

WHY IS THIS ART?

Sunflower Seeds

by Ai Wei Wei



Sources:

- ❑ [Art Assignment: The Case for Ai Wei Wei](#)
- ❑ [Ai Weiwei – Sunflower Seeds | Artist Interview | Tate](#)
- ❑ [Smarthistory Essay: Ai Wei Wei, Kui Hua Zi](#)
- ❑ [Smithsonian Essay: Is Ai Weiwei China's Most Dangerous Man?](#)

Hawkins you can go first basically to just say what is seen

Am i last then lol or what are you saying evelyn? Ok great

You can go second and ill add on after to connect with you and add some of what i wrote in my notes

Group Notes:

Hawkins Farr:

The Case for Ai Wei Wei

Ai Wei Wei, famously known for taking photos of himself dropping a vase, is well known for his art work in which he takes old remains of temples and buildings and repurposes them into crazy contraptions of art. He thrives on the idea that the past has to be faced in order to move into the future. He also committed tax evasion, which is awesome.

This piece can be considered art, but I will take the opposite position. When it comes to symbolism, anything can be considered "art." Not everything has a meaning. For this reason, I find that this sunflower seed room is just a cool design rather than art with meaning and complexity. It is just a room with sunflower seeds on the floor, we usually call that a mess. Ai Wei Wei may have had a motive for creating this room, but for me it is not seen.

Evelyn Mier:

Artist Interview/Smarthistory Essay

Each sunflower seed that is found in this art is man made and painted individually. All 100 million seeds were once touched by a different person. These seeds later come together to represent one piece of art that consists of uniformity and consistency. Although each sunflower seed is different, they all end up in the same rectangle with 100 million other seeds. This art depicts a kind of society that exists in various parts of the world. While each individual in a society can be completely different from each other person, there must be a change of behavior and personality in order to fit into the society where everyone must be the same. The artist uses this as a representation of his childhood in China, where people weren't treated very well.

The way each and every person was able to experience the artwork influences the way that they perceive it. Coming from my very own perspective, the artwork is just a bunch of seeds that were made by man.

Valerie La: Is Ai Weiwei China's Most Dangerous Man?

Although he has a past of rebellious actions, Ai Wei Wei has been named the most powerful artist in the world by an art magazine. Weiwei is able to create art through various mediums and is able to successfully have a message come across through the symbolism that he establishes in his art. In his signature work, *Sunflower Seeds*, for example, makes sunflower seeds using porcelain, and the appearance of the sunflower seeds is through the painting of Chinese craftsmen who had individually painted all of the pieces of porcelain. As a Chinese artist who resists control (e.g., capitalist and communist control), Ai Weiwei has been labeled as a radical figure who believes that the Chinese government is extremely flawed. *Sunflower Seeds* is, in fact, art due to the fact that it expresses the idea of China's corruption. The individually-painted sunflower seeds express the scale at which cheap laborers must work in order to fulfill the need of exports for the country's economy. In fact, having 1,600 Chinese craftsmen paint the sunflower seeds individually is ironic, for Ai Weiwei is using the art as a satire that criticizes the labor system while confiding to the same system in order to create this artwork. Furthermore, in the art work, the use of people who are of different ethnicities show how the Chinese have been a prominent source of exports and how the world relies on the country in order to receive materials. By sitting and walking on the sunflower seeds, the people show how the countries who receive China's exports have been prospering while China is left with the short end of the stick by constantly having to work in order to fulfill the other country's needs, thus resulting in the corrupt, cheap labor force that has been established in China.