

AI WEIWEI: THE SEED

A play about
the early
life of artist
Ai Weiwei in
China & NYC



湯普金公園外 1986.

Outside Tompkins Square Park. 1986

Ai Weiwei

Created by Jessica Chen, Jason Kao Hwang,
Adriel Luis, Kelly Tsai & Kit Yan

Performed at Brooklyn Museum during Ai
Weiwei's "According to What?" exhibit

Background & Process

The entire text of this show was created* from direct quotes by Ai Weiwei found in over 200 pages of his blog posts and interviews about his art & activism.

*With exception of creator interviews, reflection poems & direct quotes from other artists. See references for sources.

Writer Kelly Tsai extracted biographical portions of Ai Weiwei's blog posts and interviews and formed 22 "found poems" using his life story as a backbone.

Creators (Jessica Chen, Adriel Luis, Jason Kao Hwang, Kelly Tsai, Kit Yan) then devised this show over 3 months using word, sound, movement & video.

The creators of the show were asked to do freewrites related to diaspora, NYC artists, activism & social media throughout the creative process.

These freewrites were the foundation for the creator interview videos as well as the content for the reflection poems at the end of each act.

Writer Kit Yan modeled the form of the reflection poems after the writing style of Ai Weiwei's father, poet Ai Qing, incorporating the content from the creator freewrites.

The show was performed during Ai Weiwei's exhibit "According to What?" at Brooklyn Museum in summer 2014.

As creators, we made this show inspired by the artist's early life, his relationship to poetry & his formative 12 years living in NYC's East Village during the 1980's & 1990's.

Creators: Adriel Luis (Sound, Video), Jessica Chen (Movement), Jason Kao Hwang (Violin), Kelly Tsai (Writer/Editor - Ai Weiwei Found Poems, Director, Video), Kit Yan (Writer/Editor - Reflection Poems)

Thank you to Ai Weiwei, Alicia Boone & Elisabeth Callihan of Brooklyn Museum, technical director Marlon Cadore & videographer Lee Milby.

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For more info on this project, contact booking@kellytsai.com.

Ai Weiwei Text References:

Obrist, Hans Ulrich. (2011) *Ai Weiwei Speaks with Hans Ulrich Obrist*. London, England: Penguin UK.

Ai, Weiwei. (2011) *Ai Weiwei's Blog: Writings, Interviews & Digital Rants, 2006-2009*. Translated & Edited by Lee Ambrozy. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

BBC "HARDtalk with Ai Weiwei," Video, 2014.

Other Artist Text References:

Ai, Qing. (1984) "A Young Man's Departure"
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Eugene Chen Eoyang. Bloomington, Indiana:
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Collected Poems 1947-1980. New York, NY: Harper
& Row.

Warhol, Andy. (1977) The Philosophy of Andy
Warhol (From A to B and Back Again). New York,
NY: Harvest.

Ai Weiwei Visual References (in play order):

Inspiration for Title Sequences:

"Sunflower Seeds," Installation (2010)

Direct Visual References:

"Profile of Marcel Duchamp in a Coat Hanger,"
Mixed Media (1980's)

"Violin," Sculpture (1985)

"Safe Sex," Mixed Media (1986)

"Mao" paintings

Selection of New York photos

"Neolithic Vase with Coca-Cola Logo 2010 Paint
on Neolithic vase (5000-3000 BC)," Sculpture
(2010)

"Dropping a Han Dynasty Urn," Photo (1995)

"Ai Weiwei in the Elevator when Taken Into
Custody by the Police, Sichuan, China, August
2009," Photo (2012)

"S.A.C.R.E.D," Sculpture (2013)

"He Xie," Installation (2010)

"Grapes," Sculpture (2008)

"Sichuan Earthquake," Photo 2008-2010

"Sichuan Earthquake," Photo 2008-2010

"Remembering," Installation (2009)

"Colored Vases," Sculpture (2006)

"Gangnam Style," Video (2012)

(With Herzog & de Mueron) "Diagram, Serpentine
Gallery Pavilion," Architecture (2012)

(With HHF Architects) "Tsai Studio Floor Plan,"
Architecture (2009)

(With Herzog & de Mueron, Stefan Marbach &
CADG-Li Xinggang) "Beijing National Stadium,"
Architecture (2011)

(With HHF Architects) "Tsai Guesthouse Floor Plan," Architecture (2011)

(With HHF Architects) "Tsai Residence," Architecture (2009)

Other Artist Visual References (in play order)

Xie, Tieli, "Taking Tiger Mountain by Strategy," Film (1970)

Ping, Wang, "The East is Red," Film (1964)

Pan, Wenzhuan & Fu Jie, "The Red Detachment of Women," Film (1971)

Van Gogh, Vincent, "Wheatfield with Crows," Painting (1890)

Degas, Edgar, "La Toilette (Nude Arranging Her Hair)," Painting (1884-1886)

Manet, Edouard, "A Bar at the Folies-Bergere," Painting (1882)

Johns, Jasper, "0-9," Painting (1960)

Johns, Jasper, "Flag," Painting (1954-1955)

Channel 4 UK, "State of the Art: Andy Warhol & Jean-Michel Basquiat," Video, (1986)

Warhol, Andy "Self-Portrait," Print (1986)

Johns, Jasper, "Map," Painting (1961)

Johns, Jasper, "Ale Cans," Sculpture (1964)

Duchamp, Marcel, "Bicycle Wheel," Sculpture (1913)

Duchamp, Marcel, "Fountain," Sculpture (1917)

Dada Machine Fluxus Poster, Print

Koons, Jeff, "Three Ball Total Equilibrium Tank (Two Dr. J Silver Series, Spalding NBA Tip-Off), Sculpture (1985)

