

Nanopublication – Cell dimensions as invariant: Ai Weiwei's detention crosses three modalities intact, but the 'why' arrives before any receiver has diffracted

by Arnaud Quercy

The line is between emission and reception: this source documents, with unusual precision (measured dimensions, three dated realizations, an authorial quote naming the intentional logic), the emission-side apparatus – invariant, seriality, explicability – and grips it cleanly. It is a press account, not a reception account; it says nothing about how any visitor actually diffracts inside the cell, so the receiver-side machinery (ricochet, multiplication, diagnostic self-reception) is neither confirmed nor tested, only rendered structurally premature by the advance disclosure of the 'why.'

WHAT THE SOURCE SAYS ^[1]

Ai Weiwei will stage a 24-hour live performance, *Sewing a Button*, in Manchester, reenacting his 2011 detention inside a full-scale rebuild of his actual cell (7.2 by 3.6 meters), visible to visitors partly through the same CCTV vantage his guards had. This follows two earlier treatments of the same material: S.A.C.R.E.D. (2013), six fiberglass dioramas of the detention shown at the Venice Biennale, and *Dumbass* (2013), a heavy-metal music video he called 'a kind of self-therapy.' Of the new work and its predecessors, Ai tells the *New York Times* the piece is 'not really about me... about how the power of the state tries to manage and maintain this kind of control.'

WHERE THE LENS GRIPS

P3/P3a grip cleanly: the physical invariant here is literally measured and rebuilt across three separate emissions spanning thirteen years – the same cell dimensions, the same guard/interrogation structure, recur in the 2013 dioramas, the 2013 video, and the 2026 live reenactment, exactly the 'skeleton that survives the crossing' the propositions describe. P19a grips too: Ai supplies the intentional invariant on request, unprompted by any dialogic ricochet – 'not really about me... about the power of the state' – satisfying the explicability condition directly. P8 (Seriality) grips: three distinct realizations of one

idea, none offered as final, each a fresh actualization. P2, in its narrowed form (this idea, not any idea; carried, not transported wholesale), also holds – the ideational identity of the detention experience persists across sculpture, song, and live body without claiming universality.

WHERE IT BREAKS

P18a's ricochet model assumes the intentional invariant is disclosed in dialogue, after the receiver has already diffracted on their own, generating tension between their creation and the revealed structure. Here Ai's rationale is issued as press material in advance, available to everyone equally before most visitors ever stand in the recreated cell. This slips IF one reads ricochet as requiring a genuine receiver-initiated request following independent, prior diffraction – the mechanism as described presupposes an asymmetry (revealed vs. not-yet-revealed) that a universally broadcast quote erases. It holds if one reads the quote merely as evidence the codex is articulable on demand (P19a's condition), leaving room for a richer, individually timed ricochet once any given visitor actually spends hours inside the cell.

PROPOSITIONAL GRID ^[2]

Read this grid. "Not evaluated" does **not** mean the source has nothing to say about that proposition. It means **the reading did not instruct it**. That is not a result, and it counts in no denominator. A silence, by contrast, is a finding: the reading touched the proposition without concluding, or noted its absence itself.

Evaluated

proposi- tion		audit status	relational verdict
P2	Transliteration	audited ^[3]	evidence-for
P3	Invariants	not audited	evidence-for
P3a	Double Structure of the In-variant	not audited	evidence-for
P8	Seriality	not audited	evidence-for
P18a	The Ricochet Effect	not audited	pressure-against
P19a	Explicability as Condition	not audited	evidence-for

What was instructed. These propositions have been judged and carry a current statement: it is **that** statement the reading tested, not the founding one.

- **P2** – judged in Note 01 · current statement : the statement is narrowed: it loses « transportée » and « toute »

Remarkable silences

2 called for by what the reading found, and absent from the source.

