ARCHITECTURE CAN ALSO BE SILENT

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Perhaps unusually, it was architecture rather than art that provided my first physical encounter with the work of Ai Weiwei. In early 2008, a few months before his inaugural London exhibition offered me the possibility to experience his art directly for the first time, my practice was fortunate to be among one hundred young architects from around the world who were invited by him and the Swiss architects Herzog & de Meuron to take part in a project called ‘Ordos 100.’

Looking back seven years, it seems remarkable how little we knew then about his work. Indeed it was only a rather scant knowledge of his outspoken politics that overcame our initial reluctance and otherwise, with regard to his ambitious plan to ‘curate’ part of a new city within the desert landscape of China’s Inner Mongolia.

This project remains unrealised, yet our participation in it offered an opportunity to meet and talk with Ai and to visit buildings, including his own home and studio, that he had designed for the urban village of Caochangdi, on Beijing’s peripheral (fig. 22). Despite the eloquence and energy that emanated from the many young architects with whom we met and conversed during those intense few days in China, it was the quiet yet emphatic material presence of Ai’s sculpted yet elemental volumes and spaces, simply constructed using brickwork and concrete, that informed our own contribution and which continues to resonate in my imagination.

As Ai writes, Architecture can also be silent. It can stay aloof from the popular words of this world, like a stone sunken in a river bed.” This early encounter with his powerfully experiential buildings made explicit for me the extent to which their concerns and qualities.
and they often go further in appropriating its forms and conventions or in literally re-appropriating its materials. Architecture's structures of space, material and movement are not only reflected within the pieces themselves, but are also described through the relationships that they form with one another and in the dialogues they engage with the rooms and spaces in which they are placed. Although Ai's built works are not explicitly represented in his Royal Academy exhibition, architecture could be said to be, slily, everywhere.

As he claims, 'ordinary architecture' rooted in the idea of home and our individual and collective need to dwell in the world. He seeks to work with fundamental concerns, forming spaces that may be both practically and poetically inhabited and which, through their material qualities, embody something of the essential structure of human life. Yet he equally recognises the complexities of this apparently basic activity: 'His meanings on the subject reflect upon a contemporary architecture's increasingly fragmenting and troubling disengagement from human needs, as it struggles and often fails to address a continually evolving condition of human and often brutal social and physical transformation. As in the context in China, a country whose extreme pace of change led to it using more stone between 2011 and 2013 than the United States did during the entire nineteenth century. Yet as a greater social order the unique could be applied universally. Although he is hurt by criticism of his work, he is not surprised. He believes it is necessary to rethink architecture's role in inhabiting and enriching the continuum between mind, body and world.' For Ai the many efforts that people make when creating architecture represent an understanding of their own place within the natural world, of order and of potential. He represents this process of re-discovering a sense of home and possibility through the experience of everyday life, in response to the contemporary conditions and future possibilities. In ways that can encompass many forms. It embodies an open attitude that seeks to address both individual desires and collective need through a sense of freedom, and to understand some of the most fundamental concerns.

His concerns seem unspoken when one considers his background. As the future of the renowned poet Ai Qing, was expelled from Beijing to Xinjiang in the Chinese cultural revolution, during Mao's anti-intellectual campaign of 1957 and lived there in hardship with his family for the next twenty years, until his return to Beijing in the late 1970s. Ai realises the first time he appointed himself to an architectural problem as the moment when he dug out and deepened the underground chamber in which they were required to live, so his father could stand upright in it. One can only speculate how much such juxtapositions - between a necessarily private but intensely public and intellectual family life and the idealised realities of everyday existence that involved his father planning the public latrines - shaped his understandings, utilising the importance of architecturally indispensible shelter and comfort and through them, in nurturing and enriching the continuum between mind, body and world.

For Ai the many efforts that people make when creating architecture represent an understanding of their own place within the natural world, of order and of potential. He represents this process of re-discovering a sense of home and possibility through the experience of everyday life, in response to the contemporary conditions and future possibilities. In ways that can encompass many forms. It embodies an open attitude that seeks to address both individual desires and collective need through a sense of freedom, and to understand some of the most fundamental concerns. Through his materialisation of the issues and themes that underpin his own life and the lives of his neighbours and fellow citizens, the act of building has been instrumental in reshaping the emerging critical dialogues that Ai has subsequently explored across a diverse range of artistic forms and media.