Basquiat, Jean-Michel, "Boy & Dog in a Jonnypump," Painting (1982)
Schnabel, Julian, Painting

Rong, Rong, "East Village Beijing No. 1" Photo (1994)

Zuzhou, Zuoxiao, "To Add One Meter To An Anonymous Mountain," Photo (1995) & "I Love Contemporary Art Too," Photo Documentation of Performance (2007)

Zhang, Huan, "12M2," Photo Documentation of Performance (1994)

Ma, Liuming, "Self-Portrait 5," Photo (1996)

Rong, Rong, "East Village Beijing No. 70." Photo (1994)

Ma, Liuming, "Fen-Ma Liuming's Lunch II," Photo Documentation of Performance (1994)

Yuan, Gao, "Ai Weiwei," Photo (2010)

CREATOR INTERVIEWS: DIASPORA

[VIDEO: CREATOR INTERVIEWS: DIASPORA]

ADRIEL:

Over the course of the past couple of generations, my family has lived in mainland China, in Hong Kong, and Mexico, and the United States.

KELLY:

My mom is from the mainland. Her dad was a politician. It is rumored that he would have run for the mayor of Shanghai, if not for the revolution. Uh, but then, my family fled to Taiwan.

JESSICA:

My two grandfathers fought in the nationalist army. So after the civil war against the communists they had to escape and go to Taiwan.

JASON:

Well, immigration was very difficult for my mother. Uh, her grandfather owned the electric company in Changsha. So she grew up with great wealth in a house of 100 rooms.

KIT:

In my home in Hawai'i, we used to have pictures of Mao in every single room including the bathroom.

JASON:

But during World War II bombed the home, which they rebuilt on a smaller scale and that was subsequently destroyed by the communists.

KIT:

My family was a very poor farming family. So the cultural revolutions promises of prosperity really made sense to us.

ADRIEL:

When I hear the word refugee, I don't necessarily associate it with my own story, but at the same time, my family did escape a country because of a world leader who was oppressing people.

JESSICA:

My grandpa on my Mom's side was always pretty mean when we were growing up -

KELLY:

But the first time my mom actually made friends with people from the mainland was that she became a real estate agent and her specialty was working with Chinese immigrants.

JESSICA:

He had the option of taking all the treasures he could take with him, but

instead, he brought as many of his men as he could.

JASON:

So, I always felt this destruction of her social fabric of war, of her family affected her worldview. Life was dangerous, and tragedy was always lurking around every corner.

KIT:

When I was little, my best friend lived three blocks away, and her family was persecuted by the Cultural Revolution. So, she actually wasn't allowed to play at my house, because her mom thought that we were communists.

KELLY:

She said, Oh wow, you know, I have friends from the mainland now, and they're actually not scary.

ADRIEL:

I call myself Chinese to not be able to speak Chinese, I just I've just always felt kinda like embarrassment out of that.

JESSICA:

There's such a rich history and heritage in China, and there's so much of it that we hide, and I just wish that Chinese families would talk more.

TITLE I

[VIDEO: TITLE I]

Ai Weiwei: The Seed

The seed is a household object, but at the same time, it's a revolutionary symbol. - Ai Weiwei

**ACT I
Scene 1**

[VIDEO: BEIJING]

JASON plucking. KIT enters SR and crosses to DSR mic. KELLY & JESSICA enter SL. KELLY sits on SR side of table facing upstage. JESSICA sits in chair upstage.

KIT (AI WEIWEI - denoted AW):

i was born in 1957
in a courtyard on Beijing's east side
called Tofu Alley

my father was a man who loved art

he studied art in the 1930's in Paris
he was a very good artist

after he came back
he was put in jail in Shanghai
by the Kuomintang

while in jail for three years

he couldn't paint
but he became a writer

JASON (AI QING denoted AQ):

Like a canoe, still smelling of the
fragrance of wood,
That leaves a small, desert island,
An enthusiastic and melancholy young
man
Has left his small village

KIT (AW):

he was heavily influenced by French poets
-

Appollinaire
Rimbaud
Baudelaire

you know all this group of people -

he became a top figure in contemporary
language poetry

but even then he couldn't write -

KELLY & JESSICA walk towards USR mics.

JASON (AQ):

I don't like that village -
As ordinary as a banyan tree
As clumsy as a buffalo -
Where I spent my childhood

KIT (AW):

he was accused of being

KELLY & JESSICA (Party Members):

anti-revolutionary -
anti-Communist -
anti-peoople -

KIT (AQ):

and that was a big crime

**ACT I
Scene 2**

[VIDEO: GOBI DESERT]

*JASON Gobi Desert & ADRIEL Sandstorm
sounds.*

*KELLY crosses downstage. KIT crosses
upstage. JESSICA in gardening phrase
CS. KIT toilet cleaning phrase USR.
KELLY at DSR mic.*

KELLY (AW):

when i was eight
we were transferred to Xinjiang
in the Gobi desert

the sandstorms were incredible
and the winters were enough
to freeze you solid

my father was almost sixty
and had never done any physical work

he was punished with hard labor
and cleaned the public toilets
for a village of 200 people

for years

he never had a chance to rest
even for one day

he joked:

KIT (AQ):

you know,
people never stop
shitting

KIT rejoins physical labor phrase.

