

'@Large: Ai Weiwei on Alcatraz' tickets go on sale June 27

By Sam Whiting
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Ai Weiwei in the elevator when taken into custody by the police, Sichuan, China, 2009; photo courtesy the artist Photo: Courtesy Ai Weiwei, Same



Tickets to "@Large: Ai Weiwei on Alcatraz" will go on sale June 27, organizers of the major art exhibition announced Tuesday.

The show, which will feature seven site-specific installations by the Chinese conceptual artist and political activist Ai Weiwei, opens Sept. 27. The exhibition is free, but it takes a \$30 ticket on an Alcatraz Island ferry to get there and those sell out weeks in advance during the high season.

Reservations may be made no more than three months in advance, so if you want to be there for the opening day, Sept. 27, you must buy tickets June 27 and so on, through April 26, 2015, when the exhibition closes. There will be no ferries specific to the artgoers, but a limited number of spots for the early bird ferry at 8:45 a.m. each day will be set aside for Ai enthusiasts.

"@Large" is a partnership between the [National Park Service](#) and the [Golden Gate National Park Conservancy](#), which jointly oversee the federal penitentiary-turned-national park; and the [For-Site Foundation](#), a San Francisco nonprofit that commissions artwork in public places.

One of For-Site's previous shows, "Presidio Habitats," featured blue-and-white ceramic owl houses created by Ai and hidden high in cypress trees.

For the Alcatraz installation, For-Site Executive Director [Cheryl Haines](#) has made four trips to Beijing in the last year to meet with Ai, who is restricted from leaving China. This follows 81 days of incarceration on charges of tax evasion, an experience that is expected to color his approach to the Rock.

A press release dated May 13 but obtained in advance by The Chronicle states: "The exhibition explores urgent questions about human rights and freedom of expression and responds to the potent and layered history of Alcatraz as a place of detainment and protest."

Best known for his work on the "Birdhouse" stadium for the Beijing Olympics, Ai works on a grand scale, mixing sculpture, sound and media. The art will arrive by containership with precise instructions for assembly, since Ai cannot be here to oversee it. Working from documents delivered to him by Haines, Ai has chosen to place his work in the dining hall; the main and psychiatric wards of the hospital; [Cell Block A](#), which dates to the early 20th century; and the two-story [New Industries Building](#) where inmates worked. Other than the dining hall, these locations are not normally open to the touring public.

"@Large" is one of the most the most ambitious art exhibitions mounted in the [National Park System](#). Though not a first for Alcatraz, it is the first to feature site-specific work that is museum-quality by an artist of international renown. Because Alcatraz receives 1.4 million visitors a year, it might break attendance records for an art show that requires a paid ticket to reach.

@Large: Ai Weiwei on Alcatraz: Tickets are \$30 for the ferry, and may be reserved starting June 27 at www.alcatrazcruises.com. (415) 981-7625. Reservations for the 8:45 a.m. ferry are at www.aiweiweialcatraz@parksconservancy.org. (415) 561-3021.