009 and to his subsequent arrest and detention in 2011. As Ai puts it himself, the blog propelled him into "the public's field of vision with the force of a bullet from a gun."

His creative life, which began in 1978 when he enrolled on an animation course at the Beijing Film Academy, had taken time to find its footing. That same year, he also became one of the founders of the mostly self-taught avant garde art group Stars, who were pioneers for today's thriving art scene in China.

In 1981, during a period of tentative reform by the Chinese government, Ai was among the first group of students to be granted a visa to study in America. He remained there for 12 years, mostly living in New York, where he won a scholarship to Parsons School of Design, only to forfeit it with an impetuous decision: leaving an art history exam paper blank save for his signature. As protests go, it was oddly self-defeating in its vagueness. "I was simply ambivalent," he writes. "I didn't know what I liked." He survived in New York by doing part-time jobs and becoming a street artist sketching tourists in Times Square. He had few friends and, at one point, his sense of isolation was so acute that he refused to answer the door to callers at his grotty apartment on the Lower East Side. For inspiration, he lingered long in downtown galleries and secondhand bookstores. He met, and briefly befriended, Allen Ginsberg, a champion of his father's poetry, and for a time shared a loft with the performance artist Tehching Hsieh who happened to be spending a year tied to fellow artist Linda Montano with an 8ft rope. They were, writes Ai, "models for me in terms of their unflinching commitment to an artistic vision."

It was in New York that Ai held his first solo show, the intriguingly titled *Old Shoes, Safe Sex*, at a small SoHo gallery. It received a single, short, affirmative review in *Artspeak*, which described it as "a neo-Dadaist knockout". On 4 June 1989, and for several days afterwards, he compulsively watched CNN reports of the massacre of pro-democracy protesters in Tiananmen Square. It precipitated a long bout of soul-searching that, alongside anxiety over his ageing father's increasing ill health, culminated in his return to Beijing in 1993. "Freedom with no restraints and no concerns had lost its novelty."...

Art In America (11/2/21) Fathers and Sons: Ai Weiwei's 1000 Years of Joys and Sorrows,
<https://www.artnews.com/art-in-america/aia-reviews/ai-weiwei-memoir-1000-years-of-joys-and-sorrows-1234608596/>

Given the harrowing experiences that the artist and activist Ai Weiwei has endured over his sixty-four years, it is a bit miraculous to see him exude mordant humor and calm determination throughout his lucid new memoir, *1000 Years of Joys and Sorrows*. Even in very dire circumstances, he seems able to engage—maybe even enjoy—one absurdity or another.



Writing about the eighty-one days he spent in Chinese custody in 2011, having been detained after years of outspoken political activity, Ai relishes the cat-and-mouse exchanges he had with his interrogators, who he says accused him of everything from bigamy to subversion. He likens one questioning session to “a car that veers off the road and charges wildly over desolate fields and wild hillsides,” and he recalls an exasperated official

exclaiming, “How come you can talk at such great length when art is the topic?” While confined, Ai thought of his father, the celebrated poet Ai Qing, who was imprisoned for “causing a public disturbance through Communist Party activities” in the 1930s and exiled to remote work camps by the Communists during a purge of government critics in the late 1950s. “I realized I knew very little about his ordeal,” the artist writes, saying he “felt a deep pang of regret at the unbridgeable gap between him and me.” He decided to write a book because “I did not want Ai Lao”—his own son, with his partner, Wang Fen —“to suffer the same regret.”

Penguin Interview (11/11/21) Ai Weiwei: 'I'm the one who talks the most in the art world'

<https://www.penguin.co.uk/articles/2021/november/ai-weiwei-memoir-interview-1000-years-joys-sorrows.html>

“I’m the son of a poet,” he says, explaining that he read a lot of poetry when he was very young. “I still value poetry as the highest form of human intellect. China also has a strong culture in terms of poetry. In poetry, personal sensitivity can always be talked about, and at the same time a larger perspective about the universe, so Chinese have this unique culture because they don’t have religion.”

I wonder if the book was influenced by other writers. Not directly, he says, but he has long had a love of Mark Twain, later of Franz Kafka, and more recently, the Japanese author Yusanari Kawabata – “the writing is so plain, it’s a little like water flowing.”

I ask him if he has turned the concept of the artist as “art worker”, whose role is to be a “cultural soldier” for Communism, back on those in power in both East and West (in works such as 2017’s “Law of the Journey”, for example, which implicitly criticises the response of Europe’s governments to the refugee crisis), because of the way he meshes his political beliefs with art? “I think being an individual is a very political position,” he says. What does he make of the British-Indian artist Anish Kapoor’s belief that mixing politics with art makes for “less good art”. There is a sudden flash of steel in his eyes that reminds me this is a man who stood up to a state that governments around the world are afraid to. Does he strongly disagree? “I strongly agree I’m making less good art. Let him do the good

art, because that so-called good art is questionable. Because, you know, someone wants to be a puppy, so it can be praised as good art? We say dog loves dog, pig loves pig; the pig will never love dogs, the dog will never love pigs. So we belong to two different classes, with not the same standard of good art or bad art.

“Chairman Mao said something very interesting,” he adds: “In the class society, every person’s judgment really only reflects his class level, and no thinking can escape that, because whatever our judgment is really reflects which position we’re in. I’m in the position to make ‘not good art’.”

