

“Sky Ladder”

Cai Guo-Qiang is a Chinese artist who has taken one of China’s oldest inventions (gunpowder) and turned it into an art form. His art spans a variety of mediums and along with his signature fireworks displays are large scale art installations. One is a huge arch of leaping wolves. A pond named “Silent Ink” and a dilapidated Chinese fishing boat with a host of dead animals on board (a reverse Noah’s Ark), speak to our destruction of the environment, All are unique works of art but nothing can compare to his dazzling pyrotechnics where he uses the sky as a giant easel.

Where to start with the wonders awaiting you in “Sky Ladder”? , a film that you long to see on an Imax screen. There is the fireworks display at the opening of the Olympic Games in Beijing for which the word spectacular hardly suffices. Then there is the artistry of “The Ninth Wave”. It begins with a billowing cloud of grey smoke and then morphs into a panorama which will take your breath away. They are but two examples of the unique celestial art on display in “Sky Ladder.

Guo-Qiang and his family moved to New York City in 1995 and he now runs a large company which stages events throughout the world. His career is in high gear but he will not be satisfied until he accomplishes his ultimate dream - “Sky Ladder”. Like cathedrals which lift towards the heavens, he wants to create a 3,000 foot fireworks ladder to connect the earth to the universe, He has worked on the project on and off for 15 years with numerous setbacks but finally everything is ready to go in his old hometown fishing village of Quanzhou. The countdown has all the drama of a space launch. And finally his dream is realized.

Along with the compelling visuals are the interviews with Cuo-Qiang who explains what drives his artistic vision; the painstaking engineering involved in his projects and how he strives to keep challenging himself rather than coasting on his reputation, He is a most engaging man with a distinctive talent. Make time to see “Sky Ladder”.

(Netflix).