

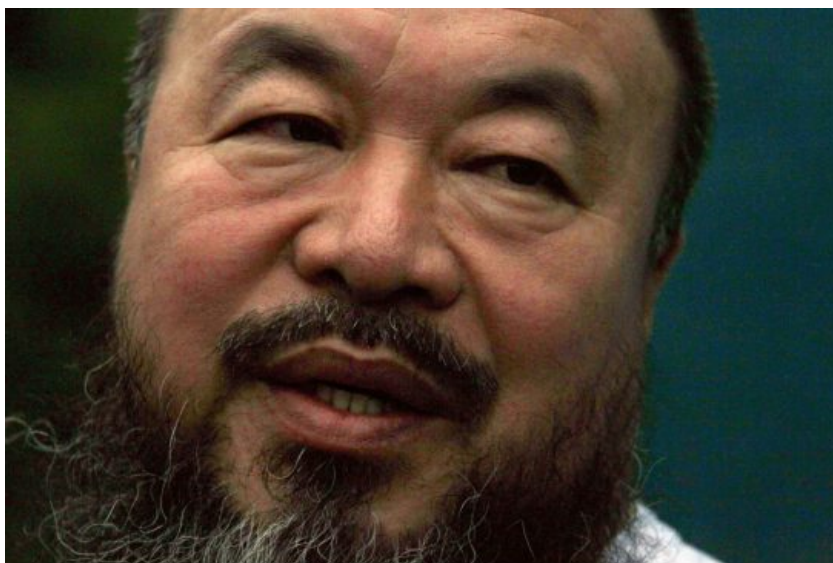
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Ai Weiwei sculpture Circle of Animals/Zodiac Heads will be displayed in Nathan Phillips Square

Ai is also subject of survey at the Art Gallery of Ontario, According to What?



DAVID GRAY / REUTERS FILE PHOTO

Dissident Chinese artist Ai Weiwei, whose sculpture Circle of Animals/Zodiac Heads will be displayed in Nathan Phillips Square's reflecting pool in June.

By: [Murray Whyte](#) Visual arts, Published on Thu May 09 2013

Toronto City Council has given approval for *Circle of Animals/Zodiac Heads*, a large-scale sculpture by famed Chinese artist and dissident [Ai Weiwei](#), to be installed in the reflecting pool in Nathan Phillips Square. It precedes, not coincidentally, the [Art Gallery of Ontario's](#) display of a large travelling survey of Ai's work, *According to What?*, which will open at the gallery in August.

Despite Ai's sudden visibility in the city this summer, the artist himself will be famously absent. Almost exactly two years ago, Ai, a highly visible activist and agitator against China's communist regime, was detained initially on no charges and then on allegations of tax evasion. The arrest coincided with the first installation of *Circle of Friends/Zodiac Heads* in New York's Central Park in May 2011.

Ai, who had been agitating for government accountability over the shoddy construction of schools that collapsed, causing the deaths of thousands of children, in an earthquake in Sichuan province in 2008, was arrested and silenced just before the piece, his largest ever installation in North America, was set to be revealed. Released several months later, but kept under constant

surveillance, the formerly globetrotting artist is now confined to his home country and kept under close observation in his Beijing home and studio complex.

The sculpture will be on view here from June 10 to Oct. 27.

The AGO's Ai show will open Aug. 17, but the gallery has already installed a large piece called *Snake Ceiling*, one of several memorial pieces Ai has dedicated to the more than 5,000 children who died in the earthquake. The huge serpent snakes along the ceiling of a gallery corridor, made from children's school backpacks.