Situated in the village of Gaodebang, a once-autonomous community now subsumed into the many folds of Beijing's ever-expanding city, it was the modest and unadorned brick volume of his own house and studio that in 1999 inspired Ai to bend his consistently productive career as an 'intellectual architect.' He apparently stretched the design one evening as he sat at his mother's kitchen table, before taking advantage of the village's legal informality and the strange slippages of bureaucratic oversight that can occur at the overlapping margins of the urban, centralised structures of the Chinese time, to build it over the next one hundred days. So within a walled courtyard is the core of its plot and annotated to the passersby only by the vibrancy of its turquoise gates, the building is deliberately unassuming, inside as sealed from further two openings punctuated in its long, closed facade of black-grey brick: a large window cut out within a projecting gable, and a small central entrance door, discreetly set into the moulded cornice. Both open onto a double-height living space of red brick, which relates two enfold of Beijing's ever-lengthening skis, autonomous community now subsumed into the connected sequence of rooms of varying scales and degrees of enclosure. Collectively these establish a common ground, accommodating friends, family and an inordinate film community alongside the array of volunteers and collaborators who have together supported Ai's complex and evolving creative activities as an artist, architect, galore, curator, collector, writer and political activist.

Within these logical arrangements the potential for slippage or juxtaposition between one and another, a central concern in Ai's work, becomes embodied through the operations of inhabitation. The generous scale of the table occupying the main living space anticipates its

Fig. 39 Ai Weiwei, Beijing 2003, 2003 Video, 1 hour 50 minutes (side view)
drifting usage and the transition from greeting to eating or eating together over the course of a day. Yet the table’s proximity to the large, centrally positioned master bathroom, which overlooks it from the top of an open niche on the floor above, simultaneously questions that sense of public use (Fig. 21). With the bathroom’s most intimate functions screened only by a projecting brick wall at one end of an otherwise open gallery, the humorous yet disconcerting intimacy of this relationship, between an intimate social space and what is usually considered an intensely private one, exemplifies the antinoues of an artist whose own identity and understood form are regularly used to present an uncomfortable sense of questions about society, culture, and the human condition.

Since its construction, his studio-house has offered Ai the freedom to develop the many aspects of his work alongside the structures and relationships that support it. Yet his wider experiences equally demonstrate the limits of architectonic ability to embody freedom of a more fundamental kind. Jorn Utzon’s Sydney Opera House (1959–1973) is an iconic monument to the overarching power of a state security apparatus, which has employed its functioning counterparts to maintain a constant surveillance over the house’s walled compound, finally transmuting it into a space of confinement when Ai was placed under house arrest in 2010. His subsequent 81-day detention during 2011 is variously described in S.A.C.C.A.R. (2012: cat. 45), whose six chilling diagrams set within the diminutive cell depict the draft, institutionalized brutality of an architecture whose purpose has been subverted to that of subjugation and oppression.

The philosopher Michel Foucault once proposed, “It is never beneath the structure of things to guarantee the essence of freedom. The guarantee of freedom is freedom.” To chase for where ideas exist in things, this is a solitary thought, although one that is encouragingly qualified by his penetrating statement that “Liberty is a practice.”[9] The notion that freedom might exist in the doing, rather than in what it does, is a possibility that Ai appears to pursue continually, through both thought and action. From behind the closed sanctuary of his overlooked gate, his response to surveillance has been to expose himself to the collective gaze, broadcasting his life and thoughts through digital photography, Twitter, and a blog, with an intensity that endures external monitoring nearly superfluous. His response to domination is to turn the gaze of the world upon the actions of his oppressors. Through S.A.C.C.A.R. the watchers become the watched. It is clear however that, for him, the material architecture has come to offer more than mere enclosure to human activity; no matter how deplorable its realization that when compared to other man-made objects, architectures is probably closer to politics. Increasingly leads him to employ it as a material deity, in physically embodying a singular agency through which he is able to offer critical resistance to the problematic conditions of contemporary Chinese society and culture.

Pivotal to the construction of his house, Ai professes to have had no formal knowledge of architecture. The only book he owned on the subject was apparently a monograph on the house that another called “unusable,” Ludwig Wittgenstein, built for his sister in Vienna in 1921. But Wittgenstein liked and his architecture appear to have had a considerable influence on Ai, whose observation that the philosopher’s effort, the repeated effort, made all his practice become one—“just one act”[10]—seems to reflect equally upon his own trajectory. Intriguingly, the plan arrangement of the Haus Wittgenstein bears a marked similarity to that of Ai’s studio-house, along with the Venice Biennale’s formal sequence of salutes, grand façade and salon replaced by the single space of the studio.[11] The sensibilities inherent in Wittgenstein’s house are even elemental forms and spaces, which seem capable of simultaneously addressing and condensing both history and modernity into a singular expression, also have much in common with his own.

