

# Ai Weiwei and Francis Alÿs: The power of explicitness and implicitness in contemporary political art

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## Abstract

The 21st century witnessed a closer relationship between art and politics, yet at the same time, artists were given more independence from direct political influence. In this context, artists have become political powers in their own right. At the same time, globalization has supported the itineration of cultural workers from various cultural backgrounds. The political art approach under the new order can be classified as either explicit or implicit, according to their different initial political purpose and the artistic language used to fulfil it. This essay aims to examine the characters of these two approaches by analysing leading figures Ai Weiwei and Francis Alÿs, respectively, comparing the artistic value and political influence of their influential projects. The research and analysis indicate that the implicit approach in political art exerts more significant influence and has more potential value, because of its true independence from ideological and political conflict and its unlimited influence in different cultural contexts.

## **Final Studies: Statement of Originality**

(Student to complete)

The ideas and words in this study are my own, except where specific attribution is made to another source. All sources of information, ideas and quotations are given in conformity with standard academic procedure.

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## Introduction

"The isomorphism of art and politics" ("艺术与政治同构") (Gao, 2004) is a basic trend of the modern and contemporary movements. Andy Warhol interpreted and expressed the prosperity of American capitalism society; Bruce Springsteen performed by the Berlin Wall in East Berlin was a forerunner to the Wall coming down and the reunification of Germany the year later; Guerrilla Girls produced posters fighting for more female power in the art world. Entering the 21st century under the wave of globalization, the establishment of the global art market and academic system have been building a transnational platform that is placing the art world in a "semi-autonomous" (Maria, 2016) stage from the current political climate. It has also united cultural workers from different cultural backgrounds for artistic debates on different approaches and methods, bringing abundant viewpoints and visual languages into the art practice. Based on this expansive background, artists nowadays are independent powers in the political world, finding angles "re-entering" politics by participating in, commenting on, interfering with the socio-political movement, collecting "with their sources in lived experience" (Lippard, 1984).

This essay will discuss the ideas and purpose for artists to compose political art nowadays. Two different approaches to political art are emerging nowadays: one has a sense of explicitness, believing in artists' right and obligation to activate social and political reforms and voice their political beliefs through their art, by

transmitting their political beliefs and directly organizing social events or interfering in social confrontation and protest. The other view believes that art should have an "implicit" effect on political reality. This includes the notion that art is still the "representation of an outer reality" (Sontag, 1966), and art should still keep a sense of ambiguity towards political issues.

Ai Weiwei and Francis Alÿs are two outstanding examples of artists whose works can help to address this topic. Firstly, their approaches to political art are poles apart, and they are leading figures of the two tendencies mentioned; Secondly, as non-westerners working in the western art circle, their main focus and concern are all on socio-political movements in their motherland, China and Mexico. This essay will analyse the basic artistic features in their artworks, including the purposes of their artistic activities, and how they function in their political contexts, considering the artists both separately and in comparison.

## 1 Ai Weiwei

The key to understand Ai Weiwei as an artist and his artworks, is to understand his thoughts as a social activist. The theory of artists' work as activism has been discussed and developed within the term Art Activism. The general definition of Art Activism "is to create art that is a form of political or social currency, actively addressing cultural power structures" (Tate, no date). It believes in art's ability to interfere, affect directly, or even change political situations, instead of

"representing them or simply describing them" (Tate, no date), and by doing that, art needs to be practised in various areas. Therefore, art is not limited to galleries and exhibition rooms but is made into events, investigations, social activities and projects. Here, the medium is social interaction, and the art is activated by human involvement.

Activist Art operates its political power against the mainstream political forces in a society instead of supporting or serving them as in the old times. Art Activism, as itself, is a "renewed sense of the power of culture" (Lippard, 1984) towards politics. Furthermore, under the current democratic ideological consensus in most societies, artists have been given political and cultural "empowerment" (Lippard, 1984) to work on changing conditions, to "subvert" the current political situations for fulfilling social and political goals for themselves or their community, pursuing their beliefs for "sensuous recognition" (Lippard, 1984).

Based on this background, activist artists stand for certain beliefs politically and socially, aiming to practice and promote these notions in society. This purpose requires a particular form of artistic language. According to Jean Fisher, activist art "is a persuasion of clarity of transmission, which means that the language is used must be unambiguous and already commonly understand; that is, there is an assumption that words and images are directly communicable" (Fisher, 2007).