- **P16a** – Diagnostic Self-Reception
the reading establishes that Ai supplies the intentional invariant unprompted, satisfying explicability, but diagnostic self-reception requires the artist re-reading an actual reception to measure a gap, and the reading itself flags this receiver-side machinery as untested because the disclosure precedes any visitor's diffraction.
- **P17** – Multiplication of Creation
the reading establishes rich emission-side documentation across three dated realizations of one invariant, but multiplication of creation requires distinct receptions to count as N creations, and the reading itself notes no visitor reception is reported, only rendered premature by advance disclosure of the codex.

Not evaluated (29) – P1, P4, P5, P6, P7, P9, P10, P11, P12, P13, P14, P14a, P14b, P15, P16, P18, P19, P20, P21, P22, P23, P24, P25, P26, P27, P28, P29, P30, P31

Overall verdict: Bounded – taxonomy of the August 2026 pass, predating the move to relational verdicts. Kept as metadata: the gap between the two forms is data, not residue. This reading's judgement is in the grid above.

Reading of 2026-04-24 · model claude-sonnet-5 · source 7,342 chars · 3 attempt(s)

FIRST PASS – KEPT AS WRITTEN

Reading produced by the T50 RSS pass, before the boundary lens. It is reproduced UNCORRECTED. Keeping it is the point: without it, a

changed title is just a changed title – with it, what the second pass refused becomes legible.

Title it carried : « Ai Weiwei's 24-Hour Reenactment and the Ricochet of Embodied Testimony »

Ai Weiwei's 'Sewing a Button' is a structural case of the ricochet effect. The artist emits a signal (his own body, 24 hours, the space of detention reenacted) through a codex of political testimony and embodied resistance. But the receiver—the audience witnessing live—does not receive a transparent account of what happened to him. Instead, the gap between the real detention and its reenactment, between historical trauma and present performance, becomes the site where new meaning is generated. The intentional invariant (why these 24 hours, why this specific gesture) is latent in the emission. When it's revealed—'this is about my detention'—it doesn't correct the diffraction already happening in the room. It generates a second one: the audience must now hold simultaneously the knowledge of what was, the knowledge of what is being performed, and the unbridgeable distance between them. This productive tension IS the ricochet. The work refuses lossless transmission; it engineers generative loss as its epistemic practice.

T50 RSS assessment · 2026-04-24 · remplacée par boundary-lens-2026-08

REFERENCES

[1] Ai Weiwei to Reenact His Own Detention in 24-Hour Performance in Manchester. ARTnews.com, 2026-04-24. <https://www.artnews.com/art-news/news/ai-weiwei-24-hour-performance-factory-international-1234782448/>

[2] Quercy, A. (2026). The 31 Propositions of Ideamorphism. <https://ideamorphism.org/en/publications/2026/03/the-31-propositions-of-ideamorphism.html>

[3] Quercy, A. (2026). The Passenger Without a Vehicle – Relational Content and Multiple Execution. <https://ideamorphism.org/en/publications/2026/07/the-passenger-without-a-vehicle-relational-content-and-multiple-execution-5b10.html>

EPISTEMIC PROFILE

Claim type	boundary reading
Voice	third person analysis
Epistemic status	bounded grip
Methodology	Boundary-finding lens applied to one source, model claude-sonnet-5, 3 attempt(s), traceability check passed.

CHECKSUM (SHA-256)

a28736c5f17b014b1df2dcb8a3b084b9be1e7c297dcd29dc3ae231c3a9cedea4

Licensed under Creative Commons Attribution 4.0
International (CC BY 4.0)

Author Arnaud Quercy
Asset code IDS-RNI0018
Identifier NAN-RDG000023
Version 1
Published 2026-08-05

ISSN: applied for – U.S. ISSN Center, Library of Congress

© 2026 Ideamorphic Studies

Published by Art Quam Anima Publishing New York,
an assumed name of AQA Publishing LLC

c/o Northwest Registered Agent, 418 Broadway Ste N
Albany, NY 12207, USA
+1 917-764-5470

NY DOS ID 7624376 · Assumed Name ID 7658709

publishing.artquamanima.com

Last updated: 2026-08-15

Persistent URI: <https://ideamorphism.org/en/nanopubs/2026/08/IDS-RNI0018-cell-dimensions-as-invariant-ai-weiweis-detention-crosses-th.pdf>