Art-chaeology: The artwork of Mark Dion and Ai Weiwei in an archaeological framework

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Archaeology, as a whole, is a highly interdisciplinary subject; it has overlap with numerous fields, one of which is art. This overlap can be seen in the way that many artists critically engage with archaeology. A prime example is Mark Dion, who engages with the methodologies of archaeological projects. A contrasting approach is to be found with Ai Weiwei, whose work can be seen as controversial because of his focus on the material alteration of archaeological artefacts (including their destruction) rather than the processes and methods of the archaeological discipline.

In 2003, the renowned archaeologist Colin Renfrew published *'Figuring It Out: What are we? Where do we come from?: The parallel visions of artists and archaeologists'* in which he examined artworks by contemporary American and European artists within an archaeological framework in relation to both archaeology as a discipline (its methods, processes, and heritage functions) and parallels he identified between archaeologists and artists. Renfrew (2003) argued that a common thread/ground between the archaeologist and the artist is engagement. This commonality can be understood through the comparability between an archaeologist interacting with artefacts, and an artist engaging with a material (Renfrew, 2003, p. 44). He further argued that "as students of the past we gather all our information from our various encounters with the material remains of that past" (Renfrew, 2003, p. 47). Some of these material remains may be non-utilitarian objects and evidence of symbolic behaviour – artworks are the products of this.

A particular extension of Renfrew's views can be seen in a research paper recently published in the journal *'Archaeological and Anthropological Sciences'*; within this, the authors argue that a pebble with an ochre fingerprint, discovered in the San Lázaro rock-shelter (Segovia, Spain), "could represent one of the earliest human facial symbolizations in Prehistory" (Álvarez-Alonso et al., 2025, p. 1). Additionally, in a Renfrew-like way, journalist Sam Jones published an article titled '*World's oldest fingerprint may be a clue that Neanderthals created art'* (Jones, 2025).

The roots of Renfrew's novel research can be seen in his earlier essay *'It may be art but is it archaeology? Science as art and art as science'* published in a book on the 'digs' undertaken by American artist Mark Dion during the 1990s (Renfrew, 1999; Coles & Dion, 1999, pp. 12–23). For Renfrew "it is often difficult to decide where the artist's simulations end and the 'authentic' procedures of the real' researcher begin" (Renfrew, 2003, p. 87). The profound effect of Renfrew's approach is evidenced by Ian Alden

Russell and Andrew Cochrane's anthology of research papers '*Art and Archaeology: Collaborations, Conversations, Criticisms'* from 2014. Their aim is to provide a critical context for an emerging field. The attempt, they say, is to bring "together the parallel agencies and practices of artists as *makers of new worlds* and archaeologists as *makers of past worlds*", and in doing so, "help to establish a discourse about developing collaborations between contemporary art, heritage and archaeological practitioners" (Russell & Cochrane, 2014, p. 3). In Chapter 15 of the same book, Doug Bailey argues that there is an 'affinity' between the projects of many artists and the topics in which archaeologists hold interest; this 'affinity' can provide inspiration for archaeological work (Bailey, 2014, p. 237). He argues that instead of archaeologists turning back to their specialisms they could take a chance on collaboration/engagement: "If we can take the risk (and a willingness to take risks is the key), then the potential exists in the articulation of art and archaeology for movement into a new intellectual space altogether" (Bailey, 2014, p. 238). This thesis aims to add to this discourse.

Renfrew (2003) focussed almost exclusively on post-war and contemporary American and European male artists which, given the effects of globalisation, is lacking breadth. Extending research, as Russell and Cochrane's anthology aims to do, necessarily broadens discourse and case studies. This thesis intends to compare the work of Mark Dion, as an exemplar of Renfrew's approach, with that of the Chinese artist Ai Weiwei, within an archaeological framework. Ai Weiwei's work provides a controversial example of Renfrew's notion of engagement due to his focus on material 'artefacts'. He also engages with both Chinese heritage norms and those of the West. This is in contrast to Mark Dion, who explicitly engages with the material 'methodologies' of archaeology and in Western heritage contexts.

The reason for this research is to provide a case study in a similar character to Russell and Cochrane's anthology. It aims to answer the questions: how does contemporary art raise awareness for archaeology? And, how can this awareness be used to maintain cultural heritage through the use of current and/or transformed methods and techniques of the archaeological discipline? To do this, three main questions will structure the analysis and discussion:

1. What would an archaeologist who is steeped in the scientific methods of stratification, excavation, context, and methods of heritage display have to say about the artworks of Mark Dion and Ai Weiwei?

2. How would an archaeologist informed by post-modernist transformation of the archaeological discipline respond to the artworks of Mark Dion and Ai Weiwei?
3. Where do the artworks of Mark Dion and Ai Weiwei sit in the approaches, outlined by Russell and Cochrane (2014) and Bailey (2014), which offer a provocative reading of the art-archaeology field?

This research is, in essence, a literature review, the main body of which will be laid out in the following chapters. Firstly, in Chapter 2, background information, is established. Information concerning previous research will be detailed using works such as: Renfrew's '*Figuring it Out'* (2003), and the anthology by Russell and Cochrane (2014), as well as other essays. Context will be given concerning the two main artists in discussion Mark Dion and Ai Weiwei. Selective biographical information will shed light on the histories and views of both artists and will allow for the better understanding and analysis of their respective works. The exhibition, *Ai Weiwei: In Search of Humanity* (2023–2024, Kunsthal Rotterdam), will also be discussed.

Chapter 3 details the artworks by Mark Dion and Ai Weiwei that will be the topic of consideration in subsequent chapters. The initial discussion of artworks is as much as possible an objective description; the physical attributes of the works, as well as context for their creation are kept as the focus. The artworks by Mark Dion that are discussed include: *History Trash Dig* (1995), *Raiding Neptune's Vault* (1997/98), and *Tate Thames Dig* (1999). The artworks by Ai Weiwei are as follows: *Dropping a Hann Dynasty Urn* (1995), *Dust to Dust* (2009), multiple works of painted vases (from 1994 to 2015), *Colored Vases* (2006), *Names of the Student Earthquake Victims Found by the Citizens' Investigation* (2008–2011), *Forge* (2008–2012), and *Straight* (2008–2012).

Chapter 4 will outline the methodological and theoretical approach of the research. Different 'ways of looking' are considered. The theoretical framework, through which the artworks and artists are later discussed, will also be detailed in this chapter. The decision to introduce the artworks prior to theoretical approaches was taken to facilitate the understanding of the rationale and contexts for the theories, especially as some key viewpoints originate from outside of conventional archaeological sources. In this case, a prior knowledge of the discussed artworks will enable conceptual understanding as the theoretical framework is introduced. This so-called framework consists of various 'lenses' which include: reproducibility, destruction, markets, process and display, process and waste, and value. The works of Walter Benjamin, '*The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction'* (1936), and Amelia Jones, '"*Presence" in absentia: Experiencing performance as documentation'*

(1997), are used to address the idea of reproducibility, especially with regard to ephemeral and durational practices – including those of performance art. Destruction in its different forms is considered, as well as the context(s) in which it occurs. Different angles regarding the concept of process are discussed with a focus on notions of display and waste. The subject of markets is also discussed, highlighting different 'types' and the effects/consequences they can have. The consideration of these markets is essential to understanding the movements of objects. The notion – or perhaps more accurately, notions – of value are considered.

Chapter 5 is then given to the analysis and discussion of the artworks. Perspectives towards answering the three afore mentioned questions will be offered, for example the artists and their artworks will be viewed through the theoretical framework described in Chapter 4. Lastly, Chapter 6 is reserved for the discussion of the entire research, and any concluding remarks.

Chapter 2: Background

This chapter outlines contextual, background information, including short biographies for both Mark Dion and Ai Weiwei. Mark Dion's simulated archaeological digs are the subjects of inquiry and are followed by a section devoted to Ai Weiwei and his use of archaeological objects in his artworks – including those displayed in his major retrospective at the Kunsthal Rotterdam exhibition, *Ai Weiwei: In Search of Humanity* (2023–2024). These brief artist biographies locate the histories and careers of both artists relevant to the focus of this thesis. This chapter begins with a consideration of the main points in recent explorations of the relationship between archaeology and art.

The subtitle of Colin Renfrew's seminal text (Renfrew, 2003) on the relationship between archaeology and its methods and artworks by many contemporary artists is '*The Parallel Visions of Artists and Archaeologists*'. Robert Williams (1999) notes that "the relationship between art and archaeology has been present since the early days." (Williams, 1999, p. 87). He quotes William Masters Flinders-Petrie, the renowned Egyptologist famous for establishing systematic archaeological methods and preservation of artifacts as a distinct discipline, from 1904, on the close 19th and early 20th century links between the archaeology, the fine arts and history (Williams, 1999, p. 87). Even today, at Oxford University the 'Art, Archaeology and Ancient World Library' is one of the principal research libraries of the Bodleian Library.

Williams (1999) observes that Colin Renfrew and Paul Bahn in '*Archaeology: Theories. Methods and Practice'* (Thames and Hudson, 1998) explain how "postmodern and processual theories" have added "revolutionary new dimensions in the consideration of the products of archaeology" (Williams, 1999, p. 88). The influence of these theories is nothing new, Williams argues, within the practice of contemporary art or as a model for art criticism. What is common to both recent archaeology and art influenced by postmodernism is that "the centrality of interpretation recognises many levels of meaning" (Williams, 1999, p. 88). He continues "Whilst applied to the specific object (artwork and artefact) or association of objects (the collection/exhibition or assemblage), an interpretive model such as this, can be regarded as a bridge which links [...] contemporary art and archaeology as epistemological study" (Williams, 1999, p. 88). This is echoed in the Introduction to *Art and Archaeology* (Russell & Cochrane, 2014, pp. 1–6).

The archaeologist Michaël Jasmin (2014) also explores “artists connecting archaeologists” as a new method informed by postmodernist notions of meanings produced by an encounter (Jasmin, 2014, pp. 157–178). He is keen, though, to make distinctions between the two disciplines. He writes: “archaeologists excavate sites and objects from the past and then write about them; while artists create, and invent objects or situations in the present”; this, he says, represents “two radically different relations to time and materiality” (Jasmin, 2014, p. 157). It should be acknowledged, too, that there are diverging practices of destruction and reconstruction in the excavation and restoration processes of archaeology. How this also relates to the differing art practices of Mark Dion and Ai Weiwei will be discussed in subsequent chapters.

