

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
January 10, 2022

**THE WELLIN MUSEUM OF ART AT HAMILTON COLLEGE WILL PRESENT  
THE EXHIBITION *YASHUA KLOS: OUR LABOUR*,  
FROM FEBRUARY 12 THROUGH JUNE 12, 2022**



Yashua Klos. The artist with *OUR LABOUR*, 2021 (in process) at BRIC. Woodblock print on muslin and canvas. 15ft. 6 in. x 38 ft. (472.4 x 1158.2 cm). © Yashua Klos. Photo by Andrew Kist.

**Clinton, NY**—The Wellin Museum of Art at Hamilton College will present *Yashua Klos: OUR LABOUR*, the artist's first solo museum exhibition. The exhibition is curated by the Wellin Museum's Johnson-Pote Director Tracy L. Adler and will be on view from February 12 through June 12, 2022.

*Yashua Klos: OUR LABOUR* builds upon the artist's recent explorations into the intersections between the human form, the natural world, and the built environment. A Brooklyn-based artist who was raised in Chicago, Klos employs a process of collaging woodblock prints to engage ideas about Blackness as a constructed identity and as an adaptable material for survival. Foregrounded in a series of print-based and sculptural works created especially for this exhibition—including the collaborative mural *When the Parts Untangle* realized with the assistance of Hamilton students—the exhibition considers how familial, geographic, and narrative histories inform notions of identity.

This body of work is inspired by a recent life-changing event that led Klos to gain a deeper and more nuanced understanding of his family's multigenerational history working at the Ford Motor Company in Detroit. The work on view incorporates representations of aunts, uncles, cousins, and other relations—both figuratively and metaphorically—alongside mechanical and natural elements such as car engines, gears, flowers, and vines. Klos's approach is a means of both untangling and connecting his own complex

and sprawling genealogy. With this exhibition, Klos also introduces works conceived around an examination of labor through both deeply personal and historic lenses.

Debuting at the Wellin is the centerpiece of the exhibition: a sweeping, mixed-media collage on canvas entitled *OUR LABOUR* measuring over 15 x 38 feet. Inspired by Diego Rivera's iconic *Detroit Industry Murals* (1932–33), Klos uses Rivera's mural as a compositional structure "but prioritizes the Black women workers who are absent from Rivera's depiction, and who represent this branch of my family." Faceless workers are replaced by the artist's family members including a portrait of his father alongside his father's fourteen siblings and their children.

Incorporating Art Deco design motifs drawn from the era in which Rivera's murals and much of the city's iconic architecture were made, Klos echoes these stylized geometric patterns in the collage-based works *Tyla*, and *Yonna and Towana*, which depict his cousins, as well as in other works on view.

The monumental sculpture *Auntie Grandma* further links Klos's familial history to Detroit's automobile industry. This carved wood sculpture imagines a car engine fused with the bough of a tree, each offshoot signifying a branch of Klos's family. Taken together with over a dozen other artworks—including four wall-mounted sculptures that are a composite of industrial welding and traditional African tribal masks representing an amalgam of the artist's "genealogical and creative DNA"—this exhibition marks new creative and personal terrain.

The recurrent images of wildflowers and vines introduce natural elements symbolic of Black resilience through the collapse of capitalist industry, and Klos' untangling of his own genealogical roots. Accompanying the work in the gallery, and providing insight into the artist's process, is a selection of Klos's woodcut panels that were used to create the prints in his collages.

During a visit to Detroit in early 2020, Klos spent time at the Detroit Institute of Arts carefully examining the Diego Rivera mural, which depicts workers in the Ford factory at that time, and, in the words of Klos, "glamorizes and mythologizes the proletariat labor force." Klos made compositional studies while studying the Rivera mural and spent time with his family in Detroit to gather portrait photos and family histories about their migration from Memphis and their relationship to the Ford plant. Back in Brooklyn, NY, Klos began to construct the work during an artist residency at BRIC in fall 2020.

Klos explains, "I feel very fortunate that the Wellin has provided me with the opportunity to share this new body of work. The inspiration and production of this show comes at a unique time in our global history, and during a breakthrough in my personal history. The works here span several media, and intersect many disciplines, hopefully providing many entry points for the Wellin's diverse community of thinkers.

"This work is fueled by the recent, life-changing event of finding my family, which was further nurtured during the global pandemic. During the Wellin's shutdown and postponed exhibition schedule in spring and summer of 2020, I was able to commit all the necessary time and effort into these carvings, prints, and sculptures. I would not have had the time to produce such a large body of work otherwise.

