



Queens Museum of Art
New York City Building
Flushing Meadows Corona Park
Queens, NY 11368-3398
718.592.9700
www.queensmuseum.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Krista N. Saunders
718.592.9700 x221
ksaunders@queensmuseum.org

**THE QUEENS MUSEUM OF ART PROUDLY PRESENTS THE FIRST FULL
SCALE SOLO U.S. EXHIBITION OF LEADING CHINESE CONTEMPORARY
ARTIST YUE MINJUN.**

**YUE MINJUN AND THE SYMBOLIC SMILE
October 14, 2007-January 6, 2008**

Queens, NY (October 15, 2007) - Yue Minjun's first museum show in the U.S. is now on view at the Queens Museum of Art from **October 14, 2007-January 6, 2008**. *Yue Minjun and the Symbolic Smile* includes large-scale bronze and polychrome sculptures, watercolors and the artist's exuberant yet eerie oil paintings. In these works, the artist has successfully transformed his iconic smiling self-portrait into his signature motif. One of the self-styled, Beijing-based artists who emerged in the early 1990's, Yue Minjun has since gained both international recognition and national renown: in auction just this month, one of his paintings garnered the highest price for a Chinese contemporary artwork while the Chinese government recently declared Yue one of 8 Chinese contemporary artists to be honored with their own museum in the Mainland. Yue Minjun's exhibition at the Queens Museum is also the inspiration for the *What's Behind Your Smile?* campaign: an interactive website and art-making program which encourages viewers of all ages to create their own portraits depicting both authentic and inauthentic smiling expressions.

Yue Minjun began his career as a founding member of the “Cynical Realism” school. This group emerged in the early 1990’s, in the wake of the Tiananmen Square incident and the subsequent crackdown on artistic freedom imposed by the Chinese government. From the founding of the PRC in 1949, through the decade long Cultural Revolution that ended in 1976 with the death of Chairman Mao Zedong, art was solely created to promote Communist Party ideology. All of China’s artistic production was framed by a system of government-imposed directives.

In the current art world, Yue Minjun and his renowned contemporaries, including artists Zhang Xiaogang and Fang Lijun, are making artworks that reflect a social consciousness relevant to China’s changing political and economic climate. China’s avant-garde artists, many of whom are based in Beijing’s booming art scene, enjoy a surprising degree of creative liberty in utilizing parody and critique to comment on the state of their country. The attention these artists have received from the West also makes them less vulnerable to censorship by the central government.

Yue Minjun’s laughing faces convey the paradox of present-day China. The jubilant expressions depicted on the hearty faces of cloned figures make us wonder about the reality under the toothsome smile. The backgrounds depicted, from a stoic Tiananmen Square to a teeming nuclear mushroom cloud, also allude to the shifting realities of contemporary China. The seemingly cheerful demeanor of these figures suggests an attempt to cope with the country’s complexities. Yue Minjun’s work begs the question: what is truly joyful?

The key to decoding these enigmatic portrayals may lie in the rich cultural tradition that has influenced this artist from the Mainland. Yue’s laughing faces recall the “Buddha of the Future,” a welcoming figure located at the entrance of countless Buddhist temples

throughout China. While his beaming faces bespeak contemporary concerns, they also implore an optimistic future.

The show at the Queens Museum of Art will be accompanied by a smaller-scale exhibition of the artist's watercolors entitled, YUE MINJUN "I Love Laughing," at the Asia Society. The 6 watercolors that present a softer side of the artist's oeuvre will be on display at the Asia Society in New York City June 18, 2007 through January 2, 2008. For more information, please contact Jennifer Suh at 212-327-9273 or jennifers@asiasoc.org or visit www.Asiasociety.org.

ORGANIZATION AND SUPPORT

This exhibition is supported in part by Agnes Gund and Daniel Shapiro, and Sotheby's. Additional funding is provided by the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs and New York State Council on the Arts.

DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY

Available upon request. Please contact Krista Saunders 718.592.9700 x221 or ksaunders@queensmuseum.org.

###

The Queens Museum of Art was established in 1972 to provide a vital cultural center in Flushing Meadows Corona Park for the borough's unique, international population. Today it is home to the Panorama of the City of New York, a 9,335 square foot scale model of the five boroughs, and features temporary exhibitions of modern and contemporary art that reflect the cultural diversity of Queens, as well as a collection of Tiffany glass from the Neustadt Museum of Tiffany Art. The Museum provides valuable educational outreach through a number of programs geared toward schoolchildren, teens, families, seniors and individuals with physical and mental disabilities.

The Museum's hours are: Wednesday – Friday: 10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m., Saturday and Sunday: 12:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. Admission to the Museum is by suggested donation: \$5 for adults, \$2.50 for seniors, students and children, and free for member and children under 5. For general visitor information, please visit the Museum's website www.queensmuseum.org or call 718.592.9700.

Asia Society is the leading global organization working to strengthen relationships and promote understanding among the people, leaders, and institutions of Asia and the United States. We seek to enhance dialogue, encourage creative expression, and generate new ideas across the fields of policy, business, education, arts, and culture. Founded in 1956 by John D. Rockefeller 3rd, Asia Society is a nonprofit educational institution with offices in Hong Kong, Houston, Los Angeles, Manila, Melbourne, Mumbai, New York, San Francisco, Shanghai, and Washington, DC.

One of the first American museums to establish a contemporary Asian art program in the early 1990s, the Asia Society Museum presents groundbreaking exhibitions and artworks previously unseen in the United

States. Through these exhibitions and related public programs, the Society provides a forum for the issues and viewpoints reflected in the work of cutting-edge Asian and Asian American artists. Their views do not necessarily reflect those of Asia Society, which is a nonpartisan institution.

Asia Society and Museum

725 Park Avenue (at 70th Street), New York City.

The Museum is open Tuesday through Sunday from 11:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m., Friday from 11:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. Closed Monday. General admission is \$10, seniors \$7, students \$5 and free for members and persons under 16. Free admission Fridays, 6:00 to 9:00 p.m.