

WHITE CUBE

TEFAF NEW YORK

Cai Guo-Qiang
14–19 May 2026

Stand 355
Park Avenue Armory
643 Park Avenue
New York, NY 10065

CAI GUO-QIANG

Since his earliest experiments with gunpowder, Cai Guo-Qiang has mobilised the medium's immanent energy and capacity for transformation as a means to probe the fundamental tension between destruction and creation. Discovered fortuitously in the ninth century by Chinese alchemists in search of an elixir of eternal life, gunpowder has come to animate the artist's abiding preoccupations with the natural world and the cosmos and the perennial rhythms that underlie them, as well as his more recent engagements with the canons of Western art history.



Creation process of *Blue Bird and Blue Flower*, 2025–26. Photo by Zicheng Lyu, courtesy Cai Studio



Creation process of *Blue Fire and Blue Bird*, 2022–26. Photo by Zicheng Lyu, courtesy Cai Studio

After several decades of working primarily with black gunpowder, the solo presentation at TEFAF marks a special moment following Cai's recent return to colour in his painting practice, exhibiting works in which heady collisions of coloured gunpowder conjure visions of paradisiacal abundance. Central to the presentation are the artist's bird paintings, which depict avian flocks in successive states of flight and decay, and draw on his research into the historic glazed tiles known as *azulejos* that distinguish the architecture of Porto. Tracing a diffuse trajectory across the canvas, the compositions disclose the conditions of their making: a process in which Cai first maps the image by sprinkling powder onto his support, then covers it with cardboard and weighs it down with stones before ignition. The resulting images unveil vortices of muted greys, blacks and gossamer smoke trails against passages of potent blue, interspersed with flashes of crimson, purple and yellow, forming a palimpsest of obliteration and renewal that evokes broader expressions of ephemerality and spiritual transcendence.

Among the accompanying works is a series of smaller floral gunpowder paintings, developed for his 2018 solo exhibition 'Flora Commedia' at the Uffizi Galleries in Florence and conceived in response to the site's verdant Boboli Gardens. Drawing on the silverpoint techniques of Renaissance art, the botanical forms rendered in these works are studies of floral species once abundant in

the Renaissance period but now rare, which were cultivated in close collaboration with the museum's expert botanists. 'The purity of the floral theme', the artist observed, offered a framework through which he could 'experiment with unchecked audaciousness, applying both new and old painting techniques'.

In 2020, Cai became the first contemporary artist to stage a solo exhibition at Beijing's Palace Museum, presenting 'Odyssey and Homecoming' on the occasion of the Forbidden City's 600th anniversary. Two paintings on view, *Study for Sleepwalking in the Forbidden City No. 8* and *Study for Sleepwalking in the Forbidden City No. 9* (both 2020), served as preliminary studies for this landmark exhibition, which constituted a symbolic culmination of Cai's ambitious multi-year project 'An Individual's Journey Through Western Art History': an ongoing series of exhibitions realised at institutions across Europe, including that at the Uffizi, as well as the Museo Nacional del Prado, the Pushkin Museum State Museum of Fine Arts, and the National Archaeological Museum of Naples and the Archaeological Park of Pompeii, in which the artist entered into dialogue with major predecessors in painting, as well as pivotal sites and monuments within the art-historical pantheon.