KELLY (AW):

i used to go and visit
him at those toilets

i was too small to help

he would make this public area
extremely, precisely clean -

*JESSICA & KIT go to edge of table and
share a look.*

then go to another one

*JESSICA & KIT put down their books, crawl
beneath table as earthen pit.*

we were forced to live
in an earthen pit

dug right in the ground
often enough
when pigs would run overhead

their bottoms would fall through our roof
making us all too familiar with the
sight of swine nether regions

because we were a family of readers
we needed a bookshelf in our earthen pit

my father dug out a hole

JESSICA & KIT exit earthen pit.

that was the best bookshelf

*KIT & JESSICA share another look. KIT
brings chair in front of table and sits,
writing. JESSICA crosses to CR mic.*

we had to burn

JESSICA (AW's MOM):

those beautiful hardcover books he
collected
those beautiful museum catalogues

KELLY (AW):

because he could have got into trouble

he only had one book left
a big French encyclopedia

JESSICA crosses to KIT.

every day he took notes from that book

JESSICA places hand over KIT's eye.

soon he lost the vision in one eye
because of a lack of nutrition

ACT I
Scene 3

ADRIEL film strip sounds begin.
KELLY brings mic CS. JESSICA to CS mic.

*KELLY CL & KIT CR sitting on ground facing
upstage, looking up at empty screen.*

JESSICA (AW):

we lived in a remote village
movies were shown in the village square

as soon as a movie would come on

KIT & KELLY begin to raise up hands.

the entire village would light up

even though the light was only from the
film
we would cover our eyes with our hands

it seemed that bright

[VIDEO: COMMUNIST FILMS]

*KIT & KELLY get up by end of 'finished'
and begin solemn walking pattern upstage.*

each time a film finished

it was passed on to the neighboring
village

to be screened again

we would travel with it

carefully placing one foot after another

the irregular soil of the fields
on the dark roads

the scene was something like
pious devotees on a religious pilgrimage

*They turn the corner to face JESSICA when
they reach center.*

in truth, those were tedious and
boring times
and the films weren't even that
interesting

KIT & KELLY shrug.

perhaps it was precisely for this
reason
that we ilked the villains in the
films

they always seemed different from the
rest

ADRIEL film strip sounds fade out.

ACT I
Scene 6

*KIT crosses to DSR mic. KELLY & JESSICA
cross DSL reading books.*

KIT (AW):

when i graduated from high school

i spent time in Beijing
with my father
for treatment for his eye

there were almost no books
the whole nation was to have no single
book

i got my first books on

[VIDEO: EARLY ART INFLUENCES]

Van Gogh
Degas
Manet

and another one

Jasper Johns

from a translator

named Jian Sheng Yee

he married a woman from Germany
so he had a chance to get those books

he thought, ah this kid loves art
and those books became so valuable

everyone shared them in Beijing -

this little circle of

literary men
professors

artists

good artists

my father's friends who became
the same category as him

enemy of the state

and then had nothing to do
because the universities did not open

i had a chance to learn art from them
they had a huge influence on me

we all liked the post-Impressionists
but the Jasper Johns

*JESSICA & KELLY holding imaginary book
upside down, trying to figure it out.*

we asked
what is this

it went straight
into the garbage

ACT I
Scene 5

[VIDEO: CHINESE TYPEWRITER]

*ADRIEL Chinese Typewriter sounds. JASON
typewriter sounds.*

*KIT crosses US to sit SR edge of table in
profile - reviewing mentees poems. JESSICA*

brings chair to sit SL of table, typing on Chinese typewriter. KELLY crosses to mic CR.

KELLY (AW):

all the poets in China would come to my father

when Bei Dao had just started writing

before he published anything
he'd bring his handwriting to show my father

i was just eighteen and he was just over twenty
he wanted to make an album of his poetry

of course nobody would print anything like that
but he knew a girl who used to do typing

for a military unit

at that time in China if you could type

your status was very high
your power was secret

because that meant you were involved in propaganda

everything had to be typed out ten times
a hundred times to make copies

there were no photocopy machines

the paper was very rough

i drew the book cover for him

ADRIEL (BEI DAO)

The ruins of a lighthouse
still hold the great beams from the past.

You lean on the remaining stairs,
on the rusted banisters,
beating the same rhythm over and over.

KELLY (AW):

the book of poetry was called Strange Beach

ACT I Scene 6

ADRIEL train sounds.

KIT crosses downstage to center mic. KELLY crosses upstage to SL side of table, puts book down. JESSICA stands. They share a look.

KIT (AW):

i started to do some artworks
mostly because i wanted to escape society

*JESSICA & KELLY push off from table.
JESSICA crosses to USL. KELLY crosses to USR. Their gazes pan from corners of room inwards.*

i started as a painter
i made a lot of drawings

JESSICA & KELLY's gazes pull them to walk forward and back as commuters on'months.

i would spend months in the train station
because there were so many people -

they were like free models for me -

i also spent time in the zoo
drawing the animals

KELLY & JESSICA settle. Gazes pan from outside to in.

the early drawings i made were more
for training myself in how to handle the
world
with the very simple traces of a mark

my paintings were mostly landscapes
in the fashion of Munch - or Cezanne

Gazes pan from inside to out and hold.

i think my mother threw most of them away

in school the teacher would critique
every student but he purposely left me
alone

i was clearly already on my own

this was my starting point

ADRIEL train sounds fade out.

ACT I
Scene 7

[AUDIO: CHAIRMAN MAO]

JESSICA goes to sculpt KIT. KELLY holds
USR.

KIT (AW Voiceover):

in school

the only poetry
you could recite was

Chairman Mao
every classroom

Chairman Mao
every paper

Chairman Mao

his language
his image

in 1973 i got into Beijing Film
Academy
and Mao Zedong left this earth

suddenly [we] had a chance
to rethink that part of history

this group of young people started
to write poetry and to make magazines

it was like Spring had come

JESSICA goes to sculpt KELLY. KIT holds.

there were no copy machines

so we would copy whole books by hand

and give them to a friend

there was a wall, the Democratic Wall,
where people posted their writings or
thoughts

we used to meet there

a very small circle -
less than a hundred people

there were about twenty or thirty
magazines
we were writing every night

we had to print them
and post them on the wall

every cover i drew by hand

KIT unwinds.

in 1980 Deng Xiaopeng repressed the
movement

they wanted to have some change
but not to denounce the communist
struggle

in 1981 i left school
to go to the United States

KELLY unwinds.