Aesthetic value, including the importance of experience, in art and those of archaeology is addressed by Renfrew (2003) particularly in relation to concept and production methods. There are undeniable delights, he argues, within archaeological practices and processes. He includes, as examples, the physical labour in excavation which leads to the archaeologist interacting with different stratifications of the past. Renfrew identifies “a certain joy when discovering a find, something that has been left unknown since its deposition” and with objects, especially ceramics, that are found as fragments “the art of reconstruction is another aspect of archaeology that can be highly satisfying” (Renfrew, 2003, pp. 44–45). Further, one overarching satisfaction that many archaeologists feel through their work is “a palpable sensitisation of knowledge being advanced” (Renfrew, 2003, p. 45).

Research by Renfrew (2003), Williams (1999), Jasmin (2014) and others in the Russell and Cochrane anthology from 2014, demonstrate that there are many overlaps between art and archaeology, be these of an aesthetic nature or a practical resemblance/simulation in process. It seems, from their texts, that there is art in archaeology and archaeology in art.

Renfrew argues that throughout its history, art, as a concept, has been expanded through practice/the practice of artists. Many artworks cannot and should not be considered as merely the final end product. The processes involved in its creation must also be considered – art as a process, and process as an art (Renfrew, 2003, p. 78–80). The central involvement of process is a key aspect in Mark Dion’s works, for many of which the process (and its documentation) is just as important, if not more so, than the final installation in an art gallery/museum. Here, there are parallels to archaeology as a discipline of ‘fieldwork’ and as a contribution to heritage (the meanings and display of the finds of fieldwork).

Artist Biography: Mark Dion

Mark Dion is an American artist who currently lives and works in New York (USA). He was born 1961 in New Bedford, Massachusetts (USA) (Graziose Corrin et al., 1997/2011, p. 146). Having grown up in a working-class family, Mark Dion had little-to-no access to art as a young child. He attributes the onset of his understanding and relationship with art, in part, to the collections at the New Bedford Whaling Museum (Massachusetts, USA) (Marsh, 2009, p. 38). Between 1981 and 1986 Mark Dion studied Fine Art in Connecticut and New York (USA) (Graziose Corrin et al., 1997/2011, p. 146).

Renfrew notes that Mark Dion's early works have archaeological parallels in that he "is *fascinated* by the processes and methods in the field of natural history by which knowledge is created, and by how taxonomy itself is constructed and then applied" (Renfrew, 2003, p. 86). His interests reach further than the actual knowledge of natural history, to involve the human perception of the natural world. As with many contemporary archaeologists, Mark Dion is concerned with pollution and the impacts urban life have on nature as evidenced by the subjects of his early artworks (Renfrew, 2003, pp. 86–87). Further with his 'digs' (see Chapter 3), his artworks almost always play host to a meticulous classification process (akin to archaeological methods) which have become a predominant characteristic of his artistic process (Renfrew, 2003, p. 87).

The essays in '*Mark Dion: Archaeology*' (Coles & Dion, 1999) and the 2011 monograph on Mark Dion (Graziose Corrin et al., 1997/2011) demonstrate that his artworks and installations address the influence of dominant ideologies and public institutions on public understanding of history, knowledge of the natural world; in particular, the essays by Alex Coles and Robert Williams (Coles & Dion, 1999, pp. 24–33, 72–101). Renfrew in '*It May be Art But is it Archaeology? Science as Art and Art as Science*' (Coles & Dion, pp. 12–23), considers how Mark Dion's simulations or appropriations of archaeological, field work and scientific methods of taxonomy and exhibition of objects raise questions about categorisations of objective/rational scientific methods and subjective/irrational influences. Emi Fontana goes even further:

> I know I'm not the only one to think that Mark Dion's work has a lot to do with fiction. Its presence always seems to hover over his installations. Things, objects, and fragments take the place of people and do not hesitate to tell you

their stories and their version of the facts. I have even noticed that his works emanate a special smell. (Fontana, 1999, p. 47)

In relation to Mark Dion's *Tate Thames Dig*, 1999, (see Chapter 3) Williams draws attention to the artist's emphasis that "the real value - in educational, scientific, artistic and theoretical terms, should be in witnessing, and participating in the process of collection and analysis" (Williams, 1999, p. 90). For Mark Dion, making comparative connection to different disciplines can bridge specialisms, such as art and archaeology: "In a period like ours, when so many disciplines are so highly specialized, there is a great opportunity for artists to bridge specializations" (Marsh, 2009, p. 36).

Artist Biography: Ai Weiwei

Ai Weiwei, born 1957 in Beijing, is a Chinese artist. He currently lives and works in several places across the world, including Beijing (China), Berlin (Germany), Cambridge (United Kingdom) and Montemor-o-Novo (Portugal) (Kunsthal Rotterdam, 2023a). The work of Ai Weiwei is very influenced by the experiences of his life. He uses these events in combination with other conceptual approaches to contemporary art making: "he always combines the past with the now. Ai's work is as diverse as world events and more present than almost any other" (Buchhart, 2022, p. 17).

Ai Weiwei spent his childhood living in poor and harsh conditions. When the artist was just one year old his father was labelled a 'reactionary' by the Chinese government, as a consequence his entire family were moved to a 're-education camp' (Buchhart, 2022, pp. 12–19).

During the 1980s, Ai Weiwei moved to New York for study. While there his work was particularly influenced by the American Pop artist Andy Warhol and the French artist Marcel Duchamp who was well known for his use of 'ready-mades' – found objects – in/as artworks. Warhol was fascinated by Duchamp's emphasis on the common place as the subject for his art works. In the 1980s Ai Weiwei in turn became fascinated, even obsessed by Warhol as an art figure and as an artmaker (see Figure 1). Like Warhol, Ai Weiwei was highly influenced by Duchamp's emphasis on the relationship between 'artist', 'artwork' and 'beholder' to a "chain between artist (thinker, cultural critic, concept maker) – ready-made – (exchangeable object with no inherent value) – beholder" (Buchhart, 2022, p. 13) where 'ready-mades' (for Warhol a

can of Campbell's soup or a portrait of Mao-Zedong; for Ai Weiwei, a Han Dynasty urn or a Neolithic vase) provide artistic material to be transformed into new cultural objects (Buchhart, 2022, p. 13). The use of 'ready-mades' – everyday objects – has also become a common occurrence within many artworks, especially installations (Renfrew, 2003, p. 80).

Ai Weiwei returned to China in 1993, in order to care for his sick father (he died three years later) who was a survivor of internal exile during Mao-Zedong's Chinese Cultural Revolution, that lasted from 1966 until his death in 1976. After his return to China, Ai Weiwei began to visit street markets, collecting 'antiques' including ceramics and wooden furniture. The act of collecting these items soon developed into an interest in the idea of cultural objects as symbols of the past in contemporary globalisation. Buchart also stresses the importance on Ai Weiwei of the Chinese government's Golden Shield Project, 1998 "a program of surveillance and censorship, often referred to as the 'Great Firewall of China,' that has increasingly cut off the People's Republic from the rest of the worldwide web – the artist responded in 2005 with an online blog on the Chinese internet portal SINA that featured both artistic and harsh political and social commentary" (Buchhart, 2022, p. 16).

A major event, that influenced Ai Weiwei, was an earthquake with a magnitude of 7.9 that occurred on the 12th of May 2008. This caused massive devastation to/in the Sichuan province in China (discussed further in Chapter 3). More recently, Ai Weiwei has been engaging with the concept of the abundance of refugees and migrants (globally), as well as the lack of compassion they are met with, as a climax of the humanitarian crisis (Buchhart, 2022, pp. 12–19).

The artworks of Ai Weiwei can be regarded as reflections of his beliefs, influences in the context of his own life. For example, the outcome of destruction is often a subject within his work. This is in both the metaphorical and physical sense, as he often choses to use items or materials that are products of destructive processes. Many of his works also convey his opposition and criticism of the Chinese government (Kunsthal Rotterdam, 2023a); Ai Weiwei is recorded to have said "Everything is art. Everything is politics." (Coonan, 2010). In following this mantra, "the artist addresses power structures and the mechanisms of exercising power, be it the destruction of cultural heritage as an expression of one's own superiority or the exercise of manipulation, censorship, and surveillance by the state" (Albrecht Schröder, 2022, p. 9).

The denunciation of injustice soon became what might be considered as a trademark of his work (Albrecht Schröder, 2022, p. 9). The work of Ai Weiwei is often considered to portray his activism, and strives towards a better world for humanity. Within the press release for the exhibition *Ai Weiwei: In Search of Humanity*, Ai Weiwei is described as "one of today's most prominent artists, the activist, and critic of authoritarian power systems" (Kunsthal Rotterdam, 2023a, p. 1).

For the focus of this thesis encountering works in *Ai Weiwei: In Search of Humanity* (an exhibition that took place between 30th September 2023 and 3rd March 2024) is important. This exhibition (see Figures 2 and 3) was held at Kunsthal Rotterdam, and produced in collaboration with Ai Weiwei Studio, Albertina Modern in Vienna, and guest curator Dieter Buchhart. This was the most comprehensive retrospective exhibition of his work to date, exhibiting 120 of Ai Weiwei's artworks (Kunsthal Rotterdam, 2023a). This exhibition acts as an overview for his career, highlighting "the aspects of humanity and artistic commentary in the work of Ai Weiwei" (Albrecht Schröder, 2022, p. 9). It included artworks from every phase in his creative career, a period of more than four decades. The many artworks from this exhibition offer examples of his: cultural ready-mades, sculptures, installations, wall works, photographs, and films (Albrecht Schröder, 2022, p. 9). During the 22 weeks that it ran for, the exhibition received over 270,000 visitors. It was also covered extensively by the press, featuring in the news and other television programs, as well as newspaper interviews and articles (Kunsthal Rotterdam, 2024). Ai Weiwei gave an 'Artist Talk' on the opening weekend (Kunsthal Rotterdam, 2023b).

Chapter 3: Data – The Artworks

This chapter focuses on the discussion of the main artworks, by Mark Dion and Ai Weiwei, from an objective standpoint. The physical attributes and intended meaning of the works are described, as well as context for their creation. There are images for each work of art with descriptive captions, to aid in the comprehension and understanding of these. When considering artworks, it is not only useful, but rather imperative, to acknowledge (if available) the artist's views and observations about their work. These can aid in the understanding of the artist's approach(es) and can bring the meaning of their art across to the viewing subject.

Mark Dion

Mark Dion's works rely on commissions, outside funding, a project team, documented processes, and envisioned museum and gallery display. The artworks discussed here are *History Trash Dig* (1995), *Raiding Neptune's Vault* (1997/98), and *Tate Thames Dig* (1999).