It’s fascinating to hear Ai, who spent his formative years in an indoctrination camp, quote Mao. Yet he knows well his own capacity to stir up trouble. “My father used to tell me, ‘the sickness comes from what you are eating, but the real disaster is what comes out of your mouth,’” he laughs. “Every Chinese knows those classic words, ‘if you talk too much there will be a lot of problems’ and I’m the one who talks the most in the art world.

Book Excerpt: Columbia University Press: Ai Weiwei on Falling in Love with the Possibilities Architecture (3/4/21)

<https://lithub.com/ai-weiwei-on-falling-in-love-with-the-possibilities-architecture/>

Excerpted from *Conversations* with Amale Andraos and Carol Becker ... Ai Weiwei’s work is bound to touch us all...It appropriates everyday objects and materials and transforms them across mediums with great intensity of labor and care. As new juxtapositions converge, new aesthetic experiences are created, new meanings are produced, and new associations are made possible; old boundaries are erased, walls crumble, and limits are recast. It is not only the work that expands and is expansive; it is also the person and his practice—more than an artist, more than an architect, more than a writer, a filmmaker, or an activist. Ai Weiwei’s expanded practice is opening up for all of us new possibilities for knowledge, for engagement, and for action...

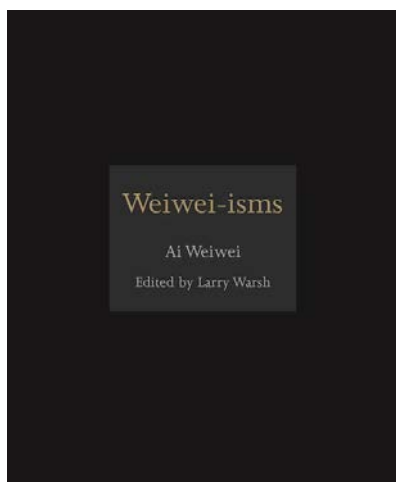
Conversations

Ai Weiwei

with
Andrew Solomon
Evan Osnos
Tim Marlow
Amale Andraos
Carol Becker
Vivian Yee
Nicholas Baume

Weiwei-isms: The Quotable Ai Weiwei, edited by Larry Warsh (2012)

<https://press.princeton.edu/books/hardcover/9780691157665/weiwei-isms>



This collection of quotes demonstrates the elegant simplicity of Ai Weiwei’s thoughts on key aspects of his art, politics, and life. A master at communicating powerful ideas in astonishingly few words, Ai Weiwei is known for his innovative use of social media to disseminate his views. The short quotations presented here have been carefully selected from articles, tweets, and interviews given by this acclaimed Chinese artist and activist. The book is organized into six categories: freedom of expression; art and activism; government, power, and moral choices; the digital world; history, the historical moment, and the future; and personal reflections.

Together, these quotes span some of the most revealing moments of Ai Weiwei's eventful career—from his risky investigation into student deaths in the 2008 Sichuan earthquake to his arbitrary arrest in 2011—providing a window into the mind of one of the world's most electrifying and courageous contemporary artists.

Select Quotes from the Book

On Freedom of Expression

"Say what you need to say plainly, and then take responsibility for it."

"A small act is worth a million thoughts."

"Liberty is about our rights to question everything."



On Art and Activism

"Everything is art. Everything is politics."

"The art always wins. Anything can happen to me, but the art will stay."

"Life is art. Art is life. I never separate it. I don't feel that much anger. I equally have a lot of joy."

On Government, Power, and Making Moral Choice

"Once you've tasted freedom, it stays in your heart and no one can take it. Then, you can be more powerful than a whole country."

"I feel powerless all the time, but I regain my energy by making a very small difference that won't cost me much."

"Tips on surviving the regime: Respect yourself and speak for others. Do one small thing every day to prove the existence of justice."

On the Digital World

"Only with the Internet can a peasant I have never met hear my voice and I can learn what's on his mind. A fairy tale has come true."

"The Internet is uncontrollable. And if the Internet is uncontrollable, freedom will win. It's as simple as that."

"The Internet is the best thing that could have happened to China."

**"The world is a sphere,
there is no East or West."**

On History, the Historical Moment, and the Future

"If a nation cannot face its past, it has no future."

"We need to get out of the old language."

Personal Reflection

"I've never planned any part of my career—except being an artist. And I was pushed into that corner because I thought being an artist was the only way to have a little freedom."

"Anyone fighting for freedom does not want to totally lose their freedom."

"Expressing oneself is like a drug. I'm so addicted to it."

AI WEIWEI – THE ARTIST ACTIVIST



A small assortment of Ai Weiwei video interviews

Oxford Union Society (10/21/22) Ai Weiwei (50 minutes)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5qlqU5Vrr3w>

The Oxford Union is the world's most prestigious debating society, with an unparalleled reputation for bringing international guests and speakers to Oxford - Ai Weiwei is a Chinese contemporary artist, documentarian, and activist.

Bloomberg (2018) Ai Weiwei: Artist and Human Rights Champion (24 minutes)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H8QAjQ1GS2U>

In this episode, we meet Ai Weiwei in Athens for his solo exhibition at the Cycladic Museum. We revisit his most iconic works and see how Ai Weiwei became the artist and the champion of human rights that he is today.