REFLECTION POEM: IF WE WERE WOLVES...

JASON begins violin.

*KELLY, KIT, JESSICA re-arrange mics
CS. Spoken word/slam style.*

JESSICA:

If we were wolves,
I would dig my claws into the sweet earth,
and howl into the breeze,
asking the wind to carry these old bones,
this tough flesh ,
this dirt caked coat,
past the forest,
past the city,
to the sea.

KELLY & KIT:

To the sea, to the sea, to the sea

KIT:

Mao's Face fills our home,

KELLY, KIT, JESSICA:

His fat cheeks smiling on empty bellies.

Promising a People's land.

Where - The blood red sun shines.
On blood red walls.

JESSICA (3x):

Out back,

Her hard hands wipe clean the villagers
waste.

**KELLY & KIT (overlapping JESSICA's second
repetition):**

Out back,
Her cracked fingers curl over heavy waste
filled buckets,
Sloshing back and forth.

KELLY, KIT, & JESSICA:

Out back,
Fear is as thick as feces,
Spilling out the toilets,
Into village homes.

JESSICA begins solo.

KELLY:

Strong tree trunks become pillars,
that keep a house still through storm and
snow.

A woman plants a welcome into fertile
grass.

Her voice becomes a blueprint of how to
build a home.

KIT:

Beijing

KELLY & KIT:

as foreign as a new planet,

You are resting place of world trade,
You are a land dried and soiled by greedy
sport.

For how long can you be as rich as silk
Han scrolls,
And as ripened fat as stacks of paper
money?

CREATOR INTERVIEWS: NYC ARTISTS

[VIDEO: CREATOR INTERVIEWS: NYC ARTISTS]

KIT:

So, I moved to New York to follow my art.
I didn't really care that it was New York
City.

JESSICA:

I never wanted to move to New York. I
didn't grow up dreaming of moving here one
day. It just sort of happened.

KELLY:

It wasn't something I really planned, but
I think it was something and somewhere
that I always wanted to be.

ADRIEL:

I always wanted to live in New York.
Coming from California, it was kind of
more exotic than any other country.

KELLY:

Like one of my mentors told me that, she said the reason that I left Chicago was that my environment wasn't big enough to hold my evolution.

KIT:

So, I've lived here for almost 7 years now, but I perform most of my shows outside of the city and take all - most of my writing breaks in Hawai'i, so, I'm still really getting used to, to the city.

JASON:

When I was young, I would go to University of the Streets, which was on Avenue B, which at that time, was a bad neighborhood.

ADRIEL:

And so when I finally got to New York, I thought that in itself was making it, and then, I came to learn that that's not impressive to anyone else who's already living there.

JESSICA:

The first years of being in New York, I felt that I was always behind and that I didn't have enough technique or passion or knowledge.

JASON:

Well, I think about an artist like C#, and his saxophone had rubber bands all over it, because he couldn't afford to fix his horn, but he was very warm towards me and others he could be, you know, really quite bitter.

KELLY:

It really requires you to be tough. It really requires you to be resilient, and it really requires a certain kind of sophistication.

ADRIEL:

I've never lived somewhere where I got yelled at so often, where I got so many fines, where I, where I got duped and paid too much for stuff, just because I was too scared to ask the price in the first place.

JASON:

You can achieve great things in the arts, but, you know, not really be rewarded.

KIT:

I haven't really felt comfortable living here, until I moved to Chinatown, and I spend most of my free time going to queer and POC shows, um, these are the kind of shows that really give me life.

KELLY:

If you're gonna be living in New York, you gotta be coming hard with what you're doing.

TITLE II

[VIDEO: TITLE II]

The most appealing thing about New York is that it was built from mistakes. - Ai Weiwei

ACT 2 Scene 1

ADRIEL city soundscape: horns, slamming doors, radios.

KIT, JESSICA, KELLY arrange microphones in a V pointed DSL. JESSICA US. KELLY DS. KIT DSL (aka the Mighty Ducks moment).

KIT (AW):

the year before i left for New York
my father wrote this

JASON (AQ):

Tonight after nightfall
The residents of New York, turn on lights
by the millions
more dazzling than any vision
But who can live their lives on visions?

KIT (AW):

New York was the capital of contemporary
art

and i wanted to be on top

KELLY crosses DS, starts pulling fist phrase.

on the way to the airport
my mum said things like

JESSICA (AW's MOM):

do you feel sad because you don't speak
English?

you have no money

KIT (AW):

(i had thirty dollars in my hand)

JESSICA (AW's MOM):

what are you going to do there?

KELLY stops.

KIT (AW):

i said
i am going home

KELLY start.

KIT (AW):

i said
maybe ten years later when I come back
you'll see another Picasso!

my mother was so surprised

so were my classmates

JESSICA starts fist phrase.

they all laughed

i was so naive
but i had so much confidence

i left because the activists
from our same group
were put in jail

i left because the accusation was that
they were spies for the West
which was total nonsense

i left because the leaders for the
Democratic Movement
were put in jail for thirteen years

i left because

*KELLY & JESSICA into still standing
posture.*

we knew all these people

and we all got absolutely mad
and even scared -

you know,
this nation has no hope

ADRIEL city soundscape ends.

