

Ai Wei Wei / Breathing Through Silk

Trust the dissident artist;
he knows heads crack as
easily as sunflower seeds
and schools built on sand,

where fragrant Sichuan spices almost
cover the stench of corruption and death.

He spreads out one hundred million
porcelain seeds, each one perfectly
painted. Will that be enough to feed
the souls released in the Great Leap
Forward and Chengdu Earthquake?

There are one hundred million
reasons to walk in his shoes,
footsteps of ghosts who went
before him, as carefully as ants
avoiding diatomaceous earth

and resolute heroes swimming in circles.

The mornings Ai Wei Wei,
arrested for truth, sipped thin
soup in prison, we broke bread
on the rocks where circling gulls
opened their beaks to drop and
smash their invertebrate food—

where every story's a sacrament,
one thing becoming another.