

# Grace and Gunpowder

KJ Kahnle, artist



KJ Kahnle creates intriguing works of art from a material that is usually thought of in relation to destruction.

*"Gunpowder is a medium that engages my desire to artistically experiment. The variables and reactions are endless and not being able to completely predict nor control the final outcome is part of what draws me to it." – KJ*





*Reflections*, 18"x24", \$450  
Ignited Gunpowder on paper



*Quiet Power*, 18x24, \$490  
Ignited Gunpowder on paper



*The Hike*, 9x14, \$220  
Ignited Gunpowder on paper



*Unmistakable*, 16x12, \$350  
Ignited Gunpowder on paper



*The Story Teller*, 11"x14" \$350  
Ignited Gunpowder on paper



*The Journey*, 7x16, \$220,  
Ignited Gunpowder on paper



*Vortex*, 8x12, \$220  
Ignited Gunpowder on paper



*Cosmic Chaos*, 23x27, \$490  
Ignited Gunpowder on paper



*Wired*, 14"x14", \$300  
Ignited Gunpowder & cannon fuse on paper



*From Here Out*, each 7"x7", \$400 (tryptic)  
Ignited Gunpowder & canon fuse on paper

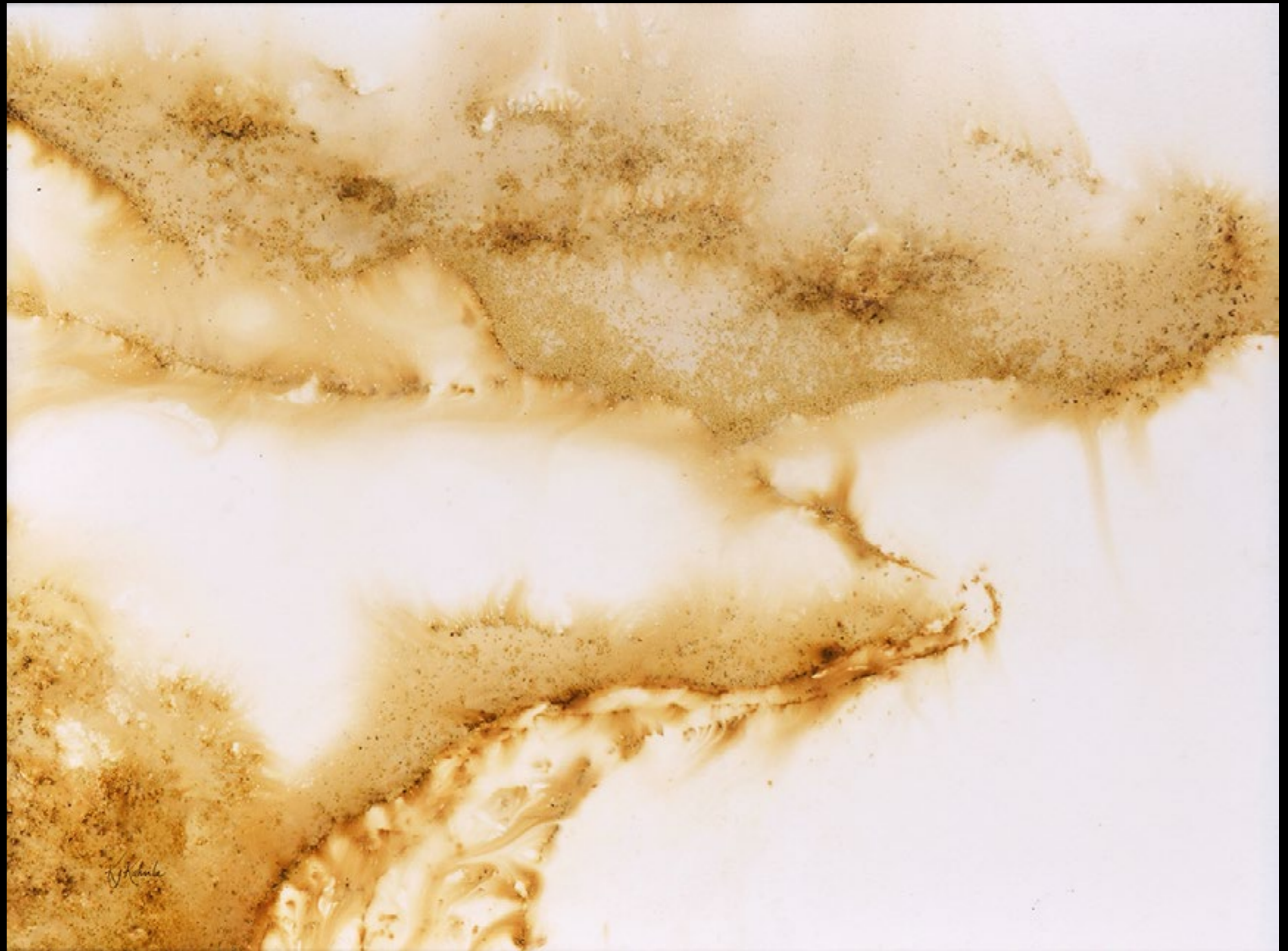




*Burned Evening*, 14x14, \$250  
Ignited Gunpowder on paper



*Dreaming*, 9x17, \$220,  
Ignited Gunpowder on paper



*Untroubled Morning*, 18x24, \$450  
Ignited Gunpowder on paper



*Connor's Flag, 18"x24"*  
Ignited Gunpowder on paper

## The Physical Process

**Gunpowder engages my desire to artistically experiment.** The variables and reactions are endless and not being able to completely predict nor control the final outcome is part of what draws me to it.

All artworks are original, and created by burning paper with gunpowder. Various types and amounts of gunpowder are put on the paper along with organic objects, inorganic objects and/or templates depending on the desired result. The work is then covered and the gunpowder is ignited. The powder burns fast enough to flash burn the paper but not long enough to catch the paper on fire. The process is then repeated in various ways as many as 20 or more times to achieve the final art.



Igniting Gunpowder on paper:  
The Making of *Reflections*.



*"Reflections" was created from 10-12 individual burns.*



*Reflections*, 18"x24", \$450  
Ignited Gunpowder on paper

## The Thought Process

I love that my gunpowder work often **creates wonder, engages thought and sometimes provokes interesting questions** (both personally and culturally) because it is a substance more often associated with destruction than beauty. It seems to be an interesting vehicle for opening dialogues and providing unexpected ways of gaining a new perspective.



Using gunpowder has also encouraged me to be more non-judgmental and comfortable with who I am as well as explaining how I discovered gunpowder as a medium. I am a USPSA (United States Practical Shooter Association) shooter and consequently discovered Cai Quo-Qiang's work. Cai is the originator of the process, a world rebounded gunpowder artist, and master-mind behind the Beijing Olympic fireworks. I was captivated by his art, immediately tried it... and fell in love with gunpowder as an art medium.

