



Ai Weiwei: Interlacing

At the Jeu de Paume, Weiwei's first large-scale exhibition in France focusses on his diverse, complex production and the "interlacing" and "networking" typical of his output. An [art report from Paris](#) by [Gonzalo Herrero Delicado](#), [María José Marcos](#)

Ai Weiwei — probably the world's most famous Chinese living artist — has, over the course of his career, consistently criticized the current political situation of his home country. Through diverse formats — architecture, sculpture, photography, or writing — Weiwei communicates current topics and social issues in China. In Paris, photography gallery [Jeu de Paume](#) now presents "Interlacing", curated by Urs Stahel, the first major exhibition in France devoted to the artist who brings life into art and art into life.

Ai Weiwei's work could be defined as a Chinese contemporary [Costumbrismo](#), rooted on a permanent political scene criticism. This wonderful exhibition collects many of Weiwei's most important projects in a chronological format: from his professional origins in Beijing where he joined the artist collective *The Stars* — which rejected Social Realism and advocated artistic individualism and experimentation in art — to his steps in New York, where Weiwei studied at Parsons and came across artists like Allen Ginsberg, Jasper Johns, Andy Warhol, and, above all, Marcel Duchamp. The show also explores the return of Weiwei to China, where he established a studio in Shanghai for a short period, before finally settling in Beijing.

The exhibition focuses precisely on Ai Weiwei's diversity, complexity and his ability to create links, the "interlacing" and "networking" typical of his output, that one can discover here through hundreds of photographs — often taken with a mobile phone — and texts posted on his blog or on Twitter, as well as in explanatory essays.

Section
[Art](#)

Author
[Gonzalo Herrero Delicado](#), [María José Marcos](#)

Published
12 Apr 2012

Keywords
[Ai Wei Wei](#), [China](#), [Jeu de Paume](#), [Photography](#)

Location
[Paris](#)

Network

[View All](#)

[Add a comment](#)

[Like](#) 7

[+1](#) 0

[Tweet](#) 3

[Pin](#) 1

RSS feed

[English](#) or [Italian](#)



Delicado, Gonzalo Herrero and Maria Jose Marcos. "Ai Weiwei: Interlacing." Domus, April 12 2012.

FRIEDMAN BENDA 515 W 26TH STREET NEW YORK NY 10001

FRIEDMANBENDA.COM TELEPHONE 212 239 8700 FAX 212 239 8760



† Top: June, 1994. Above: Olympic Stadium, 2005-2008

The exhibition is organized into 11 sections or projects, related to each one of his topics of interest. Some of the most interesting and unknown categories that Urs Stahel has established to explain Weiwei's work are the following:

New York Photographs, 1983–93

During these years in New York, Weiwei photographed the East Village, where he lived, as well as other places before his return to Beijing in 1993. He also recorded images of himself and the people he met: the Chinese artists who visited him in his tiny apartment and his American friends. In 1988 the mood of his photographs changed radically. Weiwei moved away from these tranquil, casual portraits and townscapes and started to focus on the "dark sides" of urban life, on decay and homelessness, but also on the human rights demonstrations in the streets and the police brutality accompanying them.

Beijing Photographs, 1993–2002

When Ai Weiwei returned to China in 1993, he continued his *Costumbrist*-style photography, capturing everyday moments of his new life in Beijing. A selection of unpublished photographs has been specifically chosen for this exhibition. They depict Weiwei's everyday and artistic activities as well as the growth of the contemporary Chinese art scene in Beijing during the early 1990s.



←
Provisional landscapes, 2002-2008



Provisional Landscapes, 2002–08

This series was photographed between 2002 and 2008 in various cities in China. Since 1949 all land in China has belonged to the State, which allows it to develop large parcels of land without negotiations with landowners. Before a new development is begun, vast empty plots suddenly appear. Where the small houses and lanes characteristic of traditional China known as hutongs had recently stood, now lie only piles of rubble and debris. These landscapes are indeed only "provisional", a temporary void that marks the end of the old way of life before the arrival of the new.

Bird's Nest, 2005–08

Ai Weiwei was part of the team together with [Herzog & de Meuron](#) to design the Beijing National Stadium to host the 2008 Olympic Games. Weiwei was serving as artistic consultant for the design. As with all of his projects, Ai religiously documented the construction, sometimes over a 24-hour period.

—
"Ai Weiwei's work could be defined as a Chinese contemporary Costumbrismo, rooted on a permanent political scene criticism"
 —



↑ *Study of Perspective — Eiffel Tower, 1995-2003*

Fairytale Portraits, 2007

For Documenta 12 in Kassel, the artist undertook arguably one of his most ambitious art projects. The centrepiece involved bringing 1,001 Chinese citizens to Kassel. In China, obtaining a passport for foreign travel is extremely difficult and, for most of the poor, more like a fairytale dream than a reality. For the project Weiwei recruited Chinese people of all backgrounds, and photographed each person near the different embassies where they were interviewed prior to getting their papers processed.

Study of Perspective, 1995–2010

The first *Study of Perspective* was shot in Tiananmen Square, Beijing, 1995, and the series is continually growing. It is a simple gesture that speaks volumes about the artist's perspective on authority and the autonomous right of the individual to freedom of expression.



↑ *Sichuan Earthquake, 2008-2010*

Delicado, Gonzalo Herrero and Maria Jose Marcos. "Ai Weiwei: Interlacing." *Domus*, April 12 2012.

FRIEDMAN BENDA 515 W 26TH STREET NEW YORK NY 10001
FRIEDMANBENDA.COM TELEPHONE 212 239 8700 FAX 212 239 8760

Cell Phone Photographs, 2009–10

Since Ai Weiwei's blog was shut down in 2009, he has used Twitter as his online communication platform. Embracing the technology of mobile phone cameras, Weiwei often takes photographs with his phone and transmits them immediately onto his Twitter page.

The exhibition is completed with three more series: *Beijing Airport Terminal 3* (2002–07), *Earthquake* (2008–10) and *Shanghai Studio* (2010–11).

Ai Weiwei: Interlacing

Jeu de Paume

21 February – 29 April 2012

1 Place de la Concorde, Paris Through 29 April 2012