

BLOUIN ARTINFO

Berlinale Diary 1 – Ai Weiwei: Who's Sorry Now?

Ai Weiwei: Never Sorry

dir. Alison Klayman, at the Berlin International Film Festival

Fresh from Sundance, *Ai Weiwei: Never Sorry* has made its European debut at the Berlin International Film Festival.

Ai Weiwei may now be one of the best known living artists on the planet. His fifteen minutes, if you can call it that, seem to be renewed in perpetuity. Unlike the blithe Andy Warhol, Ai is fighting, rather than flattering, those who exercise power with impunity. The film, directed and shot by Alison Klayman, reminds us how he got to this point.



Ai Weiwei and His Medium - the Media

Until recently, Ai was interviewed non-stop by Western media for among other things, the attention that he brought to the casualties of the 2009 earthquake in

D'Arcy, David. "Berlinale Diary 1 – Ai Weiwei: Who's Sorry Now?", *Artinfo*, February 16, 2012

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Sichuan that killed more than 5000 people. It made him an enemy of the Chinese government, which has been trying to shut him up ever since – sending agents out to beat him, demolishing his studio and jailing him last year.

It hasn't worked. The other side of Ai's media strategy is to become the kind of presence that the Chinese media can't ignore. We see his approach to media manipulation as a form of performance art. If you do something – like exposing an undercover agent who's tailing you by pulling off his sunglasses – make sure that you have a video team documenting it, and then put it on twitter. He's done what Chinese journalists can't do, or are afraid to do.



Citizen Ai Weiwei Argues with a Public Servant

The Martin Gropius Bau in Berlin, where the European Film Market (EFM) has been headquartered this week, is showing *Ai Weiwei in New York*, photographs that Ai Weiwei took while he was living in New York City in the 1980's and early 1990's. The pictures, a prequel to the better-known Ai Weiwei story in China, have much in common with those that foreign artists take when they come to a place that they consider to be the center of the art world. There are shots of counterculture idols, like Allen Ginsberg, and there are pictures of other young Chinese artists on an adventure in the grimy Lower East Side – where most artists can't afford to live now.

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Ai Weiwei and Allen Ginsberg - From "Ai Weiwei in New York" at the Martin Gropius Bau in Berlin



Ai Weiwei Documents Himself and China in the New Documentary by Alison Klayman

A lot of those Chinese artists stayed in the US, for the freedom to do their own work. Ai Weiwei returned to China, as he explains in the

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documentary, to act as if he had the freedom to do what he's doing. As the documentary is inevitably overtaken by events in China, we'll see if art is powerful enough to win that battle.

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