The Fruitmarket Gallery
Exhibition Archive

Cai Guo-Qiang
Life Beneath the Shadow

Exhibition 30 July —25 September 2005

The Fruitmarket Gallery's 2005 Edinburgh Festival Exhibition is the most ambitious solo presentation in the UK to date of work by Chinese artist Cai Guo-Qiang, known throughout the world for his large-scale, site-specific installations.

Life Beneath the Shadow, an exhibition in several parts, explores Edinburgh's reputation for ghosts and ghost stories, seeking poetically to conjure spirits and make peace with them, uniting matter and spirit, present and past in an acknowledgement of the fragility of human life.

The exhibition opened with the dramatic explosion of an ominously beautiful black firework rainbow over Edinburgh Castle, marking the start of the 2005 Edinburgh Art Festival. **Black Rainbow: Explosion Project for Edinburgh** arched three times above Edinburgh's most famous monument, and was made from over one thousand custom-made pyrotechnic shells designed to be seen in daylight. It was the second in a series of explosion events intended by the artist as a protest against the increased threat of violence under which we all live. The first took place in Valencia on 22 May this year, and a third is scheduled for Beijing in the autumn.

At The Fruitmarket Gallery, the exhibition begins with a grove of living plantain trees planted in the downstairs gallery. The leaves of the trees are inscribed with fragments from written accounts of ghost sightings, sourced in association with Scottish writer James Robertson with whom Cai has collaborated throughout the development of the exhibition. In Chinese folklore these trees are thought to attract ghosts, particularly female ones. The trees' powers are monitored on the Gallery's surveillance cameras, which film them overnight. The footage is shown during the day, to enable viewers to check the trees' success.

Upstairs hang eleven vast drawings, created according to the artist's uniquely unusual method. Attracted by the simultaneously creative and destructive power of gunpowder, invented in China as a by-product of experiments in alchemy, and used on all significant occasions, whether joyful or sorrowful, Cai Guo-Qiang uses it as a drawing material. He lays fuses on specially-created paper and sets light to them, leaving the residue as a drawing burned into the paper. The drawings are portraits, their subjects chosen by the artist in collaboration with James Holloway, Director of the Scottish National Portrait Gallery. The individuals depicted are all historical Scottish figures with connections to ghosts and ghost stories. They are drawn from the period between the 12th and 19th centuries. The portraits hang beneath webs which ensnare groups of Chinese 'joss' dolls, used in Chinese cremation rituals to represent the material world being left behind. In this installation, the dolls symbolise his attempts to recuperate the lost souls who feature in his portraits, the artist using fire to resurrect, rather than consume, at least an image of their material form. The dolls carry much of the conceptual weight of the installation, and return in a multiple the artist has created for it – a choice of one of five different dolls, pierced with needles, mute behind a sheet of Perspex.

Cai Guo-Qiang's installations at The Fruitmarket Gallery are complemented and enriched by one at the Scottish National Portrait Gallery, in which a further two gunpowder portraits are displayed alongside portraits and death masks of notorious murderers and criminals, selected by the artist from the Portrait Gallery's collection of phrenological heads, on permanent loan from the Edinburgh Phrenological Society.

A highly regarded international artist, Cai Guo-Qiang's solo exhibitions and projects include: *Transient Rainbow*, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2002; Cai Guo-Qiang, Shanghai Art Museum, 2002; *Cultural Melting Bath: Projects for the 20th Century*, Queens Museum of Art, New York, 1997; *The Earth Has Its Black Hole Too, Hiroshima*, 1994; and *Project to Extend the Great Wall of China by 10,000 Meters*, Jiayuguan City, 1993. In 1999 Cai Guo-Qiang was awarded the prestigious International Golden Lion Prize at the 48th Biennale di Venezia and in June this year he curated the inaugural China pavilion at the 51st Biennale di Venezia, 2005.

In my work, there has always been a focus on the 'unseen' world. This is related to the traditions and beliefs in my hometown, Quanzhou, China. For a lot of everyday activities related to traditional practices, such as where to dig a well, or which direction a door opens, people always consult fengshui specialists. This kind of beliefs and habits are a starting point, and often are the themes of my work. I have used concepts of Chinese medicine, fengshui, and 'Qi'--the Chinese term for internal energy-- in the past, and the Edinburgh exhibition is an extension of this theme. The combination of these concepts reflect a central idea, the fluidity of time, a central idea which I have always explored. I think Art is like a time tunnel that has the ability to cross space and time. We can connect the past and future through it.
Cai Guo-Qiang 2005.