CAI GUO-QIANG

Blue Bird and Flowers No. 1

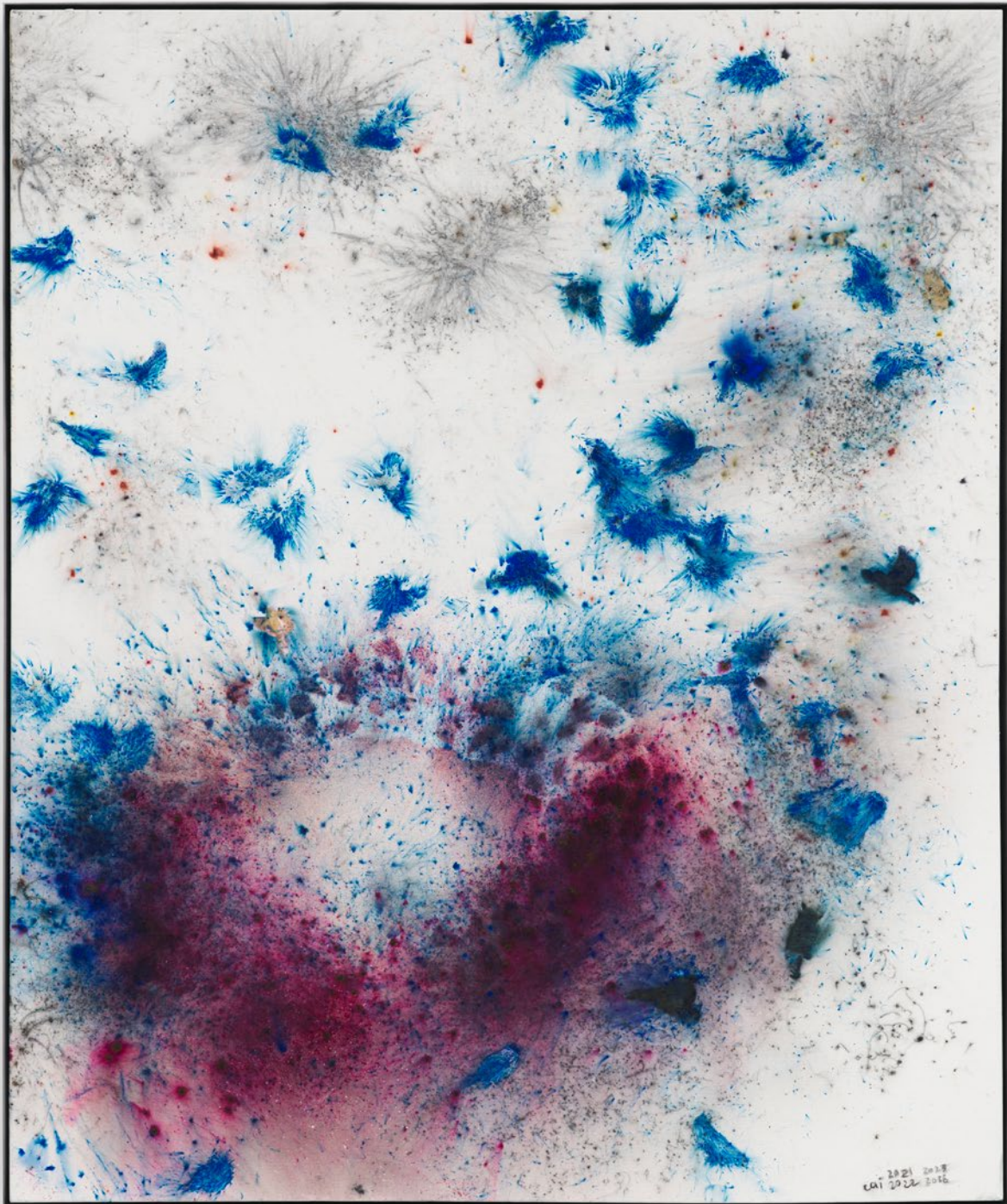
2021–26

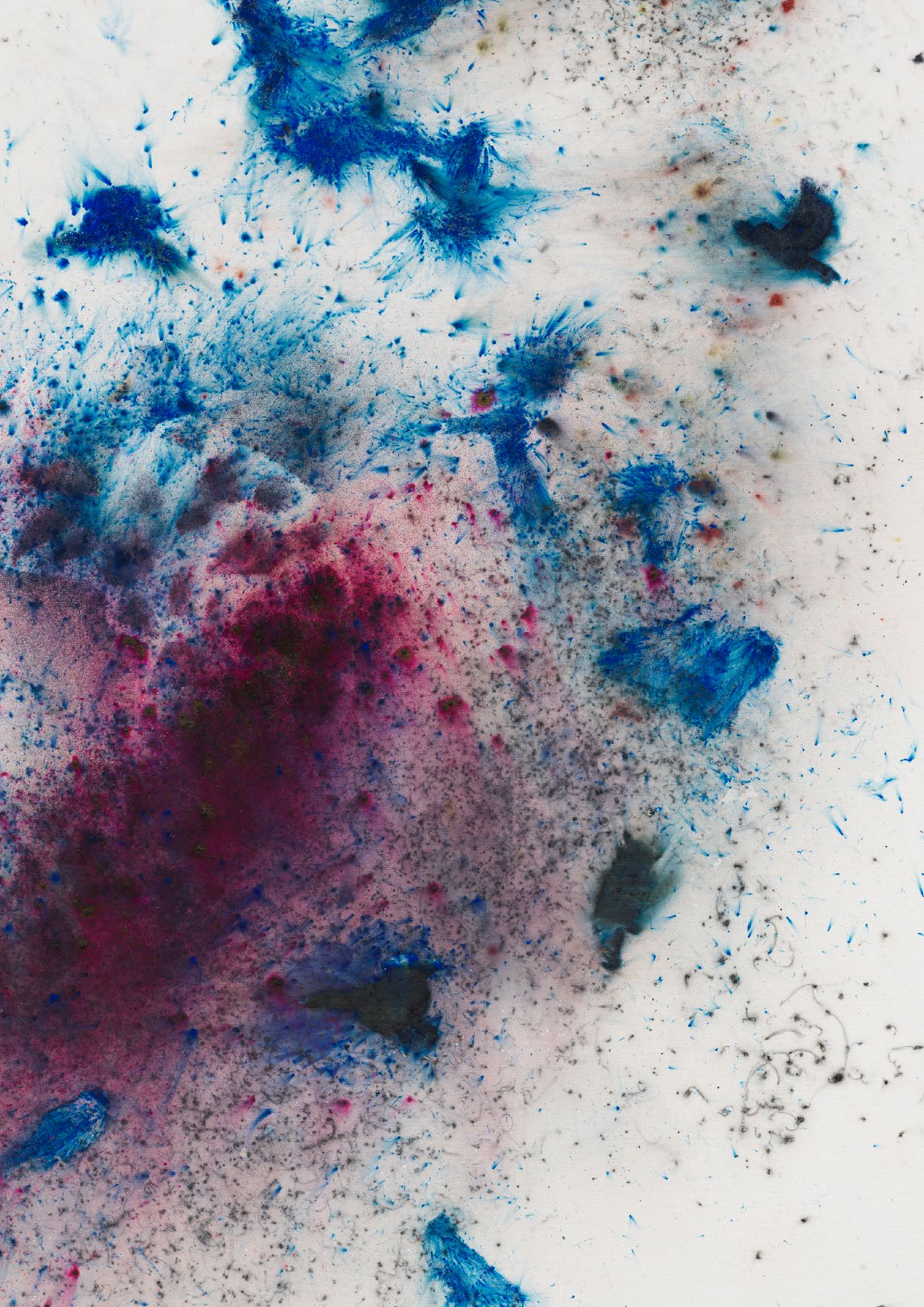
Gunpowder on canvas

183 × 152.5 cm | 72 × 60 in.

185.1 × 154.3 × 6.7 cm | 72 ⁷/₈ × 60 ³/₄ × 2 ⁵/₈ in. (framed)

USD 700,000 *plus applicable taxes*





CAI GUO-QIANG

Red Bird 2022, 2026

2022-26

Gunpowder on canvas

151.7 × 121.6 cm | 59 ³/₄ × 47 ⁷/₈ in.

154.3 × 124.2 × 7 cm | 60 ³/₄ × 48 ⁷/₈ × 2 ³/₄ in. (framed)

USD 400,000 *plus applicable taxes*







Creation process of *Red Bird 2022, 2026, 2022–26*. Photo by Zicheng Lyu, courtesy Cai Studio

CAI GUO-QIANG

Blue Bird and Flowers No. 2

2021–26

Gunpowder on canvas

Overall: 183 × 457.5 cm | 72 × 180 in.

