



Text by Juliet Clark

From *@Large: Ai Weiwei on Alcatraz*,
Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy, 2014

TRACE



Installation, 2014
LEGO plastic building blocks

While *With Wind* uses natural and mythical imagery to reference the global reality of political detainment, this installation at the rear of the New Industries Building gives that reality a human face—or, rather, many individual faces. The viewer is confronted with a field of colorful images laid out flat across the expansive floor: portraits of over 170 people from around the world who have been imprisoned or exiled due to their beliefs or affiliations, most of whom were still incarcerated as of June 2014.

If the sheer number of individuals represented is overwhelming, the impression is compounded by the intricacy of the work's construction: each image was built by hand from LEGO bricks. The images of Chinese and Tibetan prisoners were assembled in the artist's studio, while others were fabricated in San Francisco to the artist's specifications. Assembling a multitude of small parts into a vast and complex whole, the work may bring to mind the relationship between the individual and the collective, a central dynamic in any society and a particularly charged one in contemporary China.

Like *With Wind*, this artwork may be viewed from the upper gun gallery as well as at floor level.



The artist and two studio assistants assembling portraits for *Trace*

OPPOSITE: Portraits for *Trace* assembled at the artist's Beijing studio, 2014