

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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THE WELLIN MUSEUM OF ART AT HAMILTON COLLEGE WILL PRESENT  
***JEFFREY GIBSON: THIS IS THE DAY***  
FROM SEPTEMBER 8 THROUGH DECEMBER 9, 2018

Exhibition Will Debut New Works by Gibson Including  
A Film Commissioned by the Wellin and a Series of Helmets and Large-Scale Sculptural Garments



Photography by Caitlin Mitchell for the exhibition *Jeffrey Gibson: This Is the Day* (September 8 – December 9, 2018) organized by the Ruth and Elmer Wellin Museum of Art at Hamilton College, Clinton, NY.

**Clinton, NY**—The Wellin Museum of Art at Hamilton College will present *Jeffrey Gibson: This Is the Day* from September 8 through December 9, 2018, featuring over 50 works of sculpture, painting, installation, and video made between 2014 and 2018, a number of which were made expressly for this exhibition. As part of the exhibition, the Wellin will debut a new film that the Museum commissioned from Gibson. Other new works in the exhibition include a group of five elaborately adorned helmets that will be presented to the public for the first time at the Wellin, alongside a series of seven large-scale sculptural garments, draped on tipi poles, which will hang from the gallery ceiling. The exhibition is curated by Tracy L. Adler, Johnson-Pote Director of the Wellin Museum of Art, and will travel to the Blanton Museum of Art at The University of Texas at Austin in 2019, facilitated by Veronica Roberts, the Blanton’s Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art.

A new film by Gibson commissioned by the Wellin titled *I Was Here* (2018) mixes documentary and dramatic styles and centers on Macy, a transgender woman and a member of the Choctaw Nation. Blurring the lines between a mystical, natural setting and Macy's daily reality, Gibson's film examines the private and personal rituals of transformation and self. The film's location, the Choctaw reservation in central Mississippi where Gibson's family is from, plays a significant role in the film's blend of spirituality, ceremony, and the fantastical.

Gibson says: "Making new work for *This Is the Day* gave me the opportunity to explore new content, materials, and formats that have pushed my practice further. The garments and the commissioned video deal with contemporary issues of identity and establish a dialogue that is inclusive and about how the representation of one's subjective narrative is complex, valid, and never didactic. The garments are mash-ups of many different cultural references that collectively defy categorization and show that what we wear can define us while simultaneously transcending labels and categorizations."

Tracy L. Adler explains: "Since the museum was founded, it has been strongly committed to providing artists with the creative space and resources to develop new projects. Jeff is an artist whom I have known and admired for many years. The themes that he explores in his practice are more relevant now than ever, when conflicting narratives about identity and how we define ourselves dominate mainstream discussion. We are excited to introduce this significant body of work to both the Hamilton community and broader audiences."

The five helmets that will be on view for the first time at the Wellin explore different themes found in Gibson's artistic practice of the last decade: love, the cultural character of the clown/play, peace, death, and the deep sea. The helmets are heavily ornamented with crystals, charms, beads, shells, gun replicas, and doll parts among other found and hand-made objects, and are oversized, heavy, and impractical to wear, weighing between 35 and 45 pounds each.

The garments reference the traditional shirts associated with Ghost Dance, a movement that originated with the Paiute around 1870 and heightened when a Paiute shaman, Wovoka, had a vision in 1889 prophesizing the peaceful end of the westward expansion of whites and a return of the land to the Native American people. It was meant to revitalize traditional ways and end poverty and disease. But Gibson's garments are exaggerated in size and are made of found objects—vintage quilts, vestments, amulets, charms, beads, and long ribbons of fringe—all meticulously sewn together. They also incorporate imagery of Gibson's previous work that are digitally printed on silk and satin. Together, the garments and the helmets point to the layers of identity that each of us embody and imagine, while their impracticality highlights the often weighty overtones of cultural responsibilities.

The exhibition will also include a suite of ceramic assemblages comprising found and sculpted ceramic elements, beaded panels, tapestries, weavings, and abstract geometric paintings, all created in 2017-2018. Also on view will be *LIKE A HAMMER*, Gibson's multi-media installation commissioned for the 2016 Site Santa Fe Biennial. Earlier pieces such as robes, bags and a sculptural figure from 2014-2016, and a series of smaller ceramic forms inspired by historic Mississippian head pots from 2015-2016, will be featured in the exhibition.

Gibson's multi-disciplinary practice encompasses a wide range of mediums and draws on disparate influences and visual languages to comment on race, sexuality, religion, and gender. *This Is the Day* examines his artistic approach, which, among other sources of inspiration, combines pop and queer culture alongside both historical and contemporary references to his Native American heritage, including the 19th century Ghost Dance and The Dakota Access Pipeline. The works in the exhibition probe his continued interest in the ritual of self-adornment as a historical and contemporary phenomenon.

Join the conversation on social media by tagging @wellinmuseum and using the hashtags #ThisIsTheDayWellin and #JeffreyGibsonWellin when posting.

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### **Publication**

*Jeffrey Gibson: This Is the Day* is accompanied by a publication with a foreword and interview with the artist by Tracy L. Adler; and essays by Jane Panetta, Associate Curator at the Whitney Museum; and Lowery Stokes Sims, Curator Emerita at the Museum of Arts and Design. This book is co-published by the Wellin Museum of Art and DelMonico Books/Prestel.

### **Travel**

*Jeffrey Gibson: This Is the Day* will travel to the Blanton Museum of Art at The University of Texas where it will be on view July 14 – September 29, 2019.

### **About Jeffrey Gibson**

Jeffrey Gibson's multi-disciplinary practice encompasses a wide range of mediums including painting, sculpture, embroidery, beaded works, stained glass, and video. A member of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians and half Cherokee, Gibson grew up in major urban centers in the United States, Germany, Korea, and England. This unique combination of influences play a central role throughout Gibson's work, which largely focuses on themes of identity, cultural perceptions, and the artist's own personal history.

His work has been featured in solo museum exhibitions at the National Academy of Art in New York City (2013), the Bronx Museum of Art (2014), the Savannah College of Art and Design (2016), and the Oklahoma Contemporary in Oklahoma City (2017), and his first major museum retrospective will be presented by the Denver Museum of Art (2018). Recent group shows include *Prospect.3: Notes for Now* in New Orleans (2015), *Greater New York* at MoMA PS1 (2016), and *Desert X* in Palm Springs (2017). Gibson's artworks are in the permanent collections of many major museums, including the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.; the National Gallery of Canada; the Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University, Durham; Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art, Overland Park; Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville; and the Denver Art Museum.

Gibson is a recipient of the Joan Mitchell Foundation Painters and Sculptors Grant and the Creative Capital Foundation Grant, among others. He earned an MA in Painting from the Royal College of Art in London (1998), and a BFA from The School of the Art Institute of Chicago (1995). He is currently an artist-in-residence at Bard College and lives and works in Hudson, New York.

### **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 approaches 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 exploring a wide range of disciplines. The Museum features a 27-foot-high visible archive, 6,200-square-feet of exhibition space, and other amenities that foster common exchange and learning. <http://www.hamilton.edu/wellin>

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