That is, activist artworks are looking more or less like a poster with strong slogans and design; a documentary of a protest; or even the protest itself.

Ai Weiwei is a firm believer in Art Activism. Throughout his career, he has travelled between East and West, strengthening or propagating the value of freedom and liberation of individuals in the world. His work and practice reflect his investigations and comments on misjudged incidents, his voiced discontent for moments when political power suppresses individuals and his concerns for the malfunction of the social and political mechanism. He shows that "art can be an effective tool for activism, and activism can be an effective medium for art" (Lentz *et al.*, 2020). According to him, "Everything is art. Everything is politics" (Lentz *et al.*, 2020). His ideas for making art and holding artistic activities are a means to express political aspirations and achieve political goals.

Ai Weiwei's condition of being an art activist is unique. As an artist, his influence is almost entirely in the West culturally and politically because the value in his activism find echoes in the West. As a social activist, he has already adapted to "Western art circles and human right communities" (Sorace, 2014), whose ideology is firmly against the value of social and political mechanism found in China. As a result, for most of the time, his artistic activities, including social events and exhibitions, face resistance in the country in which he wants to

activate social and political changes. At the same time, he is treated as a celebrity in the West, as a hero fighting for an ideology they agree on.

This is significantly affecting the way how Ai Weiwei create and present his political work. Like most activist art, there is a repetitive usage of direct, strong, easy-to-understand artistic languages. For examples, his early photographed series, *Dropping a Han Dynasty Urn* (1995), *1994.6* (1994), and *Study of Perspective* (2003), straight-forwardly expressed strong emotions of discontent and distrust by smashing a valuable ancient Urn, let his wife raise her skirt showing her underwear in front of Mao Zedong's portrait and present his middle finger to Tiananmen square. On top of that, classical, widely-known Chinese cultural elements in his work, like Chinese traditional building parts, sunflower seeds, Chinese-brand bicycles, not only for their direct directivity on the topic, but also providing their already-existed cultural information for the material of interpretation. At the same time, they are also creating an exotic aura, a "fresh visual experience" ("新鲜的视觉经验") (Peng, 2008) for audiences out of China.





Fig.1 Ai Weiwei, *Study of Perspective-Tiananmen Square*, 1995-2003, gelatin silver print, 38.9 x 59cm, Museum of Modern Art, New York.



Fig.2 Ai Weiwei, *Fragment*, 2005, Iron wood (tieli wood) table, chairs, parts of beams and pillars from dismantled temples of the Qing Dynasty, 500 x 850 x 700 cm, M+Sigg Collection, Hong Kong.

Ai Weiwei is good at constructing a sense of immediacy for his audiences.

Christian Sorace in his article *China's Last Communist: Ai Weiwei* described Ai's life in China as an "open-ended experimental performance piece", "one might say that Chinese state is the genuine artist and Ai only a curator. (2014) His work is more like a documentary, an artistic reaction of his experience and struggle as an object of intervention, an anomaly in "state's biopolitical governance" (Sorace, 2014), and showcase it to audiences outside China. He made marble cast of cameras surrounding his Beijing studio complaining of being watched; he live-streamed to the world of the process of demolishing his Shanghai studio that was just built in 2011. Later in his installation *Souvenir from Shanghai* (2012), he used the parts from destroyed studio building to bury a Qing Dynasty bed frame to mesmerize this incident; In his project *With Flowers* (2013-2015), he put some flower around the entrance of his Beijing Studio every day during his time that he could not travel freely. This is all providing easy access for an empathy effect for sympathizing his suffering, and then stand and support his activism.



Fig.3 Ai Weiwei, *Souvenir from Shanghai*, 2012, Concrete and brick rubble from the artist's destroyed Shanghai studio, set in a wooden frame, 380 x 170 x 260 cm, Royal Academy of Arts, London.