History Trash Dig (1995)

Mark Dion's *History Trash Dig,* 1995, (see Figure 4) was a simulation of archaeological excavation and finds processing in an art gallery context. It was part of the exhibition *Mark Dion: Unseen Fribourg*, at Kunsthalle Friart (Fribourg, Switzerland), 3rd of September to 22nd of October 1995.

This artwork exists as both a performative act (a specific time-based process and exhibited display) and as a series of documentary photographs with descriptions. The act, itself, was performative, done by Mark Dion and his assistants; there were three parts to the artwork. First the removal of a two-meter cube of earth and debris from a specific area, the bottom of a gorge, behind 16th century houses on Fribourg city walls – for centuries inhabitants of the houses have thrown material out of the windows which has settled in the gorge. Second, the transfer of the removed material which was piled on a drop cloth in the centre of the gallery where it was subjected to the archaeological processes of sorting, cleaning, and categorisation. This took three days of numbering and then placing cultural material on a long display shelf lining the gallery

until filled; the remaining cleaned earthenware fragments were placed on a table. The leftover cone of soil, boxes of stones and rocks, tools and cleaning apparatus remained in place for the duration of the gallery exhibition (Coles & Dion, 1999, p. 35). Documentary photographs, descriptions and partial remnants now constitute the artwork.

When talking about his work, Mark Dion said:

> That's one of the reasons I made *History Trash Dig* [...] which [...] superficially borrow[s] the methodology of archaeology in order to reframe the fascination that many Americans have with the simultaneity of history that one encounters in older European cities. During my digs into trash dumps of previous centuries I'm not interested in one moment or type of object, but each artefact – be it yesterday's Juicy Fruit wrapper or a sixteenth-century porcelain fragment – is treated the same. (Graziose Corrin et al., 1997/2011, pp. 29–30)

Raiding Neptune's Vault (1997/98)

This work is dated 1997 and 1998 because it had two iterations; first in the Nordic Pavillion at the 1997 Venice Biennale and second at the Galleria Emi Fontana, Milan under the title *Loot: Raiding Neptune's Vault*.

The first element of this work was a performative process with assistants; Mark Dion hired a large mechanical digger to excavate/dredge the bottom of Canal Rio della Sensa, Venice (Italy). In the Nordic Pavilion visitors could observe the dredge being sifted through with found items cleaned and catalogued in a temporary laboratory. Finds included a wide range of detritus, from variously dated ceramics to contemporary espresso cups. In an adjacent gallery, catalogued items were displayed on shelves, cases and chests. Photographs also record plants and animals from the lagoon in storage jars on the steps outside the Nordic Pavilion.

At the end of the summer 1997, an anonymous report was filed at the 'Nucleo Speciale dei Carabinieri per la Protezione del Patrimonio Artistico' claiming that pieces of priceless archaeological value were on display in Mark Dion's exhibition. Subsequently labels were placed under Mark Dion's work, stating: "these pieces are the property of the Italian State". The authorities stated that "Since Mr. Dion is an American citizen, and since the work is being exhibited in the Nordic Pavilion, we have a situation akin to the crime of illegal international trafficking" (Fontana, 1999, p. 49).

Some of the confiscated materials were taken to the offices of Doctor Pedrazzon, the Sovrintendenza Archaeologica in the Palazzo Ducale. He suggested to Mark Dion's gallerist, Emi Fontana: "First we have to make another inspection [of the exhibition], then you and the artist could donate one of the pieces in question to the State of Italy". For example, Pedrazzon suggested "those wooden boxes with the fragments? Well, we have identified some rather important material in it" (Fontana, 1999, p. 51). This was the work titled *Loot*; the day after the Biennale closed Mark Dion's *Loot* passed into the hands of the Italian State.

The second iteration of Mark Dion's project (minus the temporary laboratory and *Loot*) was shown at Galleria Emi Fontana, Milan (Italy) under the title *Loot: Raiding Neptune's Vault* (see Figures 5 and 6). The title was a play on 'to loot', where the installation had been looted by the Italian state's strict laws.

Tate Thames Dig (1999)

This artwork was commissioned Tate Gallery London and was displayed in the exhibition *Art Now: Mark Dion Tate Thames Dig* at Tate Britain (October 1999 to February 2000). It involves process, documentation, and final display; Williams (1999) argues that "the project should be viewed as a practice where the process, encompassing the whole range of activities, becomes the artefact" (Williams, 1999, p. 73).

The *Tate Thames Dig* project was undertaken by Mark Dion and a group of volunteers (see Figure 7). The team searched the banks of the River Thames between the low and high tides for artifacts from all periods and categories; first at Millbank (the shore near Tate Britain), and later at Bankside (the shore near Tate Modern). The Tate lawns played host to three tents, within which the project team washed, cleaned, and sorted finds (see Figures 8 and 9). There were also team members working on finds conservation: drying, cleaning, and restoring processes (amongst others). During this process archaeological experts were consulted (for example Professor Colin Renfrew, Cambridge University) and Museum experts (for example, Museum of London professionals). The results if these surveys included finds, such as, pieces of broken glass, pottery sherds, and fragments of bone (Williams, 1999, pp. 78–87).

Later finds – all processed, classified, and labelled – were selected for display. The finds were presented in a glass fronted cabinet (2660 x 3700 x 1260 cm), resembling a Wunderkammer (cabinet of curiosity) (see Figure 10). This was double-sided, with one

side holding items found at Millbank, the other from Bankside. None of the displayed objects had labels.

Ai Weiwei

The discussed works of Ai Weiwei have been separated into two groups, namely 'Ceramics' and 'The Sichuan Earthquake'. The first section includes the following artworks: *Dropping a Han Dynasty Urn* (1995), *Dust to Dust* (2009), various *Vase(s) with Coca-Cola Logo* (from 1994–2015), and *Colored Vases* (2006). The second group is comprised of: *Names of the Student Earthquake Victims Found by the Citizens' Investigation* (2008–2011), *Forge* (2008–2012), and *Straight* (2008–2012).

Ceramics

After his return to China from New York in 1993, Ai Weiwei collected various 'antiques', from antique and flea markets, including items such as Neolithic vases and Han Dynasty vases and urns. Ancient artifacts were found in the dug-up layers of earth during a massive construction boom in China in the 1990s. Without any cultural or archaeological sense of their value to Chinese history, they were often sold for relatively low prices. Ai Weiwei collected these objects, used them in his artwork, selling them to international art collectors who were steeped in Western notions of archaeological and cultural heritage values. As the Chinese state appeared indifferent to their long pre-Communist history (a legacy of the Cultural Revolution where historical sites were reduced to rubble), Ai Weiwei treated these objects in two ways: items for making money in international trading of art and archaeological objects and, in relation to his experience of the art world of New York, as 'found objects' or 'ready-mades' in the modernist tradition (exemplified by Marcel Duchamp). Ai Weiwei sourced all the pottery, used in the works mentioned below, from antique and flea markets (Lahner, 2022a, p. 104).

Dropping a Han Dynasty Urn (1995)

In 1995 Ai Weiwei made the artwork *Dropping a Han Dynasty Urn*: a set of three large back-and-white photographs (see Figure 11), a triptych, taken with a Nikon F3

camera that can record 4 frames a second (Lahner, 2022a, p. 104). Each of the photographs measures 148 x 121 cm. The first shows the image of Ai Weiwei standing in casual clothes holding the urn in his hands in front of a brick wall. The second depicts the act of him dropping the urn, captured in mid-air, in the space between his hands and the ground. In the final photograph the urn can be seen broken in pieces as it smashes on the ground. Ai Weiwei has the same unemotional face in all three. These photographs serve as the documentation of a performative act; namely, Ai Weiwei deliberately dropping a Han Dynasty urn causing it to smash. This work exists as a time-based performative act (the dropping of the vase) and in documentation as the three photographs of the act.

Dust to Dust (2009)

The artwork *Dust to Dust* (see Figure 12) was created by Ai Weiwei in 2009. The structural element of the work consists of a wooden shelving unit, with five rows of six cubes, of dimensions 200 × 240 × 36 cm. There are 30 glass jars nestled within the shelf spaces. Each of these jars contains the preserved, pulverised remains of Neolithic pottery (dating from 5000–3000 BCE).

Vase(s) with Coca-Cola Logo (various 1994–2015)

These are five artworks made at different times: one in 1994, one in 2007, two in 2011, and one in 2015 (see Figures 13, 14, 15, 16, and 17 respectively). All five of these works are made up of an archaeological ceramic vase (four from the Neolithic and one dating to the Han Dynasty) with the Coca-Cola logo painted onto their surface in red paint. The Coca-Cola logo was meant to symbolise “neoliberal capitalism” (Buchhart, 2022, p. 20), and the work was made to critique modern consumerism; he transformed these “signs of the past” into symbols of “overflowing consumer society” (Buchhart, 2022, p. 15).

Colored Vases (2006)

This piece involves a collection of 4,000-year-old vases, each measured to approximately 20 x 27 cm. All 12 Neolithic vases have been dipped into a Japanese-brand industrial household paint (see Figure 18). For Ai Weiwei, this controversial act changes “the understanding and perspective of an object, or reworking an established concept, disrupts its stability”; he wanted to “question both the identity and

authenticity of the object" and says that this work "makes both conditions non-absolute" (Lahner, 2022a, p. 116).

The Sichuan Earthquake

On the 12th of May 2008, an earthquake of magnitude 7.9 hit the Sichuan province in China. During this disaster, over 90,000 citizens were killed; this included 5,197 children, who were buried under the rubble of their schools (Buchhart, 2022, pp. 16–17). These had been built with poor construction materials and insufficient steel reinforcement, in order to save money. As a consequence of this "negligence" and "corruption", the school buildings were not adequately equipped to survive an earthquake. The Chinese government made no attempt to investigate the disaster leading to claims of a cover up because it did not want to draw attention to its causes in the year of the Beijing Summer Olympics (Lahner, 2022b, p. 224).

Names of the Student Earthquake Victims Found by the Citizens' Investigation (2008–2011)

After the death and destruction caused by the Sichuan earthquake and the Chinese government's failure to investigate the disaster, Ai Weiwei was prompted to create this piece.

The title, *Names of the Student Earthquake Victims Found by the Citizens' Investigation* (see Figure 19), describes what the work itself is, and how it came about. This work comprises a list containing the names and birth dates of 5,197 schoolchildren who lost their lives during the Sichuan earthquake. This takes physical form through inkjet prints. The means and processes of research for the creation of this artwork was done by Ai Weiwei along with a group of unnamed citizen volunteers. This effort was undertaken between 2008 and 2011.

