

Artists Taking to the Streets!

423 Art Citizens March and its Revelations

Wen Yau

2011, the year that left an important mark of Hong Kong artists taking to the streets.

The 423 Art Citizens March, sparked by the detention of the Mainland Chinese artist Ai Wei Wei and participated by over 2000 protestors, was of course not the first time artists and arts practitioners of Hong Kong called for mass rallies and took to the streets. Earlier in 2010, the Revitalization Independence Partnership (RIP) organised a 300-strong rally “生勾勾被活化” (Revitalised Alive)¹ protested against new government measures which promoting revitalisation of industrial buildings, in view of its impact on artists leasing industrial premises. “Speak Now, or Never – one art practitioner on petition”, organised by October Contemporary (an event curated by seven NGOs) in 2009, concluded with participants each submitting a petition letter to the government headquarters². On 1 July 2003, members of the artist community joined the wider community and marched through the streets of Hong Kong to protest against the Article 23 legislation. Since then, the 1 July Marches have become an annual event, with local arts practitioners a common sight of it.

A group of 2,000 arts practitioners is not a small number of people (certainly large enough to fill up the seats of six performances at the theatre of the Hong Kong Cultural Centre). Hong Kong has been derided for being a cultural desert, despite the fact that there are always arts and cultural practitioners toiling behind the scenes without being known or acknowledged.. After all, during the colonial days, there was a general lack of enthusiasm about social politics among the common people, artists were no exception. Since the handover, however, social movements have become a hotly contested ground for post-colonial identity and subject realisation: the 1 July Marches are now an annual event; efforts to conserve the Star Ferry Pier, the Queen’s Pier and the Choi Yuen Village 菜園村, as well as the “Anti High-speed Rail” are all bridgeheads of social movements. Of them, last year’s 423 Art Citizens March was a most important experience for the local artist community.

Art Citizens = Art + Citizens?

423 Art Citizens March was the brainchild of Art Citizens, an ad-hoc group of arts practitioners who active in their disciplines, and enthusiastically take part in social politics or civic movements in recent years. The group has neither a fixed address nor an established organisation (there is no chairperson or convenor, only an overseer, contact person or spokesperson for individual events), and maintaining a great degree of openness (membership is extended to all art practitioners who share similar visions). Art Citizens came into existence as a result of the detention of Ai Weiwei at

the Beijing airport on 3 April 2011 when he was due to fly to Taipei enroute Hong Kong to prepare for an exhibition opening in October. He was taken away by the border security and detained, and the Beijing police did not release any official information about the reasons for detention or any other details. They searched Ai's studio in Beijing and took away records and documents. This was immediately followed by a string of articles on official media attacking and criticising the artist, which, as described by veteran China watcher Lau Yui-siu, was "a customary tactic of the Chinese administration" and "an attempt to defame and discredit".³ The detention of Ai Weiwei was perhaps an ignition point (and starting point). Art Citizens moved on to support other civil rights activists who were detained, imprisoned and deprived of freedom. As the name of the group suggests, Art Citizens is created as an assembly platform for artists to actively concern and participate in civil society.

Ai Weiwei is one of the most well-known artist actively engaging in civil society. He openly showed his care about the Sichuan earthquake in 2008 which thousands of students and teachers were killed by the collapsed "tofu-dregs" buildings. He organised volunteers to start a "Citizens' Investigation". At the time, Tan Zuoren 譚作人, who was also investigating the scandal, was tried for the charge of "inciting subversion of state power" in Chengdu. Ai tried to testify at court but was beaten up and put under house arrest until after the trial. Still it did not stop Ai from releasing the name list of over 5,000 students who were killed in the earthquake, a list which the authorities had all along concealed. Back in 1978, Ai and other artists founded the avant-garde art group, the Stars⁴, "in pursuit of freedom and self-expression", which lifted the curtain on Chinese contemporary art. When he returned from his 12-year sojourn in the US, he edited and published *Black Cover Book* (1994), *White Cover Book* (1995), and *Gray Cover Book* (1997), a series of three books about his generation of 1990s artists, which became an informative work of art development of that period in print. Ai took part in the design of the Beijing National Stadium for the 2008 Summer Olympics, better known as the "Bird's Nest"⁵. He also participated in prominent international exhibitions abroad, including *Documenta 12* held in Kassel, Germany in 2007. As an avant-garde artist enthusiastically participating in social and civil rights activities, Ai shot to fame and his identity as a "civil rights artist", the same as his beard and protruding belly, has become well-known to people. Symbolically, the unlawful detention of Ai Weiwei represented the crackdown on dissidents and the suppression of free speech and expression, sparking concerns home and abroad, including Hong Kong.