## 2 Francis Alÿs

Unlike Ai Weiwei's passion for actively participating in Art Activism, Francis Alÿs has been cautious keeping the distance between art and politics. He is "uncommonly attentive to ... the limitations even, of art's facture" (Herbert, 2007). He includes a text with the performance piece *the green line* (2004) which directly questions art as social activism:

Among all these--Can an artistic intervention truly being about an unforeseen way of thinking, or is it more a matter of creating aa sanitation of "meaninglessness" that shows the absurdity of the situation? Furthermore, in

any case, how can art remain politically significant without assuming a doctrinal standpoint or aspiring to become social activism? (Herbert, 2007)

It is interesting to consider Alj's alternative approach to political art. His works are mainly his video-recorded performances in various contexts: Pushing a big ice cube around downtown Mexico City until it melted; walking around the street holding a pistol until that he got realized and caught; filming the incident that he got stumbled by a dog from various angles. His existence in his work is not a necessary option. In some cases, he even step behind his projects and became an organizer or a director. The language in Alj's work is implicit, and restrained, the social and political implication of his work is hiding "behind the ambiguity of metaphors" (Herbert, 2007). Different from Ai Weiwei, wherever he travelled, he was cautious selecting local cultural elements and materials, on the contrary, he played around the obvious, universal meaning of the imagery in his work, like the gradually gathering soldiers in *Guards* (2004-2005), and the fox wandering around the gallery in *The Nightwatch* (2004). By locating and "weaving" these elements into the realistic, visionally, geopolitical context of the venue, they became "containers" of the local reality, collecting to its past and future. It is value is its "capacity to 'put meaning on trial'"... "new insight and configuration of reality can emerge" (Fisher, 2007), which is, description mentioned in most introductions of Francis: "poetic".



Fig.4 Francis Alÿs, *The Nightwatch*, 2004, Video, 19min, Tate, London.

Like Ai Weiwei, his life experience is "globalized". Alÿs was born and grew up in Belgium. After his education, he returned to his motherland Mexico as an architect and started his self-thought artistic practice. This multiple identity (Mexican and European) has put him into a stage where his is not firmly collected or belongs to any of these cultural context or ideology, his status towards Mexico and Latin America as "an outsider", or a "tourist" (Weston, 2018) has provided his a unique angle observing, and recording political and social movements.

The analysis of these two artists above revealed the cause of the sense of explicitness and implicitness in political art:

explicitness has shown in every aspect of Ai Weiwei's purpose of making art. It rooted in the activism nature of his art, which is its needs for direct commenting and intervention into political situations. Throughout his artistic career, he has been continuously narrating the reality in China "from his perspective" to audience outside China. He inserts himself to Chinese social and political mechanism and use himself as an example to reflect the struggle of individuals and oppression from "above" under the current Chinese system. He always hopes to change China's political reality alone. As an influential dissident in China, he is active in public to attract more followers, such as blogging, commenting on current affairs, investigating incidents such as police bullying or misfunctioned governance. Became a figure the government aimed at; he was then becoming a heroic figure for people who hold a similar view. In the West, his works were understood as "an echo of Western multiparty democracy and liberal ideals", and "an icon of liberalism and multiparty democracy" (Sorace, 2014), a celebrity, a hero who fight for value they agree with. Rely on his enormous popularity, he even promotes his political view directly in public.

His explicit artistic language is the external manifestation of the political mission of his art. In his artwork, it is obvious that there is less "artistic process" but more

sense of power of authentic and straightforwardness, which carries direct message he wanted to convey to viewers. For example, in most of his installation work like *Template* (2007), *Forever* (2013), and *Sunflower Seeds* (2010), you will see the repetitiveness of artistic and cultural elements structured in a space, like traditional Chinese windows, Chinese brand bicycles, and ceramic sunflower seeds. At the same time, his ability to document, transform, and describe his very own experience lively through various media is creating an entrance for audiences to empathize.



Fig.5 Ai Weiwei, *Forever*, 2003, installation of 42 bicycles, 275 x 450 cm, Art Gallery of NSW, Sydney.