It's interesting working with a medium where **mistakes can't be redone, painted over, or erased** unlike the other work I've done. Those completely unexpected things occasionally produce wonderful results and sometimes lessons in what not to do. Creating art with gunpowder is kind of like life - no matter how well you plan and prepare you will get unexpected results.



### **Artist Statement**

Gunpowder is a medium that encourages my desire to artistically experiment. The variables and reactions are endless. Seeing the result after igniting a piece is always exciting - sometimes it's fantastic, occasionally it's a lesson in what not to do.

Not being able to completely predict nor control the final outcome is part of what draws me to it. I also love that it often creates wonder, engages thought and sometimes provokes question because it is a substance more often associated with destruction than beauty.

Creating art with gunpowder is kind of like life - no matter how well you plan and prepare you will get unexpected results. So it's much more enjoyable to let go of things you can't control, not becoming too attached to the outcome, and enjoy the journey.

~ KJ Kahnle

## BIO

In 2012 when I finally relented to that never ending "voice" and committed to pursuing my artwork. It was by no means always easy, but it began to take on a life of it's own through experimentation with various mediums and styles. In 2016 gunpowder, as an art medium, "naturally found me."

When I was young I loved to draw and photograph abstract elements in nature. With the changes of "adult life" I pursued a degree in education and later gravitated toward graphic design. In 1983 I moved from Louisiana to Missoula, MT attended grad school at UM, and over the course of the next 20+ years, married, had two amazing children, divorced, and lived in Texas, Idaho, and New Zealand among other places. My jobs varied almost as much as the places I lived, always gravitating back toward artistic endeavors: chasing wax for Robert Deurloo, doing detail work for a taxidermist, photo restoration for Kodak, and a successful graphic design business.

In 2008 my own artistic endeavors began re-surfacing. This led to combining photorealistic drawings with abstract texture and color; and constantly experimented with a variety of mediums. My participation in USPSA (United States Practical Shooting Assn) matches was the 2016 connection that introduced me to gunpowder as an art medium. I fell in love with it's nature, the impressionistic and abstract results I could achieve, the endless experimental possibilities, and the fact that I couldn't completely predict nor control the final outcome. My medium and I found each other.

Creating artwork with a material that is typically thought of as "destructive" can be quite thought provoking. It has opened dialogue across personal and cultural differences. And has also provided me with great lessons about letting go of things are often beyond our control - much like life often is.

# Grace and GumboWelder

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*Please feel free to contact me for more information about my work, commissions, or demos. Questions, ideas, and fun conversation are always welcome. ~ KJ*

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