

For Immediate Release
October 2015

**WELLIN MUSEUM OF ART PRESENTS THE LARGEST U.S. SURVEY
TO DATE OF WORK BY BEIJING-BORN ARTIST YUN-FEI JI**

***Newly Commissioned Large-Scale Works and Never-Before-Seen
Preparatory Drawings Cap a Selection of Works from the Last Decade***

Clinton, NY – The vignettes depict a leering man with a pig’s snout, another in a rumpled suit, a hunchback hag with a snaggle-toothed grin, and a peasant with a jowly frog face, all protagonists in *Yun-Fei Ji: The Intimate Universe* at the Wellin Museum of Art at Hamilton College on view from February 6 through July 2, 2016.

The Intimate Universe presents 44 scrolls, paintings and drawings created by the Beijing-born artist Yun-Fei Ji over the last decade, drawn from major institutions as well as private collections, and new works made specifically for the exhibition. These include a suite of three related scrolls, a 24-foot wall mural painted on site, and recent experimental works with elements of three-dimensionality made at the Dieu Donné papermaking workshop. Twenty-six never-before-exhibited preparatory sketches are featured as well.

“For more than a decade, Yun-Fei has chronicled the harsh reality of the dispossessed in today’s China employing the idealized tradition of Chinese landscape painting,” says Tracy L. Adler, director of the Wellin Museum of Art at Hamilton College and curator of the exhibition. “Today, he’s exploring new ground, but still as an artist reimagining storytelling in contemporary terms.”

“*The Intimate Universe* is a commissioning project as well as a loan exhibition. Yun-Fei will create a large-scale, three panel scroll for which we are building a special viewing room within the exhibition. Through the residency we’ve initiated with Dieu Donné we are encouraging the artist to experiment with paper as a mutable form. In addition, we are creating a partnership with Golden Artist Colors to supply materials and technical support thus allowing Yun-Fei to investigate mural painting as a new method of

working,” says Adler. “Our aim is to capture this artist’s range and latest preoccupations.”

The three-panel scroll painting commissioned by the Wellin will be showcased in its own gallery, reached through a moon gate doorway. The work will be set within a shallow wall recess that winds horizontally across three walls.

On the outside of the scroll room is another exhibition highlight, a 60-foot long scroll entitled *The Village and its Ghosts* (2014). This panorama depicts the movement of ghosts, folkloric humans, hucksters, animal hybrids, skeletons and other figures within a classically limned landscape: hundreds of mini-dramas unfold, from a procession of claw footed and insect-like human figures to a young woman hand pollinating a stand of tree in a world where bees are becoming extinct. First seen last year in Prospect.3 in New Orleans, the painting will be displayed unframed, also within a recessed channel.

“Both the intimate scroll gallery and the larger gallery environment are designed to subtly evoke the forms and creative landscape of the Chinese garden design of Suzhou,” notes Adler. “It is only as the visitor engages with the artwork that other, more difficult, interpretations come into focus.”

The new mural will occupy a 24-foot-long wall to the right as the visitor enters the exhibition. To be realized with the assistance of Hamilton College students, the work marks a departure for Ji: it is the first time he has created a site-specific work and he will be using acrylic paint rather than ink or pencil. For the mural project, Golden Artist Colors, a paint manufacturer located in nearby New Berlin, New York, will provide materials and technical support.

On another large wall will be featured 26 never-before-exhibited preparatory sketches, hung in a web-like configuration intended to reflect linkages. Created only recently, they record the movement of the dispossessed in China as a visual cacophony of overturned plastic buckets, bulging garbage bags, fallen branches, gutted cabinets, and upturned chairs dotted by improvised shelters.

New paper works created by Ji in a residency underwritten by the Wellin at Dieu Donn  in New York City will evidence of the artist's thinking as he experiments with texture and form and serve as a bridge between *The Intimate Universe* and a concurrent exhibition *Pure Pulp: Contemporary Artists Working in Paper at Dieu Donn , 2000–Present*.

While the displacement of over a million and a half people due to the construction of the Three Gorges Dam on the Yangtze River was the basis for the exhibition's long scroll *Water Rising* (2006), many of the more recent drawings and scrolls to be featured, including a new series created for the Zeno X Gallery in Antwerp, look to other places and times, or to a timelessness, to convey a sense of a world no longer in harmony and a present day haunted by ghosts of the past.

"We at the Wellin hope that this exhibition will provide a platform for launching a dialogue about the relationship between art, power, politics and the environment," adds Adler. This winter, the curricula of a number of Hamilton College courses will incorporate concepts and ideas relating to *Yun-Fei Ji: The Intimate Universe* and the Wellin will offer programs for K-12 students in conjunction with the exhibition.

Publication

Yun-Fei Ji: The Intimate Universe, a major monograph publication with essays by Adler and Steven J. Goldberg, Associate Professor of Art History at Hamilton College, is forthcoming.

About Yun-Fei Ji

Yun-Fei Ji (Beijing, 1963) received his BFA from the Central Academy of Fine Arts (CAFA) in 1982 and an MFA from the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville in 1989. Ji's work has been shown extensively, most recently with *Surroundings*, a two-person exhibition with Susanna Heller at the Grand Rapids Art Museum, a solo exhibition *Migrants, Ghosts, and the Dam* at the University Museum of Contemporary Art in Amherst, Massachusetts (2015); and group exhibitions with *Unscrolled: Reframing Tradition in Chinese Contemporary Art* at the Vancouver Art Gallery (2014–15); *Prospect.3: Notes for Now* in New Orleans (2014–15), and at the Twentieth Anniversary Exhibition at Pierogi in Brooklyn (2014). Other group exhibitions include participation in the 2002 Whitney Biennale and the 11th Biennale de Lyon (2011), as well as shows at The Museum of Modern Art, NY and the British Museum, London. In

2012, he participated in the 18th Biennale of Sydney. Select solo exhibitions include *Boxers* at the SAFN Museum, Iceland (2004); *The Empty City*, which was organized by the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis and traveled to the Rose Museum, Brandeis University, Waltham, MA (2004); *Great News Comes from the Collective Farm* at Zeno X Gallery, Antwerp (2005), and *Water That Floats the Boat Can Also Sink It* at the James Cohan Gallery, NY (2006). In 2012, Ji presented his first Beijing solo exhibition at the Ullens Center for Contemporary Art. *Water Work* examined the historical developments in contemporary America and China, focusing on the impact of grand infrastructural projects and water-related natural disaster on ordinary people in his two homelands. He received the Rome Prize in 2006 from the American Academy in Rome, Italy.

About the Ruth and Elmer Wellin Museum of Art

Designed by Machado Silvetti, the Ruth and Elmer Wellin Museum of Art at Hamilton College opened in October 2012. Through its exhibitions, public programs and educational outreach, the museum promotes interdisciplinary research and the cross-fertilization of concepts and ideas vital to a liberal arts education. The museum works with emerging and established artists and collaborates with Hamilton students and faculty to develop programming promoting a wide range of disciplines. The museum features a 27-foot-high visible archive, a 6,200-square-foot exhibition space, and other amenities that foster common exchange and learning.

###

For media inquiries, please contact:

Hamilton College
Vige Barrie
vbarrie@hamilton.edu
315-859-4623

Anne Edgar Associates
Anne Edgar/Cindy Bokser
cindy@anneedgar.com
646 336 7230