Implicitness is Francis Alÿs' artistic approach to politics. His early experience has given him a unique "outsider" perspective on observing and analysing politics. This is making the mission of his art "lies beyond the transmission of mere information" (Fisher, 2007). His art is not searching for "ready to be discovered" truth, but to "response to a world and a self in a continuous state of transformation (Fisher, 2007). For example, in his recent work produced in Middle East countries like *color matching* (2016), *reel / unreel* (2011), *watercolour* (2010), you cannot find any trace of imagery that was used by most cultural products about the Middle East: cruel battleground, children crying, and how many people lost their lives every day. However, just mixture of bright colours on the palettes became earthly-yellow, Iranian kids happily push and chasing a roll of film in the ancient neighbourhood, or mixing the waters of the Black Sea into the Red Sea. These indirect imageries are intended to awake people's memories about the socio-political development and crisis with humanistic care, to "induce in its interlocutor a momentary loss of control of meaning from which a new insight and configuration of reality can emerge" (Fisher, 2007). His political consciousness broke away from any presupposed elitism viewpoint, quoting his word: "without assuming a doctrinal standpoint" to remain politically significant (Herbert, 2007).





Fig.6 Francis Alÿs, *Color Matching*, 2016, video, 5.01min, Francis Alÿs.

Implicitness is also reflected in the poetic nature of his artistic language. In his video documents of his performance and social event, audiences will see a real, local landscape geographically and socially as a context though "semi documentary" (Herbert, 2007) narrative of the video. The artist or volunteers were performing like ordinary everyday-basis actions: walking a toy dog, trying to drive an old Beetle car to the top of a steep road, or holding a leaking green paint can along the "Green Line" of the Palestinian-Israeli border. In the process, the poetic style was so produced: "to endure contextual strain", "though not unquestionably real, the second staged-something similar occurs to issues of authenticity". (Herbert, 2007)



Fig.7 Francis Alÿs, *El Ensayo*, 1999-2001, video, 29:34min, Francis Alÿs.

Explicitness and implicitness represent two different approaches of the participation of the two artists' in political activities. Ai Weiwei is a representation of political artists who develop his practice under the general trend of cultural democracy in the western society. Supported by the experience of western art activist for more than half a century. Political posters and photography in Paris May 68; paintings created by black artists in the black art movement; the statue of "Goddess of Democracy" built by Chinese students in Beijing, 1989. More and more artists appear in the political movement and demonstration nowadays, becoming the most active figure to "struggle " for a higher value of humankind.



Fig.8 Lubaina Himid, *Between the Two my Heart in Balanced*, 1991, acrylic paint on canvas, 1218 x 1524 x 27mm, Tate, St Ives.

At the same time, Francis Alÿs represents the more "restrained", conservative art power in politics. They are keeping their autonomous state toward political currency, observing politics and social issues from a higher perspective. Western masters Andy Warhol and Robert Rauschenberg pictured the essence of western Capitalism, and summarized political and social ecology of American society during Cold War; Chinese contemporary artists who start their practice simultaneously with Ai Weiwei like Xu Bing and Zhang Huan who pictured Chinese social landscape and development in their work show strong humane emotion to their people.



Fig.9 Zhang Huan, *To Raise the Water Level in a Fishpond*, 1997, photo record of the performance, 101.6 × 152.4 cm, Ethan Cohen New York.

So, which approach in political art practice can exert the greater value in politics?

Which one of them potentially might represent the main methodology of political art in the future?

#### 4 Sichuan Earthquake investigation and *When Faith Moves Mountains*

For answering questions above, I am going to introduce, analyse, and compare their most important projects: Citizens' investigation (公民调查) on Sichuan earthquake student casualties (2009), and *When Faith Moves Mountains* (2002).

There are many reasons to choose these two projects to compare: the artistic languages and concerned issues of the two artists are very different, but these two projects share a relatively similar features: both of them are Social Actions in a large-scale involving a big part of society participate in. A Social Action is separated in two parts: the event itself and its artistic records and re-creations in the sense of exhibition form (Wang, 2018). This means that the analysis of these two projects will not be limited to the so-called finished products they exhibit in the exhibition space, but will have to reach outside it for analysing the entire activity process and its social impact.

Both projects involve multiple levels of artistic expression: Ai's project is an investigation looking into the tragic Sichuan earthquake in 2008, with the result of and his experience in investigation recorded in photographs, videos, documentaries, installations, and writings. *When Faith moves mountains* is a collaborative project with local artists, critics, filmmakers, and more importantly, local volunteers, moving a huge dune by hands outside Lima, the capital city of Peru. The documentary, photo records, interviews, and even hearsay and storytelling of this social event plays a big part of the projects.