Discuss: “Mr. Ai would be nothing without China. His country, its history, its artistic and material culture, its totalitarian government and the travails of its people drive his art. Conversely his art at its best bears witness to the often perverse machinations of the state.”
<https://www.nytimes.com/2014/04/18/arts/design/ai-weiwei-survey-lands-at-the-brooklyn-museum.html>

Times Talks (10/20/17) Ai Weiwei: Good Fences Make Good Neighbors (75 minutes)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iaRRA2eQFM>

Inspired by the international migration crisis and tense sociopolitical battles surrounding the issue in the United States and worldwide, Weiwei has conceived of this ambitious, multi-site project as a

way of transforming the metal wire security fence into a powerful artistic symbol. The conversation will be moderated by Vivian Yee, a national immigration correspondent at *The New York Times*.

Asia Society (4/27/16) Ai Weiwei: In China There is “No Space” for Meaningful Discussion about Architecture (5 minutes)

<https://asiasociety.org/video/ai-weiwei-china-there-no-space-meaningful-discussion-about-architecture>

Artist and activist Ai Weiwei discusses the role of architecture in Chinese society during a panel discussion hosted by Asia Society Switzerland. Ai was joined on stage by art collector and former ambassador to China Uli Sigg, architect Jacques Herzog, and journalist Martin Meyer.



Tate Talks (8/18/16) Ai Weiwei in Conversation Sunflower Seeds (102 minutes)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XGWPpKSFipU>

Sunflower Seeds is made up of millions of small works, each apparently identical, but actually unique. However realistic they may seem, these life-sized sunflower seed husks are in fact intricately hand-crafted in porcelain.

NYT (4/17/14) Ai Weiwei on Art and Technology (2 minutes)

<https://www.nytimes.com/video/arts/design/10000002831518/ai-weiwei-on-art-and-technology.html?action=click>ype=vhs&version=vhs-heading&module=vhs®ion=title-area&cvview=true&t=16>

The artist addresses the flow of information and how it affects art today.

Tate (11/2/12) Sunflower Seed Documentary (15 minutes)

<https://vimeo.com/52688185>

Ai Weiwei, one of China's leading conceptual artists and an outspoken social commentator, has carpeted Tate Modern's Turbine Hall with millions of porcelain sunflower seeds, each intricately hand-painted.

In this film he talks about his motivation, and goes back to the Chinese city of Jingdezhen to meet some of the 1,600 artisans who created the seeds for him.

The New School (2/12/15) The Fear of Art: Ai Weiwei - The Censorship of Artists: Artists in Prison, Artists in Exile (Ai Weiwei interview from Beijing, 84 minutes)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YnBnjcKYuRs>

The Center for Public Scholarship at the New School presents a public conference on The Fear of Art. Ai Weiwei will give the keynote address via a video he is creating for the conference that addresses "The Censorship of Artists: Artists in Prison, Artists in Exile," followed by a panel discussion with Melissa Chiu (Hirshorn Museum), Ethan Cohen (Ethan Fine Arts), and Minky Worden (Human Rights Watch).

Artists are imprisoned and exiled. Art continues to be banned and destroyed. This is evidence of the power of images to unsettle, to speak truth to power, to question our cherished cultural norms and our ideas about what is sacred. Join artists, scholars, and museum directors to discuss the power of art and the importance of advocating for art, artists, and freedom of expression.

Ai Weiwei YouTube Videos

<https://www.youtube.com/user/diaocha/featured>

YouTube: Ai Weiwei: New Communication/Art21 "Extended Play" (7/5/12)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2HOVhwOxpiY&t=37s>

Episode #159: In one of his first on-camera interviews following his release from detention in 2011, Ai Weiwei discusses the potential for artists to express themselves online and encourages artists to be more aware of shifts in social media.

Document Journal: Ai Weiwei Answers 20 Questions From His Son, Ai Lao (12/18/20)

<https://www.documentjournal.com/2020/12/ai-weiwei-answers-20-questions-from-his-son-ai-lao/>

... I asked him, "Can you help me with something?" "With what?" he replied.

"Can you ask me 20 questions?"

...Finally Ai Lao said, "Okay, I'll do it, then. I'll go write down questions." A half hour later, I received his 20. He told me about the order he was presenting them in. He had printed them out, used scissors to cut strips, with one question per strip, used his lottery machine to mix the strips, and then pasted the strips one by one on a sheet of paper. This would make the order random. Now it was my turn to write the answers.

AI WEIWEI DOCUMENTARY FILMS



CORONATION — 2020 (113 MINUTES)

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/21/movies/ai-weiwei-coronation-coronavirus.html>

Ai Weiwei, the artist-activist has secretly assembled a powerful and artful look at how the pandemic was handled in China ... The film reflects this broader story through vignettes that follow the events

chronologically: It begins on Jan. 23 with a couple driving through a snowy night to return home to a suburb of Wuhan and ends on April 8 with people burning paper money — a traditional offering to the dead — on a street corner.

