

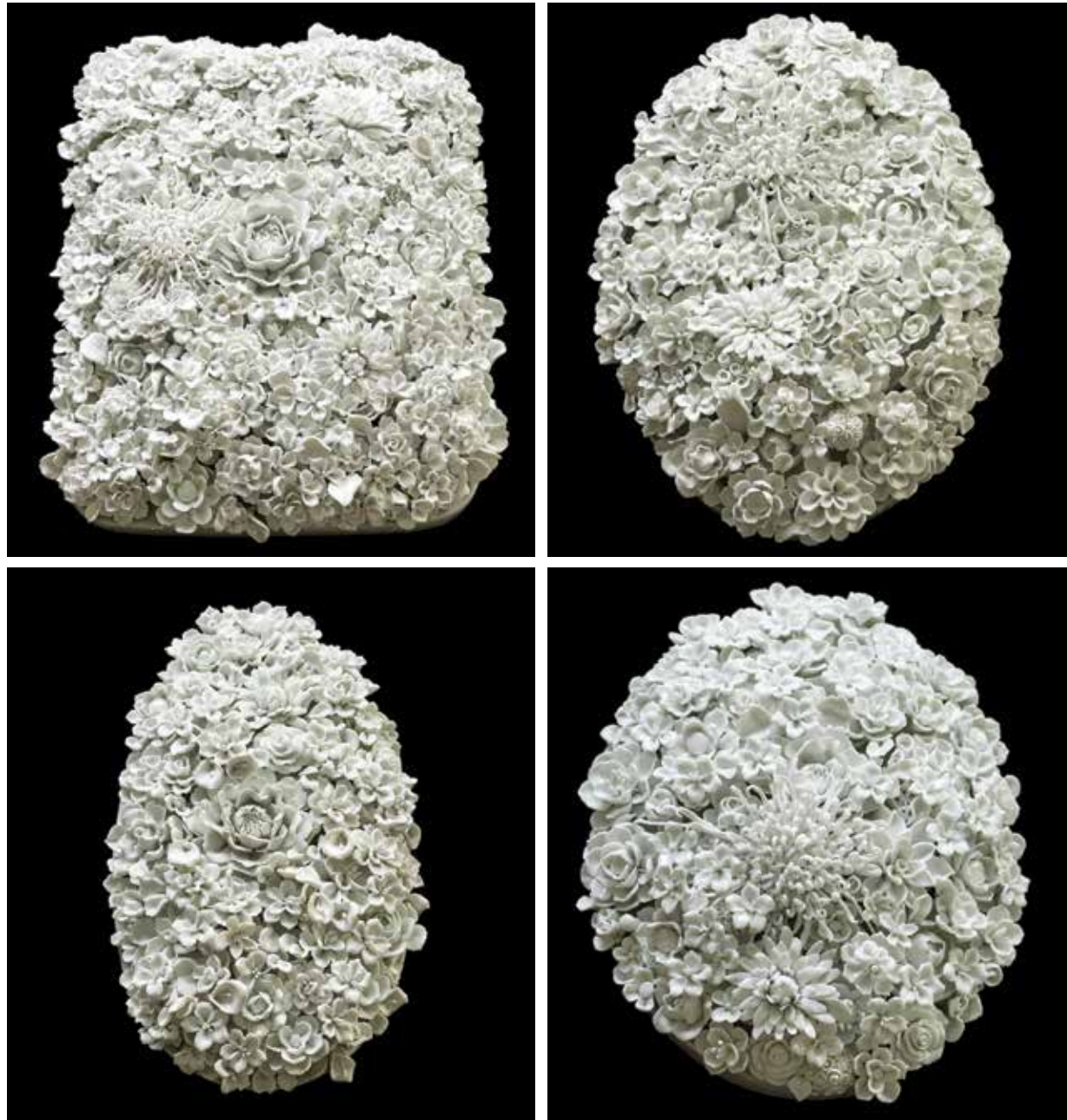
Text by Juliet Clark
From *@Large: Ai Weiwei on Alcatraz*,
Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy, 2014

BLOSSOM



Installation, 2014

Porcelain, hospital fixtures (sinks, toilets, bathtubs)



In this work, Ai transforms the utilitarian fixtures in several Hospital ward cells and medical offices into fantastical and fragile porcelain bouquets. The artist has designed intricately detailed encrustations of ceramic flowers to fill the sinks, toilets, and tubs that were once used by hospitalized prisoners.

Like *With Wind* in the New Industries Building, this work draws on and transforms natural imagery as well as traditional Chinese arts. Rather than referring to national iconography, however, the flowers here carry other associations. The work could be seen as symbolically offering comfort to the imprisoned, as one would send a bouquet to a hospitalized patient. The profusion of flowers rendered in cool, brittle porcelain could also be an ironic reference to China's famous Hundred Flowers Campaign of 1956, a brief period of government tolerance for free expression that was quickly shattered by a severe crackdown against dissent.

Porcelain flower sculptures
designed to fit into the fixtures
of the Alcatraz Hospital wing