ACT 2
Scene 2

[VIDEO: ANDY WARHOL / POP ART]

*ADRIEL Velvet Underground. KELLY grabs
center mic lowers level to DSR mic.
JESSICA takes mic USL and adjusts to high
level on chair. KIT moves third mic by
table. JESSICA & KIT become art teacher
and student.*

KELLY (AW):

i was a self-funded student
cash was tight

at the very beginning
i studied English

i was so sure i would spend my whole life
in New York

i told people this was the last place
i would be for the rest of my time
(even though i was just in my twenties)

i enrolled at Parsons

my teacher was Sean Scully

he liked Jasper Johns who had a show
at Leo Castelli at the time

i survived by doing any kind of work
my English was quite bad

KIT & JESSICA (alternating, overlapping)

gardening
housekeeping
carpentry

framing
printing
babysitting
sketching

KIT & JESSICA resume being art teacher and student.

KELLY (AW):

the first book i read was
The Philosophy of Andy Warhol:
(From A to B and Back Again)

i loved that book

the language is so simple and beautiful

understand him and you will understand the
United States

ADRIEL stops Velvet Underground. KIT & JESSICA freeze.

ADRIEL (ANDY WARHOL):

What's great about this country is that
America started the tradition where the
richest consumers buy essentially the
same things as the poorest. You can be
watching TV and see Coca Cola, and you
know that the President drinks Coca Cola,
Liz Taylor drinks Coca Cola, and just
think, you can drink Coca Cola too.

[VIDEO: EAST VILLAGE ART]

ACT 2
Scene 3

Jason violin begins. JESSICA takes high mic. KIT & KELLY play follow the leader for this scene.

JESSICA (AW):

you had to attend those galleries
and also the East Village

there was such a big mix and also a
struggle

you started asking yourself
what kind of artist
you wanted to be

i became a fan of Johns
and then I got introduced to Duchamp's
thinking

which was my introduction to modern and
contemporary
histories like Dada and Surrealism

i was so fascinated with that period
and of course what was going on in New
York

after Duchamp, I realized that being an
artist is more about a lifestyle and
attitude than producing some product

[VIDEO: ATLANTIC CITY]

there was a period when I liked playing
cards
and i went to Atlantic City a few times
every week

over those two years, i sat in a car
and set my record for intercity travel

gliding between these two cities
about two hundred times

why?

because it was my desire

ACT 2
Scene 4

KELLY & JESSICA cross upstage to table and chair. They lean against the table. KIT crosses to center mic, and takes mic off stand, comes to edge of stage and does pattern off-stage.

KIT (AW):

i dropped out of school
but stayed in New York

i gave up my legal status

because i knew i was going to stay here
forever

so i became an illegal alien
i did all sorts of work just to survive

but at the same time
i knew i was an artist

it became like a symbolic thing
to be an artist

but i wasn't making much

[VIDEO: EARLY ART - DUCHAMP HANGER]

my first sculpture in 1983
if you can call it sculpture

later

a coat hanger
to make Duchamp's profile*

[VIDEO: EARLY ART - VIOLIN]

violins*

[VIDEO: EARLY ART - RAINCOAT]

condoms attached to an army raincoat*

it was about safe sex because
everybody was so scared about AIDS

people had just recognized the
disease
and had far more fear than knowledge
about it

[VIDEO: EARLY ART - MAOS]

i did those Maos*

those were the last paintings I did
it was somehow like saying goodbye to the
old times

i did the group over a very short period
then i just gave up painting altogether

i moved about ten times in ten years in
New York -

every time i moved
i had to throw away all those works

ACT 2
Scene 5

[VIDEO: NEW YORK PHOTOS (1ST SET)]

*ADRIEL photo click soundscape. KIT, KELLY,
JESSICA looking at photos onscreen.*

JESSICA (AW):

i started taking photos when I gave up
painting

there were only fifty top artists at that
time
with Julian Schnabel and those people

i had to attend all those openings and
those galleries
and I knew there was no chance for me

so i started to take a lot of photos
thousands of photos
mostly in black and white

[VIDEO: NEW YORK PHOTOS (2ND SET)]

JESSICA pauses to watch.

i didn't even develop them until ten years
later

taking photos is like breathing

it becomes a part of you

it's just like drawing

it's an exercise about what you see
and how you record it

and to not use your hands but rather
your vision and your mind

ADRIEL Photoclick soundscape ends.

[VIDEO: WITTGENSTEIN HOUSE]

*JESSICA sits down. KIT & KELLY build house
over her.*

i was in Wisconsin with a group of young
Chinese poets
on a poetry-reading tour

i went to a bookstore and found a book
called
The Wittgenstein House

you know, the philosopher

he built a house for his sister in Vienna

because i liked his writing
i was fascinated by the book

he was so precise
he controlled the architecture so clearly

Wittgenstein said that

bad architects always try
to do everything that's possible

while good ones try
to eliminate the possibilities

ACT 2
Scene 6

[VIDEO: ALLEN GINSBERG]

JASON violin. KIT & JESSICA sit on table.
KELLY crosses to DSR mic.