3 parts, each: 184.8 × 154.6 × 6.7 cm | 72 ¾ × 60 ⅞ × 2 ⅝ in. (framed)

USD 1,600,000 *plus applicable taxes*



'In today's world, filled with chaos, contradiction, and
conflict, blue points toward a kind of peace,
a spirituality that transcends reality, and a healing force.
The flock of birds soaring upward also carries
with it a certain unease and turbulence of our time.'

CAI GUO-QIANG







Creation process of *Blue Bird and Flowers No. 2* and *Blue Bird and Flowers No. 1*, both 2021–26. Photo by Erin Moss, courtesy Cai Studio

CAI GUO-QIANG

Shadow of a Bird
2025

Gunpowder on canvas

61 × 51 cm | 24 × 20 in.

63.2 × 52.7 × 6.4 cm | 24 7/8 × 20 3/4 × 2 1/2 in. (framed)

USD 120,000 *plus applicable taxes*





2018
8/02
2026

CAI GUO-QIANG

Blue Fire and Blue Bird

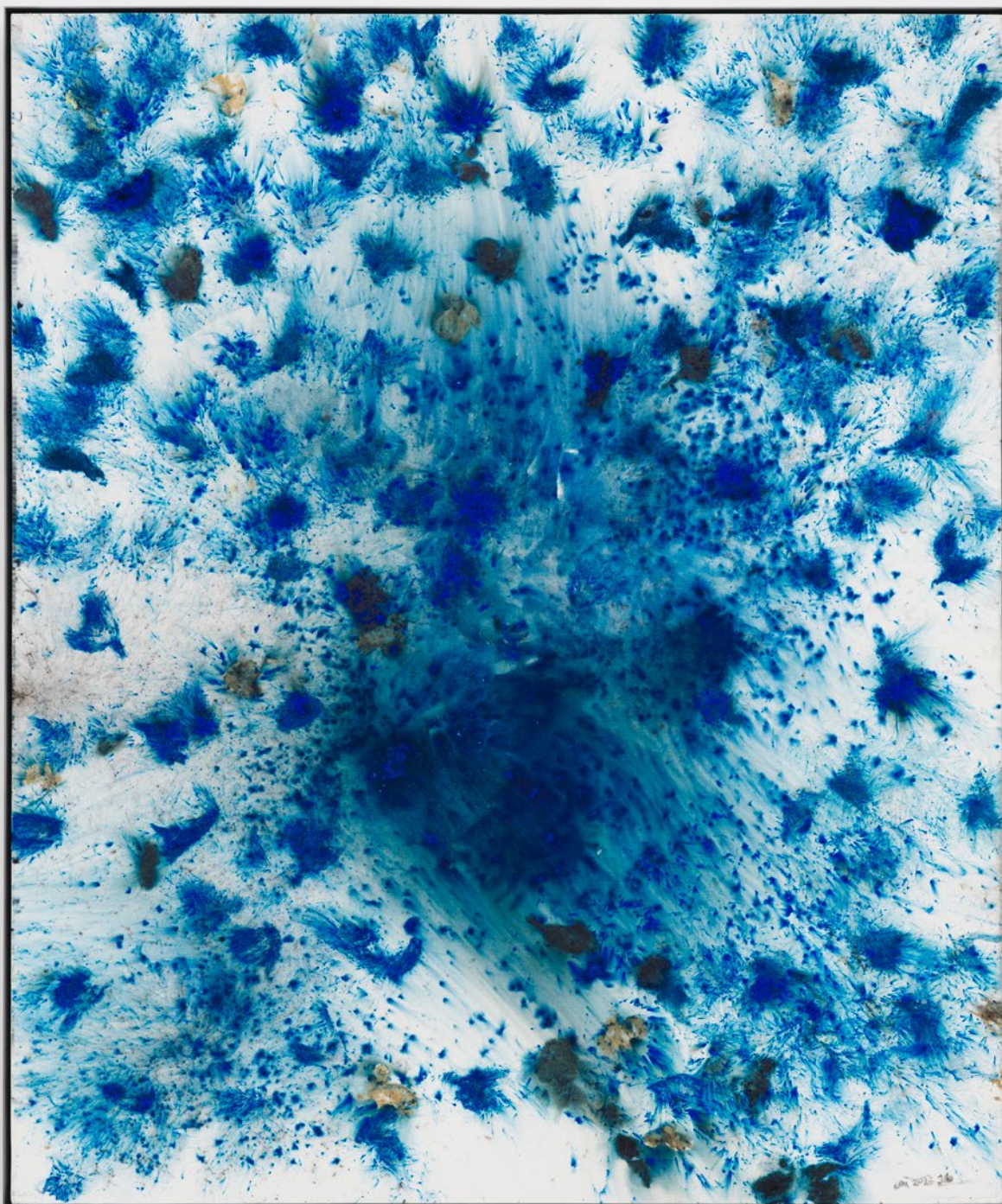
2022–26

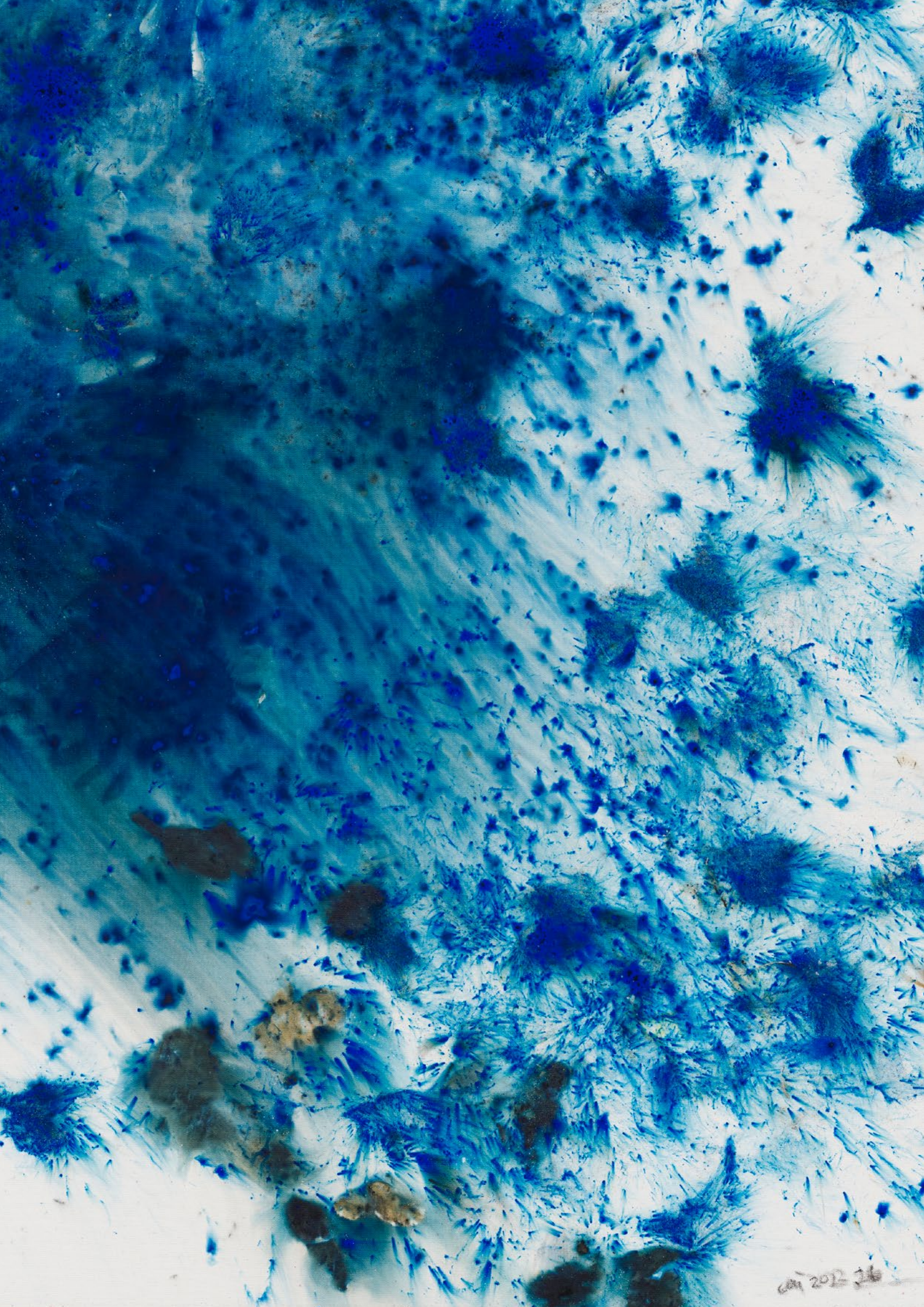
Gunpowder on canvas

183 × 152.5 cm | 72 × 60 in.

184.8 × 154.9 × 6.7 cm | 72 ¾ × 61 × 2 ⅝ in. (framed)

USD 700,000 *plus applicable taxes*





Jan 2012 JLB



Creation process of *Blue Fire and Blue Bird*, 2022–26. Photo by Zicheng Lyu, courtesy Cai Studio