"During that time, I was also faced with not being able to physically meet with my family members, who are the subjects of this work. The work grew as I was challenged to lean into social media, FaceTime, and Zoom in order to collect family histories and bridge the distance between us."

Adds Adler, "This exhibition is Klos's first solo museum show and it's been an extraordinary collaboration. In 2017, we acquired a work by Klos for the Wellin's collection and we began to talk about what a major exhibition of his work might look like. Over the last few years, the exhibition continued to

evolve as this extraordinary personal experience unfolded for Klos when he connected with his father's side of the family. The resulting exhibition reflects the experience of reconciling the artist's past with his present, and celebrating his growth as an artist and as a person, which opened up new pathways of creativity and healing."

### **WellinWorks**

WellinWorks is an interactive space designed to support and encourage creativity within the Wellin Museum. A nontraditional space for engagement, discussion, and learning, WellinWorks serves as a platform for intellectual and creative activities, and aims to expand upon the community potential within the museum. In conjunction with the exhibition *Yashua Klos: OUR LABOUR*, the WellinWorks space takes inspiration from Yashua Klos's studio, featuring examples of materials used by the artist as well as interactives and research that inform his creative process, providing visitors with an opportunity to experiment with concepts introduced in the exhibition *Yashua Klos: OUR LABOUR*.

### **Video**

A video by filmmaker Brett Novak about the making of the exhibition, commissioned by the Wellin Museum of Art, will be presented in the Wellin's galleries and on its website as part of the exhibition.

### **Publication**

A fully illustrated publication will be copublished by the Wellin Museum and D.A.P. It will include an interview with Yashua Klos by LeRonn P. Brooks and an essay by Tracy L. Adler.

### **Sponsorship**

The artwork presented in the exhibition *Yashua Klos: OUR LABOUR* has been created for this exhibition at the Ruth and Elmer Wellin Museum of Art at Hamilton College. The artist/student collaboration entitled *When the Parts Untangle* (2022) was underwritten by a grant from the Daniel W. Dietrich '64 Fund for Innovation in the Arts. The Ruth and Elmer Wellin Museum of Art's programs are made possible, in part, by the Daniel W. Dietrich '64 Arts Museum Programming Fund; the Johnson-Pote Museum Director Fund; the John B. Root '44 Exhibition Fund; the Edward W. and Grace C. Root Endowment Fund; and the William G. Roehrick '34 Lecture Fund.

### **About Yashua Klos**

Yashua Klos (b. 1977, Chicago, Illinois) lives and works in Brooklyn, New York. He has had solo exhibitions at Galerie Anne de Villepoix in Paris, Jack Tilton Gallery in New York, and UTA Artist Space in Los Angeles. His work has been exhibited at the California African American Museum (CAAM), Los Angeles; Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh; Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg; International Print Center New York (IPCNY), New York; and the Studio Museum in Harlem, New York; among others. His works are included in the collections of the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts, the Pizzuti Collection, the Seattle Art Museum, and the Wellin Museum of Art. He has been awarded residencies at the Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts, BRIC, Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, the Joan Mitchell Center, and the Vermont Studio Center. He is the recipient of a 2014 Joan Mitchell Foundation grant and a 2015 New York Foundation for the Arts fellowship. He earned an MFA from Hunter College, City University of New York, in 2009, and a BFA from Northern Illinois University in 2000. Klos is represented by Sikkema Jenkins & Co., New York, and Ziddoun-Bossuyt Gallery, Luxembourg.

### **About the Ruth and Elmer Wellin Museum of Art**

A teaching museum on the campus of Hamilton College in Clinton, NY, the Wellin invites visitors to discover the arts and form unexpected connections through groundbreaking exhibitions, a globally representative collection, and engaging programming. The Wellin Museum opened in 2012 with Tracy L. Adler as its Founding Director. Its 30,537-square-foot building was designed by Machado Silvetti and

features a 27-foot-high visible archive, 6,200 square feet of exhibition space, and other amenities that foster common exchange and learning. The Museum collection includes over 7,000 objects representing a broad range of cultures, historical periods, artistic practices and movements. Through its exhibitions, public programs, and educational outreach, the Museum promotes interdisciplinary approaches that are vital to a liberal arts education. [www.hamilton.edu/wellin](http://www.hamilton.edu/wellin)

### **Social Media**

Join the conversation on social media by tagging @wellinmuseum and using the hashtags #WellinMuseum and #KlosWellin and #OurLabourWellin when posting.

### **Media Contact**

Meg Blackburn, [meg@blackburncreative.com](mailto:meg@blackburncreative.com)