In between are scenes and stories remarkable for their rare access into the machinery of the Chinese state. These include up-close images of a hospital being built in a matter of days and an inside

look at an intensive-care unit, scenes of medical staff being rewarded with membership in the Communist Party and of workers at a crematory kneading bags of human ashes so they will fit into urns...

Review: <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2020/aug/21/coronation-review-ai-weiwei-harrowing-coronavirus-documentary>

Trailer: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T8_9fQSxsU

Rent: <https://www.justwatch.com/us/movie/coronation>

Stream free on Kanapy: <https://www.kanopy.com/en/product/10853493?vp=spl>

VIVOS — 2020 (112 MINUTES)

<https://vimeo.com/ondemand/vivos>

Vivos is a documentary feature film by artist and filmmaker Ai Weiwei, portraying the human impact of Mexico's ongoing crisis of enforced disappearances. On the night of September 26, 2014, a convoy of students from Ayotzinapa Rural Teachers' College in drug cartel-afflicted Guerrero state, travelling in buses in the city of Iguala, were brutally attacked by police forces and

other masked assailants. In the course of the night, six people were killed, dozens more were wounded, and 43 students were forcibly disappeared.

Featuring interviews with family members and surviving classmates, as well as human rights experts and international investigators involved with the case, *Vivos* depicts the emotional impasse the families experience. As they face the still unaccounted-for absence of their loved ones, their family lives irrevocably fractured, the pain of their loss is compounded by the investigating authorities' repeated attempts to mislead and to obstruct the official investigation.



Ai Weiwei Documentary Films (extensive list)

<https://mubi.com/cast/ai-weiwei>

See also:

<http://aiweiwei.com/>

The latest of Ai Weiwei's films highlighting issues of systemic injustice, *Vivos* documents the aspirations, communal solidarity, and day-to-day lives of the grief-stricken but determined families, as they demand the authorities provide answers about the crimes committed that night and disclose the whereabouts of the missing students. United behind the rallying cry, 'Alive, they took them! Alive, we want them back!', the families' tragic but defiant struggle embodies the psychological and emotional toll of endemic violence on Mexican society, where disappearances have become a national crisis, with over 40,000 persons officially missing as of 2018. Wrestling with the gross abuses of institutional power that pervade Mexican society, with its staggering contrasts of power and poverty, and the crimes and impunities that permeate public life, the mass demonstrations led by the families of the missing 43 students blossom as a defiant assertion of life.

Interview: <https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/movies/movie-news/ai-weiwei-exploring-mexican-trauma-sundance-doc-vivos-1272588/>

Trailer: <https://vimeo.com/ondemand/vivos>

Rent: <https://vimeo.com/ondemand/vivos>

COCKROACH — 2020 (93 MINUTES)

<https://www.theguardian.com/film/2020/dec/18/cockroach-review-ai-weiwei-hong-kong-protests-pro-democracy-activists>

... *Cockroach* (the film by the artist-activist Ai Weiwei), is about the passionate pro-democracy movement in Hong Kong, which was triggered by the introduction of the Fugitive Offenders amendment bill by the pro-Chinese Hong Kong government in 2019, exposing protesters to extradition to the Chinese mainland and effectively destroying that minimum of 50 years' judicial independence and autonomy that the Hong Kong people were promised at the 1997 handover.

"Cockroaches" is how the protesters feel they are seen by the Chinese authorities: their proud sense of democratic independence is seen as laughably irrelevant by an increasingly belligerent national government – and the same goes for any human rights. A banner proclaims that they are going the same way as Tibet and the Uighurs, and the whole of Hong Kong is going to be a scorched-earth monument to Beijing's new obsession with alpha-dog nationalism...

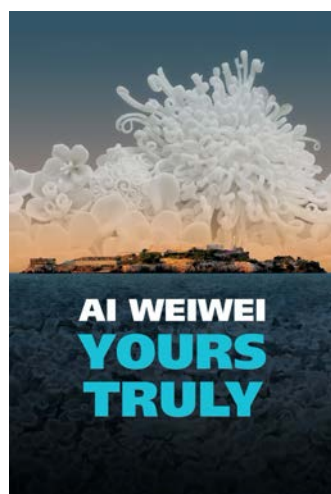


Review: <https://www.bbc.com/news/entertainment-arts-55354531>

Trailer:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dJuYB6Hlfrk&feature=emb_logo

Rent: <https://vimeo.com/ondemand/cockroach>



AI WEIWEI: YOURS TRULY — 2019 (76 MINUTES)

<https://www.for-site.org/project/yours-truly-film/>

The story of the film begins with the remarkable exhibiting 2@Large: Ai Weiwei on Alcatraz, organized in 2014 by director Cheryl Haines. Following Ai Weiwei's detention at the hands of the Chinese authorities, the outspoken artist and activist

transformed the former island penitentiary of Alcatraz into an artistic platform. The resulting exhibition engages nearly 900,000 visitors in a conversation about the plight of prisoners of conscience around the world.

...The film *Ai Weiwei: Yours Truly* follows these postcards around the globe—from Alcatraz Island to Beijing, Washington, DC and Cairo—as Director Cheryl Haines meets with former prisoners of conscience and their families to discuss their impossible choices and the comfort they found in messages sent by people they would never meet....ultimately the film is a call to action, extending the incredible reach of Ai Weiwei's postcards by asking viewers to take the issue of global human rights personally.