CAI GUO-QIANG

Blue Bird and Blue Flower

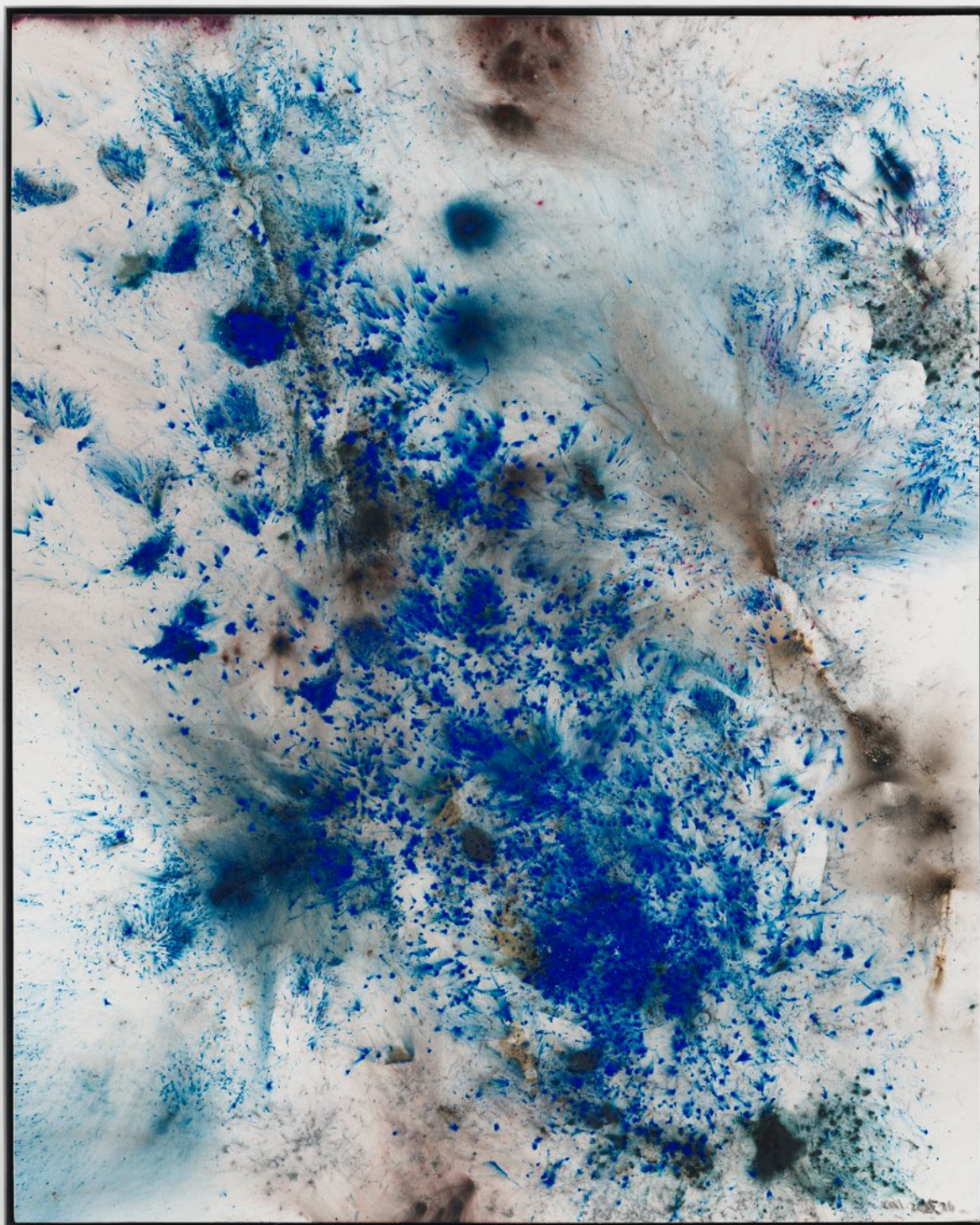
2025-26

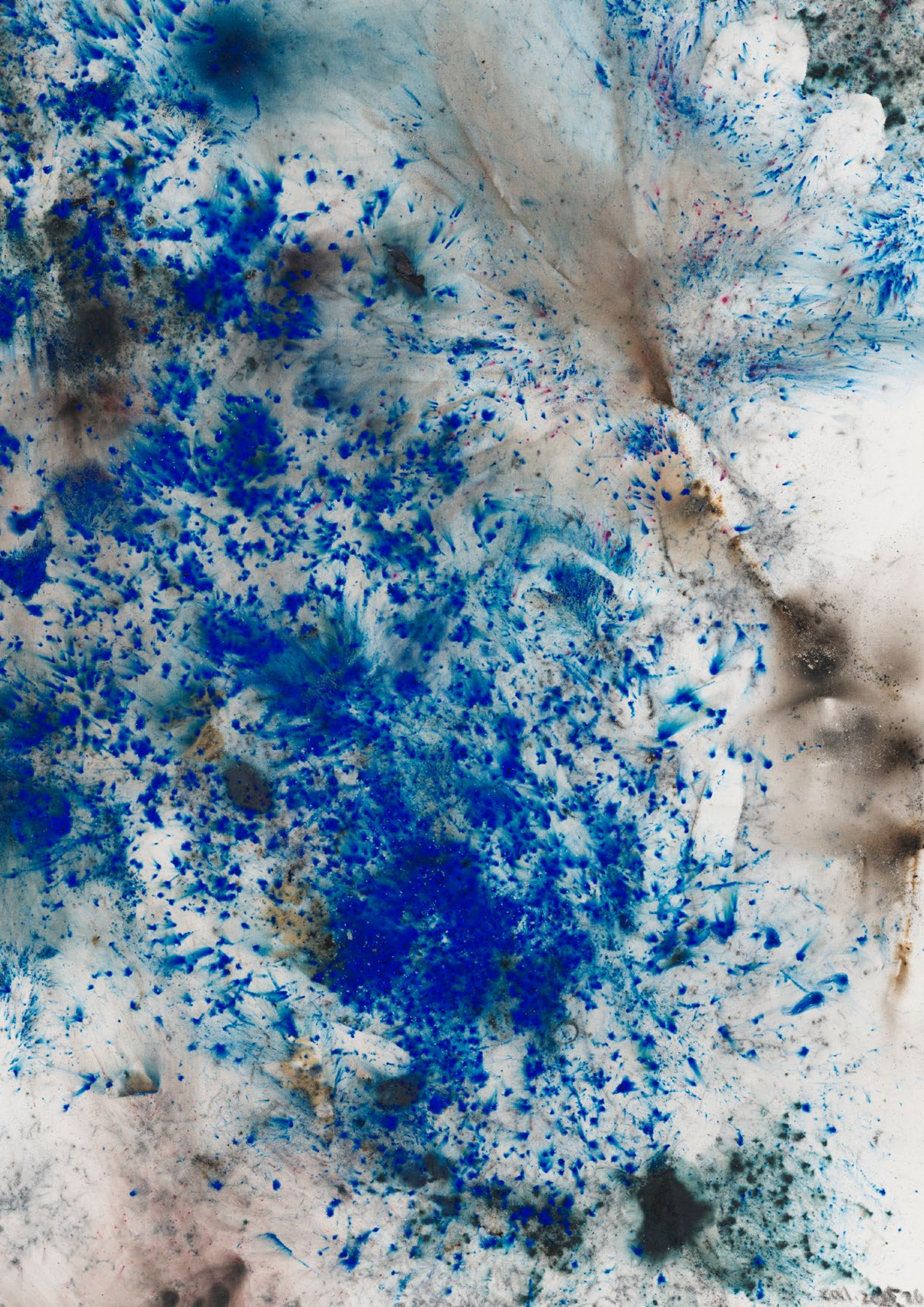
Gunpowder on canvas

151.8 × 121.6 cm | 59 ³/₄ × 47 ⁷/₈ in.

