

AI WEIWEI'S BLOG TEXTS' SELECTION (2005-2009)

Photography

Once photography has broken away from its original function as a technique or means for documentation, it is merely a fleeting state of existence that has been transformed into one possible reality. It is this transformation that makes photography a kind of movement and gives it its distinctive significance: it is merely one type of existence. Life is merely an indisputable fact, and the production of an alternate reality is another kind of truth that shares no genuine relationship to reality. Both are waiting for something miraculous to occur- the re-examination of reality. As an intermediary, photography is a medium endlessly pushing life and perceived actions toward this unfamiliar conflict.

Posted on January 16, 2006; written on July 25, 2003.

Chinese Contemporary Art in Dilemma and Transition

The lives of Chinese artists are marked by remarkable multiplicity and confusion, change and disorder, doubt and destructiveness, a loss of self and the emptiness that follows, hopelessness and its accompanying pleasures. Reflection on and exploration into China's politics, her history and culture, into the individual and the collective, reform, the authenticity of the self, repentance, spirituality, sex, the West, material wealth, art, and methodology are now commonly seen in artworks.

Posted on February 4, 2006.

On Photography

Photography is a deceitful and dangerous medium; and medium is method, it is significance, a ubiquitous feast of hope, or a hopelessly impassable ditch. In the end, photography is unable to either record or express reality, it rejects the authenticity of the reality that it presents, making reality even more remote and distant from us. People from East Asia are inclined toward another possible aesthetic attitude: they rarely see artistic activities as a means for understanding, or they rarely show an interest in this topic; instead, the process of achieving understanding itself and the means of expressing this understanding are seen as the ultimate essence. This essence is precisely our mental outlook on the world, and as for the reality of the outside world, that is even more of an illusion.

Posted on February 11, 2006

The Longest Road

China still lacks a modernist movement of any magnitude, for the basis of such a movement would be the liberation of humanity and the illumination brought by the humanitarian spirit. Democracy, material wealth, and universal education are the soil upon which modernism exists. For a developing China, these are merely idealistic pursuits.

Modernism is the questioning of traditional humanitarian thought and a critical reflection on the human condition. Any other art movement that does not belong to this modernist culture is generally shallow, or lacking in spiritual value. As for activities lacking intellectual value, or creations that deviate from or appear to be modernist, these are but superficial imitations.

Posted on February 23, 2006; written in November 1997

A World without Honor

Insidious victories, idiotic celebrations, and ignorant insolence are revolting, but, after all, we can choose to look the other way. What we'll never see are the losers and their lifetimes of enduring shame and an inescapable, chaotic world. In such a dangerous place, ignorance and hypocrisy always win.

Posted on May 4, 2006; written on April 23, 2006.

Ideal Cities and in Architecture Do Not Exist

An uproar is raging over the issue of preserving ancient architecture. On one hand, this is a reaction to ruthless development, and on the other, it is the need to create an urban identity that any competitive city must put forward, at least to attract economic growth. When most people bring up the issue of tradition, they have not declared exactly what culture we are protecting- what is tradition? China's understanding of culture has stalled at what is currently a very superficial level. It's a question of simple benefits, which cannot have any benefits for the protection of Chinese culture, and thus the "altering" of ancient architecture is not much better than its "destruction".

Posted on May 24, 2006.

Documenting the Unfamiliar – Self and the Non-Self: Rong Rong & Inri

Photography appears to be the most unreliable medium of all; it's so intimate with life, yet the furthest manifestation of it. It forces us to believe, tempts us to re-envision and to create a world that can never exist. It seems to be the most authentic, with what we call a vision and reasonable logic of its own. It tells us what the world is like now and what it was like in the past. We all willingly believe that our memories require evidence, and such a piece of evidence is the path to our next actions; or perhaps it is a trap or an obstacle.

Posted on Nov 15, 2006.

Standards and Practical Jokes

The Ministry of Culture is the department that least understands culture; it's impossible for them to have any relationship with culture. This is a universal principle of the universe, and the great tragedy of Chinese culture. Apparently, our Ministry of Culture isn't only incapable of managing culture, it could use some refresher lessons on the subject as well: the Olympic insignia is just a logo; if people aren't using it for profit, it is not a copyright infringement. The Olympics are for the entire populace- if someone wants to tweak the logo, go ahead and alter it. We're lucky enough just to have people with enough creativity to play practical jokes.

Posted on January 17, 2007.