Forge (2008–2012)

Ai Weiwei created his artwork *Forge* (see Figure 20) between 2008 and 2012. This installation consists of two separate elements that complement each other. The first, is made up by a collection of bent metal rods, collected from the destroyed Beichuan Middle School, that covers an approximately 40 × 850 × 475 cm area of floor surface.

The second component of this work is a canvas, of dimensions 440 × 800 cm, displaying a two-dimensional representation of the metal bars in ink.

The badly bent rods, collected and used in this work, constitute historical evidence (Buchhart, 2022, p. 17). The magnitude of the earthquake caused the originally straight steel bars to warp and become misshapen. The extraction of the metal from the ruins of buildings would have warped the shape of these further. For Ai Weiwei, the steel rods are remnants of the school's shoddy construction. The word 'forge', the title of his installation, can mean to make, shape or create something like a metal object or to produce a fraudulent copy or imitation – to falsify. The title thus plays on the meaning of his own art process and the claims of a government cover-up (Lahner, 2022b, p. 228).

Straight (2008–2012)

This work, *Straight* (see Figure 21), consists of 164 tons (approximately 148,778 kg) of metal rebar, covering a floor space of 300 square meters. These bars were taken from the rubble, following the Sichuan earthquake, and were painstakingly straightened by hand.

This piece has a sibling-work, also titled *Straight,* made later in 2015. This is a 15-minute video showing the meticulous process of straightening the metal bars.

Chapter 4: Methodology & Theoretical Approach

This chapter considers different 'ways of looking' that can be applied both to art and an archaeological perspective informed by post-modernism. The theoretical framework is then described in detail. This involves the examination of each of the consequent theoretical 'lenses': 'reproducibility', 'destruction', 'markets', 'process and display', 'process and waste', and 'value' which later, in Chapter 5, will be applied to a discussion and analysis of the artworks introduced in Chapter 3.

Renfrew (2003) argues that humans, as non-passive subjects, 'encounter' art (often in museums and galleries) whereby they produce differing interpretations. Encountering art as a material object is an equivalent to archaeologists, also as non-passive subjects, who 'encounter' material objects in their work (in excavations or museums) whereby they produce differing interpretations. In this sense there is an equalising or equivalent experience between the gallery goer and the archaeologist: the 'material encounter' (Renfrew, 2003, pp. 48–49). From a methodological perspective this point of view can be considered as one rooted in 'post-modernism'. This being said, however, Renfrew (2003) considers himself to be a 'realist' – someone who considers the creator's intentions as the most important factor to understand. Why did the maker create the work, and what did they want it to mean? A realist is a passive observer of art and the past.

The period of the late 1970s and into the 1980s gave rise to a new era of theoretical thinking: 'post-modernism'. Post-modernist theorists critique the realists' approach, arguing that each individual is not a passive observer, but rather an active one. This can be thought of and understood in these terms: every subject is a 'text' to be read, and every individual a 'reader' of that text; readings – or interpretations – are produced by the encounter between the viewing subject (as a text) and the object (as a 'text'). As the viewing subject is constituted by 'intersectionality' (identity position) the 'reader' is an active viewing subject, producing a range of possible meanings.

When considering the interpretation of the past, a post-modernist theorist would argue that the intent of the creator (a realist perspective) is important but is only one of many competing viewpoints. They would call for the allowance that an individual's interpretation of the past is bound to be informed by their personal present (and 'intersectionality'). Humans are living, thinking beings in their own contemporary context, they have individual views that will influence their perception; therefore, one

person's reading of a subject might be quite different than another's. It is important, therefore, that the viewer is aware of their active role, as well as the context and origins of their perspective. The observer must acknowledge their own position, allowing them to be self-reflective. It is important to maintain the awareness that there are changes in both contexts and attitudes, and that these can – and most probably will – inform various interpretations.

In her book '*Ancestors: The Prehistory of Britain in Seven Burials'* (2021), Alice Roberts highlights the impacts other disciplines (in this case genomics) can have on archaeology. New disciplines aren't always welcomed and are sometimes perceived as a threat by traditional archaeologists; but new methods and new findings "don't mean archaeologists working in a more traditional way [...] are obsolete" (Roberts, 2021, p. 15). Opening archaeology up to other disciplines can bring in new information and offer different perspectives of interpretation; this approach stems from a post-modern perspective. Later in her book, Roberts recognises that "we can never escape our own cultural lens – we can never be truly objective. But we can at least ensure that we are aware of our subjectivity and how it might influence our interpretations" (Roberts, 2021, pp. 329–330).

A realist critique of post-modernism is that this active viewing can lead to what is known as 'relativism' – the endless comparison of infinite interpretations. However, it has to be argued that acknowledging the different notions of interpretation is key. When contemplating 'confrontation' and 'interpretation' – the regarding/observation of a subject, and the analysis to facilitate its further understanding – as methodological approaches, "the parallel between the positions of the archaeologist and the art viewer is more than an analogy" (Renfrew, 2003, p. 49).

Theoretical Framework

The following 'lenses' are for the purposes of this thesis; however, given post-modernist critiques there are, other possible lenses.

Reproducibility

In '*The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*' (1936/1969), Walter Benjamin discussed how the experience of art has changed due to technologies that

can reproduce images, objects and events. While he predominantly focuses on artworks, his concepts and arguments can be applied to any object of enquiry.

For Benjamin ‘authentic’ objects have a certain ‘aura’; this ‘aura’ refers to the uniqueness of the object, as well as its authenticity. The age of mechanical reproduction caused the aura of an object to perish; the very act of reproduction facilitated “the liquidation of the traditional value of the cultural heritage” (Benjamin, 1936/1969, p. 4). Further, Benjamin argued, for a unique object “to destroy its aura, is the mark of a perception whose 'sense of the universal equality of things' has increased to such a degree that it extracts it even from a unique object by means of reproduction.” (Benjamin, 1936/1969, pp. 5–6). This was a deliberate act with the Dadaists, including Marcel Duchamp: “What they intended and achieved was a relentless destruction of the aura of their creations, which they branded as reproductions with the very means of production” (Benjamin, 1936/1969, p. 17).

Amelia Jones is an American art historian who studies performance art “entirely through its documentation”, this being “photographic, textual, oral, video, and/or film traces” (Jones, 1997, p. 11). She acknowledges that those critics and historians who advocate authenticity and aura stress the problematic nature of a person writing about a performative work that they have not experienced themselves; they were not present at the event (Jones, 1997, p. 11). Here there is a void/gap/separation between concepts of ‘documentation’ and the ‘real-life experience’. This raises questions such as: Did the observer need to be ‘there’ to truly understand? Is the documentation sufficient? Or are they two separate things entirely? These questions bring the concept of authenticity, as with Benjamin, into discourse: Is ‘the work’ the documentation or was it the process/act? Which is the ‘true’ artwork: the act or the documentation?

Jones also argues that although there is a certain value to be obtained from the first had experience (being there in the moment and viewing the event), this “specificity should not be privileged over the specificity of knowledges that develop in relation to the documentary traces of such an event” (Jones, 1997, p. 12). She argues:

> The problems raised by my absence (my not having been there) are largely logistical rather than ethical or hermeneutic. That is, while the experience of viewing a photograph and reading a text is clearly different from that of sitting in a small room watching an artist perform, neither has a privileged relationship to the historical "truth" of the performance. (Jones, 1997, p. 11)

This argument is highly relevant when thinking from an archaeological perspective. An archaeologist studies the residue of events from the past, events impossible for an

individual in the present to experience. Therefore, the archaeologist has no choice other than to view the past through its 'documentation' – the material remains left behind.

Both Benjamin and Jones address 'authenticity'. Authenticity is a topic of some debate in archaeological community, especially when it comes to the preservation of cultural heritage including the restoration and maintenance of ancient buildings and sites. An example of this can be seen through the 'Liang ancestral temple' at Guangzhou, in the Guangdong Province of south China. After having fallen into disrepair, this Yuan dynasty (1271–1368 CE) temple was independently restored by architect-turned-artist Fengwen Li (Ma et al., 2018, pp. 142–143). In such cases 'authenticity' may be considered compromised by 'reproduction' in the use of 'non-original' materials. For Benjamin, "the presence of the original is the prerequisite to the concept of authenticity" (Benjamin, 1936/1969, p. 3).

Destruction

The act of destruction can take many forms. For example, one of the largest, destructive threats to heritage is associated with looting. Looting is the term used to describe the stealing of artefacts, without any record of excavation or context (Hart & Chilton, 2014, pp. 318–319). It endangers heritage more than other destructive forces (e.g. natural disasters, infrastructure development) as "looters are particularly ruinous because they carry out selective destruction, targeting the best-preserved and scientifically most important sites for digging" (Mallouf, 1996, p. 198). The illicit excavation, undertaken by looters, can lead to the destruction of sites (Renfrew, 2000, p. 20).

Archaeological fieldwork aims to recover ancient remains (e.g. artefacts, features) documented in context, permitting advancements in knowledge and understanding of the human past (Renfrew, 2000, p. 19). However, if the destructive facets of archaeology itself are considered, it can be argued that it shares similarities with looting: "each involves digging and recovery and each generates things and information while also destroying things and information" (Hart & Chilton, 2014, p. 319). It is important to understand that archaeology is inherently destructive but is done in a controlled and thoroughly documented way, allowing for advancements in knowledge and the ability to understand the finds.

The destruction of heritage is a major concern in the field of archaeology, and looting is not the only threat. The destruction, and consequent loss, of cultural heritage has occurred throughout history, predominantly as a result (intentional and/or collateral) of war or other armed conflicts (Francioni & Lenzerini, 2003, pp. 619–620).

Material objects of cultural heritage are destroyed, often for political reasons. The destruction of heritage to 'make a point' is exemplified by the Buddhas of Bamiyan which were carved into the cliffs of the Bamiyan valley (Afghanistan). These immense statues (one measuring 53, the other 36 meters) were sculpted in the 3rd and 5th century CE), and were considered one of the most valuable pieces of Afghan culture (Francioni & Lenzerini, 2003, p. 625).

The Taliban, a political movement that advocated 'Islamic Revolution', gained control of Afghanistan in the late 1990s (Francioni & Lenzerini, 2003, p. 622). In December 1997, the *World Heritage Committee* convened for its 21st session. Concerns were raised about reported threats (from the Taliban regime) to Afghanistan's heritage, and more specifically the Buddhas of Bamiyan. The committee asserted the "inestimable value [of the statues], not only as part of the heritage of Afghanistan but as part of the heritage of humankind" (World Heritage Committee, 1998, p. 34) and proposed a set of resolutions for the conservation of the natural and cultural heritage of Afghanistan. However, in March 2001, the Taliban regime announced its new form of symbolic politics: the deliberate destruction of any cultural heritage that represented non-Islamic religious and spiritual traditions (Francioni & Lenzerini, 2003, p. 625). With cynical manipulation of world media reports, the Taliban destroyed the statues "inspired by the sheer will to eradicate any cultural manifestation of religious or spiritual creativity that did not correspond to the Taliban view of religion and culture" (Francioni & Lenzerini, 2003, p. 620).