154.3 × 124.2 × 7 cm | 60 ³/₄ × 48 ⁷/₈ × 2 ³/₄ in. (framed)

USD 400,000 *plus applicable taxes*





CAI GUO-QIANG

Test of Blue Birds

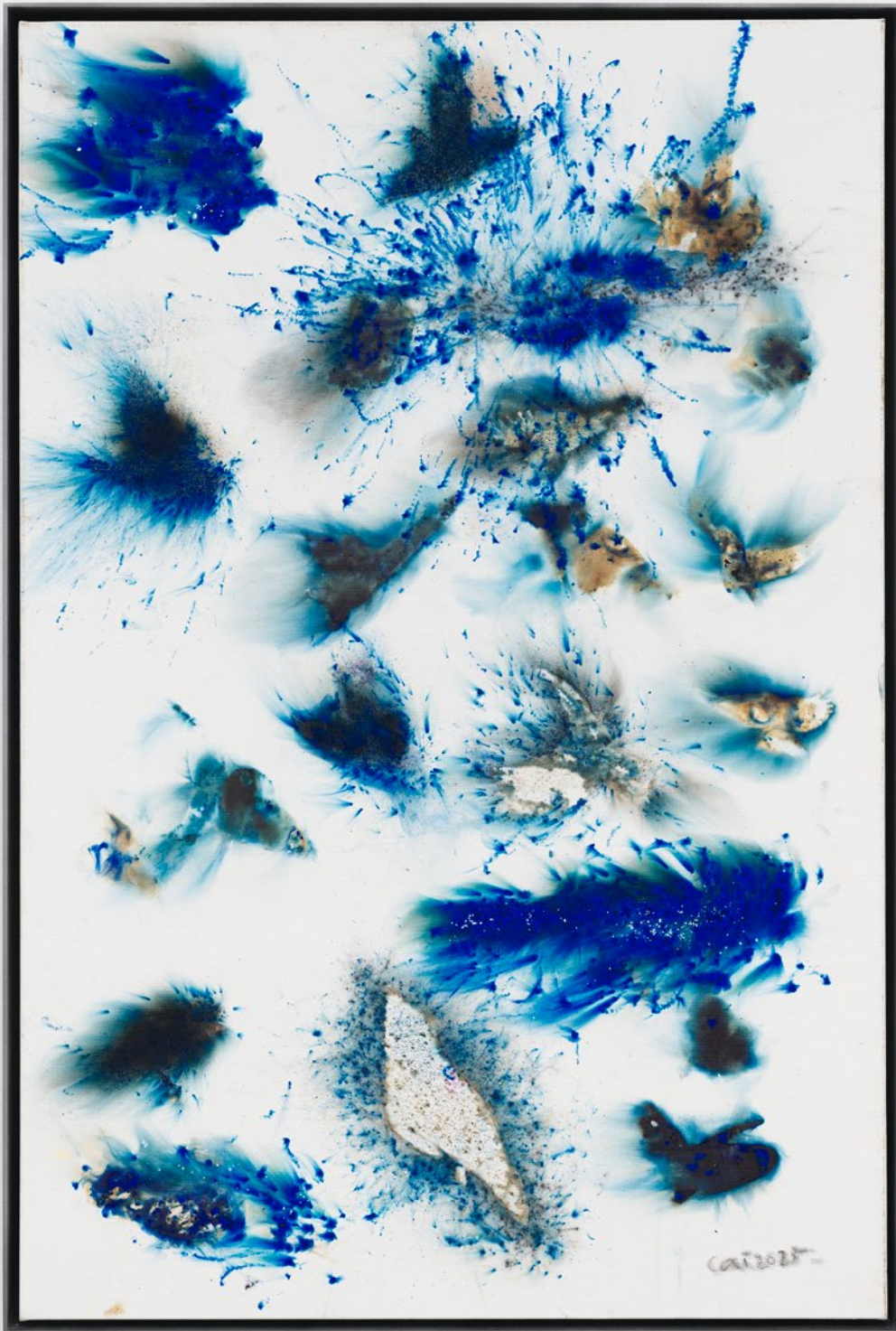
2025

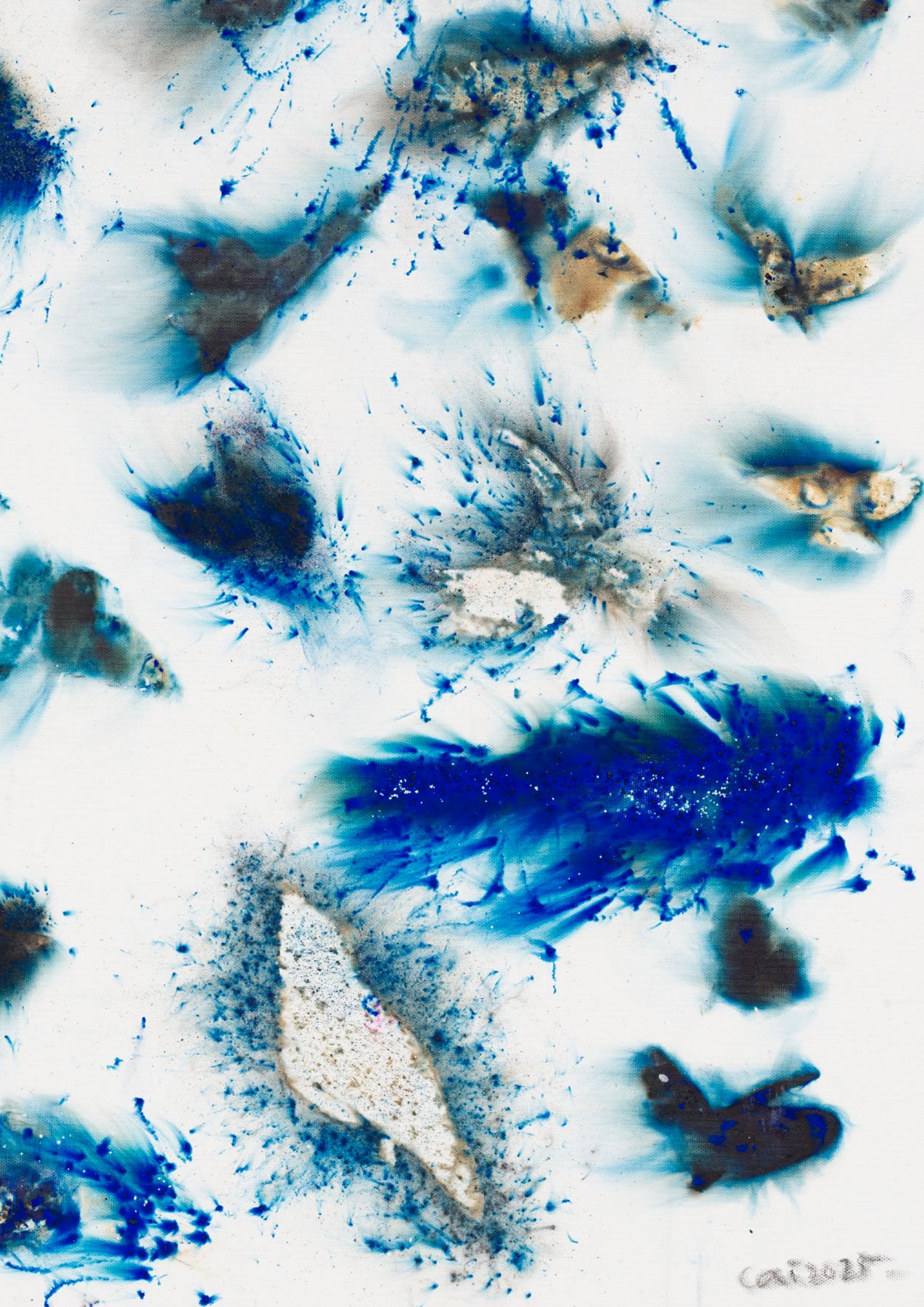
Gunpowder on canvas

90.8 × 60.3 cm | 35 ¾ × 23 ¾ in.

93.3 × 62.9 × 7 cm | 36 ¾ × 24 ¾ × 2 ¾ in. (framed)

USD 195,000 *plus applicable taxes*





Carroll

CAI GUO-QIANG

Study for Uffizi: Small Piece No. 2

2018

Gunpowder on canvas

25.4 x 25.4 cm | 10 x 10 in.

27.3 x 27.3 x 7 cm | 10 ³/₄ x 10 ³/₄ x 2 ³/₄ in. (framed)

USD 40,000 *plus applicable taxes*



'I pursue "eternity" through the instantaneous, perceiving
and grasping its mysterious force within
moments of chaos. Moments with gunpowder are uncontrollable
and transient; is it not the same with life?'

CAI GUO-QIANG



CAI GUO-QIANG

Wall Plant No. 1

2018

Gunpowder on canvas

25.4 × 25.4 cm | 10 × 10 in.

27.3 × 27.3 × 7 cm | 10 ³/₄ × 10 ³/₄ × 2 ³/₄ in. (framed)

USD 40,000 *plus applicable taxes*

EXHIBITION HISTORY

'Flora Commedia', Uffizi Galleries, Florence, Italy,

19 November 2018 - 16 February 2019





CAI GUO-QIANG

Maple Leaves No. 1

2018

Gunpowder on canvas

25.4 × 25.4 cm | 10 × 10 in.

27.3 × 27.3 × 7 cm | 10 ³/₄ × 10 ³/₄ × 2 ³/₄ in. (framed)

USD 40,000 *plus applicable taxes*

EXHIBITION HISTORY

'Flora Commedia', Uffizi Galleries, Florence, Italy,

19 November 2018 - 16 February 2019





CAI GUO-QIANG

Study for Sleepwalking in the Forbidden City No. 8
2020

Gunpowder on canvas

46 × 61 cm | 18 × 24 in.

47.6 × 63.2 × 6.4 cm | 18 ¾ × 24 ⅞ × 2 ½ in. (framed)

