

Cai Guo-Qiang

Contemporary artist



Cai Guo-Qiang was born in Quanzhou, Fujian in December 1957. In the early 1980s, he was trained in stage design at the Shanghai Theatre Academy. From December 1986 to September 1995, he sojourned in Japan for nearly nine years. He studied at Tsukuba University from 1989 to 1991, furthering his education in the Plastic Art and Mixed Media research lab.

Over the years, Cai has worked with a broad range of creative mediums, from painting, installation, video art, and performance art, to new technologies such as virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR), NFTs, blockchain, and artificial intelligence. Grounded in the conceptual foundations of Eastern philosophy and contemporary social issues, his often site-specific artworks interpret and respond to the local culture and history, establishing a dialogue between viewers and the larger universe around them. His famed gunpowder paintings, explosion events, and

installations are imbued with a force that transcends the two-dimensional plane to oscillate freely between society and nature.

As of August 2023, Cai has realized 563 exhibitions and projects on five continents, including seventeen curated projects; twelve projects are currently ongoing.

Major awards he has received include the Golden Lion at the Venice Biennale in 1999, the Hiroshima Art Prize in 2007, and the Fukuoka Prize in 2009. In 2012, he was honored as a Laureate for the Praemium Imperiale. That same year, he was awarded the first U.S. Department of State Medal of Arts. Cai also served as the Director of Visual Effects and Fireworks for the opening and closing ceremonies of the 2008 Beijing Summer Olympics and the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics.

For over three decades, Cai has had numerous solo exhibitions in major art museums around the



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world, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York in 2006 and a retrospective at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York in 2008, which travelled to the National Art Museum of China the same year. In 2015, Cai realized the explosion event *Sky Ladder* in his hometown of Quanzhou. The artwork became the centerpiece of an eponymous documentary directed by Academy Award winner Kevin Macdonald, which is globally available on Netflix.

In recent years, he embarked on his *Individual's Journey Through Western Art History*—a series of exhibitions held in world-renowned museums, including the Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow (2017); Museo del Prado, Madrid (2017); Uffizi Galleries, Florence (2018); National Archaeological Museum of Naples and Pompeii Archaeological Park (2019). In December 2020, Cai realized *Odyssey and Homecoming* at the Palace Museum in Beijing,

marking the first solo exhibition of contemporary art in the museum's history. The next year, *Odyssey and Homecoming* traveled to the Museum of Art Pudong in Shanghai as one of its inaugural exhibitions.

Cai's major curated exhibitions include the first Chinese pavilion in the history of the Venice Biennale in 2015, the exhibition *Everything is Museum*, which debuted in the Guggenheim Museum in New York before travelling to Guggenheim Bilbao and the National Art Museum of China in 2008–2009, and the group exhibition *What About the Art? Contemporary Art from China* commissioned by the Qatar Museums in 2016. He also co-curated the collection exhibition *Artistic License* at the Guggenheim Museum in New York in 2019.

His most recent projects in 2023 include the blockchain divination project *EET* as well as the experimental artificial intelligence art project *cAITM*. In June, he realized the daytime fireworks *When the Sky Blooms with Sakura* on the coast of Iwaki City, as well as the solo exhibition *Ramble in the Cosmos—From Primeval Fireball Onward* at the National Art Center, Tokyo.

Cai has lived and worked in New York since 1995.