Review: <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2019/sep/27/ai-weiwei-yours-truly-review-alcatraz-artwork-mixes-the-political-and-personal>

Trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VOGQBZP5OpU>

Stream for free on Kanapy: <https://www.kanopy.com/en/spl/video/10736364>

HUMAN FLOW— 2017 (140 MINUTES)

<http://www.humanflow.com/synopsis/>

Over 65 million people around the world have been forced from their homes to escape famine, climate change and war in the greatest human displacement since World War II. Human Flow, an epic film journey led by the internationally renowned artist Ai Weiwei, gives a powerful visual expression to this massive human migration. The documentary elucidates both the staggering scale of the refugee crisis and its

profoundly personal human impact.



Captured over the course of an eventful year in 23 countries, the film follows a chain of urgent human stories that stretches across the globe in countries including Afghanistan, Bangladesh, France, Greece, Germany, Iraq, Israel, Italy, Kenya, Mexico, and Turkey. Human Flow is a witness to its subjects and their desperate search for safety, shelter and justice: from teeming refugee camps to perilous ocean crossings to barbed-wire borders; from dislocation and disillusionment to courage, endurance and adaptation; from the haunting lure of lives left behind to the unknown potential of the future. Human Flow comes at a crucial time when tolerance, compassion and trust are needed more than ever. This visceral

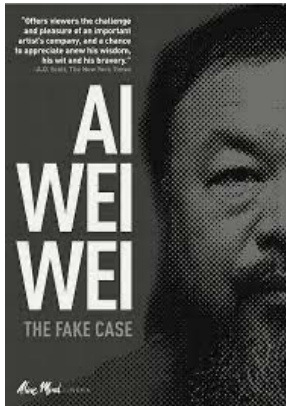
work of cinema is a testament to the unassailable human spirit and poses one of the questions that will define this century: Will our global society emerge from fear, isolation, and self-interest and choose a path of openness, freedom, and respect for humanity?

Ai Weiwei discusses the film: <http://www.humanflow.com/videos/>

<http://www.humanflow.com/press-kit/>

Trailer: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DVZGyTdk_BY

Rent/stream: <http://www.humanflow.com/watch-at-home/>



AI WEIWEI: THE FAKE CASE — 2013 (86 MINUTES)

<https://www.winnipegfilmgroup.com/event/we-rise-above-ai-weiwei-the-fake-case/>

A follow up to *Never Sorry*, documenting the life and work of

Chinese artist and activist Ai Weiwei, *The Fake Case* showcases his 81-day kidnapping by the Chinese authorities and his gigantic lawsuit from the government, which he soon names 'The Fake Case' in reference to the obvious false reasons behind the accusations. The

film follows the 18 cameras that are monitoring his studio and home, the police agents that follow his every move and the heavy restrictions from the authorities that weigh him down. He is shaken, but he steadily finds new ways to provoke and challenge the mighty powers in his fight for human rights. Ai Weiwei strongly believes that China is ready for change. And he will do everything to make it happen.

Review: <https://www.rogerebert.com/reviews/ai-weiwei-the-fake-case-2014>

Trailer: <https://www.winnipegfilmgroup.com/event/we-rise-above-ai-weiwei-the-fake-case/>

Rent: <https://www.justwatch.com/us/movie/ai-weiwei-the-fake-case>

The title is a bit of a double entendre. Ai's company is named Fake Ltd.—a play on the F-word—but it also speaks to the charges against him. The government accused him of \$2.5 million in tax evasion, but it's clear that he'd long been a target for his outspoken and sometimes outrageous activities. He blogged daily and posted photos and video wherever he saw injustices. The key image in "Ai Weiwei: Never Sorry," which you really need to see before watching this, is of Ai holding up a middle finger in the direction of Tiananmen Square.

AI WEIWEI: NEVER SORRY — 2012 (91 MINUTES)

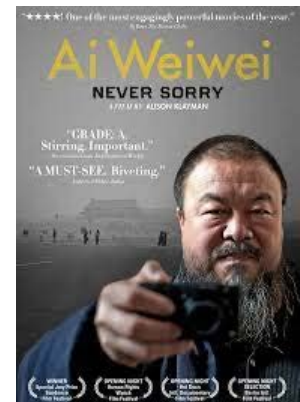
<https://alisonklayman.com/ai-weiwei-never-sorry>

Ai Weiwei: Never Sorry is the inside story of a dissident for the digital age who inspires global audiences and blurs the boundaries of art and politics. First-time director Alison Klayman gained unprecedented access to Ai while working as a journalist in China. Her detailed portrait provides a nuanced exploration of contemporary China and one of its most compelling public figures.

Trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0MYFOzP6Xns>

Stream (part Mandarin/some English interviews):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WIIdlt3j9nKA>



ORDOS 100 — 2012 (61 MINUTES)

<http://paassc.com/social-documentaries-at-ybca/>

Ordos 100 is a massive construction project in inner Mongolia, curated by Herzog & de Meuron and Ai Weiwei, who had previously worked together on Beijing's "Bird's Nest" stadium. One hundred architects from 27 countries were chosen to design a 1000-square-meter villa to be built in a new community. The 100 villas would be designed to fit a master plan designed by Ai Weiwei. In January 2008, the 100 architects gathered in Ordos for a first visit to the site. The film documents a total of three site visits, during which time the master plan and design of each villa was completed.

