

12 February 2009

Ground-breaking exhibition to reveal Darwin's impact on nineteenth century art

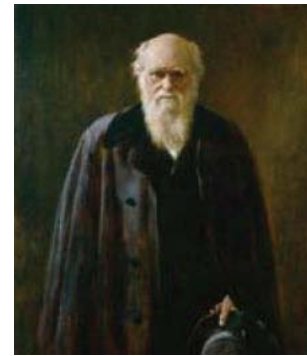
Endless Forms Charles Darwin, Natural Science and the Visual Arts

The Fitzwilliam Museum 16 June – 4 October 2009
www.darwinendlessforms.org website launches today

A ground-breaking exhibition opening at The Fitzwilliam Museum this summer reveals an unusual and previously unexplored aspect of Charles Darwin's legacy – the impact of his theories upon artists of the late nineteenth century.

Developed by The Fitzwilliam Museum in association with the Yale Center for British Art, and supported by the Wellcome Trust and the Phileology Foundation, *Endless Forms: Charles Darwin, Natural Science and the Visual Arts* offers an intriguing new perspective on the cultural resonance of Darwin's theories. This landmark exhibition explores both Darwin's interest in the visual arts and the vast range of artistic responses to his revolutionary ideas, through a diverse selection of exhibits from around the world.

The notion of a link between Darwin, the scientist, and the visual arts might at first be surprising. Yet, as *Endless Forms* demonstrates, Darwin owed a significant debt to visual imagery – from meticulously detailed botanical studies and teaching diagrams to observational watercolours – in the development of his theories and scientific imagination. In turn, Darwin's ideas about the natural world and man's place in it had a profound influence on European and American artists of the late nineteenth century. By opening a new perspective on man and his origins, Darwin's theories of evolution by natural selection provided fertile territory for the creative imagination.



"There is a grandeur in this view of life ... from so simple a beginning endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been, and are being, evolved."

– Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection* (1859)



Endless Forms draws together those wide-ranging artistic responses; from artists inspired to 'illustrate' Darwin's ideas, to those whose work was affected in subtler, more indirect ways. From imaginings of prehistoric Earth, to troubled evocations of a life dominated by the 'struggle for existence'; from fantastic visions of life-forms in perpetual evolution, to images of colour and pattern in nature influenced by Darwin's own response to the beauties of the natural world: in its scope and depth, this exhibition encourages a radical reappraisal of nineteenth-century art.



Bringing together a remarkable variety of nearly two hundred exhibits, many on public display in the UK for the first time, *Endless Forms* juxtaposes works of art with fascinating scientific material. Paintings, drawings, sculpture, early photographs, caricatures and illustrated books will be displayed alongside natural history specimens, maps of geological stratification, botanical teaching diagrams, vivid ornithological specimens and a dazzling array of minerals.

Trumpington Street
Cambridge CB2 1RB
England

- continues -

01223 332900
www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk

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

Press Release | The Fitzwilliam Museum



The exhibition unites world-renowned masterpieces by artists such as Monet, Degas, Cézanne, Church, and Landseer with works by lesser-known artists such as Bruno Liljefors and Félicien Rops, and features loans from more than one hundred institutions around the world including Tate Britain, the British Museum, the Natural History Museum, the Smithsonian Museum of American Art, the National Gallery of Art, Washington, Nationalmuseum Stockholm, the V&A, the National Gallery, as well as works from private collections and rarely exhibited material from the Darwin Archive at Cambridge University Library.



A wide-ranging programme of public events and activities at The Fitzwilliam Museum will accompany the exhibition, including talks by specialists, thought-provoking debates and workshops for all ages. The exhibition website www.darwinendlessforms.org launching **today** will also host a range of online features, including a Virtual Exhibition and a series of podcasts discussing Darwin's work and legacy for both the arts and science, featuring interviews with prominent Darwin experts from Cambridge University and beyond.



