

For Immediate Release

Contact: Michael Kaminer, 212-260-9733

[press@yum.cjh.org](mailto:press@yum.cjh.org)

## THE PAINTED WORD: DAVID GELERNTER'S FIRST MUSEUM EXHIBITION BRINGS MESMERIZING "TEXT" PAINTINGS TO YESHIVA UNIVERSITY MUSEUM

<b>WHAT:</b>	<i>Sh'ma/Listen: The Art of David Gelernter</i>
<b>WHEN:</b>	Through January 20, 2013
<b>WHERE:</b>	Yeshiva University Museum, 15 West 16th St. in Manhattan, 212-294-8330
<b>COST:</b>	Adults: \$8; seniors and students: \$6. Free for members and children under 5
<b>WEB:</b>	<a href="http://yumuseum.tumblr.com/Gelernter">http://yumuseum.tumblr.com/Gelernter</a> or <a href="http://www.yumuseum.org">www.yumuseum.org</a>

*"The central goal of an artist is to create an image that radiates sanctity... that creates an environment, an ambience, a sacred space." –David Gelernter*

**New York, NY (November 26, 2012)** – As a field-changing computer scientist, author and critic, David Gelernter occupies a unique place in American intellectual life – "at the intersection of technology, art, politics, and religion," wrote the *Seattle Times*. Now, people will have the opportunity to experience his work as a painter, which Gelernter describes as his true calling. His images pulsate with energy and color – and with challenging ideas.

Yeshiva University Museum, near Union Square, is presenting the first museum exhibition of Gelernter's entrancing word paintings, based on phrases from the Hebrew Bible, Jewish liturgy and other sources, as well as an arresting series of monumental new works based on Christian tomb sculpture, which capture portraits of the great Hebrew Biblical kings.

*Sh'ma/Listen: The Art of David Gelernter* features 27 paintings and 2 drawings – executed in a striking range of media, including acrylic, oil, pastel, aquarelle (water-soluble crayons), liquid iron, and gold and metal leaf. Using resonant color chords and delicate drawing, the artist embeds text under luminous natural imagery and within broad areas of thickly applied paint. The rich visual effects echo the artist's longstanding characterization of Judaism as intensely and inherently visual. "Jewish literature, especially the Bible," Gelernter has said, "is explosively visual."

Yeshiva University Museum has also produced a short documentary for the exhibition. In *Sh'ma/Listen*, by award-winning filmmaker Oren Rudavsky, Gelernter addresses his obsession with and drive to be an artist, and also challenges some commonly accepted conceptions about Jewish and Christian art.

"Beauty is central to Judaism," he contends in the film, viewable at <http://vimeo.com/yumuseum/gelernter>. "There's no more fundamental drive in Judaism than the drive to be beautiful. It is intrinsic to Judaism, and it has to propel the art of Judaism, which is properly at the head-of-the-table of Western art. This is where the

idea of Christian and, thus, of European art emerged from; and Jewish art needs to be bold enough to take the lead.”

In the film, Gelernter also speaks candidly about the 1993 Unabomber attack that left him critically injured. “One of the most troubling things for me was ... I thought I’d never be able to paint again. But doctors and nurses told me, ‘It’s all in your head’. And it’s true. Sometimes the reassuring things people tell you are true.” After the attack, the right-handed artist re-learned painting with his left hand.

“David Gelernter makes an eloquent case for the importance of seeing and of visibility in Judaism,” says Dr. Jacob Wisse, director of Yeshiva University Museum and curator of the exhibition. “Judaism, which is still – stubbornly – characterized as being hostile to visual expression. His paintings joyfully demonstrate how words can express both sacred meaning and artistic beauty, one function enhancing the other. This show also reflects the unity of Gelernter’s vision: the images in his head dominate his books, his writing on Judaism, his software design and, of course, these paintings.”

Among the works never seen before in public are three new powerful large-scale images of Saul, David and Solomon, the first three kings of Israel. The “portraits” were inspired by the tradition of Christian tomb sculpture known as the *gisant*, a funerary sculpture representing a recumbent figure dying or in death. Gelernter appropriates this tradition – in painted form – to claim the primary role of the Hebrew kings as creators of the Western ideals of kingship and nationhood.

David Gelernter, a “probably genius” according to *The Atlantic*, is professor of computer science at Yale and a widely published author and scholar of American culture, computer software and the human mind, and Judaism. Many of Gelernter’s science-focused books, including *Machine Beauty* (Basic Books, 1998) and *The Muse in the Machine* (Free Press, 2002), draw on his love of aesthetics and assert the need for computers to accommodate the basic human inclination toward beauty.

He is former member of the governing board of the National Endowment for the Arts. His writings on art – from Medieval European to New York School and modern American architecture – have appeared in *ArtNews*, the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, *The Weekly Standard*, and *Commentary*, among other publications. His book, *Judaism, A Way of Being* (Yale, 2009), evokes the essence of Judaism through four image-themes that demonstrate distinct Jewish “ways of being” in the world.

#### **ABOUT YESHIVA UNIVERSITY MUSEUM**

Yeshiva University Museum is dedicated to the presentation and interpretation of the artistic and cultural achievements of Jewish life. The Museum, founded in 1973, is distinguished by its wide-ranging and intellectually rigorous exhibitions and, as the cultural arm of Yeshiva University, by its strong educational mission. As a partner in the thriving Center for Jewish History and a participant in New York’s lively downtown cultural scene, Yeshiva University Museum makes a distinctive and important contribution to Jewish life and to the world of culture and the arts. The Museum’s rich and diverse collections preserve Jewish artifacts, art, texts and material culture for posterity, making objects accessible through exhibitions, educational programs, and research and conservational initiatives.

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