Widely reported in local and overseas media, Ai's "forced disappearance" not only captured the attention of the general public of Hong Kong, but also caused a stir in the artist community in particular. After a week of his detention, graffiti slogans such as "Free Ai Weiwei" and "Who's afraid of Ai Weiwei", accompanied by stencilled images of the artist, began appearing over the streets of Tsim Sha Tsui, Jordan and Central in Hong Kong. Instead of being treated as a general offence of criminal damage, as reported by some Hong Kong newspapers, the investigation was handed over to the Serious Crime Squad and Criminal Intelligence Bureau of the Hong Kong Police Force.⁶

Dubbed “The Graffiti Girl” by the media, the girl who started it all said, “I did this because I want more people to care about Ai Weiwei and those who went into forced disappearance”. Her choice of time and places – in the middle of the night; the International Finance Centre and the Avenue of Stars – were intended for “Mainland Chinese tourists who frequent those spots and politically indifferent bankers who work at the IFC.” She went on, “When you do something, you have to pay the price for it. If I get to enjoy the rights/resources the society gives me, I’ll also have the duty to pay for the price of my actions that influence the behaviour of others.”⁷ Civil disobedience or not, her deeds were a very action to unleash the power of art. Indeed, this spirit was recognised and furthered by later incidents. The high-profile investigations by the police only served to spark a flurry of Ai-inspired guerrilla street art campaigns: through the use of light and ingenuity, a photographer projected the giant image of Ai Weiwei onto the facades of landmark buildings across the territory – notably the headquarters of the Hong Kong Police Force and the People’s Liberation Army – which the artist recorded with camera. The photographs went viral online⁸, spawning a host of imitations and variations by other campaigners.⁹

It is how Art Citizens came into existence, hastened by a precarious social milieu. If it could be said that Ai’s forced disappearance aroused the empathy of Hong Kong artists for Mainland Chinese activists and even those artists falling victim to political trials, it might also be aptly described as their fears over the loss of free speech and civil movements under the brutal suppression and white terror of the ruling authority. Art Citizens was founded on a simple and bold principle: “In support of independent minds, in defence of freedom of expression”.

The freedom of speech is not only necessary for making art, but also a constitutive element for civil society. We believe that the freedom to create and the freedom of speech underline that citizens can voice out and express themselves without fear. We stand against all forms of censorship.

We want to take up the freedom of speech promised by the “one country two systems” and defend for those who are deprived of such freedom, for those whose basic human rights are not respected. Nevertheless, 13 years after the handover, we also realise that the freedom of speech in Hong Kong is declining in light of the increasing political prosecutions without proper reasons. To defend for the freedom of speech in Mainland China is also a way to defend for ours.

The Manifesto of Art Citizens

16 April 2011¹⁰

Just days after Ai Weiwei was detained, the first act in support of his release merged. Posted on 7 April, the online petition “呼籲立即釋放艾未未及所有維權的藝術工作者”(Call for the Release of Ai Weiwei and All Activist working in the Arts)¹¹ initiated by a group of 23 Hong Kong artists, was an embryonic form of Art Citizens. It was followed by the Hong Kong Arts Discovery Channel, which called for photographs of people paying homage to Ai’s *Dropping a Han Dynasty*

Urn (1995), by sending in full-length images of themselves dropping objects of their choice (before the objects hit the ground and shatter) symbolised liberation. A collage of the photos collected was published in *Ming Pao* on 10 April. On the same day, dozens of arts practitioners joined in the march from the Western Police Station to the Chinese Liaison Office organised by the Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements of China (the Alliance).

