

James Cohan will present *Rumors, Ridicules, and Retributions* an exhibition of new work by Yun-Fei Ji at the gallery's Lower East Side location. This is Ji's fourth solo exhibition at James Cohan.

In this body of work, Yun-Fei Ji turns his attention to the stories of people living in rural China. The realities of life outside the nation's largest cities have largely been ignored by narratives of rapid urban growth. Rural lives are often governed by the whims of the powerful, robbing them of physical and spiritual rootedness. Ji is interested in the ways in which people enact their agency both individually and collectively in the face of these larger societal forces, often through subtle but willful acts of resistance.

Indebted to the long history of folktales in China, Ji is inspired by the tall tales and ghost stories that he has gathered in the Chinese countryside. Full of ghosts, demons, and other eccentric characters, these stories have frequently functioned as metaphors for power structures and defiance. They are stand-ins for the political undercurrents and the complex tug-of-war underlying the social reality of rural communities. Ji's own political sympathies have attracted the attention of Chinese authorities, leading government censors to cover portions of his paintings on view during the 10th Shanghai Biennale in 2014.

Ji first moved to the United States in the late 1980s. After spending the past six years in Beijing, he currently divides his time between New York and rural Ohio – an experience that has amplified his perceptions of the cultural and ideological disparities in this turbulent political moment. He sees similarities between the migration discourses that he has explored in a Chinese context and the current immigration debates in the United States. In both countries, there is an active “othering” and suspicion of immigrants or migrant workers, fueled by the rhetoric of political leaders.

Yun-Fei Ji has employed the stacked perspective and flattened space of classical Chinese painting throughout his career, reinvigorating this traditional style as a means of contemporary storytelling. The conscious two-dimensionality of Ji's compositions imbues his narratives with an immediacy that compels the viewer's attention. His paintings are acts of resistance in their own way, insisting that these stories of cultural degradation, struggle, and resistance are worth telling.

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