Markets

Markets has become a key concept with the capitalist flow and exchange of items, specifically archaeological artefacts. Renfrew (2003) notes that the interest in the acquisition of such artefacts has grown beyond the scope of archaeologists and antique collectors and now encompasses artists and modern art collectors (Renfrew, 2003, p. 69).

There are different types of markets, from legitimate ones (selling predominantly legally sourced items) to street markets (often part of black markets, selling illicit objects). Although, many countries have laws prohibiting archaeological excavation without a permit, in protection of that nation's heritage, collections found in antique or flea markets often occur due to archaeological looting. Ancient objects are sold to private collectors and/or museums, often for a large profit (Renfrew, 2003, p. 55). Looting has been going on for thousands of years, evidenced by ancient grave robbers, for example. Systematic archaeological research is negatively impacted by looting activities, as these "remove important artifacts from their stratigraphic context" (Caspari et al., 2024, p. 2), thus stripping them of their provenance.

Many countries face an enormous problem with looting, especially China but there has been very little research in this area (Soudijn & Tijhuist, 2003, p. 150). For political reasons, there have been severe access restrictions to China that have "limited research on the dynamics, functionality, and impact of the Asian antiquities black market on archaeological heritage" (Caspari et al., 2024, p. 3). Large scale antique markets do exist, continuously evidenced by items with un-clear provenance. "Illicit excavations", leading to black-market activities, are thought to have "started on a serious scale after the establishment of the 'Reform and Opening' policy in 1978" when China began to open-up to the Western world (Soudijn & Tijhuist, 2003, pp. 152–153). However, pre-Communist cultural heritage is seen merely as an economic resource by local governments in China. Moreover, the illicit trade of certain antiquities, Han Dynasty ceramics for example, is tolerated because they are seen as low-value artefacts (Soudijn & Tijhuist, 2003, pp. 162–165).

Process and Display

The discipline of archaeology, at its infancy, began with artefact collecting and display of 'curiosities' during the Renaissance (circa 14th to 17th century) (Renfrew, 2003, pp. 83, 95). It transformed, during the 20th century, into the "systematic process of excavation which was refined into a well-controlled and well-recorded stratigraphic exercise directed towards the recovery of context" (Renfrew, 2003, p. 83). Nowadays, the archaeological process, if viewed at its core, can be considered in four definitive categories, namely: survey, surface-find collection, excavation, and display (Jasmin, 2014, p. 160) – all of which are thoroughly documented throughout. Archaeologists use discipline-specific methods to excavate sites, for example waste dumps – 'midden' in archaeological terms (what was discarded by past human beings). The results of

research are then displayed in heritage and museum sites using particular conventions of display.

Display, like archaeology, has developed since the Renaissance. To begin with, 'Wunderkammern' or 'cabinets of curiosities' were the convention, arranging objects and artefacts – so-called 'curiosities' – of any kind within the same display space. Breaking from tradition, the first division between collections occurred in the 1870s, with the separation between fine art and nature. Archaeological, ethnographical, and prehistorical remains, however, were frequently to be found in the 'natural' display (Renfrew, 2003, p. 95). Today, the display of collections can be considered as vastly improved, however, there are still certain challenges. Williams highlights the fact that "any given collection (in whatever form) provides as much of an insight into the agenda of the collector, as it does of the material itself. [...] the ideology, expectations, and world view of the 'curator' is manifested" (Williams, 1999, p. 90). For Renfrew it is important to understand that "the undertaking of display, and then the notion of process, [...] are integral to the very inception and development of archaeology, just as display and process are today central [...] in the visual arts" (Renfrew, 2003, p. 83).

Process and Waste

Waste is also a major factor within archaeological processes. To consider this concept, another work by Walter Benjamin, his uncompleted '*Arcades Project*' is relevant to this thesis. Part of this project was posthumously published as '*Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism'* in 1973 (Benjamin, 1973/1983); the project in its entirety was published later, in 1982, as '*The Arcades Project'* (Benjamin, 1982/1999). For Benjamin, Baron Haussmann's renovation (involving much destruction/demolition) of Paris (c. 1850–1870) and Charles Baudelaire's figure of the 'ragpicker' are central. The ragpicker character is the embodiment of human misery, an individual who is "'ragtag' [...] in a double sense: clothed in rags and occupied with rags" (Benjamin, 1982/1999, p. 349).

Benjamin was interested in why some Parisian artists and poets (especially Baudelaire) considered modernity an illusion: the bright facades of capitalism (new Boulevards, department stores, arcades) hiding the dispossession of the poor, and the waste of past and present. These sceptics of modernity "find the refuse of society on their street and derive their heroic subject [the ragpicker] from this very refuse"

(Benjamin, 1973/1983, p. 79). When discussing the ragpicker Benjamin quotes Baudelaire:

> Here we have a man who has to gather the day's refuse in the capital city. Everything that the big city threw away, everything it lost, everything it despised, everything it crushed under foot, he catalogues and collects. He collates the annals of intemperance, the capharnaüm (stockpile) of waste. He sorts things out and makes a wise choice; he collects, like a miser guarding a treasure, the refuse which will assume the shape of useful or gratifying objects between the jaws of the goddess of Industry. (Benjamin, 1973/1983, p. 79)

He believed that Baudelaire (amongst others) was shedding light on life in a capitalist era of modernisation – a world turned upside down – with the ragpicker as the representation of what it meant to live through this confusion. The ragpicker takes the waste of contemporary life and makes something out of it, and in doing so is regarded as "the modern hero" (Benjamin, 1982/1999, p. 368). Benjamin's discussion of Baudelaire's 'ragpicker' could also be used to describe many of the activities of the modern archaeologist.

Value

The concept of value is very complex; it has many facets and can mean divergent things to different societies and cultures. Variation in 'types' of value include display value, historical value, cultural value, monetary value. Although a full consideration is beyond the scope of this thesis, 'value' is a useful and relevant concept for this research.

When considering an object (artwork or archaeological find) two notions of value can be considered, namely, material and knowledge. These separate 'values' may both be factors in the overall value of an object; however, they might also be considered as contrasting elements when viewed from different perspectives. On the one hand, from an artistic perspective, the material value of an object may hold more precedence; the object solely in and of itself, its material presence as non-utilitarian. On the other hand, from an archaeological standpoint, the knowledge value may be of greater importance; what can be learned from the object? what was its use? how was it made? what might it reveal about the past? When considering archaeological artefacts, the desire to produce a piece of art in the modern sense was probably not the conscious aim of the creator.

Further there are value distinctions between when an object was made and when it is displayed. Renfrew argues: “Indeed, in a non-monetary economy, the process of commissioning work from a sculptor must perforce be very different from that in the gallery-mediated commercial transaction of the present day” (Renfrew, 2003, p. 70).

The theoretical framework (detailed above) will be used to analyse the relevant artworks and artists, which will help to illuminate contexts for differing readings and arguments regarding the works. Different perspectives/views on this topic will be examined, and the resulting analysis will be discussed in the following chapter.

Chapter 5: *Art*-chaeology: Analysis as Discussion

The focus of this chapter will be to analyse and discuss the artworks by Mark Dion and Ai Weiwei (see Chapter 3) in terms of the research questions outlined in Chapter 1, and methodological and theoretical approaches from Chapter 4. The topics discussed within this chapter are inherently interlinked and overlapping, therefore, for clarity, the arguments have been structured to address three main questions:

1. What would an archaeologist who is steeped in the scientific methods of stratification, excavation, context, and methods of heritage display have to say about the artworks of Mark Dion and Ai Weiwei?
2. How would an archaeologist informed by postmodernist transformation of archaeological discipline respond to the art works of Mark Dion and Ai Weiwei?
3. Where do the art works of Mark Dion and Ai Weiwei sit in the approaches, outlined by Russell and Cochrane (2014) and Bailey (2014), which offer a provocative reading of the art-archaeology field?

The first question addresses the traditional archaeologist's viewpoint, a more 'realist' perspective. The second takes observations further by using the lenses of the theoretical framework (see Chapter 4); allowing for a more post-modern, multiple interpretation approach. The final question discusses the crossovers and affinity between art and archaeology and how these may be utilised within an expanded discipline.

A Traditional Standpoint

What would an archaeologist who is steeped in the scientific methods of stratification, excavation, context, and methods of heritage display have to say about the artworks of Mark Dion and Ai Weiwei?

From a traditional, scientifically focused, archaeological perspective the work of Mark Dion would be considered interesting, but merely a 'simulation' of archaeological practice. It has many signs of being a dig – a 'project' with a team, survey, find collection, processing, and display – but it is lacking the 'proper' procedure and cannot be considered the 'real thing'. When it comes to *Raiding Neptune's Vault,* the approach of the Italian state in seizing part of the artwork would be seen as understandable and predictable. A 'true' archaeologist would have done the required disciplinary research,

been prepared, and have got all the relevant work permits. Moreover, with *History Trash Dig,* his work would be considered that of a dilletante. There is no stratigraphical context given to any of the artefacts; he is not using proper scientific methods even though he may be aware of them.

Renfrew (2003) points out that Mark Dion the artist was accused by the Italian authorities of 'excavating without a permit', which is normally applied to archaeologists. Artists are seldom archaeologists and therefore, their "views of archaeology usually belong to the public one, with a limited knowledge of the archaeological agenda and none of the methodological problems" (Jasmin, 2014, p. 159). While Renfrew (2003) does acknowledge that "most archaeological projects today look at least at first sight [...] like Dion's" (Renfrew, 2003, p. 90), Mark Dion is not an archaeologist, rather he refers to himself as a 'dilletante', stating:

> I never take on the mantle of mastery in these projects. It is always obvious that I am a dilettante struggling to find my way. As you know the tone set at a dig is pretty irreverent despite the serious labour involved. So there is a strong performative aspect, but there is no illusion. (Markonish, 2001, p. 36)

Although Mark Dion refers to himself as a 'dilettante', he stresses that this is not, in his view, a contemptuous thing. He notes that "we use that word only in the pejorative now, but the origins of the notion [...] are interesting: a society of dilettantes [...] was a society of people who were interested in everything" (Marsh, 2009, p. 36).

