

VISIT TO THE  
EXHIBITION 'RAPTURE'  
NOVEMBER 2021

# AI WEIWEI

INTERVENTIONIST ARTIST



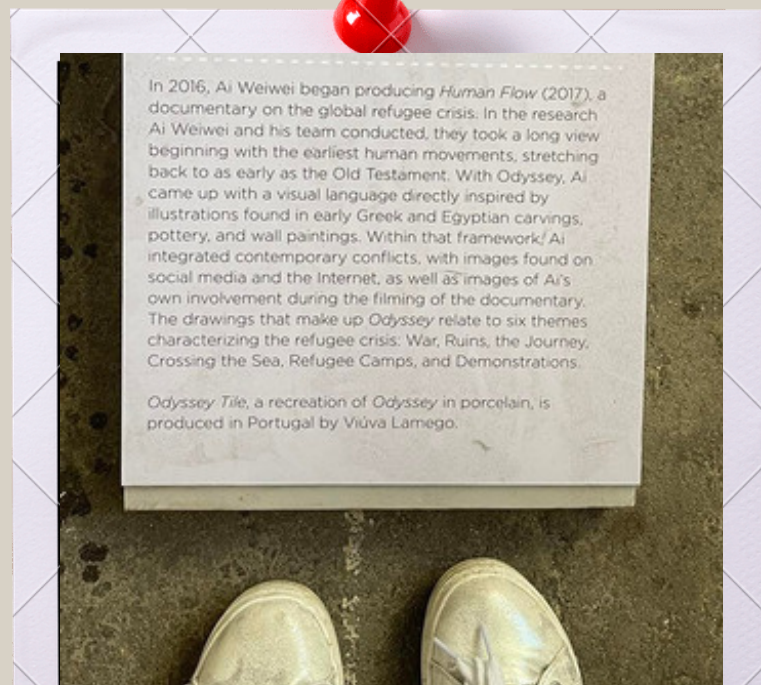
Ai Weiwei | *Rapture* is the first exhibition in Portugal by the noted Chinese dissident, artist and activist. 85 of Weiwei's most iconic work, as well as 4 others produced for the show in Portugal, are on display in a space covering 4000m<sup>2</sup>.

Ai Weiwei | *Rapture* runs through 28 November at the Cordoaria Nacional, in Lisbon.

**A. Research more information about this artist in order to better understand the path which lead him to social activism.**

Weiwei is considered one of the most influential and creative names in contemporary art today. Visitors to the exhibition will see installations and sculptures in large, medium and small scale, as well as videos/films and photographs. This includes some of his best-known works, such as **Forever Bicycles** (2015), a monumental sculpture with 960 stainless steel bicycles used as building blocks; and **Snake Ceiling** (2009), a large snake-shaped installation made up of hundreds of children's backpacks.

Now living in the Alentejo, Weiwei began collaborating with Portuguese artists and workshops (cork, ceramics and textiles).



In 2016, Ai Weiwei began producing *Human Flow* (2017), a documentary on the global refugee crisis. In the research Ai Weiwei and his team conducted, they took a long view beginning with the earliest human movements, stretching back to as early as the Old Testament. With *Odyssey*, Ai came up with a visual language directly inspired by illustrations found in early Greek and Egyptian carvings, pottery, and wall paintings. Within that framework, Ai integrated contemporary conflicts, with images found on social media and the Internet, as well as images of Ai's own involvement during the filming of the documentary. The drawings that make up *Odyssey* relate to six themes characterizing the refugee crisis: War, Ruins, the Journey, Crossing the Sea, Refugee Camps, and Demonstrations.

*Odyssey Tile*, a recreation of *Odyssey* in porcelain, is produced in Portugal by Viúva Lamego.

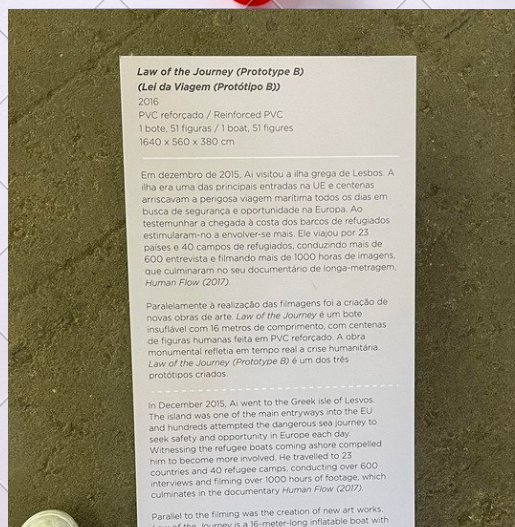
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Last month, I visited this exhibition and took some photos for my students to discuss in class. The exhibition is divided into two themes: the fantasy, where Weiwei's research into the imagination is explored; and the reality, commenting on issues that spill over into our lives with the aggravation of human conditions, for environmental, political, or social reasons.

**B. Comment these tiles entitled *Odyssey Tile*.**



**Law of the Journey (Prototype B)** (2016) is a 16-meter-long inflatable boat with human figures, alluding to the global refugee crisis.

## C. Discuss:

- Why artists play an important role in social activism.
- Difficulties refugees have to deal with.
- Reasons leading to a refugee crisis.
- Consequences of this crisis.
- Countries refugees flee from / to. Why?