In his seminal work Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus (1921) Wittgenstein posits the idea that “words and architecture are one and the same.”[12] This cannot seem central to Ai’s developing architectural discourse as it is echoed in his demands that architecture should have an intellectual component and an ethical-moral coherence. From before his arrest, Ai forcefully expressed a disdain for architecture’s role in embodying power and authority through his ongoing photographic series Study of Perspective (1995—). These works depict his middle finger raised in ironic salute to landmarks from around the world, among them the White House in Washington (Fig. 46) and Tiananmen Square in Beijing. Yet the moral and ethical issues that principally concern him now do so with the representational qualities of individual monoliths. Instead they increasingly focus on the physical and social consequences of the massive programmes of urbanisation and urban transformation, instigated by the Chinese State, as a means to facilitate the political growth and
Li Qianzhi (1962-1995) was the son of an influential writer. His work, "Breakfast in Bed" (1995; ca. 21), explores the tension between traditional and modern Chinese culture. The piece depicts Ai-Da, a replica of the ancient Chinese Dynasty Urn, which was once solid but now stands in an art context. Ai-Da's 'readymades' are created from a collection of everyday objects, including an old urinal, a coat hanger, and a pair of scissors. The urinal is a work of art in its own right, but Ai-Da's use of it reflects a modern interpretation of Marcel Duchamp's famous "Fountain" (1917). Ai-Da's works are pieces that might arguably be described as 'readymades', a term that is associated with Duchamp's work. Ai-Da's piece "Breakfast in Bed" is considered a counterpoint to Duchamp's original work, which was controversial at the time of its creation.

Ai-Da's work is influenced by the Cultural Revolution, which took place in China during the late 20th century. The revolution had a profound impact on the country's cultural and social landscape, and Ai-Da's work reflects this influence. The revolution's aesthetic influence on Ai-Da is captured in the archaeological objects that she uses in her art pieces. These objects, placed into an art context, create a dialogue between the past and the present, and between the traditional and the modern.

Ai-Da's "Breakfast in Bed" is a work that is both visually and conceptually complex. The piece explores themes of identity, culture, and the role of art in society. Ai-Da's work is often described as challenging the boundaries of traditional art forms, and it has been featured in various exhibitions around the world. Ai-Da's "Breakfast in Bed" is a work that is both a critique of the past and a celebration of the present. It is a work that is both a reflection of Ai-Da's own experiences and a commentary on the broader cultural context in which she works.

Ai-Da's works often explore the tension between the past and the present, and between the traditional and the modern. Her work is a commentary on the role of art in society, and on the ways in which art can be used to challenge and reshape cultural narratives. Ai-Da's "Breakfast in Bed" is a work that is both a reflection of Ai-Da's own experiences and a commentary on the broader cultural context in which she works. It is a work that is both a critique of the past and a celebration of the present, and it is a work that is both a reflection of Ai-Da's own experiences and a commentary on the broader cultural context in which she works.
If these and other works can be understood, in part, as a critique of what has been lost to the chinking banality of the contemporary Chinese city, then the architecture that Ai made in parallel takes a further step in offering both a resistance and an alternative to it. The initial success of the studio-house, which received considerable exposure across China and internationally brought with it a steady stream of building commissions that, in turn, led to the establishment of Ai's studio, mA.Dongji. It is most active in the period up to 2008, when Ai announced his withdrawal from architecture, not completed a substantial and wide-ranging body of work, amounting to more than eighty commissions.

Yet it is in the sequence of buildings made within the immediate environs of his residence that his architecture is most compelling. These low, brick volumes, which iterate and develop the simple forms and construction techniques of his own project, might appear formally rural. Yet in the context of the wider city their form, scale and materialisation place them in opposition to both the alienating, ossified monstrosity of buildings' new residential towns and the gaudy objectification of its often imported neoclassical architecture. Equally emphatically they reject the hackneyed, form -vermicular tendencies often employed to slightly domesticate Design in highly controlled fashion. Ai's architecture declines to close itself off into self-contained, authoritarian systems. Instead it adapts, adapts and refines readily available local materials and the expedient construction techniques of local traditions, establishing a modest, robust language that has grown out of the village context and within which it continues to propagate.

