

# Honolulu Museum of Art

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## MUSEUM'S FIRST MAJOR CONTEMPORARY CHINESE EXHIBITION INTRODUCES YUN-FEI JI

*Artist uses ancient techniques to address modern issues*

**WHAT:** [Yun-Fei Ji: The Intimate Universe](#)

**WHEN:** Sept. 29, 2016–Feb. 5, 2017

**WHERE:** Honolulu Museum of Art, 900 S Beretania St, Honolulu, HI 96814

**INFO:** 808-532-8700, [honolulumuseum.org](http://honolulumuseum.org) (publishable)

*High-res images available on request.*



**HONOLULU, HAWAII**—This fall, the Honolulu Museum of Art presents its first major exhibition of Chinese contemporary art with *Yun-Fei Ji: The Intimate Universe*, opening Sept. 29.

The U.S.-based artist, who was separated from his parents at the age of two and grew up on a collective farm outside Hangzhou during the Cultural Revolution, is known for his large-scale watercolors that at first glance look like traditional scrolls, then yield subversive narratives upon closer inspection.

*The Intimate Universe* presents 44 scrolls, paintings and drawings created by 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 and recent experimental works with elements of three-dimensionality. Twenty-six never-before-exhibited preparatory sketches are featured as well in the survey, which was organized by the Ruth and Elmer Wellin Museum of Art at Hamilton College in New York State. Special thanks goes to to hospitality sponsor Halekulani and media sponsor *Modern Luxury Hawai'i*.

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

“The Honolulu Museum of Art has one of the best collections of traditional Chinese art in the country,” says Shawn Eichman, the museum’s curator of Asian art. “At

the same time, we are increasingly looking to Asia when it comes to contemporary art. The way Yun-Fei Ji takes on the thousand-year-old practice of Chinese scroll painting to present the gritty reality of life in China today parallels our Asian art program.”

Like Chen Quilin, the video artist whose [work the museum showed in 2014](#), Yun-Fei Ji emphasizes the critical relationship between the land and its people and how the balance is being challenged by current social, political, ecological, and economic shifts.

“Yun-Fei Ji’s sensitive depictions of the plights faced by villagers in contemporary China, resulting from natural and man-made disruptions, are based on his own fieldwork and first-hand experiences,” says Eichman. “They also speak to larger issues facing the entire world, including failing infrastructures, climate change, natural disasters, and the tensions between the needs of individuals and small communities on the one hand and national or international social policies on the other. His haunting, otherworldly figures in disjointed landscapes are at once sympathetic references to real individuals and their tragedies, but also embodiments of traditional culture faltering under the pressures of modernization.”

The Wellin initiated a residency with Dieu Donn e, a New York artists’ workspace and gallery dedicated to all aspects of contemporary art using handmade paper, where this year Yun-Fei created the commissioned large-scale, three-panel scroll —*After the First Seventh Day*—which draws inspiration from the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*.

Also in the exhibition is *The Village and its Ghosts* (2014), a 60-foot-long scroll that 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 pollinating a stand of trees in a world where bees are going extinct.

## Publication

The Museum Shop will offer *Yun-Fei Ji: The Intimate Universe*, a major monograph with essays by Tracy L. Adler, Steven J. Goldberg, Associate Professor of Art History at Hamilton College, and Robert Morgan, noted art critic and curator.

## 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). In 2012, he participated in the 18th Biennale of Sydney.

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 disasters on ordinary people in his two homelands. He received the Rome Prize in 2006 from the American Academy in Rome, Italy. He divides his time between New York City and Gambier, Ohio.

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### **About the Honolulu Museum of Art**

One of the world’s premier art museums, the Honolulu Museum of Art presents international caliber special exhibitions and features a collection that includes Hokusai, van Gogh, Gauguin, Monet, Picasso and Warhol, as well as traditional Asian and Hawaiian art.

Located in two of Honolulu’s most beautiful buildings, visitors enjoy two cafés, gardens, and films and concerts at the theater. The museum is dedicated to bringing together great art and people to create a more harmonious, adaptable, and enjoyable society in Hawai’i.

### **Locations:**

Honolulu Museum of Art: 900 S. Beretania Street

Honolulu Museum of Art Spalding House: 2411 Makiki Heights Drive

Honolulu Museum of Art School: 1111 Victoria Street

Honolulu Museum of Art at First Hawaiian Center: 999 Bishop Street

Honolulu Museum of Art Doris Duke Theatre: 901 Kinau Street (at rear of museum)

**Website:** [www.honolulumuseum.org](http://www.honolulumuseum.org)

**Phone:** [808-532-8700](tel:808-532-8700)

**Hours:**

Honolulu Museum of Art: Tues–Sat 10 am–4:30pm; Sun 1–5 pm; closed Monday.

Honolulu Museum of Art Spalding House: Tues–Sat 10am–4pm; Sun noon–4pm

**Admission (permits entry to both museums on the same day):**

\$10 general admission; children 17 and under are free.

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