KELLY (AW):

i first met Allen Ginsberg at St. Mark's
Church

annually we would have this poetry reading

and i saw this old man come up
and noticed that everybody respected him

and then he read some long poems about
China

JASON (ALLEN GINSBERG):

In nineteen hundred forty-nine
China was won by Mao Tse-tung
Chiang Kai Shek's army ran away

They were waiting there in Thailand
yesterday

Supported by the CIA

Pushing junk down Thailand way

First they stole from the Meo Tribes

Up in the hills they started taking bribes
Then they sent their soldiers up to Shan
Collecting opium to send to The Man

Pushing junk in Bangkok yesterday

Supported by the CIA

KELLY (AW):

so I thought this was interesting

when he came down from the stage
he passed me and he realized that I was
Chinese

and we started to talk and it turned out
that he had been to China and met my
father

he was very affected by that

we chatted for a long time
and became very close

he often invited me
to give poetry readings

and i remember two Christmases
or New Year's Days

that we spent together

he'd come to my apartment
and read his long poems to me

JASON (ALLEN GINSBERG):

angelheaded hipsters burning for the
ancient heavenly connection to the starry
dynamo in the machinery of night,

KELLY (AW):

it was very interesting

ACT 2
Scene 7

[VIDEO: TIANANMEN SQUARE]

ADRIEL booming in background sounds.
KELLY, KIT, JESSICA frozen, watching until
British broadcaster speaks -

TOM BROKAW:

Good afternoon once again everyone, or now
what is the middle of the night in China.
It is very early on a Tuesday morning in
Beijing, and it's fair to say that the
capital city is still up for grabs. The
army is controlling a portion of it. Will
the people prevail? And many of the
neighborhood -

REPORTER #1:

China in crisis.

BRITISH BROADCASTER:

On the streets leading down to the main
road to Tiananmen Square, furious people
stared at disbelief at the glow in the
sky, listening to the sound of shots.
Heading down the road was a hazardous

business, but hundreds of people cheered
as buses were set alight, and army trucks
caught fire too. They yelled or shouted,
but then as troop lorries were seen moving
down the road. There was gunfire from
those lorries.

[AUDIO: FORGET JUNE 4TH]

Tiananmen Square Manipulation movement
phrase.

KELLY (AW VOICEOVER):

let us forget june fourth
forget that day with no special
significance

life has taught us that every day
under totalitarianism is the same day

all totalitarian days are one day
there is no day two
there was no yesterday and is no tomorrow

forget those soldiers firing on civilians
the tank wheels crushing the bodies of
students
the bullets whilsting down streets and the
bloodshed

the city and the square that didn't shed
tears

forget the endless lies
the leaders in power who insist that
everyone must forget
forget their weaknesses wickedness and
ineptitude

you surely will forget
they must be forgotten
they can exist only when they are
forgotten
for our own survival
let us forget

ACT 2
Scene 8

JASON violin riff begins.

ADRIEL soundscape

*KELLY, KIT, JESSICA restore mics to v
formation from the top of the act.*

*KELLY & JESSICA begin no vision, no voice
phrase into mic.*

KIT (AW):

my father's illness is what brought me
back
from the United States

i didn't have a good relationship with my
family
there was some distance

the question was
if I had to go back

this was the moment

i was just wandering around

i didn't have much to do

and after a while it became very difficult
because I was so young

on the one hand you want to do something
to be somebody
but at the same time you realize it's
almost impossible

economically and culturally

it was an excuse for me to go back to
China
and to take a look

because for the past twelve years

i hadn't written back home
and had never visited

so in 1993

i made a decision
and just packed everything

and moved back

in the dozen or so years

i was trifling around in the United States
i was never able to integrate completely
in its framework

upon returning to Beijing
i am still an outsider

REFLECTION POEM: ACROSS THE COLD SEA...

*JASON begins violin. KIT, KELLY, JESSICA
re-arrange mics to CS mash-up formation.
JESSICA solo sequence.*

KELLY:

Across the cold sea,
Along the winding highways,
A city with many boroughs and buildings,
Welcome you to a maze of dead ends.

KIT:

Across the cold sea,
Along the winding highways,
A city with many boroughs and buildings,
Welcome you to a maze of dead ends.

KIT & KELLY:

Across the cold sea,
Along the winding highways,
A city with many boroughs and buildings,
Welcome you to a maze of dead ends.

Grid locked traffic below,
Gray skies above,
Cloud big dreams,
You hear, "I have no idea how to get to
where I wanted to go..."

City chatter:

KELLY:

people move to New York

KELLY & KIT:

and blow up

KELLY:

The artist who was so successful two years
before,

KELLY & KIT:

was no longer making art

KELLY:

We watch queer and poc artists to garner
inspiration

KIT:

An endless opportunity to hear people
because of how many voices live here.
A pressure cooker of souls,

ALL:

The pressure to "make it" to "not fail"
and to "not give up."

KELLY:

rehearsals during the day, and coming home
laying in an old bathtub at night, the
grit collecting beneath skin.

JESSICA:

Take a shift or perform for free?

KIT:

The horns are like the sound of drums.

KELLY:

Reminding you to move quickly,
people move to New York and learn to
hustle constantly trying out new things.
They find the fatigue of being a working
artist.

old school Chinatown activists with
attitude, sass, and experiences to match,
Remind us that there is soil under cement,

KIT & KELLY:

That this is still land.

ALL:

All the workers are missing home.
But people from home don't understand you.

KIT:

When the bell stops ringing,
The stocks stop trading,
And the taxis break for midnight meals,

ALL:

We are watching
Because New York jams us together.

**CREATOR INTERVIEWS: ACTIVISM & SOCIAL
MEDIA**

*[VIDEO: CREATOR INTERVIEWS: ACTIVISM &
SOCIAL MEDIA]*

KELLY:

I have a lot of questions about activism
these days.

KIT:

When I think about protests, I think about
inspiration.

JESSICA:

It's a fight for something you believe in
against someone or some entity that
believes in the opposite.

ADRIEL:

I got involved with activism because I was
a young person looking for a purpose and
activism is all about purpose.

JASON:

I looked on the bulletin board, and I saw
Asian American poetry workshop, and that's
the first time I saw those two words put
together: Asian American. So, I thought,
that's that's me.