USD 120,000 *plus applicable taxes*





CAI GUO-QIANG

Study for Sleepwalking in the Forbidden City No. 9
2020

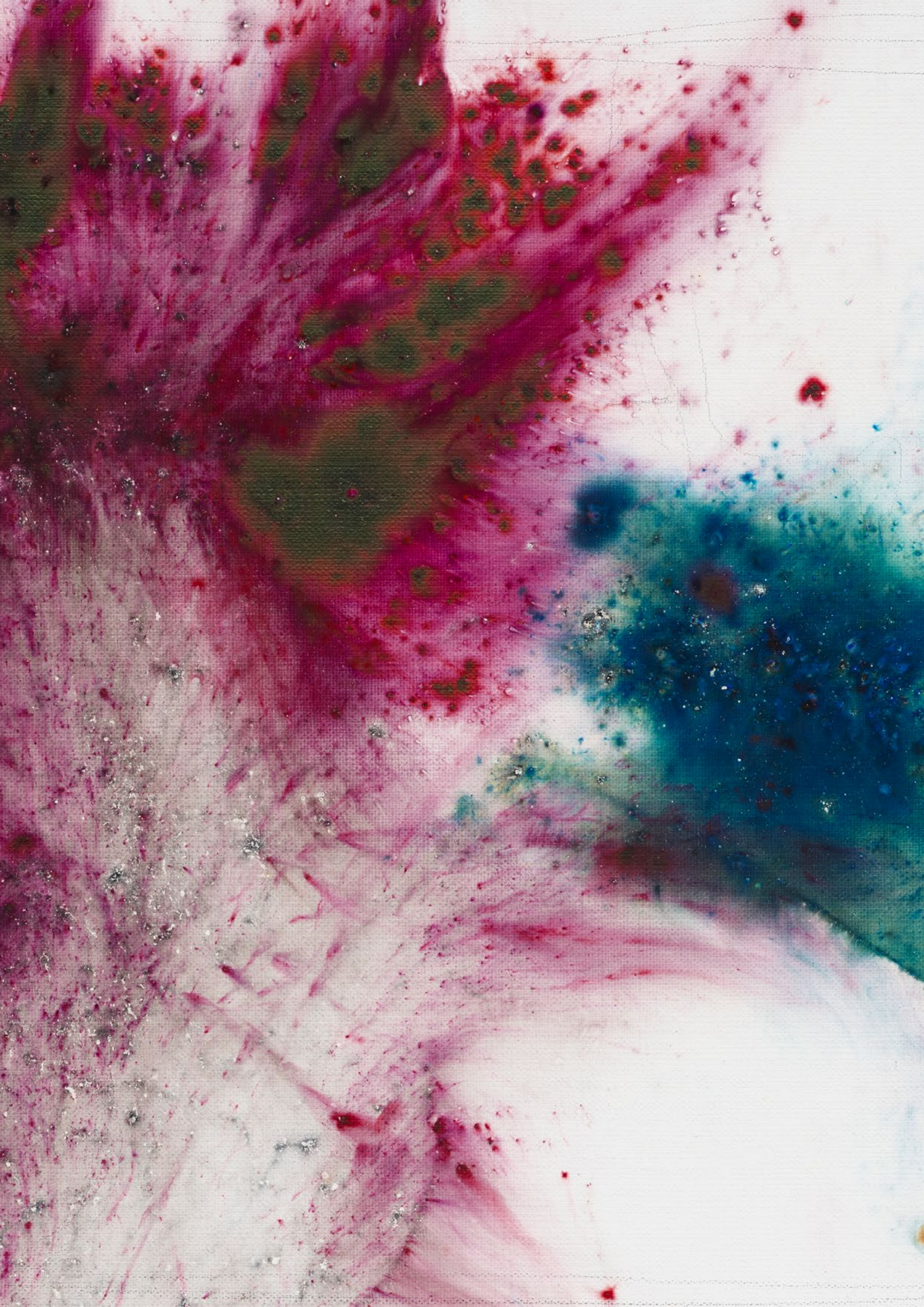
Gunpowder on canvas

40.6 × 51.1 cm | 16 × 20 1/8 in.

42.6 × 53 × 7 cm | 16 3/4 × 20 7/8 × 2 3/4 in. (framed)

USD 80,000 *plus applicable taxes*





Cai Guo-Qiang (b. 1957, Quanzhou, China) has lived and worked in New York since 1995. In the early 1980s he trained in stage design at the Shanghai Theatre Academy, China, and from December 1986 to September 1995, he sojourned in Japan for nearly nine years, during the initial phase of which he studied at Tsukuba University in the Plastic Art and Mixed Media research lab. Notable international solo exhibitions include the Palace Museum, Beijing (2020); National Archaeological Museum of Naples and the Archaeological Park of Pompeii, Italy (2019); Uffizi Galleries, Florence, Italy (2018); Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid (2017); Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow (2017); Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York (retrospective, 2008); and The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (2006). He has received numerous awards, including the Golden Lion at the 1999 Venice Biennale, the Hiroshima Art Prize in 2007, and the 2009 Fukuoka Prize. In 2012, he was honoured as a Laureate for the prestigious Praemium Imperiale, in the painting category. The same year, he was named as one of five artists to receive the first US Department of State Medal of Arts for his outstanding commitment to international cultural exchange.

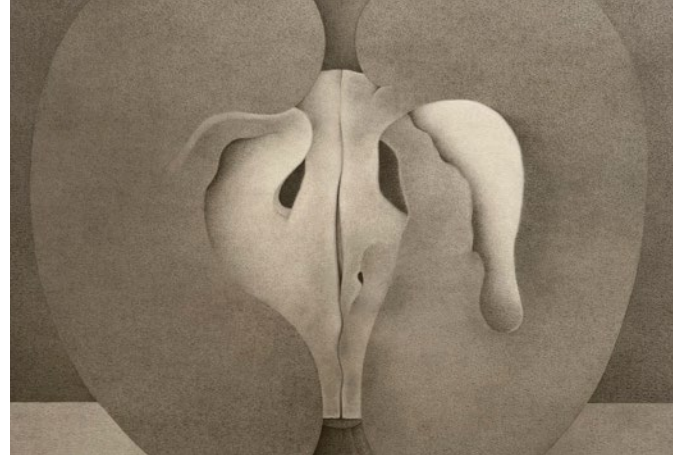


GALLERY EXHIBITIONS



Katharina Grosse
I Set Out, I Walked Fast

22 April – 31 May 2026
Bermondsey, London



Shao Fan
Refrain / 复沓

22 May – 27 June 2026
Mason's Yard, London



Park Seo-Bo

15 April – 30 May 2026
Paris



David Hammons
and Jannis Kounellis

1 May – 13 June 2026
New York



Duett:
Takis and Nam June Paik

2 May – 5 June 2026
Seoul



Alia Ahmad
In Time, A Bloom / مع الوقت، تزهّر

20 May – 27 June 2026
Hong Kong

GALLERY INFORMATION

BERMONDSEY, LONDON

144 – 152 Bermondsey Street
London SE1 3TQ
+44 (0) 207 930 5373

Opening Times:
Tuesday – Saturday, 10am – 6pm
Sunday, 12 – 6pm

MASON'S YARD, LONDON

25 – 26 Mason's Yard
London SW1Y 6BU
+44 (0) 207 766 3550

Opening Times:
Tuesday – Saturday, 10am – 6pm

PARIS

10 avenue Matignon
75008 Paris
+33 (0) 1 87 39 85 97
By appointment

Opening Times:
Tuesday – Saturday,
10am – 12.30pm, 1.30 – 6pm

NEW YORK

1002 Madison Avenue
New York, NY 10075
+1 212 750 4232

Opening Times:
Tuesday – Saturday, 10am – 6pm

HONG KONG

50 Connaught Road Central
Hong Kong
+ 852 2592 2000

Opening Times:
Tuesday – Saturday, 11am – 7pm

SEOUL

6, Dosan-daero 45-gil
Seoul
+82 (0) 2 6438 9093

Opening Times:
Tuesday – Saturday, 10am – 6pm