In common with much of Ai's creative output, the power of this collection of buildings is reinforced through their seriality and proximity. The balance of repetition and variation within their various arrangements allows them to be understood as an adaptive type, malleable enough to be responsive to a particular situation while retaining a strong familiar character when considered as an ensemble. Each grouping of buildings organizes a series of nationally valued volume types, for use as living, working or gallery space, within the constraints of a ghost town: "I search for maximum feasibility because I don't know who will end up using the space," Ai explains. "Since I know nothing about the inside's final function, I try to control the proportions, the material and the opening." Extensive courts and passages form suggestively between the resulting volumes, regenerating their relationship with the irregular grain and form of the unplanned village context. In its loose grid of nineteen rectangular and L-shaped studio-houses, each a variant of Ai's original, one project, 241 Caochangdi (2007; fig. 23), subsumes the series within itself. Shifting his cubic mixes of material, including Tree of Tao (2008; cat. 31) and Cube in Ebony (2009; cat. 32), this adjusting repetition of simple forms makes manifest a relationship between his architecture and minimalist art, proposing, in the buildings' incidental exercise of work by Donald Judd or LeWitt, that meaning is established through the experience of them as simultaneously objects, space and idea.

Beyond similarities in their scale and layout, it is the use of brick as a unifying material that draws the Caochangdi projects into embrace (fig. 23). Ai is not the first artist to utilize this material and its possibilities. Pre-Raphaelite brick sculptures might be one reference point, while the persistent geometry of the twelve sculptural grey brick pavilions that the German artist Le Corbusier constructed for the Museum of Horrou II in the Djenné offer immediate counterparts, albeit in very different circumstances. Reflecting upon the laconic walls of Caochangdi, one also recalls the Eichholtz of Carl Andre, stables of bricks whose
Souvenir from Beijing (2002) places a single grey flouting brick into a mix of salvaged lintels, highlighting the increasing scarcity of this once-pervasive material within the city, while simultaneously celebrating its physical characteristics. Contrast 1:1 elevates the cobbled, textual qualities of the same brick as a component within a larger surface. Beloved of the structural responsibilities, it is utilised purely as a lining, masking a series of existing concrete members in order to form a unified exterior, in doing so it creates a small portal in a context whose concrete (nominally) dominates.

Conversely, the external expression of the Red Brick Complex uses brick within a constructive language of frame and infill, revealed elsewhere only through the interior. Here the vestiges of facade present in other works, are stripped away to expose what the architectural historian Kenneth Frampton describes as "a potentially poetic manifestation of structure in the original Greek sense of poiesis, as an act of making and revealing... the exposure of the frame, in which members of varying lengths are combined to encompass a spatial field and the assertion of compressive mass, but whilst it may embody space, is constructed through the piling up of identical units."

Many of Ai’s works demonstrate his concern with juxtaposing the qualities and character of an individually worked element against its placement within the multitude. Brick translates this idea into the realm of architecture. Humble yet sensuous, it remains inseparable from both the place and time of its making and the temperament of the bricklayer who places it, allowing their practice to be drawn into collaboration with the artist’s own. The architecture that results both acknowledges his appreciation of the skills of his workforce and reveals the extent to which Ai contemporises the act of making itself. "Most of the buildings we located within five minutes’ walk of my place,” he says, “although I never paid a visit to the building site during construction. The craftsmen understood my design, and I believe they are doing things right” (see fig. 25).

As with many of his large-scale collaborative art projects the rough precision of the resulting buildings demonstrates "the art of architectural process as a critical medium,"²³ made by many hands. The outcome is not a return to the vernacular but, instead, its inversion, by claiming the expedient possibilities of local skills and resources & encouraging both construction workers and fellow villagers to profit from the cultural and economic impacts that Ai’s burgeoning international profile has brought to Caochangdi. The space aesthetic of...
Ai's architecture has thus become a commodity, appropriated through any number of false means, which borrow its identity without ever quite achieving its eloquence.

