

Dai Nippon: Kabuki prints from the Henry Dyer Collection [DRAFT]

21 Aug - 10 Oct 2009

Mackintosh Gallery

PREVIEW: FRIDAY 21 AUGUST 6PM

Dai Nippon (trans. *Great Japan*) reunites a series of original late Edo period Japanese woodblock prints from the Henry Dyer Collection, acquired by the Lanarkshire-born Dyer between 1873 and 1882 during his tenure as founding Principal and Professor of Engineering at Japan's Imperial College of Engineering. Dyer's enthusiasm for acquiring 'pictures of the floating world', the exotic expression of another country's traditions and aesthetics, documents a genuine sense of cultural reciprocity that existed between Japan and the West at the close of the 19th Century.

Reflecting Dyer's passion for Japanese theatre and musical traditions, this exhibition will focus upon the Kabuki theatre-related material from his collection produced by the finest graphic artists of the Utagawa School of *Ukiyo-e*: Kuniyoshi, Kunisada, Sadahide, Kunichika and Hiroshige. *Dai Nippon* will explore Japan's performance traditions through a contextualisation of the prints and an explanation of their narrative and symbolic content.

Upon his departure from Japan, Dyer became the first Briton to be decorated by the Japanese Government for his invaluable work in reforming Engineering education. However, as a Scottish collector of Japanese Art, Dyer has sadly been overlooked. This exhibition is a wonderful opportunity to bring these previously undisplayed artworks to the public's attention. Since 2009 is the year of Scottish Homecoming, this is the ideal time to commemorate the life and legacy of Scotland's most influential 'oyatoi gaikokujin'.

The Mackintosh Gallery, within the heart of Charles Rennie Mackintosh's Japanese inspired Art School building, is a further enduring example of the cross-cultural transfer of knowledge and aesthetic ideals shared between Scotland and Japan from the late Victorian period onwards.

There will be a Kabuki-inspired music performance by *The Floating World Sankyoku Ensemble* as part of the exhibition programme (Tuesday 29th September -TBC).

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SCHOOL OF ART**
PRESS RELEASE

Notes for editors:

A bi-lingual English-Japanese catalogue will accompany the exhibition.

Dai Nippon has been made possible thanks to the generous support of the keepers of the Henry Dyer Collection: Edinburgh City Libraries, City of Edinburgh Council, Mitchell Library (Glasgow) and Glasgow Museums.

This exhibition is part of the **Japan-UK 150 Festival**, celebrating 150 years of friendship between Britain and Japan. For details see <http://www.japanuk150.org/>

In connection with this exhibition: *The Tale of Genji*

Reproduction prints of pages from the album *Murasaki Shikibu Genji Cards* (Kunisada II)

Edinburgh City Library, George IV Bridge, Edinburgh EH1 1EG

3rd September – 10th October 2009 part of the **Edinburgh Art Festival 5 Aug – 5 Sept 2009**. For details see <http://www.edinburghartfestival.org/>

This exhibition is supported by:

Japan-UK 150 Festival

Great Britain Sasakawa Foundation

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For more information or press images please contact:

Alison Hunter, Media Relations, The Glasgow School of Art Press Office +44(0) 141 353 4443 a.hunter@gsa.ac.uk or Gráinne Rice, Exhibitions Officer, Katie O'Brien and Sharon Thomas, Exhibitions Assistants (job share) at The Glasgow School of Art Exhibitions Department on 0141 353 4525 or email g.rice@gsa.ac.uk s.thomas@gsa.ac.uk k.obrien@gsa.ac.uk (www.gsa.ac.uk)