



News

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CAI GUO-QIANG AN EXPLOSION EVENT: LIGHT CYCLE OVER CENTRAL PARK

SEPTEMBER 9 THROUGH DECEMBER 14, 2003

Asia Society presents an exhibition of gunpowder drawings by internationally renowned Chinese artist Cai Guo-Qiang. The artist has created this series of impressive large-scale drawings as studies for his “explosion” event in Central Park on September 15th (curated by Creative Time, the New York public arts organization) to celebrate the Park’s 150th anniversary. This exhibition of drawings, presented in conjunction with the Central Park event, will be on view at the Asia Society and Museum from September 9 through December 14, 2003.

Drawings at Asia Society

The large-scale drawings – 42 meters long and 4 meters high – are made by burning gunpowder on paper, a technique the artist has experimented with for nearly two decades while in China, Japan, and now in the United States, where he has lived since 1995. The effect resembles calligraphy while at other times it suggests abstract gestures.

Gunpowder, which originated in ancient China, has always fascinated Cai as an artistic medium. In his words, “Explosions make you feel something intense at the very core of your being because, while you can arrange explosives as you please, you cannot control the explosion itself. And this fills you with a great feeling of freedom.”

The different visual effects achieved within this sequence of drawings are remarkable, ranging from charred, dense gestures to wispy delicate lines. Divided into three sections, they are designed to correspond to the sequence of “explosions” devised by Cai for Central Park. These are; *Signal Towers* (pillars of light), *The Light Cycle* (a series of halos) and *White Night* (small shell explosions of brilliant white light). The exhibition at the Asia Society provides an insider’s perspective on this important artist’s work.

Melissa Chiu, Asia Society’s Curator for Contemporary Art will conduct a public discussion with the artist about his work on Wednesday, September 17, at 6:00 p.m. at Asia Society. The event is cosponsored by Creative Time.

The exhibition is made possible with support from Take A Step Back Collection, The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Stephanie Holmquist, and Patricia and Henry Tang.

At Central Park

The explosion project, *Light Cycle*, is designed by Cai Guo-Qiang to illuminate the sky over Central Park, using as its central motif a 1,000 foot-high halo made of light and fire. Cai has collaborated with the nation’s oldest fireworks company, Fireworks by

Grucci, to develop a new technology which employs programmable microchips in each shell, allowing the artist to use fireworks as an expressive artistic medium. The total duration of *Light Cycle* will be approximately 4 – 5 minutes. Spectators on the ground will be directed to the Central Park Great Lawn; buildings overlooking the Park, however, will allow the most complete viewing of the five firing locations.

During the first stage, *Signal Towers*, Cai will create a series of five pillars of fire extending 600 feet into the sky, referencing ancient methods of communication. The second stage, *Light Cycle*, consists of a series of halos that will be drawn over five firing locations resembling, in the artist's words, "amulets placed over the heart of Manhattan." The third and final stage is *White Night*, in which hundreds of shells producing an effect similar to signal flares will be shot into the air to wash the sky with bright light, providing an unusual perspective of the Park and a shimmering finale to the evening. **In the event of delay or postponement of *Light Cycle*, a hotline will be established to provide updates and information for the public. The number will be posted at www.creativetime.org**

Light Cycle at Central Park is curated by Creative Time, the New York-based nonprofit organization, presented in conjunction with The City of New York and the Central Park Conservancy, and sponsored by Häagen-Dazs. For over 30 years Creative Time has commissioned, produced, and presented multidisciplinary public arts projects supporting artists and surprising New Yorkers and visitors alike with fresh artistic visions in unlikely urban locales. For details visit www.creativetime.org

The Artist

Cai Guo-Qiang was born in Quanzhou, China in 1957. He studied in Shanghai before migrating to Japan in 1986. He has lived in New York since 1995. Cai is a leading contemporary artist who is known for his large-scale installation works and ambitious explosion projects, which he has staged around the world including the Tate Modern in London, Museum of Modern Art in New York and most recently at the Pompidou Museum in Paris. He has had solo exhibitions of his work at the Musee d'art Contemporain Lyon (2001), Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain (2000) in Paris, Taiwan Museum of Art (1998) in Taipei, Queens Museum of Art (1997) in New York and Louisiana Museum of Modern Art (1997) in Denmark. He was also included in the landmark group exhibition *Inside Out: New Chinese Art* at Asia Society in 1998.

About the Asia Society

The Asia Society is America's leading institution dedicated to fostering understanding of Asia and communication between Americans and the peoples of Asia and the Pacific. A nonprofit, nonpartisan educational institution, the Asia Society presents a wide range of programs including major art exhibitions, performances, media programs, international conferences and lectures, and initiatives to improve elementary and secondary education about Asia. The Asia Society is headquartered in New York City, with regional centers in Washington, D.C., Houston, Los Angeles, Hong Kong and Melbourne, Australia, and representative offices in San Francisco, Manila and Shanghai.

Asia Society and Museum

725 Park Avenue (at 70th Street), New York City.

(212) 517-ASIA, www.asiasociety.org

Hours: Tuesday – Sunday, 11:00 A.M. – 6:00 P.M.; Fridays extended evening hours until 9:00 P.M.; Closed on Mondays and major holidays.

Admission: \$7; \$5 for seniors and students with ID; Free for members and persons under 16; Free to all on Friday evenings, 6:00 – 9:00 P.M