In undertaking research into Scotland's spiritual past, Cai Guo-Qiang has developed a unique collaboration with the award-winning Scottish writer James Robertson. In a new publication titled Life Beneath the Shadow, which accompanies this exhibition, James Robertson has written thirteen new short ghost stories inspired by the subjects in the gunpowder portraits. The book includes illustrations of the new work Cai has made for The Fruitmarket Gallery and the National Portrait Gallery with essays by Fiona Bradley and Yuko Hasegawa. It is available from the gallery bookshop from the 5 September priced £19.95.

Special Installation at the Scottish National Portrait Gallery
1 Queen Street, Edinburgh
27 July —11 September 2005

Talks and Events

Artist's Talk, Cai Guo-Qiang in conversation with Fiona Bradley
Wednesday 27 July, 7pm, Free

Black Rainbow: Explosion Project for Edinburgh, Edinburgh Castle
Friday 29 July, 7pm, Free
Outdoor event visible from across the city

Writer's Talk, James Robertson
Tuesday 9 August, 7pm, Tickets £4/£3 conc.
Acclaimed writer James Robertson discusses his collaboration with Cai Guo-Qiang on Life Beneath the Shadow with Marc Lambert, Director of the Scottish Book Trust.

Adult Sculpture Workshop
Saturday 13—Sunday 14 August, 11am—5pm. Tickets £70 / £50 conc (materials provided). Venue: Edinburgh Sculpture Workshop, 25 Hawthornvale Newhaven, Edinburgh.
Artists Elaine Allison and Patricia Bray run a two-day workshop enabling participants to create a large-scale installation.

Through The Veil: An Evening of Storytelling and Song
Thursday 18 August, 7—9pm. Tickets £4/£3 conc.
Story-teller David Campbell and singer Ruth Fraine explore Scotland's rich historical links with the spirit world.
Organised in collaboration with the Scottish Storytelling Centre.

Family Workshop
Saturday 27 August, 2—4pm. Booking essental.
Tickets £4 per child. 20 places.
Suitable for children aged 3—6 and a parent/guardian.
Artist Charlie Hackett delivers a fun family workshop.

Cai Guo-Qiang's Ghosts
Thursday 1 September, 6pm, Free. Venue: Scottish National Portrait Gallery, Queen Street, Edinburgh.
Helen Smailes, Senior Curator, National Gallery of Scotland, and Tracy Morgan, Education Manager, The Fruitmarket Gallery, discuss Cai Guo-Qiang's installation of death and life masks selected from the Gallery's collection.

Heads and Tales: Education Project Presentation
Thursday 15 September, 6.30pm, Free. Booking advised.
Presentation of work created with the Ways of Seeing Group from the Prentice Centre, story-teller Millie Gray, Community Education and The Fruitmarket Gallery.

Spirit Music: Evening of Middle Eastern Music
Wednesday 21 September, 7pm, Free. Booking advised.
To celebrate International Day of Peace, music and poetry in collaboration with the Edinburgh International Centre for World Spiritualities. Café bar open.

To book for all talks and events contact the bookshop
P 0131 226 8181 **E** bookshop@fruitmarket.co.uk

Opt in For Art
Opt in For Art is The Fruitmarket Gallery's two-year programme of work for schools and youth groups. Informal visits including assistance with transport, tailored activities and a resource pack. For further information contact Johnny Gailey, Opt in For Art Co-ordinator **P** 0131 226 8186 **E** optinforart@fruitmarket.co.uk

Primary School Visits
A series of free storytelling and creative writing workshops exploring ghosts from Edinburgh's past with storyteller Millie Gray are available for booking from 12—20 September.

Reading Room
Resource material and an exhibition interpretation film presentation of Cai Guo-Qiang discussing the work in the exhibition is available in the gallery reading room. The exhibition DVD is available from the bookshop priced £15.

Gallery Information Assistants
Will be on hand daily for impromptu tours and to answer any questions.

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