We Have Nothing

One night, at a dinner party, I made the comment that we live in the era most lacking in creativity, but that comment was made rather hastily. I almost never use the word “creativity”. Rather, I am more inclined to use “fantasy,” “suspicion,” “discovery,” “subversion,” or “criticism,” words whose accumulated capacity, in my opinion, define creativity. These are the fundamental requirements, or very substance, of life. They are indispensable.

Posted on January 30, 2008.

Grief

Silence please. No clamor. Let the dust settle, let the dead rest.

Extending a hand to those caught in trouble, rescuing the dying, and helping the injured is a form of humanitarianism, unrelated to love of country or people. Do not belittle the value of life; it commands a broader, more equal dignity.

Posted on May 22, 2008

Sacrifice

A nation without spiritual beliefs is a fearless nation, and here we lack genuine mourning. There is no misery that this nation cannot extricate itself from, and likewise no moral accountability or ethical doubt. The relentless simulation of peace and prosperity, blindly singing their praises while shamelessly concealing the truth, will ultimately make for sobering dizziness and ignorance, and true hypocrisy will eventually become a ruthless and severe part of reality. Until the day when misfortune becomes the norm, this land will never again see such a disaster; misfortune has already been deeply impressed in everyone's hearts. This land is calamity in itself.

Posted on June 4, 2008.

Endless Surprise

An ideal civil society would resist and eliminate the will of centralized power, and would pin down and fragment power structures. Limited political rights in China result in consortiums, labor unions, and religious organizations with no real significance. Without a balance of or restrictions on power structures and without dissident voices, everything is a return to the Soviet era and leads to absolute corruption and impotence. Civil rights are laid to waste and a culture of ideals has collapsed, thus resulting in the fact that when China is confronted with competition, it is impossible to sustain the courage, responsibility, ideals, and identity that such a large nation ought to possess.

Posted on July 10, 2008

Does the Nation Have a List?

How many people were actually killed and wounded in the Wenchuan earthquake?

How did they perish, and who should shoulder the blame?

Confronted with this question, the responsible Ministry of Education and Ministry of Architecture are refusing to answer; they want to eternally play dead.

Posted on July 28, 2008

Why Violence?

Stone Age techniques have once again been put into extensive use. How dignified must people be and what kind of moral character must people have in order to hurl stones at a loaded machine gun?

People unprotected by the constitution have no legal status, so how can people with no legal standing possibly use “lawful channels”? They are bleeding just to obtain access to those “lawful channels” – if they were waiting for any day, it would be the day that “lawful channels” might be established. If there were lawful channels, these people wouldn’t be demonstrating.

Posted on November 22, 2008

Stimulating Domestic Introspection

Meddling with blogs and censoring comments is just a universal reminder of who the blog host really is on this patch of land. Although the government is not liberal or decent, it can't be criticized. The lack of freedom of expression and the absence of public debate are old habits; it's just that this makes blogging a little less interesting.

Posted on December 30, 2008.

Citizen Investigation

They say the death of the students has nothing to do with them. They say it was inevitable, unavoidable, and that experts have demonstrated this. They close their mouths and do not discuss corruption, they avoid the tofu-dregs engineering. They conceal the facts, and in the name of “stability,” they persecute, threaten, and imprison the parents of these deceased children who are demanding to know the truth. They flagrantly violate the constitution and trample on people’s fundamental rights.

Posted on March 20, 2009.

How Could We Have Degenerated to This?

Without individual voices or the free exchange of information, neither the people nor the proletariat can exist, and there can be no common interests for humanity; you cannot exist. Authentic societal transformation can never be achieved in such a place because the first step in social transformation is to regain the power of freedom of speech. A society lacking freedom of speech is a dark, bottomless pit. When it's this dark, everything begins to look bright.

Posted on May 16, 2009.

Don't Harbor Illusions about Me

What I want to illustrate is: as a human, I feel compelled to uphold my rights. No one should provoke me. I've tolerated your deleting my blog, I've tolerated your wiretapping my phone, I've tolerated your monitoring my residence. However, I am unable to tolerate your charging into my home and Threatening me in front of my seventy-six-year-old mother. I am unable to tolerate plainclothes officers secretly trailing me and threatening my safety. You don't understand human rights, but you ought to have heard of the constitution, right?

Posted on May 28, 2009

I'm Ready

Reject cynicism, reject cooperation, reject fear, and reject tea drinking, there is nothing to discuss. It's the same old saying: don't come looking for me again. I won't cooperate. If you must come, bring your instruments of torture with you.

Posted on May 28, 2009.