

## TRACE

Ai Weiwei also selected three North Korea related individuals based on information provided by AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL and other human rights organizations, as well as independent research by the artist's studio and the FOR-SITE Foundation.

The viewer is confronted with a field of colorful images laid out flat across the expanse of the floor: portraits of 176 people from around the world who have been imprisoned or exiled because of their beliefs or affiliations, most of whom were still incarcerated at the time the artwork was made. Ai Weiwei has called them "heroes of our time." If the sheer number of individuals represented is overwhelming, the impression is compounded by the intricacy of the work's construction: each image was built by hand from LEGO bricks. (Some portions of the artwork were assembled in the artist's studio, while others were fabricated to the artist's specifications by more than 80 volunteers in San Francisco.) Assembling a multitude of small parts into a vast and complex whole, the work may bring to mind the relationship between the individual and the collective, a central dynamic in any society and a particularly charged one in contemporary China.



### Oh Kyu-won Suk-ja

Indefinitely detained. Oh is a South Korean citizen. Her father, Oh Kil-nam, moved his family to North Korea to work as an economist and to obtain treatment for his wife's hepatitis. In 1986 he requested political asylum in Denmark. The following year Kyu-won, her sister, Hae-won, and their mother, Shin Suk-ja, were imprisoned, apparently because Oh Kil-nam did not return to North Korea.



North Korea

### Shin Suk-ja

Indefinitely detained. Shin is a South Korean citizen. Her husband, Oh Kil-nam, moved his family to North Korea to work as an economist and to obtain treatment for Shin's hepatitis. He requested political asylum in Denmark in 1986. The following year Shin and her daughters were imprisoned, apparently because Oh did not return to North Korea. Authorities have stated that Shin has died of hepatitis.



North Korea

### Oh Hae-won Suk-ja

Indefinitely detained. Oh is a South Korean citizen. Her father, Oh Kil-nam, moved his family to North Korea to work as an economist and to obtain treatment for his wife's hepatitis. He requested political asylum in Denmark in 1986. The following year Hae-won, her sister, Kyu-won, and their mother, Shin Suk-ja, were imprisoned, apparently because Oh Kil-nam did not return to North Korea.

### Ai Weiwei

Chinese, born 1957

Ai Weiwei is a Beijing-based artist and activist whose work encompasses sculpture, installation, photography, film, architecture, curation, and social criticism. His art has been featured in major solo exhibitions including *Ai Weiwei at Blenheim Palace*, Woodstock, UK, 2014; *Evidence* at the Martin-Gropius-Bau, Berlin, 2014; and *Ai Weiwei: According to What?*, which was organized by the Mori Art Museum, Tokyo, in 2009, and traveled to North American venues in 2013–14. Ai collaborated with architects Herzog & de Meuron on the "bird's nest" stadium for the 2008 Beijing Olympics. He has been the recipient of numerous awards and honors, including the Václav Havel Prize for Creative Dissent from the Human Rights Foundation in 2012.

Ai Weiwei Website (<http://aiweiwei.com/>)



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