

RUBIN MUSEUM OF ART

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**SUPERHEROES, MYTHICAL CREATURES, AND EVIL FORCES
TAKE OVER RUBIN MUSEUM OF ART IN EXHIBITION EXPLORING
THE TIBET OF COMICS FROM DECEMBER 9, 2011 – JUNE 11, 2012**

**THE GREEN LAMA, MICKEY MOUSE, BUDDHA AND DALAI LAMA
REVEAL HOW FANTASTICAL DEPICTIONS OF TIBET
HAVE SHAPED REAL WORLD PERCEPTIONS**

New York – When the evil Hooded One unleashes a pack of giant dinosaurs on New York City, young Peter Cannon must use his knowledge of the Tibetan secret scrolls to save the city from destruction. Orphaned as a child and raised by Tibetan lamas, Peter has gained the Tibetan cultural knowledge and spiritual wisdom he needs to defeat the evil doer, who vows revenge. Comic book storylines, such as this one from the *Origin of an Avenger* (1966) have drawn on the cultural and religious traditions of Tibet for more than 60 years. Mixing real knowledge with long-held myths and stereotypes, comic illustrators and writers have created a Tibet shrouded in mystery and fantasy.

The Rubin Museum of Art's upcoming *Hero, Villain, Yeti: Tibet in Comics* features more than 50 comic books from around the world and provides audiences with unprecedented access to fantastic Tibetan adventures. Characters as diverse as the Green Lama, Mickey Mouse, and Tomb Raider Lara Croft journey through Tibet, frequently gaining superpowers and strengths from ancient Tibetan teachings and legends along the way.

The most complete collection of comics related to Tibet ever assembled, the exhibition includes comics from the United States, Germany, France, Belgium, Italy, India and Japan—some of which have been translated into English for the first time and will be presented both in the original and translated formats. As much a social commentary as an escape into unknown lands and heart-pounding adventure, the exhibition sheds light on global perceptions of Tibet, the perpetuation of stereotypes about the country and its people, and human interest in superheroes and paradisiacal places.

“Tibet appears as a place of mystery and the supernatural again and again in comics created in different countries and in different times,” said Dr. Martin Brauen, Chief Curator of the Rubin Museum of Art. “This exhibition looks, for the first time, at the depiction of Tibet as a whole—both real and imagined—and traces the historic roots of these perceptions of Tibet. We invite visitors to explore this world through the comic books and the characters in them.”

The multimedia exhibition includes first edition figurines of popular comic characters, a film about the depiction of Tibet in comics, and visual comparisons between comic storylines and a Tibetan narrative scroll, which depicts the life scenes of the saint Milarepa. *Tibet in Comics* also traces the historic roots of comics, and features a large, interactive reading area with comics in the following categories:

- Fantasy comics about superheroes and villains, legendary creatures like the Yeti or Abominable Snowman, and the search for mysterious lands—Shangri La—or lost people and objects;
- Biographies of holy figures, including the Dalai Lama, Buddha, and Milarepa, a Buddhist saint;
- Political comics that address the social and political situation in Tibet;
- And educational comics that provide lessons on various subjects to youth and adult students.

“Comic art has a long history in both Asia and the West, and has influenced everything from contemporary art to film to video games,” said Brauen. “*Tibet in Comics* captures the imagination and spirit of the art form and explores cultural perceptions reflected in and influenced by comics.”

Tibet in Comics is part of the Rubin Museum’s exploration of storytelling in Himalayan cultures, which is also central to the upcoming exhibition, *Once Upon Many Times: Legends and Myths in Himalayan Art*, (September 16, 2011 – January 30, 2012). *Once Upon Many Times* presents the art of Himalayan storytelling and its most popular themes, including stories of the Buddha, legendary masters, spiritual quests, and heroic adventures, illustrated through such diverse visual and oral forms as murals, *thangkas*, dramas, sculpture, and portable shrines. Together the exhibitions provide audiences with an insightful view into stories and storytelling of and about Himalayan cultures.

CURATOR:

Dr. Martin Brauen, Chief Curator at the Rubin Museum of Art until July 2011, studied Buddhism at Delhi University and anthropology and history of religions at Zurich University. Field studies have taken him to Ladakh, Nepal, Bhutan, and Tibet. Brauen joined the museum as Chief Curator in 2008, after serving as head of the Department of Tibet, Himalayas and the Far East at the Ethnographic Museum of the University of Zurich. He is the author of numerous English-language publications about Tibetan and Himalayan art and culture, including *The Dalai Lamas*, *Dreamworld Tibet*, *Mandala – Sacred Circle in Tibetan Buddhism*, and *Deities of Tibetan Buddhism*, as well as a number of publications in German.

ABOUT THE RUBIN MUSEUM:

The Rubin Museum of Art holds one of the world’s most important collections of Himalayan art. Paintings, pictorial textiles, and sculpture are drawn from cultures that touch upon the arc of mountains that extends from Afghanistan in the northwest to Myanmar (Burma) in the southeast and includes Tibet, Nepal, Mongolia, and Bhutan. The larger Himalayan cultural sphere, determined by significant cultural exchange over millennia, includes Iran, India, China, Central Asia, and Southeast Asia. The museum explores these rich cultural legacies—largely unfamiliar to Western viewers—from a variety of perspectives, offering multiple entry-points for understanding and enjoying the art of the Himalayas.

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