The themes that was discussed in these two projects are similar: the survey of the earthquake incident was to expose "the government's failure to fulfil its own promise" (Sorace, 2014 ); the purpose of *When Faith Moves Mountains* is to

make sense of collection with the context of the political change and social contradictions in Peru at the time using prophetic language. They are all concerned about some kind of political malfunction.

What is more apparent is that these two projects are great examples of the explicitness and implicitness characteristics in their art: Ai's investigation shows an evident activism nature: his survey of the list of students killed in the Sichuan earthquake proves the government's failure to protect the basic rights of the people. Meanwhile, he and his investigation team had to face resistance from complex forces investigating and publishing results. Volunteers were stopped, controlled, or even jailed investigating in locations (Ai Weiwei, no date); Ai, Weiwei himself, was attacked by local police while attending testimony for an activist who got arrested during investigation, and had to seek medical treatment in Germany later. The results of the investigation, including the fight and struggle pursuing it, were then narrated by Ai in an "archival-like" language in artwork and exhibitions, using the method of displaying found materials in the disaster, documentaries, photo records, and interviews.



Fig.10 Ai Weiwei, *Lao ma ti hua* (老妈蹄花), 2011, documentary, 79min.



Fig.11 Ai Weiwei, *Brain Inflation*, 2009, photograph, 200 × 100 cm, CHRISTINE KÖNIG GALERIE, Vienna.

At the same time, Ai's *When Faith Moves Mountains* is a collaborative project on a much larger scale compared to his performance work. Its reflection is also clear: the social tension during and after the downfall of the Fujimori government.

Nevertheless, the implicit character of it is still there and even more obvious.

The atmosphere of this event did not embody socio-political tension of current



atmosphere, nor recreate a smaller social structure, but almost suspend from the political and social reality in which it was located, an "autonomous temporality", a "purposiveness without purpose", a "movement as movement", a "time-out-of-time" (Fisher, 2007). More than five hundred local volunteers worked in a fine line, manually moved a huge dune a little forward, on the outskirts of the Lima. The realistic influence of this utopian collective activity was insignificant: the manual effort of moving this actual "mountain" might have been erased by nature in a short amount of time, but they reached a significant goal conceptually. All these facts seem to connect to political issues and social crisis at the time in Peru inconspicuously, and the social context also seems explaining the project. This sense of "intertextuality" has created a space for interpretation by the audience.



Fig.12 Francis Alÿs, *When Faith Moves Mountains*, 2002, video, 31:06 min, Museum of Modern Art, New York.

After analysing the purpose and the artistic features of this projects, finding out what political influence did these two projects have at the time, and if these achieved the artist's original purpose, is what needed to find out to analyse the value of their art.

Let us takes a look at Ai Weiwei and his investigation first. First of all, the social impact of this project in China was once significant, but it was almost impossible to maintain the impact because of government intervention: It all started in 2008, when the tragic earthquake stroke Sichuan Province, China, caused thousands death. More shockingly, around five thousand students died in school buildings. The local government once refused to announce the number and list of students who died and who should be responsible for a high rate collapse of public-school buildings. Eager for the truth, Ai organized hundreds of volunteers on the Internet as a team called "citizen's investigation" (公民调查). During that time, Ai's blog became a public centre of the investigation process and new evidence, and was popular among Chinese citizens at the time, and became a platform to discuss government corruption and its dereliction of duty in this disaster.

However, since Ai's blog was forced to close in 2009, he and his team could no longer maintain a more considerable influence in Chinese society (he them continues to post on Twitter, but only a small number of people in China were able to access it). At the same time, potentially as the response to Ai's activism,

the government announced the number of students killed in the earthquake on May 7, 2009, but still refused to release further details.

The Western society received more significant influence from this. In 2009, just after he was attacked in Sichuan, the results of his Sichuan earthquake survey were exhibited in Munich, Germany. This included *Remembering* (2009), an installation with colourful backpacks composed the sentence "She lived happily in this world for seven years" ("她在这个世界上开心地生活过七年"), the installation of crooked rebars found in collapsed school building that were artificially straightened, An audio work *Nian* (2009) was created from a list of dead students in the earthquake.