KIT:

In college, I used to go to protests with
my professors and the other students and a
lot of them were about queer and trans
rights, and I honestly didn't always know

what I was protesting or why or rallying around, but I did understand those raw impulses to, to do something to be a part of a greater work.

ADRIEL:

It's easier to find yourself if you're in a community that is going for a cause.

JASON:

So, I went there, and I met a lot of people with um, common experiences with myself, and a great passion to uh, assert their cultural identity and their history.

KELLY:

'Cuz I think the uh, internet empowers us more than ever before. There's so much opportunity, and I think that there's a lot of dangers that we're really not aware of quite yet.

JASON:

I think social media, uh, people, um, are able to find each other and create, uh, communities, um, across geographic and national borders.

JESSICA:

I sometimes ask myself the question what is the fight for, uh, because if you judge your success on people changing then that's something really that's completely out of your hands.

KELLY:

What is democracy if the majority of Wikipedia editors are white males, you know? What is democracy if we use our freedom of speech to spew trolling awful Youtube comments, you know, to each other.

ADRIEL:

Sometimes, I would realize that activists were just talking about the politics of politics.

KIT:

Every time I show up, something plants itself inside me saying that my voice can be used for good.

KELLY:

But I guess like every generation before us, we're going to have to make the path by walking it.

TITLE III

[VIDEO: TITLE III]

I don't think that being independent is a bad choice, it means you trust yourself well. - Ai Weiwei

ACT 3 Scene 1

[VIDEO: MAGNOLIAS]

JASON plucking. KELLY sets up mic formation. KIT & JESSICA do falling magnolia motion.

KELLY (AW):

once a month i return to my home
in central Beijing

it is a small courtyard
inside the Second Ring Road

there is a magnolia tree which flowers
every year

before his death

my father's vision had begun to fail

and i would see him counting its buds
over and over

even in the most tumultuous times
flocks of pigeons still fly overhead

no matter how chaotic the outside world
becomes

a return to this yard always finds it
quiet
and ablaze with light

[my father] regained his honour
he was rehabilitated and very popular
again

he became head of a writer's association

and he started to write like young people
do
like a younger man

he was really passionate and a very nice
man

he passed away in 1996
when he was eighty-six years old

ACT 3
Scene 2

[VIDEO: FLASH FUTURE FORWARD]

*KELLY, KIT, JESSICA watch screen. At end
of video, JESSICA grabs mic.*

JESSICA (AW):

no, nothing was planned
the most beautiful things
that ever happened in my life

were by coincidence
and not by plan

and it often happens because
you don't plan

if you have plans
you only have one go

if you don't have plans
it often turns out well
because you've followed
the situation

ACT 3

Scene 3

KIT, KELLY, JESSICA at triangle of mics.

KIT (AW):

after i came back to China
i had nothing to do

i lived with my mother in Beijing
she was too shy to ask me

i didn't have
a degree

almost no money

no property
not married

i sold antique furniture

*[VIDEO: EAST VILLAGE - BEIJING ARTIST
COLONY]*

helped to establish a performance artist
colony beyond Third Ring Road

they lived in migrant worker housing
and named the colony

East Village

they were shut down a year
after they openeed

Ma Liuming was arrested for cooking naked
in the courtyard

*KELLY pushes KIT out of way, steps to the
mic, counter-clockwise rotation.*

KELLY (AW):

many young artists
wanted to talk to me

i thought

why don't we do a book?

there were no galleries
museums
collectors

the book could at least record
basic concepts for future study

or as evidence

the artists sent me
photos of paintings and sculptures

i said
return all those photos

i'm not interested in what you've done
i'm interested in what's in your mind

what's behind those works

at the very beginning
they were not used to it

some knew how to do it

i said

give me one sentence, one word
but it has to be done by you

[VIDEO: BWG BOOKS]

we published the first book
and it became very popular

it sold three thousand copies

there was nothing else to read!

we circulated it underground and got
noticed
by the Public Security Bureau

one of my collaborators dropped out
he was so scared

but we didn't get into much trouble

so we published the second volume

and the third volume

artists began to print their own
catalogues
the political situation got much looser

[VIDEO: ARCHIVES]

*JESSICA pushes KELLY out of way, steps to
the mic, counter-clockwise rotation.*

JESSICA (AW):

we created China Art Archives and
Warehouse in Beijing

the first alternative space for
contemporary art in China

before that all works were sold
in hotel lobbies and framing shops

for tourists and foreign embassies

so we did it

and tried to justify the space and the
institution
to show what was happening

i gathered those people who were in the
previous books
and some new artists and curated another
show

'fuck off' in Shanghai

i realized doing it by myself wasn't
enough

the projects had to be big

and could be much more interesting
and could raise public consciousness

so much more

ACT 3
Scene 4

*JASON begins riff. KELLY at center mic.
KIT & JESSICA downstage - measuring,
building houses movement phrase.*

KELLY (AW):

i didn't start consciously

i decided to have my own studio

so i walked into this village and asked
the owner of the village if i could rent
some land

he said
yes we have land

i said
can i build something

he said
yes you can build

it was illegal
but they didn't care

so i rented the land
and one afternoon

i made some drawings
without even thinking about architecture

i just used measurement for the volume
and proportions and put in a window, a
door

then six days later
we had already finished it

and then i moved in

a lot of magazines noticed

here's this guy who builds

with very limited resources
for a low price by himself

[VIDEO: ARCHITECTURE]

people started asking me to do projects
for them

big commercial projects

i had a chance
and nothing else to do
so i started a practice

i formed this company
FAKE design

in china
the word FAKE is pronounced
fuck

we did about fifty projects
in seven years

all kinds of projects
from urban planning to interior design

ACT 3 **Scene 5**

[VIDEO: BLOG A]