Also by of Art Citizens, a “MISSING” poster featuring a portrait of Ai Weiwei taken by photographer Almond Chu began to pop up in galleries and art spaces across Hong Kong. The “日日掛住艾未未行動” (Missing Ai Weiwei Everyday)¹² campaign put out a fundraising badge bearing the image of the missing person for members of the public to “adopt”. On the 16th and 22nd of April (the day before the 423 Art Citizens March), street stands were set up in Mong Kok and Causeway Bay to explain to the public about Ai Weiwei and the Graffiti Girl.

Local artists responded to the global movement of “1001 Chairs for Ai Weiwei”¹³ by each bringing a chair to the Liaison Office of the Central People’s Government for a silent sit-in protest at 1pm on 17 April. Sharing the site of protests were members of the Alliance who were trying to erect a replica of the Goddess of Democracy statue in front of the office, as well as protestors from the League of Social Democrats who, arriving from the Western Police Station across the street, turned up to show support for the Jasmine Movement demonstrations in Mainland China and clashed with the police outside the office. It was a stark contrast to the artist corner nearby: several dozens of sit-in artists, quiet but full of intent, some of them were wearing the Ai Weiwei badges on their lapels and others were holding photographs of the artist in their hands, my friends and I lit small moxa cones (Moxa share the same sound of “Ai” in Chinese), sending our silent protests in wafts of smoke; Karden, a fellow artist, took out a piece of paper and started to cut out shapes of the Chinese character, *Wei*, which she then scattered on the ground. The majority of us just stayed silent and sat down on one side, without as much as a single shout of a slogan. The image of protestors trying to break through the lines of over one hundred of geared-up police officers presented an interesting contrast to the one of artists sitting contentedly in their own corner.

The artistic power of protest

Brought together by this chain of actions and a collective sentiment, the 423 Art Citizens March and its 2,000-strong procession began marching through the busiest streets across the heart of the city on 23 April 2011, from the Mong Kok Pedestrian Walkway through Nathan Road and Canton Road before arriving at the Hong Kong Cultural Centre. Together, the protestors created a beautiful, uplifting experience. A rally of 2,000 art practitioners is a drop in the ocean comparing to the 1 July March which attended by hundreds of thousands of protestors. However, it was the first time for art practitioners to take to the streets, doing it without the involvement and mobilisation of any political parties¹⁴, walking in an orderly march, speaking with a united voice in the defence of free speech and artistic creation. The march naturally made headlines the following day, with many articles shining the spotlight on the touches of creative ingenuity the artists brought to it.

“大聲行”, the Chinese name of the rally, “a voiceful march” literally, urged: “We call for your action, with any form of art – visual, sound, performance and more – to express your idea of ‘VOICE OUT’ or making sound”¹⁵. Their slogans, “WE CANNOT BUT STAND UP AND VOICE OUT NOW, AT THIS VITAL MOMENT WHEN WE STILL CAN”¹⁶ revealed the very fear of losing the freedom of speech and artistic creation. Among the protesters in the march was Kacey Wong, leading his life-size model sculpture of the “*Caonima*”¹⁷, which became the centre of attention for fellow protesters, members of the public and the media. There was also Luke Ching with his “White Terror Bug”, a large-scale model made up of a handcart, plastic pipes and white cloth put together with backyard methods. In a sea of brightly-coloured flags of “真相無罪” (Truth Is Sinless) and “藝術無懼” (Art Fears Not), the rhythmical sounds of beating drums undulated, and there were of course the Graffiti Girl’s stencilled images of “Who’s afraid of Ai Weiwei”. Performance artists Him Lo turned him into “Red Man” with a coat of red paint, while Kitty Or painted herself in white and splashed over her body other paints of bright colours. Wilson Shieh brought with him a portrait which looked like a hybrid of *Caonima* and Ai Weiwei. Wong Wing-tong was dragging a big black (possibly styrofoam) rock along the way. Ng Ka-chun was sliding forward on his “River Crab/Harmony” cart... The array of creations, taking to the streets on the heels of the artists, made for a mobile art exhibition. The drumbeats and music of the central procession, accompanied by the sounds of the instruments big and small brought by the protestors, composed an organic symphony for the parade gala. Boisterous in style, calm and peaceful in form, it was an extraordinary show of dignity and courage in a declaration to defend the freedom of speech in the face of White Terror.