The result has been to propagate Ai's ongoing influence as an architect far beyond his actual quasiquotable involvement in practice. It has led to the emergence of a type, which has been instrumental in retrofitting the village apart from the other 260 or so urban villages to be found within the expanding city edge. Not unlike Marfa, the isolated town in New Mexico that Donald Judd relocated to in the early 1970s, Cauchangdi now plays host to a heterogeneous and heady mix of artists, high-end galleries and cultural tourists, along with a shifting population of mostly migrant workers. It is not without irony that this agglomeration of mostly illegal construction has undermined its very anonymity that allowed the phenomenon to occur in the first instance. Noting its cultural and economic success, the authorities re-designated Caodiangdi a model 'Socialist New Village'. Yet as with all such places in China, the encroachment of officialdom only exacerbates uncertainty over its future.19

Through a number of photographic and video projects Ai has critically observed the cycles of desuance and consuance that accompany such processes of change across the city. While a student in New York, between 1985 and 1995, he photographed life around his home in Manhattan's Lower East Side, recording its often troubled evolution from a space of urban dereliction and counterculture into a valuable piece of real estate.20 It is tempting to imagine that his personal experience as part of that displaced community contributed the ground for his subsequent interest in the plight of the buildings, spaces, people and communities caught up in the turmoil and aftermath of Beijing's rampant redevelopment. Leaving the act of judgment or interpretation to the viewer, each piece is didactic and objective in its methods. Yet their intention is not to document the city but rather, Ai suggests, 'to realize our physical life in the moment.'21 The films Beijing 2003 (2003, fig. 205), Chang'an Boulevard (2004), Beijing Sansu Allong Road and Beijing: Third Allong Road (both 2005) recall the serial photography of Bernd and Hilla Becher or films like Paul Rotha's Day of London or Sunset Boulevard (1966) in their collision of the spatial laxonomy of a changing city. Made in parallel, Ai's photographic series Provisional Landscapes (2002–06, fig. 27) captures the many voids and transitional spaces left by the same entropic processes of change.

Ai has commented that the area of Beijing being redeveloped early this year is larger than the entire area of the city in 1949, when land was sequenced and placed into collective ownership.22 Speaking of Beijing, 2005, he says: 'I think what happens around us is often more massive than what we can interpret... 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 nonemotional way to show this to show the powerlessness of the people, and the blind nature of the redevelopment.'23 The rules and order he imposes on each piece only serve to reinforce the shifting, transient nature of their subject-matter. While they might be made with reference to official maps and particular places, these reference points are themselves variable and impermanent ‘non-sites’, comparable to Robert Smithson’s notion of ‘ruins in reverse’24 Far from seeking to offer an authoritative documentation of the urban condition, this systematic body of work instead documents its provisionality and, in doing so, questions why it is happening, who is in control, and who profits? In 1976, quoting their artist namesake, British architects Alison and Peter Smithson wrote: A building under assembly is a ruin in reverse, at certain times of a building’s construction, the ante-penultimate pleasure of ruins is made manifest.25 In the short history of its construction and subsequent demolition, the fate of Ai’s final building in China, his own
Meanwhile his celebrated collaboration with Herzog & de Meuron on the design of the 'Bird's Nest' stadium (fig. 28) for the 2008 Beijing Olympics also ended in disappointment, not as a consequence of its bold entwining of form, structure and space but because its scooping by the authorities regarded as 'designer's intention' that should act as a 'Trojan horse' which would really have a chance to become a place representing civil society, a place in which citizens can celebrate, Ai initially refused when the city of Shanghai approached him to construct a new studio and gallery complex, apparently as a cultural catalyst, only to be eventually persuaded by the enthusiasm and perseverance of the young official involved.

With its brick and concrete frame construction and asymmetric pitched roof encasing a courtyard, the resulting building briefly represented the demolition of the series Ai had developed in Caochangdi. Yet only months after its completion in 2010, the same authorities that had evicted its construction summarily demolished it on the pretext that it lacked proper permit although, by that point, Ai's increasingly dissident status made clear that this was not an act intended to demonstrate authority's ability to silence dissenting voices through physical means. The artist's response was typically pragmatic. Upon hearing of the demolition in order, he sent the citizens of China an open invitation to attend a river crab feast there, to celebrate the building's completion. As with the 3,000 porcelain crabs at the Mo (2011; cfr. 18), the feast's theme played on the use of the word for river crab as euphemistic internet slang for censorship, due to its similarity to hàn, meaning 'harmonious', itself a reference to the Chinese Communist Party's goal of constructing a 'harmonious society'. Although house arrest precluded Ai's participation in the event, its attendance by hundreds of people across the country solidarity the Shanghai studio's brief physical presence within the collective memory. Alongside, Anatomy from Shanghai (2012; cfr. 19) offers material evidence: 3,000 porcelain crabs, concrete and brick rubble recovered from the site is set against aumber bed-frame of the Qing Dynasty, a juxtaposition that serves to place the work within the same critical framework as other pieces utilizing historical fragments. Through these actions, Ai positions the studio, his China's iconic 'nail houses', as a symbol of political resistance, translated through art.

