

2 September 2009

# Lumière

## Lithographs by Odilon Redon

22 September 2009 – 10 January 2010

A new exhibition at The Fitzwilliam Museum draws on its world-class print collections to present rare and evocative works by the French Symbolist artist Odilon Redon (1840-1916).

Bringing together thirty-eight of his most significant and experimental lithographs, *Lumière* offers a fresh insight into these enigmatic works, which in the artist's own words, 'place us, as does music, in the ambiguous world of the indeterminate'. Redon termed these black and white images his *noirs*, and the selection on display represents the height of his lithographic career from 1885 to 1896 before he moved into working in colour.



Odilon Redon, *Profil de Lumière*, 1886

Redon had been exposed to printmaking as early as 1865 – via the artist Rodolphe Bresdin – but it was not until much later in his career that he moved into producing prints. Born in Bordeaux, Redon moved permanently to Paris after serving in the Franco-Prussian War (1870-1). He quickly became known in avant-garde circles and by the mid-1880s was a prominent member of the Symbolist movement. The fantastic creatures that populated his works made him a distinct figure in the mysterious and subjective world of Symbolism. Yet often overlooked is the importance of the printmaking technique itself to Redon's works, with dense, luminous blacks set against glowing white paper – a significance Redon himself identified, writing of the 'integral brilliance' and 'expressive power' of his *noirs*.

This exhibition primarily focuses upon the powerful prints from two albums by Redon based on Flaubert's novel *La Tentation de Saint Antoine*. Redon's increasing use of literary sources as inspiration for his print albums gave him ample scope to experiment with the medium – extracts from the text are printed as captions, and the variety of dramatic light effect and subtle textures gave full rein to his extraordinary imagination. The diverse imagery of *La Tentation*, with its story of the manifold supernatural temptations faced by St Anthony in the desert, allows Redon to move freely from representations of haunting visages to landscapes to intangible beings. Also featured are several stand-alone works, including *Profil de Lumière*, which highlights Redon's skilled draughtsmanship and the emotive power of his lithographs, created purely through the juxtaposition of light and darkness.

Celebrating his technical mastery and innovative approach to printmaking, *Lumière* reveals how Redon's exploration of the expressive potential of light and dark allowed him to create these ambiguous yet deeply suggestive images, which in his own words 'inspire – they do not define'.

Please note: visitors to the Museum can also see Redon's darkly surreal creation series *Les Origines* on display in the Fitzwilliam's acclaimed exhibition *Endless Forms: Charles Darwin, Natural Science and the Visual Arts*, Trumpington Street which closes 4 October 2009.

- ends .../ Notes to editors -

Trumpington Street  
Cambridge CB2 1RB  
England

01223 332900  
www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk

Press enquiries: email  
fitzmuseum-press@lists.cam.ac.uk

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## Details for publication:

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Charrington Print Room

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Sundays and Bank Holiday Mondays: 12.00 - 17.00

ADMISSION FREE

## Further information and images from:

Marketing and Press Office

The Fitzwilliam Museum, Trumpington Street, Cambridge CB2 1RB

Telephone: +44 (0)1223 332941/332900; FAX: +44 (0)1223 332923

Email: [fitzmuseum-press@lists.cam.ac.uk](mailto:fitzmuseum-press@lists.cam.ac.uk)

## 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. Free admission.

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

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Cambridge CB2 1RB  
England

01223 332900  
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