This expression of dignity and courage reached greater heights when the procession came to Canton Road in Tsim Sha Tsui. “Ai Weiwei is Not Home Yet!”, “Truth Is Sinless!”, “Art Fears Not!” were being shouted unceasingly. Mainland Chinese tourists thronged the streets and watched. Some pressed the shutters, others had quizzical expressions upon their faces, and some wanted to find out who Ai Weiwei was. A number of protestors were handing out flyers, while others stopped and explained to those tourists. Spirits were high among the leaders and slogan-chanters of the procession; and the drumbeats and sounds from the procession became vigorously louder. With the exception of the Lunar New Year parade, there had not been another procession in the territory that came out in such a full force. If the annual 1 July marches, which always begin from the Victoria Park (an emblem of colonial history), and end at the HKSAR government headquarters (symbol of sovereignty), were a platform for post-colonial subject realisation of Hong Kong people after the handover, the 423 Art Citizens March would be a more conscious and conscientious act in the ways the protesters marched through the busy districts of Mong Kong and Canton Road in Tsim Sha Tsui (landmarks of consumerism), and arrived at an everyday cultural site (the Hong Kong Cultural Centre)¹⁸, leveraging the power and influence of art to expose the underlying issues of country and sovereignty, while conveying to their countrymen on the mainland such political ideas as the freedom of speech.

But what is “artistic power”? When the rally reached the Cultural Centre on the harbour front, several artists rushed to the podium of the Hong Kong Museum of art and hung up a banner as a

backdrop, an act akin to hijacking the official temple of art, which has all along been apolitical – if art is a way to criticise the *status quo*, these artists of our time were taking a direct action to express their dissatisfaction with the institution at this everyday art/cultural site, and even endowed it with new imagination and meaning instantly.

The rally then proceeded to the piazza of the Cultural Centre and held the “Independent Minds . Free Expression – Anti White Terror Art Performances” in front of *The Flying Frenchman* (aka *The Freedom Fighter*)¹⁹. The most memorable moment came when Frog King (aka Kwok Mang-ho) read out a list of names of people accused of speech crime or silenced by “forced disappearance”, followed by his impromptu act of “Frog Fun Lum”²⁰: Frog King, waving wads of A4 paper which he extracted from his bag, announced, “A4 paper – a contemporary creative message container, a human message container!”, urging fellow artists to pass the sheets of paper on to the audience. “1, 2, 3, Creative Spirits Fly!” Taking the cue, the audience threw the sheets up in the air, watched them fall and scatter on the ground and fly off in the air again.²¹ Recalling the event, Kith Tsang said, “[Frog King] led protestors away from the demonstration area, and together, they transcend to a higher spiritual level. It was a brief moment, but a moment of freedom shared by all.”²² The power of art is such that it demonstrates imagination through the works of art. Frog King took a step further, using action to personally demonstrate a dialectical imagination with a sheet of paper (without contents, yet infinite possibilities contained). Through a playful collective action, he set free the imagination in front of “The Freedom Fighter” and concluded an afternoon of protest before the setting sun. It was little wonder that a performance done in a matter of a few minutes was all it took to reinvigorate the spirit of the protestors after an exhausting afternoon.

