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a contemporary art space

tenth anniversary 1995-2005

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SITE SANTA FE PRESENTS CAI GUO-QIANG'S *INOPOORTUNE*

January 21-March 27, 2006



Cai Guo-Qiang
Inopportune: Stage Two (detail), 2004

Santa Fe, NM—SITE Santa Fe is pleased to present the work of artist Cai Guo-Qiang in a major museum exhibition entitled *Inopportune*, featuring several large scale installations, from January 21-March 27, 2006. There will be a media preview of the exhibition with the artist on **Thursday, January 19, from 11 am-12 noon**. There will be a free public preview on **Friday, January 20, from 5-7 pm**. This exhibition was organized by MASS MoCA, North Adams, Massachusetts, where it was on view from October 2004 through October 2005.

Known for his vast orchestrations of gunpowder projects and large, theatrical sculptures, Cai Guo-Qiang will create a dramatic, multi-part installation titled *Inopportune*. The main installation at SITE features nine realistic tigers crouching, pouncing, and leaping through the air. Hundreds of bamboo arrows pierce the tigers, seemingly lifting them skyward. The tiger imagery refers to a famous 13th-century Chinese story of Wu Song, a bandit who saved a village from a man-eating tiger that terrorized it and became the paragon of heroism and bravery in China.

In another gallery, a nine-foot high, 42-foot long projection, titled *Illusion*, envelopes the viewer. A phantom car bristling with fireworks floats like a ghost through Times Square

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at night. The street vibrates with glittering neon, heavy traffic, traffic noise, and crowds of life-sized pedestrians. The ghostly car appears disembodied within the urban landscape, floating on top of the flowing traffic; people on foot and in cars are oblivious to the fireworks erupting from it. As if a dream, the viewer alone can see it. The 90-second film is a continuous loop.

The exhibition includes a series of large-scale drawings—one over 40 feet long—which are made by exploding gunpowder on the surface of the heavy paper. Cai began making drawings with gunpowder in 1984, a practice for which he is well known.

Explosions have been a central part of Cai's creative practice since the mid-1980s, when he left China for Japan (where he lived from 1986-1995). One of his best known explosions on a massive scale was *Transient Rainbow*, commissioned by the Museum of Modern Art in New York soon after September 11, 2001, in which exploding fireworks arced over the East River from Manhattan to Queens. Although he has lived in lower Manhattan for almost ten years, Cai has said that experiencing September 11 made him a New Yorker. He took the opportunity of the MoMA commission to refigure the meaning of an explosion in Manhattan, to illustrate how "something used for destruction and terror can also be constructive, beautiful, and healing."

He explains, "In my hometown every significant social occasion of any kind, good or bad – weddings, funerals, the birth of a baby, a new home – is marked by the explosion of firecrackers... Firecrackers are like the town crier, announcing whatever's going on in the town." For Cai, explosive forces – whether from gunpowder, fireworks, or even the atomic bomb – go beyond any national or political context. Their origins in alchemy and fundamental physics invoke curative, transformative power and spiritual questions whose scope is eternal rather than immediate, universal rather than local, and metaphysical rather than mundane.

Winner of one of the most important prizes in contemporary art, the Golden Lion of the Venice Biennale in 1999, Cai's recent major projects include *Bon Voyage: 10,000 Collectibles from the Airport* at the Sao Paulo Biennial in 2004; *Cai Guo-Qiang: Traveler*, a two-part exhibition at the Hirshhorn Museum and the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery in Washington D.C. in 2004; and *Light Cycle: Explosion Project for Central Park* in 2003; as well as MoMA's *Transient Rainbow* in 2002. Cai also curated an exhibition entitled

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BMoCA: Bunker Museum of Contemporary Art in 2004 which focused on turning military structures into spaces for art and culture.

Cai Guo-Qiang was born in 1957 in Quanzhou City, Fujian Province, China. The son of a historian and painter, Cai was trained in stage design at the Shanghai Drama Institute from 1981 to 1985. While living in Japan from 1986 to 1995, Cai first presented his explorations of the properties of gunpowder in his drawings, an inquiry that eventually led to his experimentation with explosives on a massive scale. He quickly achieved international prominence during his tenure in Japan, and his work was shown widely around the world. His approach draws on a wide variety of symbols, narratives, traditions and materials such as feng shui, Chinese medicine, dragons, roller coasters, computers, vending machines and gunpowder. He has been selected as a finalist for the 1996 Hugo Boss Prize and was merited with such awards as the CalArts/ Alpert Award in the Arts in 2000.

Art & Culture

SITE will present several programs related to Cai's exhibition. On **Saturday, January 22, at 12 noon**, the artist will talk about his work. On **Thursday, February 23, 2006, at 7 pm, Laura Heon**, curator of the exhibition, will speak about the exhibition as a kick-off to the Santa Fe Gallery Association's annual benefit ArtFeast, which raises money for art supplies in the public schools. Mu Du Noodles will cater a wine and hors d'oeuvres reception for the event. On **Tuesday, March 7, 2006, at 6 pm, Robert Pogue Harrison**, Chairman, Department of French and Italian, Stanford University, who wrote the essay for the catalogue, will give a talk on the societal and political implications of Cai's work.

SITE Santa Fe is located at 1606 Paseo de Peralta, Santa Fe, New Mexico. SITE Santa Fe Hours: Wed–Sat, 10 AM–5 PM; Friday, 10 AM–7 PM; Sunday, 12 PM–5 PM. Museum admission is \$8 for adults and \$4 for students, teachers and seniors; members are free. Free admission is offered on Fridays, made possible by a grant from The Brown Foundation, Inc., of Houston. Tours by SITE Guides are available free of charge to the public with paid admission and are also regularly scheduled on Fridays at 6 pm, and Saturdays & Sundays at 2 pm. SITE Santa Fe gift certificates are available. Call 505.989.1199 for more information.

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