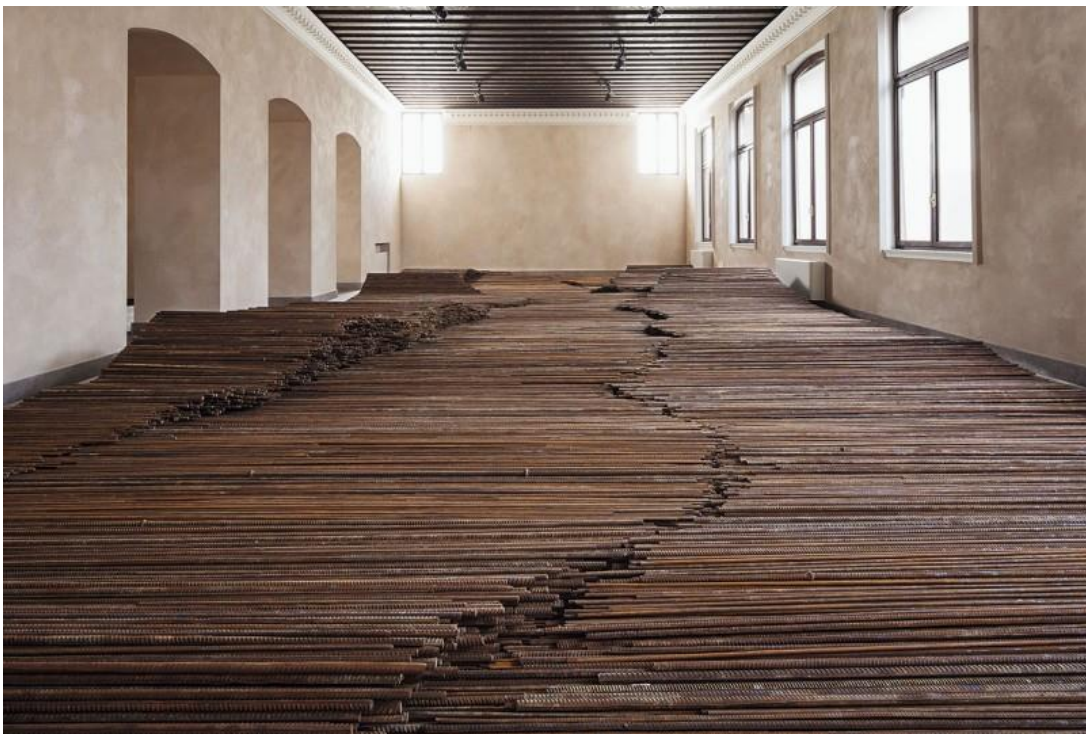


Fig.13 Ai Weiwei, *Straight*, 2008-2012, steel reinforcing bars found in destroyed school buildings in 2008 Sichuan Earthquake, 600 x 1200 cm, Royal Academy of Arts, London.

Unlike Ai's direct infliction on the socio-political reality, the actual politics is "inescapable" (Francis Alÿs, no date) in *When Faith Moves Mountains*, according to his own words. Politics background in this event is indistinct. At the same time, the virtual result of the event itself is "minimum", despite the abundant workforce and their "maximum effort", (Francis Alÿs, no date) : "No one will notice the change in this dune" (Francis Alÿs, no date), which means that the dune itself, as a presentation of this land art project, has not become a visual monument for this great act. The event itself did not, at the same time was not intended to, change the local political environment, solve the social crisis at the time.

Therefore, where is the significance of this activity lies on? Jean Fisher argued that the most exceptional value of this event is that people participating in it "in a spirit of free will and conviviality", the event itself "provides the conditions of possibility for few thought of the political", not as "the mechanism of political discourse or the structure of power and the state" (2007). When we look at value of this event itself, it created a temporary space-time that was autonomous and transcendent from temporal reality, a "transition of space of freedom" (Fisher, 2007) for all participants of it. For participants, they achieved a collective joy by cooperating to overcome this conceptually tricky goal. As one of the participants said:

Everyone was waiting for that moment! Like: "We are getting there, we are nearly there..." And when we started to get to the very last part, when they said: "Continue shovelling to the end". Everyone began shovelling harder, and when we were about to finish, everybody started screaming. (Francis Alÿs, 2002)

"Representation" (Fisher, 2007) plays a crucial role in the artistic expression of this project. The record of this event is "meticulous" (Fisher, 2007). Audiences are experiencing and restoring this event through multi-perspective video footage, photographs, writings, and interviews, in a multi-angle, multi-sensory way, understanding its "material and immaterial conditions" (Fisher, 2007).