The theme of ruin and salvation is a present image within Ai's work. Sometimes it is metaphoric as in the commissioned anthology of the Nanjing Pottery Museum (2007; fig. 23), part of his Ai Qi Saga Cultural Park project, or the supposedly re-examined foundations of previous pavilions.

Fig. 29 National Stadium, Beijing, 2002-08

Fig. 28 Shanghai Studio, Ma'anshan Town, Jiading district, eastern perspective, 2010
in his collaborative design for the Serpentine Pavilion (2012) in London, with architects Herzog & de Meuron. At other times, as in Shanghai, it becomes more tasked, a physical embodiment of memory, loss and failure that makes on deep social, political and cultural resonances. Nowhere does this happen with greater power or poignancy than in those pieces of work through which Ai confronted and engaged the tragedy of the 2008 Sichuan earthquake (fig. 50).

While he may have abandoned the practice of architecture, these make clear his unserous application of its power to engage with and critique social and political structures and the consequences of their corruption. Asking himself ‘how do I express such a historic and disastrous event simply and directly?’ he salvaged steel reinforcing bars (rebar) from collapsed school buildings across the region, the very material whose misuse the Chinese investigation 13 set up seems to have been the proximate reason why so many deaths lurk their trees in the disaster. For the sculpture, which is fabricated (2008–12, cat. 13) he had tonnes of this twisted, mangled but initially straightened and studied into an assemblage landscape (fig. 5, 35). Newly made and, as if preventing combustion, these bars seem to relentlessly represent a culture of denial, until the accompanying list of 5,000 names transforms each one into a memorial for a lost child.

As a sublime piece, its disjunctures of perception and painstaking process of fabrication, which undermines the essence of a hostile regime to smooth the truth about the tragedy and the identities of its Victims, positions it as a form of ‘social sculpture’. This term, coined by Joseph Beuys, sought to name a type of art practice that takes place in the social sphere, which requires social engagement for its completion.
and which seeks to transform society through the creative act, straightens the material of construction silently as she meditates for each a process, but equally as a means of the work of other architects could also be seen as a kind of social sculpture, in a society where unmediated dialogue and debate is so limited. 'Ordos 100' (2008: fig. 32), the project my practice took part in, revealed the act as an engaging act. Flying in from every continent to spend time together in the deserts of Inner Mongolia, the one hundred architects left remembrances of the 1,000 Chinese citizens Ai invited to visit Berlin in Germany as part of Documenta 12. While we were ostensibly there to design utopian 1,000 m² villas as part of a cultural quarter for a new city it became clear that for Ai at least, the simple act of meeting and talking was the real focus of the project. The villas remain unbuilt but the international network of collaboration that emerged represents an ongoing cultural legacy. Beyond architecture's role as a subject of Ai's work it provides the context within which his art emerges. As his Royal Academy exhibition demonstrates, Ai is intensely aware of the qualities and characteristics of the spaces in which he is working and the effect of the placement of his works within them, making tangible for the viewer the latent orders, symmetries, scales and histories through which they respond to one another. In 'The Wall: Central Hall', the placement of the mirror and statues of Triadicurr (2014: cat. 46) beneath the dome draws this representation of the heavens down to the viewer while creating a space that remains unsummable. The next gallery, lined in Ai's Golden Age wallpaper (2014: cat. 44), seems to remember the long-forgotten domed domesticity of Burlington House, with the classical enfilade of the building's plan establishing the scale and disposition of each subsequent piece. Outside, the grace of the terraced timber roof that appears to have taken root in the Annenberg Courtyard can. It echoes both the houses' former grounds and the gardens of Chinese culture, creating in their constructed history a poetic space of reflection on the relationship between things. Ai Qing, Teah 1949
One tree, another tree,
Each standing alone and erect.
The wind and air
Left their distance apart,
But beneath the cover of earth
Their roots reach out
And at depths that cannot be seen
The root of the root intertwine.

Fig. 31 Al Waiwei, Grain 1999, 2011.
Painted wood, 15.11 x 13.57 x 0.8 m

Fig. 32 Al Waiwei, Ordos 100, 2011.