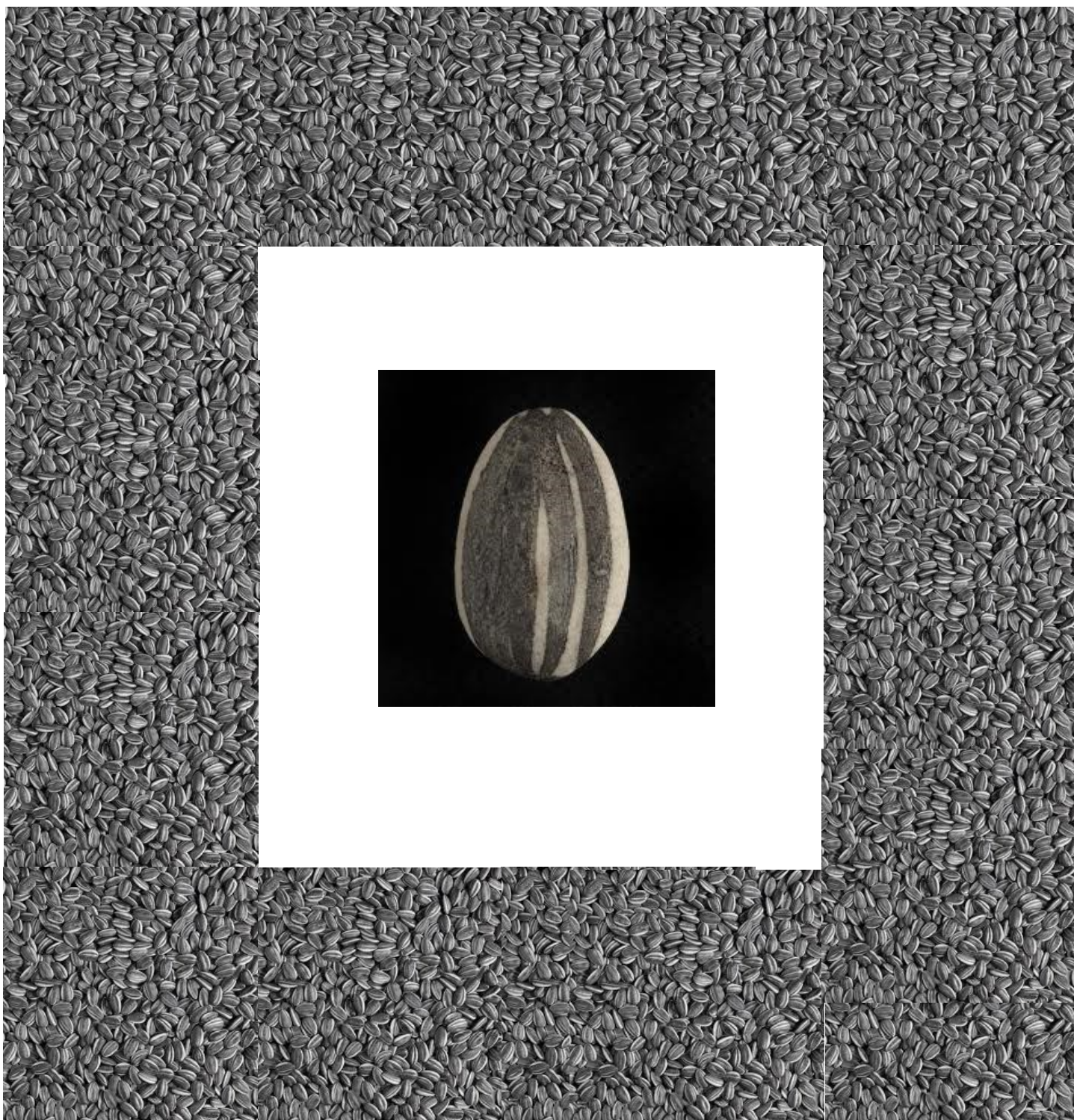


The Read Review



CELEBRATE CENTENNIAL
KENT STATE
UNIVERSITY
1910-2010

The Gerald H. Read Center for International and Intercultural Education



How do we view international students?

Thoughtful Inspiration of Ali Wei Wie's Installation, SUNFLOWER SEEDS

Ali Weiwei, a leading Chinese artist, can make us reflect on our views, on the importance of creativity, and how we look at our international students. Weiwei's installation of SUNFLOWER SEEDS at London's Tate Modern features 100 million hand-painted porcelain sunflower seeds. From the TATE's website:

Weiwei's *Sunflower Seeds* challenges our first impressions: **what you see is not what you see, and what you see is not what it means**. The sculptural installation is made up of what appear to be millions of sunflower seed husks, apparently identical but actually unique. Although they look realistic, each seed is made out of porcelain. And far from being industrially produced, 'readymade' or found objects, they have been intricately hand-crafted by hundreds of skilled artisans. Poured into the interior of the Turbine Hall's vast industrial space, the seeds form a seemingly infinite landscape. The precious nature of the material, the effort of production and the narrative and personal content make this work a powerful commentary on the human condition.

As we start the academic year and meet the array of new students, it is easy to think of students as students in a totality. Weiwei's installation makes us ask deeper questions.



Do I expect all of my Chinese students to be alike?



Do I believe that all of the Saudi students think and learn in the same way?



Do I value each international student for his/her unique ability to contribute to the collective knowledge and teach us all different ways of knowing?

Weiwei also makes us ask ourselves other thoughtful questions—questions about freedom of expression, social media in societies today, creativity's impact, and the role of the individual in the mass of highly globalized society.



To view the making of the installation of the SUNFLOWER SEEDS see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PueYywpkJW8>. and view his TED TALK at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MVnH8ou3Kd4>.