Traditional archaeologists might find the work of Ai Weiwei interesting in the context of an art show or exhibition, such as his major retrospective at the Kunsthal Rotterdam. However, when encountering his use of cultural heritage items, there would be a sense of shock and horror. The practices he undertakes in his work, and the processes of acquisition are the antithesis of what archaeologists are trained to do; and his work where he smashed an archaeological object or transformed them by paint or reduced them to dust would be considered as cultural vandalism. Furthermore, there would be disquiet at the Chinese state's attitude to cultural heritage on the one hand and correct political views on the other. Ai Weiwei has been arrested and imprisoned for his political views but not questioned for his acquisition of cultural objects and their damage or 'destruction'. Conversely, Mark Dion was criticised for a lack of permit and ignorance of the Italian Cultural Heritage Code.

Regarding Ai Weiwei's Sichuan earthquake works, it can be acknowledged that there has been some data collection regarding the provenance of items. The practices he uses here have some passing consistency with contemporary archaeology.

However, there is no documentation of the 'excavation' – collection processes – so, again this work would be considered as more of a 'simulation'.

Expanded Perspectives

How would an archaeologist informed by postmodernist transformation of archaeological discipline respond to the art works of Mark Dion and Ai Weiwei?

Reproducibility

Mark Dion's 'digs' rely on the documentation of both his process and the display of his 'finds': reproduced in catalogues, photographs, archive of exhibitions. They also rely on an informed active viewing subject. In this he is aware that the viewing subject is not fixed but transformed by post-modern perspectives (see Chapter 4). Arguably, his works are more consistent with contemporary archaeology as a research discipline which is also reliant on the reproducibility of process, finds, and display. His work is less a simulation and more a parallel activity, informed by another discipline (that of contemporary art). Mark Dion's 'digs' also critique the notion of 'aura' and authenticity, as discussed by Benjamin (1936/1969) (see Chapter 4) by stressing the performative aspects of practice in relation to its documentary status as considered by Jones (see Chapter 4).

Ai Weiwei's *Dropping a Han Dynasty Urn* is entirely based on his audience seeing the work after the act of dropping, it is reliant on a record of the action as performance. If Jones's (1997) ideas about reproduction are considered, the very character of the piece can be called into question: which is the artwork: the process/act or the documentation? And did you need to be there, is the documentation sufficient, or are they two entirely separate things?

The age of mechanical reproduction, as described by Benjamin (1936/1969), 'legitimates' the dropping of the urn – everyone can 'see' it – but in doing so the object's authenticity – the urn's 'aura' – is destroyed, replaced by the 'aura' of the three photographs (made possible by a Nikon F3 camera and print techniques). The cultural heritage 'aura' of the Han Dynasty urn is contextualised and critiqued by a 1990s artistic act within a specific political context. Here the viewing subject brings knowledge of the art world of 1980s New York, the context of a post-Cultural Revolution China and the discipline of modern archaeology to produce a meaning for this artwork.

Destruction

Here the focus is on Ai Weiwei's approach to cultural heritage. This can be seen in stark contrast to the example of the Liang ancestral temple (see Chapter 4) as "through restoration, Fengwen demonstrated her emotional attachment to her memory of the past, and her understanding of – and appreciation for – the historical aesthetics of place" (Ma et al., 2018, p. 146). Whereas Ai Weiwei approaches the objects of the past in relation to the present and strives to make a point – to make a work about the past he must destroy the past.

With his work, Ai Weiwei strives to address and criticise "power structures and the mechanisms of exercising power, be it the destruction of cultural heritage as an expression of one's own superiority or the exercise of manipulation, censorship, and surveillance by the state" (Albrecht Schröder, 2022, p. 9). However, in doing so he often performs processes of transformation on an object, which can in turn warp the message and undermine the very point he is trying to convey. For example, with his *Vase(s) with Coca-Cola Logo* to criticise consumer society, and his *Colored Vases* to question object identity and authenticity, he uses cultural heritage as art to make a point, however, the act of "overwriting antiquities that are a good two thousand years old also constitutes a covering over and concealment of the past" (Buchhart, 2022, p. 15).

The Chinese black market is flooded with objects that should be considered as cultural heritage, but through his work is Ai Weiwei critiquing the availability of the objects? Or is he embodying the lack of care for Chinese heritage? Ai Weiwei critiques the availability of heritage on the black markets, yet he is (whether knowingly or not) facilitating this availability. He is buying objects from these same markets he is critiquing and, as argued by Renfrew (2003), the buyers are (indirectly) funding this system. In this sense, Ai Weiwei is enabling/maintaining the very system he is critiquing.

In a sense, *Dropping a Han Dynasty Urn* parallels the destruction of the Buddhas of Bamiyan (see Chapter 4); media documentation is the only way global audiences knew of the targeted destruction of cultural heritage, and is likewise the only record we have of the existence of this Han Dynasty urn.

Critical questions remain: if Ai Weiwei valued his pre-Cultural Revolution Chinese heritage, would he view these Han Dynasty and Neolithic objects differently? It would seem that he does not care about heritage, though he is also speaking against

the misuse of heritage by the contemporary Chinese state. So, does he value the use of heritage but not the heritage itself? Does this reveal a complexity and contradiction in Ai Weiwei's work, something that is not resolved in his practice?

"Dust to dust" is a phrase from a Christian ritual; it is a small fragment of the funeral mass spoken by a priest. Ai Weiwei is using (English) language in a conceptual way in *Dust to Dust*, referring to the physical ceramic 'dust' and the concept of renewal through death. It has been argued that Ai Weiwei "was in a sense paying his last respects to and honoring those remains, as one would to the dead in coffins or urns" (Lahner, 2022a, p. 104). Can this truly be considered honouring? Or is it simply conceptual transformation? Moreover, these 'Neolithic ceramics' may well have been urns, or come from urns, and considering the fact that these ceramics have survived so long, is this act of destruction an insult rather than an honouring? Archaeologists often ask such questions of the past in relation to their finds.

The Kunsthal catalogue also states that "through their transformation on the part of the artist, the ancient objects undergo re-evaluation and redefinition – that is to say, a renewal" (Lahner, 2022a, p. 104). Is Ai Weiwei cannibalising archaeology here? Is he not simply honouring his own point, without evidence of provenance? To an archaeologist's mind it may well seem so; he is making a point in one discipline (art), while simultaneously taking away from a possibly rich source of knowledge in another (archaeology).

Markets

Ai Weiwei's works are made speculatively for the art market, for possible exhibition, or for his own collection. For example, the canvas (2D representation) included as part of the artwork *Forge* seems to bring no remarkable addition to the work; therefore, it raises the question of whether this element was simply directed to the art market. Canvases, in general, are a lot more marketable than a large installation or sculpture as collectors are (in general) more able to house two-dimensional works – an empty wall will suffice. It could be argued that this part of the piece appears to be serving no other purpose than giving the artwork commercial market value, however, conversely it could be argued that such an art object enables an extension of the cultural reach of Ai Weiwei's critique.

In 2019, Ai Weiwei's work was featured in the background of a Volkswagen advert. He was not happy with his work being used as a 'backdrop' for a car advert, but he has used Neolithic vases as a 'canvas' for his use of the Coca-Cola logo (Ai, 2019).

Process and Display

In discussing Mark Dion, Williams asserts that "the role of the museum, of the collection itself and the narratives that are constructed by collections, are raised as issues to be considered as a consequence of the models, methodology and practice of the project" (Williams, 1999, p. 88). Here, it is not solely the process of excavation, documentation, sorting and classification of finds that characterise Dion's practice – where there is or is not compatibility with the archaeological discipline – but also an engagement with the modes of display and their context in modern and past notions of galleries and museums. Most of his 'digs' include a display with cabinets. In this he is evoking the cabinet of curiosities or the Wunderkammern. The viewing subject, therefore, is an active participant in another discourse on the conventions of display that harks back to the beginnings of archaeology, before it had evolved into a modern discipline. Dion's 'digs' are context specific, reliant on commissions and the possibility of a radical display.

Process and Waste

In considering Mark Dion's process in conjunction with Ai Weiwei's Sichuan earthquake works, there are good methodological crossovers – the artworks can be linked to the ideas of site, documentation, material culture. However, Ai Weiwei develops the project through a transformative process, with *Straight* for example, straightening twisted steel from collapsed buildings (therefore removing evidence of the history of the event) in an act of 'reparation'. Here, Ai Weiwei appears to be unconsciously contradicting himself. In straightening out the bent rebar, he is, in essence, 'destroying the evidence' – a form of erasure. Could this not be seen as making the opposite point than that of the work? The straightening of each individual bar is described as "a senseless activity that reflects the equally senseless death of the children involved and at the same time represents a tribute to each individual object and thus to each individual life – a reparation of sorts" (Lahner, 2022b, p. 228). From an archaeological perspective, the metal bars can no longer be understood; as artefacts they have lost their (his)story, they have been stripped of their provenance.

This lack of provenance also holds true for the artefacts Ai Weiwei used: "the antiquities lost their functionality and became material for Ai's sculptures. In this way, he robbed them of their character as objects" (Buchhart, 2022, pp. 15–16) – he erases their 'aura'. Ai Weiwei has chosen to destroy highly 'created' products made by skilled

artisans with decorative and stylised features. These archaeological artefacts are not the same as the contents of an archaeological midden (waste of the past) as we see with Mark Dion's work. With Mark Dion's *History Trash Dig*, *Raiding Neptune's Vault,* and *Tate Thames Dig* there are obvious parallels to the 'ragpicker' and as a contemporary artist's versions of rag picking in the Benjamin sense, he is also concerned with the display of his finds within the convention of the Wunderkammer or cabinet of curiosities (see Chapter 4). Returning to Renfrew's quote ("it is often difficult to decide where the artist's simulations end and the 'authentic' procedures of the real' researcher begin") Benjamin's discussion of Baudelaire's 'ragpicker' could also be used to describe many of the activities of the archaeologist.

Value

Encounters with works by both Mark Dion and Ai Weiwei produce questions of value. For example, with *Raiding Neptune's Vault* the Italian authorities valued *Loot* because it contained relics – antiquities, jewels, and precious stones (Fontana, 1999, pp. 46, 51). The Italian state representative seemed less interested in the exhibition value of Mark Dion's work, in Venice Biennale, than in the material and cultural heritage value of some of the exhibited 'finds'. Benjamin argued that "Works of art are received and valued on different planes. Two polar types stand out; with one, the accent is on the cult value; with the other, on the exhibition value of the work" (Benjamin, 1936/1969, p. 7). This distinction is one recognised by both archaeologists and artists.