Documentary-like recreation of this event preserved and relayed its ephemeral artistic value. Because of this, the influence of the "social allegory" of *When Faith Moves Mountains* surpassed the "undeniable formal presence" (Francis Alÿs, no date), means the influence of this project can potentially spread in the form of a photo record, a contextual piece of writing, and even though word of mouth or gossip around local areas.

## 5 Conclusion

The answer to the questions above is already clear: In the contemporary art system, the implicit power of political art, Francis Alÿs as a representative figure, can exert better art's political function.

Let us look back to the comparison above. Alÿs's political art fulfilled his purpose in political influence. As an independent political force, Alÿs is always separate from the local political conflict, so he can regard the perspective itself as the "critical tool" (Vergne, 2005) of "seeing through" and "interpret[ing] the world". The poetry and ambiguity in his art provide a psychological distance to read his art, and allow rooms for "complex philosophical problems", for adding "perceiver's participation or involvement" (Tormey *et al.*, 1983). This means that his art transcends ideological divides and conflicts of interest. The artistic language also transcends cultural barriers allowing his art to jump out of the current social and political context and become an underlying political force in different time, space and context.

Ai Weiwei's explicit struggle and purpose towards politics has made him stand on one side of the conflict. In the community with dissenters against the Chinese political regime and the handling of the Earthquake Investigation, his work made specific comment on a specific event. The resistance that Ai practised in his social activities in China did not achieve the effect of bring changes in Chinese society, as he expected. It was because, on the one hand, the government interfered and censored his activity, on the other hand, the values he wants to express has not reached a large enough consensus in Chinese society to challenge China's mainstream values and authorities.

At the same time, the fact that his art rooted in one side of ideology, has caused solidification of his audience group. Most of his audiences belong to the same social community, having value and interest coincided with the artist. This explains why his art and his influence are limited to Western society. Moreover, his immovable ideology causing a loss of objectivity in his art. Meaning it cannot mirror a comprehensive image of current political and social reality. For example, in his recent refugee series, he was accused of repeatedly "lambasting the moral paucity" of western leaders in their treatment of refugees (Strafella *et al.*, 2018), regardless of the social problems and political games around refugee crisis in European society. As Lucy Lippard states: "activist art often eludes art critics who are neither the intended audience, nor as knowledgeable about the issues ..."  
(Lippard, 1984)

In our time, explicit political art has normalized under "right" of "cultural democracy" (Lippard, 1984). A large number of art activists and activist art appeared in political movements in different regions and society. Good examples of this can be seen in latest Hong Kong protests, recent environmental protection movements (for example, Greta Thunberg's seat outside the parliament in her early career as an activist could be explained as a performance art piece). As Art Activism is playing an increasing role in today's politics, in my point of view, it is time calling more artists like Francis Alÿs, who is a "true

individual" ("真正的个人") who "walked away from the shadow of ideology facing politics and society." ("面对政治，面对社会，走出意识形态的阴影之外") (Ma, 2007).

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10	Ai Weiwei, <i>Lao ma ti hua (老妈蹄花)</i> , 2011, documentary, 79min. <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TUizD8WDDFI">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TUizD8WDDFI</a> (Accessed: 23 January 2020)	23
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12	Francis Alÿs, <i>When Faith Moves Mountains</i> , 2002, video, 31:06 min, Museum of Modern Art, New York. <a href="https://www.moma.org/collection/works/130398?association=Installation&amp;locale=ja&amp;page=1&amp;parent_id=109922&amp;sov_referrer=association">https://www.moma.org/collection/works/130398?association=Installation&amp;locale=ja&amp;page=1&amp;parent_id=109922&amp;sov_referrer=association</a>	25
13	Ai Weiwei, <i>Straight</i> , 2008-2012, steel reinforcing bars found in destroyed school buildings in 2008 Sichuan Earthquake, 600 x 1200 cm, Royal Academy of Arts, London. <a href="https://www.artsy.net/artwork/ai-weiwei-straight-10">https://www.artsy.net/artwork/ai-weiwei-straight-10</a>	27

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