In *The Book of Poetry*, it is said: “Poetry is the product of earnest thought. Thought cherished in the mind becomes earnest; then expressed in words, it becomes poetry. The feelings move inwardly, and are embodied in words. When words are insufficient for them, recourse is had to sighs and exclamations. When sighs and exclamations are insufficient for them, recourse is had to the prolonged utterance of song. When this again is insufficient, unconsciously the hands begin to move and the feet to dance.” (Translation by James Legge) If poetry is an artistic pursuit, and when words are not enough to express emotions of the heart, then one would have to recourse to songs and moving hands and dancing feet. In the same vein, sociologist James M. Jasper stated: “Singing and dancing are two activities often found in rituals, providing the requisite emotional charge through music, coordinated physical activity, and bodily contact. Since Emile Durkheim first described ‘collective effervescence’, it has been clear that these activities are crucial in creating it, in transporting participants onto another plane, into what they feel is a more ethereal, or at any rate different, reality.”²³ (Jasper, 2008:192)

What differentiates performance art from other art forms is that the artist works in-situ, using his body to present his art. “The Spirit of Creative Freedom Takes Flight” presented by Frog King in collaboration with “his people” (the audience) is a case in point. For those artists in the procession playing their instruments in a symphony of sounds, in unison or otherwise, keeping up or falling

behind, they too were engaging in a collective act of creation and furthering a collective experience through joint participation with fellow protestors. Quoting Durkheim, Jasper went on to explain that collective rituals and gatherings suggest that “you are participating in something bigger than you: you are a part of history, or you are morally sanctioned, or you truly belong to a group. The emotions of rituals reinforce cognitive and moral visions as well.”²⁴ (Jasper, 2008:194)

Identity awareness of artists/art practitioners

From the anxiety over the loss of free speech, to the empathy for civil rights activists deprived of their freedom, people are elevated to a higher level of “bigger than you” through demonstrations and rallies – these are social politics and moral values founded on the belief of freedom and equal rights for all. Artists working in Hong Kong, and perhaps Hong Kong people in general, under the social conditions of post-handover Hong Kong (still enjoying a relatively greater degree of freedom of speech and assembly), have recourse to different forms of artistic expressions (art forms such as painting, sculpture, performance art, musical performance, sound art, and the performativity of demonstrations) and join forces in the hope of, in the words of the Graffiti Girl, “influencing others” – not only among fellow protestors but also reaching out in person to Mainland Chinese tourists, deliberately conveying to them cases that had been concealed from them on the Mainland. Was it not a process of constructing a cultural identity by the people of Hong Kong (at least art practitioners of Hong Kong) after the handover? Consolidating their unique position (Hong Kong as a Chinese city that still allows a relatively greater degree of freedom of speech and assembly; art practitioners engage in civil society by artistic means and turn from an neglected group into a visible one), as well as performing the civil duties of a Chinese citizen by spreading such political beliefs as freedom and human rights, protestors reveal fully what they are during the 423 Art Citizens March.

What is particularly interesting is that, in the same year [2011], the Civil Human Rights Front, organisers of the July 1 Marches were told by the police that no music could be played during the demonstration. The music ban caused a furore, with Art Citizens joining hands with music spaces and groups such as Hidden Agenda and Revitalization Independence Partnership, organised the Art Citizens Musical March 2011. Donning imitations of Mainland police outfits, demonstrators were playing music as they marched along, declared once again: “Freedom of artistic creation and space of expression are under imminent threat”²⁵. This form of art adopted by Art Citizens in demonstrations and protests lives on by evolving into an even more ritualised way (specific role playing and dressing up)²⁶. How do these rituals, as an act of art with its unique way, construct, perform and strengthen the identity of art practitioners and Hong Kong people?

In fact, the past few years have seen local artists (the young post-80s generation in particular) actively participating in social movements: “Art Action to Conserve the Star Ferry Clock Tower”²⁷ held consecutive Sundays (2006); the Complaints Choir of Hong Kong (2009-10) and their compositions with lyrics adapted from complaints gathered from the public; the Post 80s Anti-Express Railway campaign with their “Satyagraha Walk across Five Districts” (2009-10) in which protestors prostrated

themselves every 26 steps of the way; “Woodstock at Choi Yuen Village” and related exhibitions and performances held amid the remnants of Choi Yuen Village, the site cleared to make way for the construction of the express railway. In their own creative ways, these actions and events “use genuine emotions, daring words and inspiring street art activities... in place of formulaic traditional demonstrations and silent sit-ins”²⁸. (Jeff Leung, Lee Chun-fung, 2011). As a platform for art practitioners in civil society, Art Citizens is like a “home away from an artist’s home”. As an act of and approach to art, how did the different forms of taking to the streets adopted by these artist-protesters – be they traditional demonstrations and processions, or raising issues and protests in artistic ways and activities – lead to the exploration and realisation of a post-handover and colonial identity through ritualised performance? What are the aesthetics involved?