At the end of his book, Renfrew reproduced an archaeological find with the following caption: "A beautiful enigma, a symbolic masterpiece – incised stone ball, c.2500 BC, from Towie, Scotland – but symbolizing what?" (Renfrew, 2003, p. 194). A similar question was asked by archaeologists examining their finds in the San Lázaro rock shelter (discussed in Chapter 1). Mark Dion's 'digs' raise parallel questions in relation to his 'finds' and his methods of display. In this sense, his art works are consistent with Renfrew's observation: "Individual pieces may indeed be regarded as works of art, beautiful, interesting and evocative in their own tight. But separated from their context of discovery they have very little potential to add to our knowledge of the past" (Renfrew, 2000, pp. 19–20). Objects retain their material value, but when stripped of their context they lose their knowledge value. Hence, it is crucial to know the context of Mark Dion's 'digs'. Items without context are 'unprovenanced', meaning they have no documented provenance (Renfrew, 2000, p. 28): they lack information on their chronology of contextual situation. Mark Dion's 'digs' engage with both Renfrew's

(2000) discussion of value and context and Benjamin's (1936/1969) distinction between the context of 'cult value' and 'the exhibition value of the work'.

Arguably, the same could be said about Ai Weiwei's very different artworks and their exhibition. For example, with his *Dropping a Han Dynasty Urn* would he still drop and smash this urn if it was 'worth more'? Material value (and price) could have influenced his decision. Is he producing a critique of privilege? Or is he demonstrating the privilege of critique? If he valued his Chinese heritage, would he view these archaeological objects differently? Is he deliberately selecting antiquities to strip them of their archaeological context and original functionality so that they become symbolic material for his artworks? In this sense, did he rob "them of their character as objects of use" (Buchhart, 2022, pp. 15–16)?

It would appear at first that Ai Weiwei does not care about heritage but, what if Renfrew's (2000) archaeological emphasis about 'context' is applied? Separated from the context of discovery, objects (here, Han Dynasty urn and vase, and Neolithic vases) have lost the potential to further knowledge about the past (Renfrew, 2000, pp. 19–20). Thus, Ai Weiwei's work is arguably speaking against the current misuse of heritage in a post Cultural Revolution context. Questions are raised, for example, does he value the use of heritage but not the heritage itself? Do such questions, reveal a complexity and contradiction in Ai Weiwei's work? This is something that is not resolved in his practice. As Renfrew's (2003) arguments suggest, it is in the informed encounter with the artwork that knowledge about archaeological objects and the contexts of discovery, display and contemporary heritage is produced.

There is something inherently contradictory in Ai Weiwei's work. He demonstrates a use of the language, artefacts and processes involved with archaeological practices, re-purposing these for art world consumers (collectors, art professionals and gallery visitors). However, in engaging his audiences with the archaeological discipline he uses inconsistent approaches, revealing, both an interest in the role archaeology plays in storytelling and unearthing truths (e.g. through forensic research approaches used in selected Sichuan earthquake works) and a dis-interest in the full cultural value of ancient artefacts (e.g. through *Dropping a Han Dynasty Urn*, 1995, and painting Coca-Cola on historical vases). Can Ai Weiwei's work be seen to further the reach of the archaeological discipline, and if so, does he do this in ways which are useful or beneficial to the field? In contrast, does an encounter with Mark Dion's approach to the processes of archaeology provide a useful contribution to the field?

‘Affinity’ and Beyond

Where do the art works of Mark Dion and Ai Weiwei sit in the approaches, outlined by Russell and Cochrane (2014) and Bailey (2014), which offer a provocative reading of the art-archaeology field?

Clearly, it is important to respect the theories, methods, and practices of the modern archaeological discipline as Renfrew (2003) and Bailey (2014) argue. However, broadening the range of observations through the theoretical lenses of other disciplines, such as contemporary artworks, can reflect back productively on archaeological processes. How do we embrace the archaeological discipline but also leave space to think through other theoretical lenses?

For Dion, “In a period like ours, when so many disciplines are so highly specialized, there is a great opportunity for artists to bridge specializations” (Marsh, 2009, p. 36). In this sense, his ‘digs’ are less simulations and more examples of affinity, in Bailey’s sense (Bailey, 2014, p. 237). They sit productively in a critical comparison with the very different work by Ai Weiwei. Bailey argues that in opening up to the affinity between differing disciplines and their theoretical models, archaeologists might not just turn back to their specialisms and take a chance on collaboration/engagement: “the potential exists in the articulation of art and archaeology for movement into a new intellectual space altogether” (Bailey, 2014, p. 238).

Chapter 6: Conclusion

Connections between art and archaeology have, historically, been fundamental to the origins of archaeology as a specialist discipline in the 19th and 20th centuries. However, it was Renfrew's work (2003) on the relationship between developments in contemporary art, on the one hand, and the opening-up of research questions in archaeology, on the other, that refocussed awareness, of those connections, for both contemporary archaeology and art practice. The latter includes the process of art making and the conventions of display in galleries and museums, which have origins in the Wunderkammern or cabinet of curiosities of circa 16th century Europe. In turn, Wunderkammern prompted ideas leading to a transitional shift towards the specialist development of archaeology.

In exploring the work of American artist Mark Dion, his 'digs' of the 1990s – important also in Renfrew's research (2003) – and the contrasting works of Chinese artist Ai Weiwei, this thesis explores the ways in which contemporary art raises awareness for archaeology. This is two-fold: within the contemporary discourses of art, including its postmodernist developments, and within the archaeological discipline itself. With the former there is the public realm of exhibitions, from the Venice Biennale to the Tate Gallery (London), and publications such as exhibition catalogues; for example, '*Ai Weiwei: In Search of Humanity*' (Buchhart et al., 2022), and specialist books such as '*Mark Dion: Archaeology*' (Dion & Coles, 1999). With the latter, archaeology, it is the specialist conferences and research papers, as exemplified by Russell and Cochrane's anthology '*Art and archaeology: Collaborations, Conversations, Criticisms*' (Russell & Cochrane, 2014), which, as the study of this thesis demonstrates, has established "a discourse about developing collaborations between contemporary art, heritage and archaeological practitioners" (Russell & Cochrane, 2014, p. 3). As mentioned in Chapter 5, Mark Dion believes that "in a period like ours, when so many disciplines are so highly specialized, there is a great opportunity for artists to bridge specializations" (Marsh, 2009, p. 36).

This thesis considers how an archaeologist who is steeped in the scientific methods of stratification, excavation, context, and methods of heritage display would respond to the artworks of Mark Dion and Ai Weiwei. It is imperative that such methods be rigorously applied. However, the archaeologist's stress on 'context' (of finds and their presentation) when applied to the 'context' of art production and display (for instance, that of Mark Dion's 'digs' in galleries and museums; or that of Ai Weiwei in a

post-Cultural Revolution China) makes immediate claims of 'simulation' or 'cultural vandalism' require a broader consideration. Here issues of cultural heritage – whether those of the Italian state in relation to Mark Dion's *Raiding Neptune's Vault* (1997/98), or that of the post-Cultural Revolution Chinese state in relation to Ai Weiwei's destructive use of antiquities – are complex in their contradictions.

Questions of methodology in both art discourse and archaeology as a discipline have been questioned by post-modernism. Therefore, this thesis considers how an archaeologist informed by post-modernist transformations would respond to the artworks of the artists under consideration. As such, a (necessarily limited) number of 'lenses' are employed to answer the question of maintaining cultural heritage through the use of current and/or transformed methods of the archaeological discipline. Is it possible to describe something truly impartially, if views and opinions have already been formed and are dominant? Here issues such as the 'viewing subject', meanings being produced through 'encounters', and the role of 'intersectionality' are considered; these are viewed through the 'lenses' and the mobilisation of approaches from other disciplines, such as those of Walter Benjamin and Amelia Jones.

There is some success in using this methodology to consider how the artworks of Mark Dion and Ai Weiwei sit in approaches, outlined by Russell and Cochrane (2014) and Bailey (2014), which offer provocative readings of the art-archaeology field. For the purposes of this thesis a restricted number of theoretical 'lenses' have been selected; these would need to be expanded within a broader or more extensive study. However, they do provide enough discussion to agree with Bailey (2014) that in opening up to the 'affinity' between differing disciplines and their theoretical models, archaeologists might not simply turn back to their specialisms but take a chance on collaboration/engagement: "the potential exists in the articulation of art and archaeology for movement into a new intellectual space altogether" (Bailey, 2014, p. 238). As Roberts (2021) argues this has happened already in the science of contemporary archaeology, as evidenced in the relationship between genomics and osteoarchaeology for example. This is also the case for the discipline specific contributions of the culture/heritage industries on archaeological thinking. As Bailey (2014) rightly says, for the positive engagement between archaeology and art (or indeed any other discipline) there must be "a willingness to take risks" (Bailey, 2014, p. 238) with what he calls 'affinity' and thus embrace new and intellectual connections.

Abstract

This thesis aims to address the research questions: how does contemporary art raise awareness for archaeology? And, how can this awareness be used to maintain cultural heritage through the use of current and/or transformed methods and techniques of the archaeological discipline? Starting with archaeologist Colin Renfrew's innovative book '*Figuring it out: What are we? Where do we come from?: The parallel visions of artists and archaeologists'* (2003), this thesis examines the productive crossovers between the disciplines of archaeology and contemporary art (its production and reception). One of Renfrew's main examples are the 'digs' of American artist Mark Dion, conducted during the 1990s. Renfrew's distinction between artistic 'simulation' and the scientific method of archaeological methods of research are examined. The lack of non-European and/or American art examples in Renfrew's work is tested by considering selected artworks by Chinese artist Ai Weiwei from the 1990s and the early 2000s. The thesis examines the work of both Mark Dion and Ai Weiwei within an archaeological framework. To do so the following three questions are addressed:

1. What would an archaeologist who is steeped in the scientific methods of stratification, excavation, context, and methods of heritage display have to say about the artworks of Mark Dion and Ai Weiwei?
2. How would an archaeologist informed by post-modernist transformation of the archaeological discipline respond to the artworks of Mark Dion and Ai Weiwei?
3. Where do the artworks of Mark Dion and Ai Weiwei sit in the approaches, outlined by Russell and Cochrane (2014) and Bailey (2014), which offer a provocative reading of the art-archaeology field?

Writers from outside of the archaeological discipline are mobilised, for example, Walter Benjamin and Amelia Jones. Texts from within the discipline are utilised, including the essay by visual archaeologist Doug Bailey titled '*Art//Archaeology//Art: Letting-go Beyond*' is explored in relation to his concept of 'affinity'.

