

08 May 2008

## 'The field calls me to labour'

Watercolours of nineteenth-century rural Britain by Robert Hills and his contemporaries

27 May – 7 September 2008

An absorbing vision of nineteenth-century rural life is revealed in a new exhibition opening at The Fitzwilliam Museum this month.

*'The field calls me to labour': watercolours of nineteenth-century rural Britain by Robert Hills and his contemporaries* (opens 27 May) presents a fascinating selection of works by watercolourist Hills, depicting life and work in the English countryside. Drawn exclusively from the Museum's outstanding collection of British watercolours, these works will be shown alongside the drawings and watercolours of contemporary artists such as James Ward, David Cox and Peter De Wint.

Although relatively unknown to audiences today, Robert Hills (1769-1844) was a seminal figure in promoting the appreciation of watercolour painting among British audiences at the beginning of the nineteenth century. His watercolour sketches – often intimate and spontaneous 'snapshots' of nature and the countryside around him – are highly original, with a freshness of vision that offers a revealing glimpse into the lives of those working on the land.

*'The field calls me to labour'* also provides an intriguing insight into a turbulent period of transition for the rural environment. The emergence of landscape painting as a major genre in England at the beginning of the nineteenth century coincided with the accelerated enclosure of the English countryside, and the rural environment was revered by watercolour artists as offering a view of a more honest and potentially harmonious life. While the work of artists such as Hills may not always convey the harsher side of rural life, it demonstrates a sensitive respect for the hard, physical work of the labourer and the farm animal. In the selection of watercolours exhibited here, idealised and escapist scenes of rural life are mingled with naturalistic landscapes and portrayals of real-life labourers.

*'The field calls me to labour'* is supported by Lowell Libson Ltd.

A full-colour illustrated handlist is available from the Museum's Courtyard Shop priced £2.95

To complement the exhibition, the watercolour workshop '**Painting from Nature**' (20 July 2008) offers beginners the chance to create their own artworks, inspired by Robert Hills and his contemporaries. For further details and booking, contact The Fitzwilliam Museum Education Department on 01223 332904 or email [fitzmuseum-education@lists.cam.ac.uk](mailto:fitzmuseum-education@lists.cam.ac.uk)

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- ... / Further information -

**Exhibition details for publication:**

**'The field calls me to labour'**

**Watercolours of nineteenth-century rural Britain by Robert Hills (1769-1844)  
and his contemporaries**

27 May - 7 September 2008

Charrington Print Room (Gallery I6)

The Fitzwilliam Museum, Trumpington Street, Cambridge CB2 1RB

OPEN: Tuesday - Saturday: 10.00 - 17.00  
Sundays & Bank Holiday Mondays: 12.00 - 17.00  
CLOSED: Monday

ADMISSION FREE

**Further information and images from:**

Marketing and Press Office

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**Notes for Editors  
The Fitzwilliam Museum**

The Fitzwilliam Museum houses the University of Cambridge's art collection and is a public museum and art gallery with an international reputation. More than half a million objects and works of art are held in five curatorial departments: Antiquities, Applied Arts, Coins and Medals, Manuscripts and Printed Books and Paintings, Drawings and Prints.

The Fitzwilliam's treasures range from Ancient Egyptian, Greek and Roman antiquities to the arts of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and include masterpieces by Titian, Canaletto, Stubbs, Constable, Monet, Renoir and Picasso, one of the world's foremost Rembrandt print collections, Handel music manuscripts and the famous Fitzwilliam Virginal Book, one of the most significant collections of Korean ceramics outside South-East Asia, medieval illuminated manuscripts and outstanding collections of pottery, porcelain and medieval coins.

The Fitzwilliam Museum welcomes over 300,000 visitors a year, offers a wide-ranging programme of temporary exhibitions and events, and has an award-winning Education Service. The Museum is open Tuesday - Saturday: 10.00 - 17.00, Sunday and Bank Holiday Mondays: 12.00 - 17.00.

Admission to the permanent collections and to temporary exhibitions is FREE.

Website: [www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk](http://www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk)

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