

APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

Saint Laurent makes OOH magic with 'When The Sky Blooms'

June 30, 2023



Creative director Anthony Vaccarello commissions the explosive works of acclaimed Chinese artist Cai Guo-Qiang. Image credit: Saint Laurent

By AMIRAH KEATON

French fashion house Saint Laurent is leveraging the power of marketing channels old and new.

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Anthony Vaccarello, the luxury leader's creative director, is responsible for its latest artistic commission, one that involves the explosive works of acclaimed Chinese artist Cai Guo-Qiang. Premiered on June 29, the Saint Laurent-sponsored "When the Sky Blooms with Sakura" offers a balanced example of how brands can blend traditional tools and digital platforms to further engage global audiences.

Saint Laurent's spectacle

Celebrated for his use of alternative mediums, Mr. Guo-Qiang's compositions often depict profound explorations of human existence and the impact of society's actions on the planet.

The artisan's most recent delivery is no exception.

Mr. Vaccarello and Mr. Guo-Qiang's joint vision comes to life in an immersive visual activation. A livestream fielded by Saint Laurent and accompanied by an evocative score transported viewers to the daytime fireworks showcase, allowing them to take in the multisensory setup remotely.

"When the Sky Blooms with Sakura" aired on June 29

Inspired by a profound appreciation for nature, the artist brings his unique vision to an installation set on the Japanese shores of Yotsukura Beach in Iwaki City, Fukushima Prefecture.

Severely affected by the Thoku earthquake and tsunami that hit Japan in 2011, the symbolic significance of "sakura," or cherry blossoms, in Japanese culture takes center stage as a series of pyrotechnic blooms fill the sky to "convey collective hope and a future where one day the land can become a pink sea of sakura," says Saint Laurent and its partner.

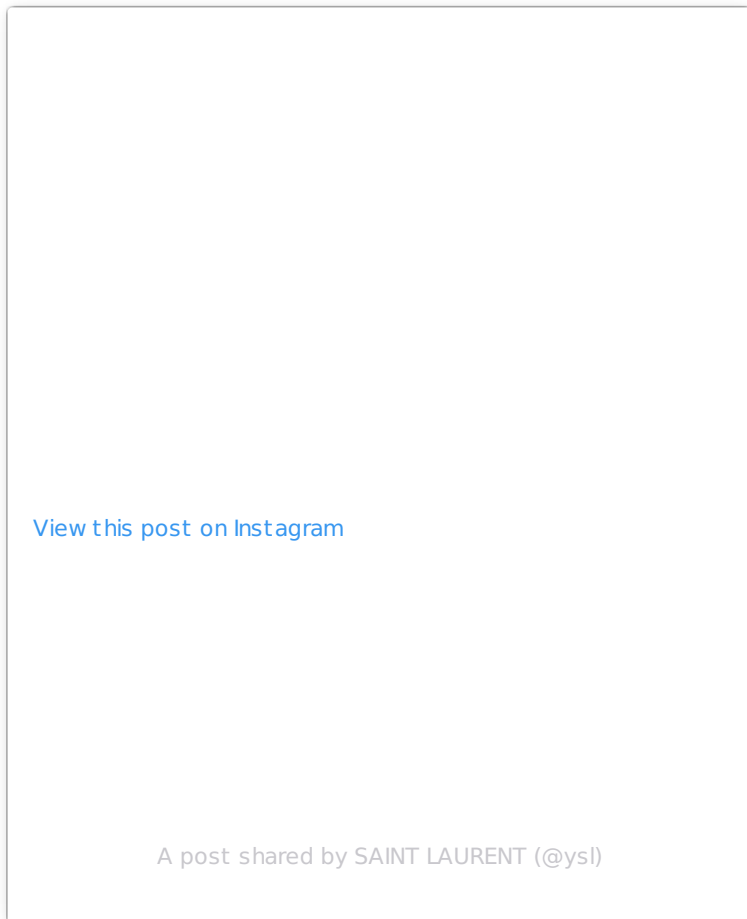
As the video unfolds, viewers witness the artist's signature use of gunpowder to create intricate patterns.

The scene is set for a breathtaking display as the items are ignited, the reactions releasing vibrant bursts of color and

cascades of shimmering sparks into the air, the artistry unfolding across an aerial canvas.

The reel acts as a testament to the enduring allure of art and fashion, as well as the synergy between Mr. Guo-Qiang's expressive techniques and Saint Laurent's aesthetic logoed versions of the saturated clouds grace the brand's social media feeds.

Drawing inspiration from his Chinese heritage, as well as his experiences living and working around the world, Mr. Guo-Qiang's creations delve into universal themes of culture, humanity, trauma and resilience with a thought-provoking approach.



The pop-up prelude a large-scale solo exhibition from the artist. Co-organized by Saint Laurent and The National Art Center, Tokyo (NACT) "Cai Guo-Qiang: Ramble in the Cosmos From Primeval Fireball Onward," opens on June 29.

In an effort to capture the initiative, "giving free rein to reverie and insouciance," according to the brand's site, Mr. Vaccarello has also curated a photoset to be sold within Saint Laurent Rive Droite, the label's creative director-conceptualized retail destinations based on Rodeo Drive and Rue Saint-Honor.

All in all, Saint Laurent, a brand synonymous with elegance and avant-garde style, finds common ground with Cai Guo-Qiang's artistic philosophy by way of the exercise, bridging East and West through the pairing's shared vision.

The brand continues its commitment to cultural exchange and appreciation, the partnership hearkening back to Mr. Vaccarello's goal of supporting excellence throughout the visual arts, cinema and music, amongst other creative fields.

Art and fashion fusion

Existing at the intersection of art and fashion, Saint Laurent's presentation pushes the boundaries of what becomes possible when powerful forces collide.

"When the Sky Blooms with Sakura" speaks to the concept in contemporary terms, a corresponding promotional campaign combines traditional outdoor advertising with dynamic digital elements, maximizing impact to ensure the event receives the attention that it deserves.

When the Sky Blooms with Sakura

Cai Guo-Qiang

Commissioned by Anthony Vaccarello for Saint Laurent

Broadcast on <https://t.co/mAWh4WhGem>

June 29 1PM CEST @CaiGuoQiang #YSL #YvesSaintLaurent

#SaintLaurent #WhentheSkyBloomswithSakura

Photo by Daxin Wu, courtesy of Cai Studio <pic.twitter.com/bszkSdAs6n>

SAINT LAURENT (@YSL) June 27, 2023

Enacted in light of the activation, prominently-placed billboard projections premiered on the streets of iconic locations in major cities worldwide: Shinjuku and Harajuku in Tokyo, The Grand Gateway in Shanghai, Shamao in Chengdu, Piccadilly Circus in London and Times Square in New York included, aside from the aforementioned Rive Droite Paris and Los Angeles locations ([see story](#)) piquing the curiosity of passersby and creating a buzz around the project.

Beyond the bounds of the physical locations that ads inhabited, Saint Laurent's broadcast drove interest online, as viewers around the world gained the opportunity to immerse themselves in the artistic journey, watching the magic unfold in real-time.

The internet-based initiative not only provided an inclusive and accessible way to engage but also demonstrated the heritage house's commitment to digital platforms as a means of artistic expression and connection.

The integration of billboards and digital livestreaming underscores the significance of meeting its fans in physical spaces and virtual realms.

Willing to embrace various marketing avenues ([see story](#)), Mr. Vaccarello's commission continues to reinforce Saint Laurent's position as a pioneering brand at the forefront of fashion.

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