YOU NEED A PURPOSE TO EXPRESS YOURSELF,
BUT THAT EXPRESSION IS ITS OWN PURPOSE. -
AI WEI WEI

*ADRIEL typing soundscape. KELLY & JESSICA
move table DS. KIT sits behind it. KELLY &
JESSICA sit DS at imaginary computers.*

KIT (AW):

[the blog] started by coincidence

Sina Corporation had a plan to set up
blogs
for a group of people

i told them i had never used computers
and i didn't know how to operate them

they said
we can teach you

i realized that it was the best way
to have immediate contact with reality

to throw my private life into the open

the first one had no image

it's kind of weird in the beginning
you really struggle about
why you need to talk to other computers
like this

it's like you throw something into a river

it immediately disappears
but it's in there

and it changes the volume of the river
depending on how many objects are thrown
in

if it had happened earlier

then you wouldn't have seen drawings

by Leonardo da Vinci or Degas

i think they'd all have had cameras

i put up almost 70,000 photos

at least a hundred photos a day
so that they could be shared by

thousands of people

the blog has already been visited by over
4 million people

[VIDEO: BLOG B]

WRITING ONE'S FEELINGS IS SIMPLE BUT CAN
ALSO BE A DIFFICULT THING FOR AT LEAST THE
FOLLOWING REASONS:

1. YOU CAN'T BE SURE THIS IS REALLY WHAT
YOU ARE THINKING.

2. IF YOU WRITE SOMETHING DOWN IT WILL
NEVER BE ANYTHING ELSE.

3. IT'S DIFFICULT TO MAINTAIN A GOOD
WRITER'S POSTURE FROM BEGINNING TO END.

*JESSICA moves into the desk position. Kit
rotates to the floor.*

JESSICA (AW):

i did over 200 pieces of writing and
interviews
which really put me in a critical position

-

you have to write it down

it's black and white and it's in words
and they can see it

so you really have no place to escape

i really love it

i think it's important for you
as a person to exercise to clear out
what you really want to say

maybe you're just empty
but maybe you really have to define this
emptiness

and to be clear

ADRIEL typing sounds end.

i'm often thinking of something
Allen Ginsberg told me

JASON (ALLEN GINSBERG):

the first thought is the best thought

KIT (AW):

i think about how he never had an
opportunity
to use Twitter

i believe that it will ultimately change

the way humans communicate
the way we transmit text and information

the distinctive nature of Twitter
is its promptness and instantaneous
turnaround

it's the opposite of the
pedantry and deep contemplation
of literature

in the Chinese language
140 characters is a novella

it's enough space

Twitter is most suitable for me

i think we have a chance today
to become everything and
nothing at the same time

we can become part of a reality
but we can be totally lost
and not know what to do

ACT 3
Scene 6

[VIDEO: AWW IS MISSING REPORT]

REPORTER #2:

Chinese artist Ai Weiwei was blocked from
taking a flight to Hong Kong and was
detained by police on Sunday. Police later
raided his Beijing studio and his home.
It's not the first time the outspoken
government critic has been prevented from
leaving the country. This comes after a
massive crack-down on dissent since
February, following unrest in the Middle

East and North Africa. Police have refused to explain why Ai was - Ai was - Ai - Ai - Ai was detained.

[AUDIO: YOU PERSISTENTLY DELETE]

KIT & KELLY circling face-off. JESSICA truth solo under pressure of the circle.

JESSICA (AW VOICEOVER):

you persistently delete
so i'll just repost

words can be deleted
but the facts won't be deleted along with them

this process will be repeated for a long time

until the day arrives when we evolve
and facts and truth are no longer important
to everyday life

so we can forget as we please

we are living in an era
that is completely different

than any before

this era will ruin all the former

systems
powers
centers of discourse

and thus produce a complete system

via digitization

the relationship between individuals
and the system of rights

will see fundamental change

**ACT 3
Scene 7**

[VIDEO: AWW STILL HERE]

AI WEIWEI:

I think uh, yes, you have to be uh, honest to fix the condition and to try to find some kind of solution or to live with it. So, your expression has to deal with it. I think as a, as a result I would accept people who think that I am very political, but that was not the intention. I think if somebody questioning about the reality or truth or facts, always becomes a political act.

KIT, KELLY, JESSICA move table and chair back upstage, but mics in final CS formation.

REFLECTION POEM: I WAS BORN INTO A TIME...

KIT:

I was born into a time when what is temporarily real and permanently a dream are one in the same,
And I have sculpted clay,

Shaped metal bars,
Sifted pearls through my finger tips,
And cut the ancient wood into many pieces,
Searching for something to hold onto as
these objects become art, become studies,

become critique.

In my voice, you can hear,
The blood shed of a strong and sturdy
people.
You can see, on these screens,
Worn out streets,
Beat with the tread of a billion feet,
And this show is just an imprint of all
that is mighty in the cry for justice.

KIT & KELLY:

You and I are the same person,
We have hands, mouths, bellies, tongues,
We eat and shit and tire out,
We fight and struggle day to day to find a
beauty that can carry us into tomorrow.

KIT, JESSICA, KELLY:

In this hall we are a great poem,
Writing itself as we breathe,
Making a history for us to remember.
In this hall we are bending time,

Standing still for cause and cure,
Asking these chairs, this stage, these
walls to become a space.

ALL:

So where are you headed?
Who has helped you believe?

KELLY:

What is your protest?
What are your seeds?

TITLE IV

[VIDEO: TITLE IV]

Creativity is the power to reject the
past, to change the status quo and to seek
new potential - creativity is the power to
act. - Ai Weiwei

THE END