Time magazine named “The Protester” its 2011 Person of the Year (Ai Weiwei was selected as one of the four runner-up candidates²⁹). In the same year, the *Hong Kong Economic Journal* awarded “protesting artists” the accolade of “People of Culture of the Year in China, Hong Kong and Taiwan”³⁰. Does time make heroes, or has Protest already established itself as an unstoppable current of time?

Out in the streets, artists and art practitioners have developed a consciousness of being “a part of history”, so there is probably more action to come. How will these actions align themselves with the development of Hong Kong’s civil society and (collective) identity? Will art be a means of action, or will actions evolve into art and something more? Since the movement is just unfolding, let us wait and see. After all, there is plenty of retrospection, exploration and examination to do.

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¹ “Revitalised Alive”, organised by the Revitalization Independence Partnership, was held on 20 February 2010. The rally started from Moreton Terrace in Causeway and ended at the Office of the Hong Kong Arts Development Council in Quarry Bay. For details, see:
Facebook Events: <https://www.facebook.com/events/295473773123/>
“四月一日工廈活化要捱貴租 藝術家遊行抗議被趕絕” (Rent Hike Caused by April 1 Industrial Buildings Revitalisation, Artists Fear Wipe-out and Take to the Streets), *Apple Daily* (A04), 21 February 2010. (In Chinese)
<http://hk.apple.nextmedia.com/news/art/20100221/13747469>

² Held on 25 October 2009, starting from Charter Garden and ending at the Central Government Offices.
Facebook Events: <https://www.facebook.com/events/153438739747/>
For more information on October Contemporary in 2009, see Chan Yuk-keung Kurt (ed): *Hong Kong Visual Arts Yearbook 2009* (Hong Kong: Department of Fine Arts, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2010), pp343-348.

³ The *Global Times* editorial, “Law will not concede before maverick”, on 6 April 2011, called Ai Weiwei

“a maverick of Chinese society”, and said: “In such a populous country as China, it is normal to have several people like Ai Weiwei. But it is also normal to control their behaviors by law. In China, it is impossible to have no persons like Ai Weiwei or no ‘red line’ for them in law....” (In Chinese)

<http://www.globaltimes.cn/opinion/editorial/2011-04/641187.html>

On the same day, *Wen Wei Po* of Hong Kong published an article with the headline, “新華社：艾未未涉經濟犯罪正受查” (Xinhua News: Ai Weiwei under investigation for tax evasion), but the article was later deleted from the Xinhua News website.

Similar articles published in the same month included: “艾未未真面目：五玩藝術家—五毒俱全”(True face of Ai Weiwei: Artist of Five Arts – and Five Poisons), *Wen Wei Po* (A02), 15 April 2011; “西方給艾未未的庇護太特殊” (West’s support of Ai Weiwei abnormally), *Global Times* Editorial, 18 April 2011. All are in Chinese.

See also “劉銳紹批評新華社以文章抹黑艾未未” (Lau Yui-siu Criticises Xinhua for Smearing Ai Weiwei), Commercial Radio Hong Kong Instant News, 9 April 2011. In Chinese.

http://www.881903.com/page/zh-tw/newsdetail.aspx?ItemId=350513&csid=261_34

⁴ Official website of The Stars: <http://www.thestarsart.com/>

⁵ The Swiss architecture firm Herzog & de Meuron was commissioned to build the Beijing National Stadium; Ai was appointed artistic consultant for design.

⁶ “少女塗鴉撐艾未未 重案組政治大搜捕”(Graffiti Girl Supports Ai Weiwei, Hounded by Serious Crime Squad), *Apple Daily* (A01), 15 April 2011. In Chinese.