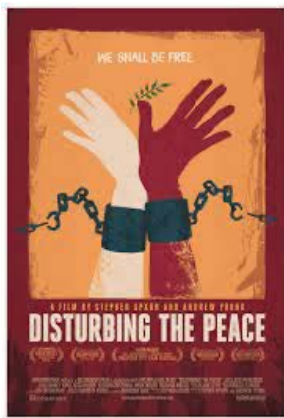
Stream: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kQNVUH-duCE>

ONE RECLUSE — 2010 (180 MINUTES)

<https://hammer.ucla.edu/programs-events/2012/09/one-recluse-by-ai-weiwei>

In June 2008, Yang Jia carried a knife, a hammer, a gas mask, pepper spray, gloves and Molotov cocktails to the Zhabei Public Security Branch Bureau and killed six police officers, injuring another police officer and a guard. He was arrested on the scene, and was subsequently charged with intentional homicide. In the following six months, while Yang Jia was detained and trials were held, his mother mysteriously disappeared. *One Recluse* is a documentary that traces the reasons and motivations behind the tragedy and investigates a trial process filled with shady cover-ups and questionable decisions. The film provides a glimpse into the realities of a government-controlled judicial system and its impact on the citizens' lives.

Stream: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nm00JuLm3vI>



DISTURBING THE PEACE — 2009 (78 MINUTES)

<http://paassc.com/social-documentaries-at-ybca/>

Tan Zuoren is a civil rights advocate who investigated the 2008 Sichuan earthquake, including the deaths of 512 Wenchuan students, and the corruption which resulted in poor building construction. For his efforts, he was charged with "inciting subversion of state power." During his trial, police violently detained witnesses, which is an obstruction of justice. He was sentenced to five years in prison. *Disturbing the Peace* is a confrontational film, with Ai Weiwei directly taking on the police and other authorities, and paying a heavy price for doing so.

Review: <https://www.newyorker.com/news/evan-osnos/ai-weiwei-disturbing-the-peace>

Stream: <https://vimeo.com/42394199>

Stream free on Kanapy: <https://www.kanopy.com/en/spl/video/5452332>

FAIRYTALE — 2008 (152 MINUTES)

<http://paassc.com/social-documentaries-at-ybca/>

Fairytale documents Ai Weiwei's project of the same name for Europe's most innovative art event, *documenta 12*, in Kassel, Germany in 2007. Ai Weiwei invited 1001 Chinese citizens of different ages and from various backgrounds to live in an abandoned factory for a massive-scale performance art project. It was the most sensational artwork at the exhibition. This 152-minute film documents the whole process, from the preparations for the project to the challenges the participants had to face before actually travelling to Germany as well as the artist's ideas behind the work.

Stream: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g3dliVfgt-I>



CHANG'AN BOULEVARD — 2004 (613 MINUTES)

<https://vimeo.com/213165531>

Spanning 45 kilometers, Chang'an Boulevard bisects Beijing, dividing the city along its east-west axis with Tiananmen Square, site of the 1989 student-led protests and massacre, at its midpoint. In 2004, Ai Weiwei traversed the length of the Boulevard, recording one-minute frames at measured intervals. The resulting film is 10 hours and 13 minutes in duration, and composed of 608 individual segments. In Chinese, Chang'an is Eternal Peace. But that is not reflected in Ai's film, which captures instead an increasingly globalized capital at a moment of historical transition: its demographic movements, receding natural landscapes, and major public infrastructure projects. Rich in cultural significance, Chang'an Boulevard was the scene of the May Fourth Movement of 1919 and the 2008 Olympic Games. The National Museum of China, National Center of the Performing Arts, and the Beijing Concert Hall are located along its expanse. Ai's film unites these landmarks with the rhythms of a 21st century political power center, its industry, commerce, and social structure, in one urban montage of past and present.



BEIJING: THE SECOND RING — 2004 (66 MINUTES)

<https://hammer.ucla.edu/programs-events/2012/09/beijing-the-second-ring-the-third-ring-by-ai-weiwei>

Beijing: The Second Ring is a document of the two opposite views of traffic flow on 33 bridges along Beijing's Second Ring. The artist records a single

frame for one minute for each view on the bridge. The entire piece is made up of 66 segments, entirely shot on cloudy days. The Rings—or traffic loops—are important urban structural elements of Beijing. The circular rings govern the whole spatial organization of the city's urban fabric. Like the Chang'an Boulevard piece, the act of recording is minimal, focusing on the process of pure observation and the nature of time. The film documents the historic aspects of the city, modern development, its nearly 13 million people, mass transport, and the urban reality that defines Beijing.