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Illustrations

Artist Biography: Ai Weiwei

Figure 1.
Ai Weiwei *At the Museum of Modern Art, 1987.* A young Ai Weiwei standing next to a self-portrait by Andy Warhol, emulating the artist through his pose. (Collection of Ai Weiwei, https://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/exhibition/andy-warhol-ai-wei-wei/#exhi-tab-key-works).

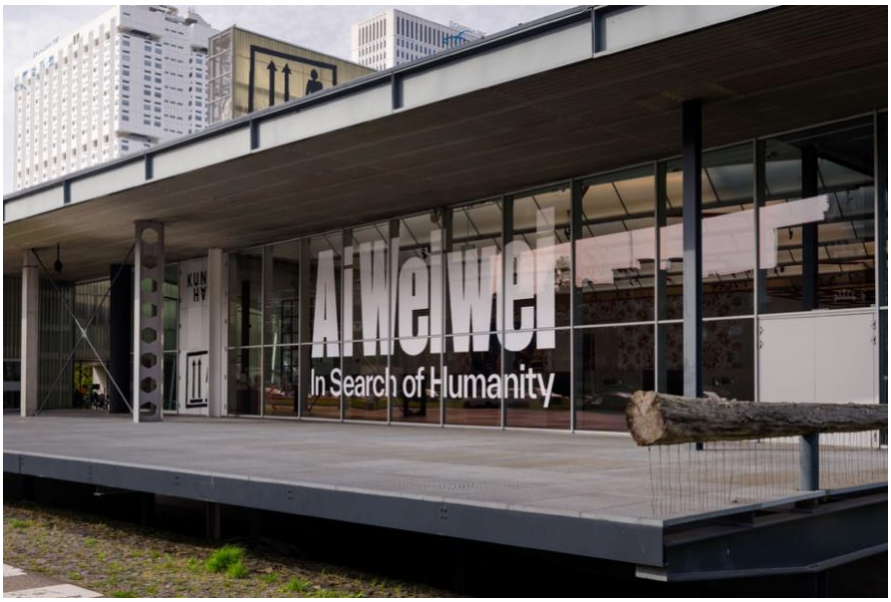

Figure 2.
View of Kunsthal Rotterdam Exterior. Throughout its duration, the name of the exhibition, *Ai Weiwei: In Search of* Humanity, was displayed in large letters on the exterior of Kunsthal Rotterdam. (de Ronners, https://www.behance.net/gallery/219278549/Ai-Weiwei-In-Search-of-Humanity-Kunsthal-Rotterdam).

Figure 3.
View of *Ai Weiwei: In Search of Humanity*. View of the *Ai Weiwei: In Search of Humanity Ai Weiwei: In Search of Humanity* exhibition at Kunsthal Rotterdam. (de Ronners, https://www.behance.net/gallery/219278549/Ai-Weiwei-In-Search-of-Humanity-Kunsthal-Rotterdam).

Mark Dion Artworks

Figure 4.
History Trash Dig, 1995. The gallery installation of artwork by Mark Dion; a mound of earth (volume of two-meter cube) removed from Fribourg, Switzerland. (Graziose Corrin et al., 1997/2011, p. 70).

Figure 5.
Raiding Neptune's Vault, 1997/98, 'Treasure Chest'. Part of *Raiding Neptune's Vault;* artwork by Mark Dion comprising three chests each holding 'Antiquity', 'Jewels', or 'Precious Stones'. (Coles & Dion, 1999, p. 46).

Figure 6.
Raiding Neptune's Vault, 1997/98, 'Loot 2'. Detail of finds from Raiding Neptune's Vault. (Coles & Dion, 1999, p. 57).

Figure 7.
The *Tate Thames Dig* Team. Photographs, names, and responsibilities of the members of Mark Dion's team for the project, *Tate Thames Dig*, 1999. (Coles & Dion, 1999, p. 96–97).

Figure 8.
The *Tate Thames Dig* Process. Detail of the conservation and sorting processes undertaken for Mark Dion's *Tate Thames Dig*, 1999. (Coles & Dion, 1999, p. 13).

Figure 9.
The *Tate Thames Dig* Tents. Detail of a finds processing tent, for Mark Dion's *Tate Thames Dig*, 1999. (Coles & Dion, 1999, p. 91).

Figure 10.
Tate Thames Dig (1999). Artwork by Mark Dion as displayed; a glass fronted cabinet containing finds collected from the River Thames shore at Millbank. (Tate, item number: T07669, https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/dion-tate-thames-dig-t07669).

Figure 11.
Dropping a Han Dynasty Urn, 1995. Artwork by Ai Weiwei comprised of three photographs (148 x 121 cm each) depicting the artist purposefully smashing an urn, dating from the Chinese Han Dynasty. (Buchhart et al., 2022, pp. 106–107).

Figure 12.
Dust to Dust, 2009. Artwork by Ai Weiwei composed 30 glass jars, containing the pulverised remains of Neolithic pottery (from 5000 to 3000 BCE), and placed in a wooden shelving unit (200 x 240 x 36 cm). (Buchhart et al., 2022, p. 125).

Figure 13.
Neolithic Vase with Coca-Cola Logo, 1994. Artwork by Ai Weiwei involving a ceramic artefact (31 x 40 cm), from the Neolithic period, with the Coca-Cola Logo painted on its surface. (Buchhart et al., 2022, p. 111).

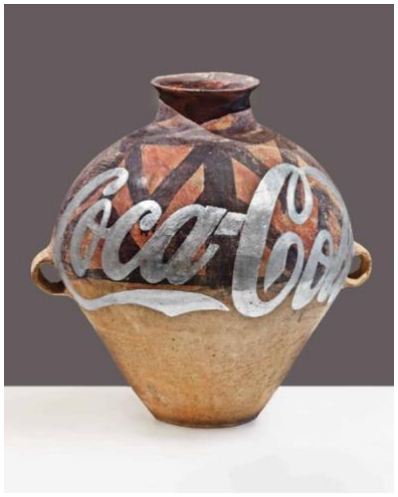

Figure 14.
Neolithic Vase with Coca-Cola Logo, 2007. Artwork by Ai Weiwei involving a painted ceramic artefact (25 x 28 cm), from the Neolithic period, with the Coca-Cola Logo painted on its surface. (Buchhart et al., 2022, p. 115).

Figure 15.
Neolithic Vase with Coca-Cola Logo, 2011. Artwork by Ai Weiwei involving a ceramic artefact (12.5 x 28 cm), from the Neolithic period, with the Coca-Cola Logo painted on its surface. (Buchhart et al., 2022, p. 112).

Figure 16.
Han Dynasty Vase with Coca-Cola Logo, 2011. Artwork by Ai Weiwei involving a ceramic artefact (40 x 27 x 36 cm), from the Chinese Han Dynasty, with the Coca-Cola Logo painted on its surface. (Buchhart et al., 2022, p. 113).

Figure 17.
Neolithic Vase with Coca-Cola Logo, 2015. Artwork by Ai Weiwei involving a ceramic artefact (34 x 42 cm), from the Neolithic period, with the Coca-Cola Logo painted on its surface. (Buchhart et al., 2022, p. 114).

Figure 18.
Colored Vases, 2006. Artwork by Ai Weiwei, made by dipping 12 Neolithic ceramic artefacts (20 x 27 cm each) in industrial Japanese-brand housepaint. (Buchhart et al., 2022, p. 117).

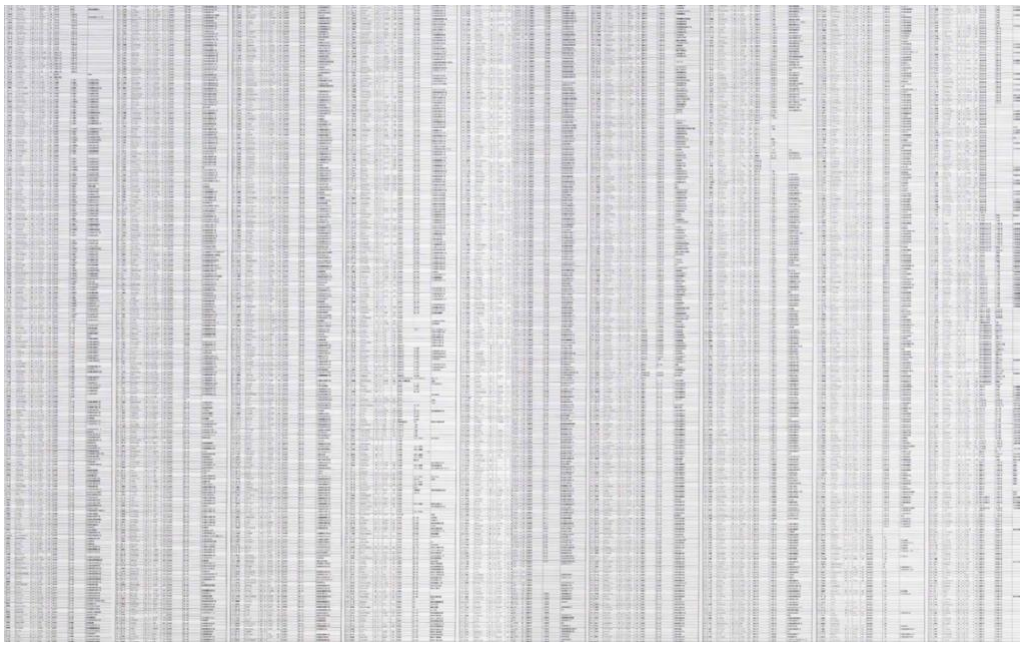

Figure 19.
Names of the Student Earthquake Victims Found by the Citizens' Investigation, 2008–2011. Artwork by Ai Weiwei, made in response to the Sichuan Earthquake; including a list of names and birthdates of 5,197 schoolchildren killed during the event. (Buchhart et al., 2022, pp. 226–227).

Figure 20.
Forge, 2008–2012. Installation artwork by Ai Weiwei, made in response to the Sichuan earthquake, with two elements; on the floor is a large area (40 x 800 x 475 cm) hosting misshapen rods from a destroyed school; a 2D representation on canvas (400 x 800 cm) hangs on the adjacent wall. (Buchhart et al., 2022, pp. 230–231).

Figure 21.
Straight, 2008–2012. Installation (300 square meters) artwork by Ai Weiwei, made in response to the Sichuan Earthquake, comprised of metal rods, collected from school debris, placed into piles after having been straightened out. (Buchhart et al., 2022, pp. 234–235).