<http://hk.apple.nextmedia.com/news/first/20110415/15169662>

⁷ Interview by Yip Po-lam Bobo, “什麼人訪問什麼人：我的塗鴉 最想給內地人和銀行家看” (My graffiti is for mainlanders and bankers), in *Sunday Morning Ming Pao* (P01), 25 April 2011. In Chinese.

⁸ “光影塗鴉艾未未 挑戰警方升級” (Light Graffiti of Ai Weiwei Challenge Police to Step up Enforcement”, *Oriental Daily News* (A04), 29 April 2011. In Chinese.

http://orientaldaily.on.cc/cnt/news/20110429/00176_007.html

⁹ “塗鴉少女啟發 塗鴉男接力聲援艾未未” (Inspired by Graffiti Girl, Graffiti Boy joins relay in Ai Weiwei campaign), *Apple Daily* (A04), 25 April, 2011. In Chinese.

<http://hk.apple.nextmedia.com/news/art/20110425/15196442>

“光影塗鴉表達不滿 艾未未影像登陸中聯辦” (Light Graffiti Voices Dissatisfaction, Ai Weiwei Portrait Lands on Chinese Liaison Office), *Apple Daily* (A10), 2 May 2011. In Chinese.

<http://hk.apple.nextmedia.com/news/art/20110502/15216492>

¹⁰ The Manifesto of Art Citizens:

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/藝術公民-Art-Citizens/179399555442195?sk=info>

Also released via email on 16 April 2011.

¹¹ Online petition, “呼籲立即釋放艾未未及所有維權的藝術工作者” (Call for the Release of Ai Weiwei and All Activist working in the Arts), in Chinese.

<http://www.gopetition.com/petition/44527.html>

¹² Facebook Events: “Missing Ai Weiwei Everyday” (日日掛住艾未未行動)

<https://www.facebook.com/events/180731945308528/>

¹³ A response to “1001 Chairs for Ai Weiwei” was, an online-project initiated by the international non-profit arts community Creative Time. The campaign re-enacted and reference the spirit of Ai Weiwei’s *Fairytales: 1001 Qing Dynasty Wooden Chairs* – an installation comprising 1001 late Ming and Qing Dynasty wooden chairs exhibited at Documenta 12 in Kassel, Germany in 2007. Creative Time invited artists and supporters from all over the worlds to participate in the campaign by bringing a chair and gathering outside Chinese embassies and consulates to sit peacefully in support of the artist’s immediate release at 1pm local time on April 17. (http://www.creativetime.org/news_feed/96). Hong Kong was the only Chinese city where a sit-in protest was held publicly, in front of the Liaison Office of the Central People’s Government in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (commonly called the Chinese Liaison Office).
Facebook Events: <https://www.facebook.com/events/215297865150062/>

¹⁴ At the front of the march on the same day were dozens of protestors from the League of Social Democrats, who were carrying banners and donning V for Vendetta masks. LegCo member Cyd Ho, who was not affiliated to any political party at the time, was present at the march from start to finish. However, there had not been any political involvement or mobilisation throughout the preparation of the march.

¹⁵ Publicity material of “423 Art Citizens March”
Facebook Events: <https://www.facebook.com/events/180507695330873/>

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ The *Caonima* (literally “Grass Mud Horse”), its origin unknown, is a name derived from a profanity and used as a form of symbolic defiance of the widespread Internet censorship in China. Later assuming the form of mythical creature that resembles the alpaca, the animal is portrayed as tenacious in the face of adversity. The existence of *Caonima* is said to be threatened by “river crabs” (*hexie*, with its Chinese pronunciation resembling the word for “harmony”, symbolises official censorship) invading their habitat.