BEIJING: THE THIRD RING — 2004 (110 MINUTES)

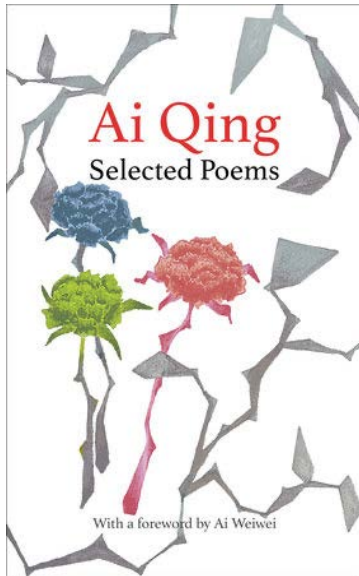
<https://hammer.ucla.edu/programs-events/2012/09/beijing-the-second-ring-the-third-ring-by-ai-weiwei>

Beijing: The Third Ring is a document of the two opposite views of traffic flow on 55 bridges along Beijing's Third Ring. The entire piece is made up of 110 segments. As opposed to *Beijing: The Second Ring*, which was entirely shot on cloudy days, the segments of this film were shot on sunny days.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/22/movies/hooligan-sparrow-ye-haiyan-review.html>

AI QING (1910–1996)

Ai Qing is regarded as one of the finest modern Chinese poets; his free verse was influential in the development of new poetry in China.



Ai Qing Selected Poems (published 11/2/21)

<https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/690456/selected-poems-by-ai-qing-translated-by-robert-dorsett/>

A timeless, visionary collection of poems from one of China's most acclaimed poets—featuring a foreword by his son, contemporary artist and activist Ai Weiwei.

One of the most influential poets in Chinese history, Ai Qing is mostly unknown to American readers, but his work has shaped the nature of poetry in China for decades. Born between the fall of imperial Manchurian rule and the establishment of the Communist People's Republic, Ai Qing was at one time an intimate of Mao Zedong. He would eventually fall out with the leader and be sentenced to hard labor during the Cultural Revolution, when he was exiled to the remote part of the country known as "Little Siberia" with his family, including his son, Ai Weiwei.

In his work, Ai Qing tells the story of a China convulsing with change, leaving behind a legacy of feudalism and imperialism but uncertain about what the future will hold. Breaking with traditional forms of Chinese poetry, Ai Qing innovatively adapted free verse, writing with simple sincerity in clear lines that could be understood by everyday readers. *Selected Poems* is an extraordinary collection that traces the powerful inner life of this of this influential poet who crafted poems of protest, who longed for a newer, happier age, and who wrote with a profound lyricism that reaches deep into the heart of the reader.

Poems by Ai Qing <https://zocalopoets.com/category/poets-poetas/ai-qing/>

Where do you live?

I live in ten thousand years of steep mountain

I live in

ten thousand years of crag-rock

.

And your age?

.

My age is greater than the mountain's

Greater than the crag-rock's

.

How long have you been silenced?

Since the dinosaurs governed the earth

Since the earth felt its first tremor

.

Have you perished in this deep rancour and bitterness?

Death? No, no, I'm still alive

Please, give me a light, give me a light. (1937)

Trees

.
One tree, another tree,
Each standing alone and erect.
The wind and air
Tell their distance apart.

.
But beneath the cover of earth
Their roots reach out
And at depths that cannot be seen
The roots of the trees intertwine..
(1940)

Fish Fossil

.
With such agility in your movements,
Such buoyancy in your strength,
You leapt in the foam
And swam in the sea.

.
Unfortunately, a volcano's eruption
Or perhaps an earthquake
Cost you your freedom
And buried you in the silt.

.
After millions of years
Members of a geological team
Found you in a layer of rock
And you still look alive.

.
But you are now silent,
Without even a sigh.
Your scales and fins are whole
But you cannot move.

.
So absolutely motionless,
You have no reaction to the world.
You cannot see the water or the sky,
You cannot hear the sound of the waves.

.
Gazing at this fossil,
Even a fool can learn a lot:
Without movement
There is no life.

.
To live is to struggle
And advance in the struggle;
Even if death is not at our doorstep,
We should use our energy to the fullest.

Hope

.
Dream's friend
Illusion's sister

.
Originally your shadow
Yet always in front of you

.
As formless as light
As restless as wind

.
Between you and her
She keeps her distance always

.
Like flying birds outside the window
Like floating clouds in the sky

.
Like butterflies by the river
She is sly and lovely

.
When you rise, she flies away
You ignore her, and she nudges you

.
She is always with you
To your dying breath.



Yenan Forum on
Literature and Art.
May 1942
P 82 "Mao sits in the
middle, front row,
Ding Ling 4 seats to
his left. Father stands
on the far right next to
Zhou Yang."



MEDIA ON CHINA

The following resources feature some newspapers and journals that provide full coverage of China-related news and contemporary issues. These recommendations - if your time is limited!

