

09 January 2009

# Arts of Asia at The Fitzwilliam Museum

## Exceptional Chinese jade and Japanese prints in Cambridge this spring

### The Immortal Stone

Chinese jades from the Neolithic period to the 20th century

27 January - 31 May 2009

An exquisite selection of rarely-seen jades offers a fascinating journey through the most significant periods in Chinese history in this new special display at The Fitzwilliam Museum.



*The Immortal Stone: Chinese jades from the Neolithic period to the 20<sup>th</sup> century* draws on the Museum's extraordinarily rich collection and explores the immense importance of jade in China throughout history. This special display presents a diverse selection of over sixty objects spanning five thousand years, including pieces from the Qing imperial court, animal sculptures, luxury utensils and items employed in burial rituals. The place of the 'immortal stone' in the modern

world is also examined, from the trade in 'fake jades' in the late 19th and early 20th century to the present-day jade market.

This display marks the beginning of the Chinese Year of the Buffalo, and is a fascinating testament to the extraordinary craftsmanship and inventiveness of Chinese artists throughout the centuries. *The Immortal Stone* is accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue (Scala, £14.95 softback, £29.95 hardback) exploring the Fitzwilliam's full collection of over two hundred jades and other hardstones, and further discussing the importance of jade in Chinese culture and history.

### Kachōfūgetsu

The natural world in Japanese prints

17 February - 17 May 2009

A remarkable vision of the natural world by Japanese printmakers is presented in this exhibition at The Fitzwilliam Museum.

This choice selection of woodblock prints and books explores the idea of *Kachōfūgetsu* - literally meaning 'flower and bird, wind and moon', but used as a term to describe the beauty of the natural world as a whole. Forming the centrepiece of the exhibition is a trio of masterpieces of book design and printing. Designed by Kitagawa Utamaro (c.1756-1806) to illustrate anthologies of playful light verse (*kyōka*) on natural objects, these beautiful and subtle works are known popularly as the 'Insect Book', 'Shell Book' and 'Bird Book'. The



extraordinary level of realistic detail contained within these books' acute observations of nature is a testament to the care and complexity of their printing. Utamaro's books also feature in a special virtual display, allowing visitors to the exhibition to explore fully their rich contents in detail.

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Press Release | The Fitzwilliam Museum

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Birds, insect, fishes, shells and flowers appear elsewhere in the exhibition in a miscellany of guises - often not always immediately apparent in the image. In several instances, they are even present by means of poetry printed with the image, in a playful exchange of verbal and visual allusion. *Kachōfūgetsu: the natural world in Japanese prints* also offers the first chance to see Hokusai's exquisite print *Convolvulus and Tree-frog*, recently acquired by the Fitzwilliam with the help of the Art Fund and the MLA/V&A Purchase Grant Fund.

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**Details for publication:**

**The Immortal Stone – Chinese jades from the Neolithic period to the twentieth century**

27 January – 31 May  
Octagon Gallery (Gallery 10)

**Kachōfūgetsu – the natural world in Japanese prints**

17 February – 17 May  
Shiba Gallery (Gallery 14)

The Fitzwilliam Museum, Trumpington Street, Cambridge CB2 1RB

OPEN: Tuesday – Saturday: 10.00 – 17.00  
Sunday and Bank Holiday Mondays: 12.00 – 17.00  
CLOSED: Mondays, Good Friday, 10 April

ADMISSION FREE

**Further information and images from:**

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

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