¹⁸ Publicity materials of “423 Art Citizens March”:
“Join us in the march that begins at Sai Yeung Choi Street, the obscene territory of high consumerism, and ends at the sculpture ‘The Flying Frenchman’ by the Hong Kong Cultural Centre.”
(<https://www.facebook.com/events/180507695330873/>)

¹⁹ *The Flying Frenchman*, by the French artist César Baldaccini and made during 1989–1992, was commissioned by the Cartier Foundation for Contemporary Art, gifted to the city of Hong Kong and erected at the Hong Kong Cultural Centre Piazza by the then Urban Council in 1992. The work, allegedly inspired by the June 4 Incident, was originally entitled “The Freedom Fighter”, but the name was changed to “The Flying Frenchman” because of its politically sensitive nature. Since 1999, a group of artists, dubbing themselves “a group of citizens”, would lay a bouquet of white flowers at the foot of the sculpture on 4 June every year. The name “The Freedom Fighter” has since come into currency among the artist community. Last year, Woofer Ten organised “誰怕自由戰士？—重生儀式” (Who’s afraid of The Freedom Fighter? A Rebirth Ceremony) as part of their project “拜山先講—再問六四和我城” (Leave it for Grave Talk: June 4 and My City Revisited). The event was to rename the sculpture as “The Freedom Fighter” – “Through rebirth, to sustain the determination of yesteryear, to give new definition to this square, to rewrite the history of our square.”

Facebook Events:

<https://www.facebook.com/events/105689369520729/>

Leung Po-shan: 「六四獻花」活動的自我考掘 (June 4th Flower Dedication and Self-excavation), Blog *samadhiinarts* (藝文·三昧), 31 May 2011, in Chinese.

<http://samadhiinarts.wordpress.com/2011/05/31/freedomfighter/>

- ²⁰ Performance art of King Frog was mostly performed in his persona of “*Hak Bun Lum*” (客賓臨, a transliteration of “Happenings”, literally meaning “guests arriving”). As the name “King Frog” became popular he changed “*Hak Bun Lum*” to “Frog Fun Lum” (literally meaning “frog play arriving”).
- ²¹ A video recording of King Frog’s “Frog Fun Lum” performance on that day is available on: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5qxvOCRsPeM>
- ²² Kith Tsang: “蛙式即自由式” (Frog style is freestyle), *Hong Kong Economic Journal* (P41), 12 May 2011. In Chinese.
- ²³ James M. Jasper: “Rituals and Emotions at Diablo Canyon: Sustaining Activist Identities”, *The Art of Moral Protest: Culture, Biography, and Creativity in Social Movements* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).
- ²⁴ Ibid.
- ²⁵ “Art Citizens Musical March 2011”
Facebook “Events”: <https://www.facebook.com/events/234003419957066/>
- ²⁶ At the time of writing this article in 2012, Art Citizens has organised “我們都是李旺陽” (We are all Li Wangyang) poetry march (Facebook “Events”: <https://www.facebook.com/events/238879096223230/>); under the banner of “In Public, Culture Resides. By Freedom, We Abide”, it called for artists to come up with creative slogans and “gear” and join in the July 1 Marches (Facebook Events: <https://www.facebook.com/events/373330276055227/>).
- ²⁷ We are Society’s “Art Action to Conserve the Star Ferry Clock Tower”
<http://wearesociety.blogspot.hk/2006/09/blog-post.html>
- ²⁸ Leung Chin-fung Jeff, Lee Chun-fung: “這一年：2011香港視藝回顧” (Review of Hong Kong Visual Arts 2011), *Contemporary Art and Investment*, 2011. (also published on: <http://www.inmediahk.net/2011%E9%A6%99%E6%B8%AF%E8%A6%96%E8%97%9D%E5%9B%9E%E9%A1%A7>) In Chinese.
- ²⁹ *Time* magazine, Vol 178, No 25 (published on 26 December 2011). The four runners-up are: William McRaven, the admiral who commanded the bin Laden raid; Ai Weiwei; Paul Ryan, US Congressman and Chairman of the House Budget Committee; and Kate Middleton, the Duchess of Cambridge.
- ³⁰ “中港台年度文化人物：反抗藝術家們” (People of Culture of the Year in China, Hong Kong and Taiwan: Protesting Artists, Special Planning by Wong Ching), *Hong Kong Economic Journal* (C03), 28 December 2011.

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