

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

EMPATHIC ECONOMIES: THE WORK OF LEE MINGWEI TO OPEN AT THE DAVIS MUSEUM AND CULTURAL CENTER IN WELLESLEY

Three sculptural installations by artist Lee Mingwei, exploring personal identity, relationships with others, and the relationship between art and money, will soon be on view at the Davis Museum and Cultural Center at Wellesley College. Titled *Empathic Economies: The Work of Lee Mingwei*, the presentation will include *Reflections*, 1999, *The Letter-Writing Project*, 1998, and *Money for Art*, 1997. The installation will open on February 24 and remain on view through June 14.

According to Judith Hoos Fox, curator at the Davis Museum and Cultural Center, “At the core of Lee Mingwei’s art—inspired by Buddhist ritual and teaching and informed by current theory in contemporary art— lies a series of interactions among the artist, the participant, and the spectator. Lee explores ordinary activities in ways which heighten our awareness of the depth of meaning and potential for change that underlie the actions of our daily life.

Fox continues, “In each of the three works in this exhibition, the artist explores distinct issues. *Reflections*, which allows a visitor to see her or his own image merged with that of another, becomes a meditation on personal identity. *The Letter-Writing Project* invites visitors to write letters that individuals had always meant to write but never taken the time to compose. The third installation, *Money for Art*, encourages visitors to rethink relationships between art and money, art and object, and art and personal interaction. Lee’s interest lies in plumbing the potential of communication between people and in recovering a spiritual element in everyday actions.”

Empathic Economies will travel to the Museum of Art, Fort Lauderdale, where it will be on view from August 4 through December 3, 2000.

Lee Mingwei trained at the California College of Arts and Crafts where he received a BA with honors in textile arts in 1993. In 1997, he earned an MFA from Yale University in

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sculpture. His work has been shown at the Whitney Museum of American Art, The Fabric Workshop and Museum in Philadelphia, the Cleveland Center of Contemporary Art, and the Third Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art in Brisbane, Australia. The immediate and enthusiastic response to his work lies in its ability to reach beyond the self-referential art world into everyday experience.

This exhibition of past work by Lee at the Davis Museum and Cultural Center coincides with an exhibition, *The Living Room*, a newly commissioned installation presented by the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston. *The Living Room* will be on view at the Gardner from February 18 through April 30.

The publication which accompanies *Empathic Economies* is in the form of the ubiquitous Post-it™ notepad. A small attached envelope includes an essay by curator Judith Hoos Fox, a bibliography of the artist's suggested readings, and a checklist of the exhibition.

The exhibition, its accompanying program and publication are supported by Crane & Co., Inc., Papermakers in Dalton, Massachusetts; LEF Foundation and The Mayling Soong Foundation.

The Davis Museum and Cultural Center, located at 106 Central Street in Wellesley, Mass., is open Tuesday, Friday, and Saturday from 11-5, Wednesday and Thursday from 11-8, and Sunday 1-5. Admission is free.

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For further information, contact Nina J. Berger, 781 283-2034.

**DESCRIPTIONS OF THE THREE INSTALLATIONS COMPRISING
*EMPATHIC ECONOMIES: THE WORK OF LEE MINGWEI***

Three installations are featured in *Empathic Economies—Reflections*, 1999, *The Letter-Writing Project*, 1998, and *Money for Art*, 1997. Below is a description of each of the three installations, which will be on view at the Davis Museum and Cultural Center in Wellesley from February 24 through June 14.

Reflections, 1999, is a meditation on personal identity—who are we? What are our personal boundaries? What is our relationship to other individuals? The piece consists of a long wooden chamber divided into two sections by mirrored glass. The reflected image of a visitor within one chamber merges with that in the other. The act of contemplating the merged images becomes an assessment of self in the context of others.

The Letter-Writing Project, 1998, encourages the viewer to write letters that we have always intended to write, but have never made the time to compose—a space to meditate on our relationships with others. Paper and envelopes are available within three booths, one designed for standing, one for sitting, and one for kneeling, postures that correspond to Buddhist meditation. The artist suggests we think of gratitude, insight, and forgiveness.

Money for Art, 1997, invites visitors to rethink relationships between art and money, art and object, art and personal values. Here the visitor is invited to take a dollar bill that has been folded into an intricate origami-shape and put in its place something he/she deems a fair exchange. The definition of art and the demarcation of value are called into question. Is one going to leave a twenty-dollar bill, a package of tissues, a piece of jewelry? Is the origami bill now a work of art or legal tender?

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