Endless Forms coincides with the global celebration of the bicentenary of the birth of naturalist Charles Darwin and the 150th anniversary of the publication of his book, *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection* (1859). The exhibition will be on display at The Fitzwilliam Museum from 16 June to 4 October 2009, after an initial showing the Yale Center for British Art from 12 February to 3 May 2009.



The exhibition has been funded by the Wellcome Trust as part of Darwin200 - a national programme celebrating Darwin's life, work and impact - and The Philology Foundation, with additional support from Cambridge University Press and other donors.

CATALOGUE: A fully illustrated publication, edited by Diana Donald and Jane Munro, is published by The Fitzwilliam Museum and the Yale Center for British Art in association with Yale University Press. Copies are available for those wishing to review the exhibition; please contact the Fitzwilliam Museum Marketing and Press Office (see below).

PRESS VIEW: The exhibition press view will take place during the week of 8 June 2009; please contact the Fitzwilliam Museum Marketing and Press Office (see below).

CREDITS: *Endless Forms: Charles Darwin, Natural Science and the Visual Arts* has been organised by The Fitzwilliam Museum, University of Cambridge, in association with the Yale Center for British Art. The exhibition has been curated by Diana Donald, independent scholar and former Professor of Art History and Head of the Department of History of Art and Design at Manchester Metropolitan University, and Jane Munro, Curator of Paintings, Drawings, and Prints at The Fitzwilliam Museum.

Trumpington Street
Cambridge CB2 1RB
England

01223 332900
www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk

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

The Fitzwilliam Museum, Trumpington Street, Cambridge CB2 1RB

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

Notes to 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 21st 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.

www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk

The University of Cambridge

The University of Cambridge marks its 800th anniversary in 2009, celebrating the best of Cambridge's rich history and looking forward to the future. The 800th will be marked in a variety of events throughout the year, including the Darwin 2009 Festival celebrating Darwin's life and work, of which the exhibition *Endless Forms* is an integral part.

www.cam.ac.uk

Darwin 200

The exhibition *Endless Forms* is part of Darwin 200, a nationwide programme celebrating Darwin's life, work and impact. Darwin200 plans to celebrate the impact that Darwin's ideas about evolution, as well as his approach to the understanding of the natural world and his outstanding example as a scientist, continue to have on our lives.

<http://www.darwin200.org/>

The Wellcome Trust

The Wellcome Trust is the largest charity in the UK. It funds innovative biomedical research, in the UK and internationally, spending over £600 million each year to support the brightest scientists with the best ideas. The Wellcome Trust supports public debate about biomedical research and its impact on health and wellbeing.

www.wellcome.ac.uk/darwin200

The Phileology Foundation

The Phileology Foundation, founded by Texas philanthropist Edward P. Bass, supports research and education in ecology and the environment and programs in conservation through grants to universities and other non-profit organizations.

Image credits

John Collier, *Portrait of Charles Robert Darwin*, 1883, oil on canvas, National Portrait Gallery, London
Martin Johnson Heade, *Cattleya Orchid and Three Hummingbirds*, 1871, oil on panel, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., Gift of the Morris and Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation
Odilon Redon, "The Misshapen Polyp Floated on the Shores, a Sort of Smiling and Hideous Cyclops," plate 3 from *Les Origines*, 1883, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Lee M. Friedman Fund
Claude Monet, *Rocks at Port-Coton, The Lion Rock, Belle-Ile*, 1886, oil on canvas, Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge
Lewis Carroll (Charles Lutwidge Dodgson), *Reginald Southey and Skeletons*, 1857, albumen print, National Media Museum, Bradford
John Stevens Henslow, teaching sheet with *Arum maculatum ('Lords and Ladies')(detail)*, 1836, collage, pen and ink, and watercolor, Department of Plant Sciences, University of Cambridge
Frederick Sandys, *Vivien* (detail), 1863, oil on canvas, Manchester City Art Gallery

Trumpington Street
Cambridge CB2 1RB
England

01223 332900
www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk

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