

AI WEI WEI'S NEW YORK PHOTOGRAPHS 1983 – 1993

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In the midst of [the artist] being missing, the desire for anything Ai Wei Wei-an was intense. In the wake of his detention by the Chinese authorities, there was a mass clamor to exhibit anything, to have a taste of just anything that would reveal another intimate slice of his life. Not only has his work admirably challenged the politically stifling environment of Beijing-- and China for that matter-- but Ai has risen as a public figure who embodies the struggle for creative expression. After his recent and much celebrated liberation, the public is still eager to ingest the work of Ai Wei Wei--

Courtesy of the Three Shadows Photography Art Centre and Chambers Fine Art, the collection of photographs currently exhibited at the Asia Society shares stories of Ai's decade in New York. It is a peek into his social life during his mid 20s to mid 30s—moments with director Chen Kaige, composer Tan Dun, poet Allen Ginsberg, artist Xu Bing, amongst other cultural figures. The black and white photographs are a mix of portraits of friends, outings in the City, encounters with the Pyramid Club and with downtown clashes with the police. Most are shot from his hands, although occasional photographs feature a youthful Ai staring defiantly back at the camera lens.

On view at the Asia Society until August 14, 2011

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<http://asiasociety.org/aiweiwei>

