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Life and art are almost impossible to separate apart. When it comes to discussion of art, no one can give the exact definition for what the meaning of art is. As for the word itself, art is defined as the acts of using skill and imagination of human to create objects such as painting, photography, and sculpture. In fact, it could be expression of emotion, communication, or other values for philosophers¹. For Ai weiwei, however, the art and politics cannot be taken apart. Ai weiwei, both an artist and an activist, said that most of art was not only for him, but it was also for all of the politics because the art has always been relevant to the human lives and their culture². Ai weiwei is China's most politically outspoken artist who fights for what he believes such as human rights, and democracy. Many of his artworks and activities illustrate the negative view he had towards the government. These bring him to be accused and be persecuted by the government. All of his work and actions are perfectly combined with politics as it reveals the truth of the society for all Chinese citizens.

From watching the documentary of Ai Weiwei, it tells his background.

Born in 1975, Ai weiwei grew up during a turbulent period in China's political

¹ "Art." *Wikipedia*. Wikimedia Foundation, 15 Sept. 2012. Web. 17 Sept. 2012. <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Art>>.

² "Ai Weiwei." *Wikipedia*. Wikimedia Foundation, 16 Sept. 2012. Web. 17 Sept. 2012. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ai_Weiwei>.

history while his father was the target of the communist party³. Ai Qing, his father, who was a characterized revolutionary poet and a member of the communist party, wrote a poem to praise Mao Zedong. According to his comparative poetry, Ai's family had political conflict with the government so they had to be banished outside China and Ai Qing was sent to work as labor in Mao Zedong's Cultural Revolution. Twenty years later, they came back to Beijing. From 1981 to 1993, Ai weiwei studied modern art at Parson School of Design in the United States and came back to Beijing because of his dying father. Meanwhile, he began to work on series of underground books, called Black book, White book, and Grey book. There are no titles because of underground printing, which means illegal. ⁴His father got engaged with politics since Ai weiwei was young. Hence, he had been interested in and integrated between art and politics on his artworks showing his strong feeling against the government.

In 2008, there was an earthquake in Sichuan, causing many school buildings to become wrecked, five thousand students were lost and lots of people died⁵. According to this event, some people suspected the cause of damaged building from corruption among local politicians. Apparently, while hundreds of school collapsed, the other buildings around there were still stable. Furthermore, the government did not tell the truth as well as hid the death toll. In response, Ai weiwei made a work from nine thousand children's rucksacks

³ "BBC.Imagine.2010.Ai.Weiwei.Without.Fear.or.Favour.HDTV.x264.AC3.MVGroup.part1.rar." *MediaFire*. N.p., n.d. Web. 17 Sept. 2012. <<http://www.mediafire.com/?h6c2pga411fng42>>.

⁴ "BBC.Imagine.2010.Ai.Weiwei.Without.Fear.or.Favour.HDTV.x264.AC3.MVGroup.part2.rar." *MediaFire*. N.p., n.d. Web. 17 Sept. 2012. <<http://www.mediafire.com/?4jm39a2zzsb8486>>.

⁵ "Sichuan Earthquake." *Earthquake in China*. N.p., 14 Sept. 2012. Web. 14 Sept. 2012. <http://topics.nytimes.com/topics/news/science/topics/earthquakes/sichuan_province_china/index.html>.

covering the entire front of the museum of Art in Munich so as to express the feeling of mothers who lament for their children in the earthquake. Later on, he started to find the name of each child dying during the earthquake and listed all of it into his blog to attack the government. Unluckily, his blog was eventually closed by the government control.

During the Olympic Games in 2008, or Beijing Games, which China was the host⁶, Ai weiwei had an opportunity to design the huge stadium known as “Bird nest” with Switzerland architect who appreciates him and considers him as a very talented artist. The stadium itself might look simple, but it is very subtle and also extremely interesting, not just only in the way the internal spaces work, but also the way outside spaces, which are unpredictable and well-represented China. Even though it might be less valuable for him as it was just creating a good appearance for the government so as to show the world how progress of China was. Personally, he thought, Chinese people still live without wing, which means freedom. Therefore, the stadium he created is only the Bird nest. Lastly, he was prohibited to join the opening ceremony because of strong criticism against the government.⁷

The most reputable artwork of Ai weiwei is Sunflower Seeds⁸ which is his latest artwork. It was held in an exhibition at the Tate’s Turbin Hall in London. The floor of the hall was covered by over thousand millions of

⁶ "Beijing 2008 Beijing 2008." *Beijing 2008 Summer Olympics*. N.p., n.d. Web. 17 Sept. 2012. <<http://www.olympic.org/beijing-2008-summer-olympics>>.

⁷ Weiwei, Ai. "Why I'll Stay Away from the Opening Ceremony of the Olympics." *The Guardian*. Guardian News and Media, 08 July 2008. Web. 17 Sept. 2012. <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2008/aug/07/olympics2008.china>>.

⁸ "Sunflower Seeds." *ArtAsiaPacific: Ai Weiwei*. N.p., n.d. Web. 17 Sept. 2012. <<http://artasiapacific.com/Magazine/72/SunflowerSeedsAiWeiwei>>.

sunflower seeds and the viewers were able to walk and sleep on them. Besides, all of seeds were painted one by one by over one thousand and six hundred local artisans. This work took time more than two years. Sunflower Seeds were made from porcelain, which is the most priceless exported merchandise of China. The reason that Ai weiwei chose sunflower seeds in his artwork is snack for China people during revolution⁹. In that time, citizens did not have freedom even their private life. Eating sunflower seeds together showing the mercy and relationship among people facing with poverty. They had to endure with the instabilities of politics. His ironic artworks, concerning with politics still carried on. He compared Mao Zedong as the sunlight while citizens were just sunflower seeds. There was a huge change from craftsmanship to industry. Hence, most of people laboring in handicraft industry were unemployed. To illustrate, the sunflower seeds could not grow gracefully. They were disparaged like the snack for someone to eat during free time. Additionally, four days after an exhibition, the museum¹⁰ did not allow the viewers to walk onto the sunflower seeds because dust could be harmful to them. However, there are a lot of people trespassing the rule by stepping on them. Ironically, it is impossible that the Western will stop suppressing the poorer countries. Wherever the seeds are, they had to bank on China labor producing goods. They have never thought of how much the pollution that China labors face so as to serve the western's needs or that all of these labors are just the husk of sunflower seeds which only fall down dispersedly on the floor.

⁹ "Cultural Revolution." *Wikipedia*. Wikimedia Foundation, 14 Sept. 2012. Web. 17 Sept. 2012. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cultural_Revolution>.

¹⁰ "The Unilever Series: Ai Weiwei: Sunflower Seeds | Tate." *The Unilever Series: Ai Weiwei: Sunflower Seeds | Tate*. N.p., n.d. Web. 17 Sept. 2012. <<http://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-modern/exhibition/unilever-series-ai-weiwei-sunflower-seeds>>.

As we can see clearly that all of his actions and his artworks make him into trouble with the government even though he would not stop being an outspoken figure fighting for human rights and equality. These things encourage Chinese citizens and the world to realize that they do not live in an innocent world anymore. Everyone has individual rights to find out or to reveal the truth. As they always say, there would be no secret in the world. His idea has already served as the starting point for the new generations who will become the future of the country as well as inspire them to perceive freedom as what they are deserved to get.