The China Project (*Sadly this project stopped November 2023 - But Podcasts have returned!)
<https://thechinaproject.com/about-2/>

China Digital Times
<http://chinadigitaltimes.net/>

The Wire China
<https://www.thewirechina.com/>

Asia Society: ChinaFile
<https://www.chinafile.com/>
<http://www.chinafile.com/conversation>

China Dialogue/Environment
<https://www.chinadialogue.net/>

China Media Project/Hong Kong
<https://chinamediaproject.org/>

The China Media Bulletin
<https://freedomhouse.org/report/china-media-bulletin>

Sinocism
<https://www.sinocism.com/>

Axios China
<https://link.axios.com/join/china-signup>

Made in China
<https://madeinchinajournal.com/journal/>

BBC News – China subsection
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world/asia/china/>

Wall Street Journal – China subsection
<http://online.wsj.com/public/page/news-china.html>

What is news literacy and how do you combat misinformation? Here are two “go to” resources for teachers: **News Literacy Project**
<https://newslit.org/> **Checkology**
<https://get.checkology.org/about/>

Check Think & Fact Tanks Too

Asia Society Center on US-China Relations
<https://asiasociety.org/center-us-china-relations>
<https://asiasociety.org/center-us-china-relations/task-force-us-china-policy>

Brookings

<https://www.brookings.edu/topic/china/>

The Carter Center – US-China Perception Monitor

<https://uscnpm.org/>

Council on Foreign Relations

<https://www.cfr.org/search?keyword=China>

Wilson Center

<https://chinafellowship.wilsoncenter.org/>

Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

<https://carnegieendowment.org/carnegiechina>

National Bureau of Asian Research (NBR)

<https://www.nbr.org/?s=China>

Kissinger Institute on China and the US

<https://www.wilsoncenter.org/program/kissinger-institute-china-and-united-states>

RAND

<https://www.rand.org/topics/china.html>

USIP

https://www.usip.org/?site_keywords=China

Pew Research Fact Tank

<https://www.pewresearch.org/search/China>

Stanford Center on China's Economy and Institutions

https://scei.fsi.stanford.edu/publication/tracking-chinas-economic-path?utm_source=act-on&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=fsi&utm_content=news

UC San Diego Policy Reports

<https://china.ucsd.edu/policy/analysis.html>

<https://china.ucsd.edu/policy/china-forum/index.html>

Center for Strategic & International Studies/CSIS

<https://www.csis.org/regions/asia/china>

The Economist – Asia section

<http://www.economist.com/world/asia>

The New York Times – China subsection

<http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/international/countriesandterritories/china/index.html>

NEWS FROM CHINA SOURCES

Caixin Global

<https://www.caixinglobal.com/>

Sixth Tone

<http://www.sixthtone.com>

Beijing Youth Daily

<https://epaper.ynet.com/>

Beijing Youth Daily

Twitter

https://twitter.com/BJ_YouthDaily?ref_src=twsrc%5Egoogle%7Ctwcamp%5Eserp%7Ctwgr%5Eauthor

Engaging with China in a New Era: A Resource Bibliography

<https://www.ncuscr.org/engaging-china-new-era-resource-bibliography>

The National Committee on U.S.-China Relations has assembled a list of materials in written, audio, and video formats related to engagement with China.

China on the Hill

<https://mailchi.mp/ncuscr/china-on-the-hill-05-10-2022?e=0a747a0020>

China Digital Times

<http://chinadigitaltimes.net/>

China Books Review

<https://chinabooksreview.com/>

China's Global News Network CGTN

<https://www.cgtn.com/>

The World of Chinese

<https://www.theworldofchinese.com/>

PODCASTS



Sinica (Highly recommend!)

<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/sinica-podcast/id1121407665>

China in the World

<https://carnegieendowment.org/chinaintheworld>

CSIS China Power

<https://www.csis.org/podcasts/chinapower>

U Penn Center for the Study of Contemporary China

<https://cscs.sas.upenn.edu/podcasts>

China Whispers

<https://www.spectator.co.uk/podcasts/chinese-whispers/>



Pekingology

<https://www.csis.org/podcasts/pekingology>

The Little Red Podcast

<https://omny.fm/shows/the-little-red-podcast>

U.S.-China Dialogue (Georgetown University)

<https://uschinadialogue.georgetown.edu/series/u-s-china-dialogue-podcast>

ETC.

Netizen Voices/ China Digital Times

<https://chinadigitaltimes.net/china/netizen-voices/>

China Media Project

<https://chinamediaproject.org/>

China Media Project is an independent research, fellowship and exchange program, that fosters dialogue on key issues in Chinese media and communications, and monitors breaking developments in the field.

Youthology

<http://youthology.cn/>

Youthology is a Chinese marketing company that attempts to connect brands to young people and young people to brands, and as a part of their business publishes articles on youth issues on their blog.

ChinaFile: Depth of Field

<http://www.chinafile.com/depth-of-field>

The Depth of Field column highlights the new and newsworthy photojournalism published in Chinese media by Chinese photographers. For each column, Yan Cong, Ye Ming, and David M. Barreda choose one image from each featured body of work, describe the project, and provide a link to the original piece.

PRIMARY SOURCES: TRANSLATED CHINESE TEXTS & DOCUMENTS

Reading the China Dream

<https://www.readingthechinadream.com/>

This web site is devoted to the subject of intellectual life in contemporary China, and more particularly to the writings of establishment intellectuals. What you will find here are essentially translations of Chinese texts that we consider important, together with discussions

of related issues and a number of reference tools that can help those interested to navigate the project.

Center for Strategic & International Studies: Translating China

<https://www.csis.org/programs/freeman-chair-china-studies/translating-china>

In an effort to better understand China's evolving political system and the role of ideology, the Freeman Chair has commissioned a series of translations of important but largely ignored speeches, reports, and articles that are openly distributed within the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). The goal of releasing these documents is to provide further context about the CCP's goals, ambitions, and capabilities for non-Chinese speakers.