

## The British Museum announces 10-year partnership renewal with Mitsubishi Corporation

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The British Museum is delighted to announce a further 10 year partnership with Mitsubishi Corporation which will enable the Museum to undertake a major refurbishment of the Mitsubishi Corporation Japanese Galleries (Rooms 92 – 94) in 2018. The galleries will be refurbished with improvements to design and infrastructure to facilitate regular gallery rotations and showcase a range of rare and light-sensitive works from the collection. The gallery will be closed to the public from 1 January to September 2018.

The refurbishment has been made possible by the generous support of Mitsubishi Corporation, who have sponsored the galleries since 2008. The sustained support provided by Mitsubishi Corporation's sponsorship has successfully raised the visibility and profile of the Japanese collection with around 5 million visitors to the galleries since 2008. Mitsubishi Corporation have also supported additional Japanese focused projects including a free temporary display, a curator post and most recently the special exhibition *Hokusai: beyond the Great Wave* (25 May to 13 August 2017). The sell-out exhibition was critically acclaimed by the media and nearly 150,000 visitors saw the show during its run.

The Mitsubishi Corporation Japanese Galleries will feature objects from the Museum's extensive Japanese collection, the most comprehensive in Europe. It will include art objects, antiquities, ethnographic and historical items dating from ancient prehistory to the present day. The existing sequence of prehistoric Jomon, Yayoi and Kofun period displays will be reworked, offering new perspectives on the archaeological objects on display. The British Museum, Sainsbury Institute for the Study of Japanese Arts and Cultures (SISJAC) and leading Japanese scholars have undertaken a major research project into these periods of Japanese history. The Museum's Japanese collection embodies the dynamic relationship between art, artefact and history in Japanese culture. These objects can tell many of the significant stories in the unfolding of that country's past, encouraging us to enjoy a deeper engagement with its present and future. The Museum will regularly rotate rare and light sensitive work in the gallery to tell these essential stories.

The centrepiece of the refurbished galleries will be a newly-acquired Edo period set of Samurai armour with a surcoat bearing the *mon* (family crest) of the Mori clan. The armour has been acquired with the support of the JTI Japanese Acquisition Fund. The Mori clan were hugely influential and controlled the Choshu domain in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Armour was meant to protect its wearer during battle, but Japanese medieval warfare often involved a series of duels where the combatants could decline or agree to a fight. For these duels, it was important that individuals distinguish themselves in armour bearing their family crest as well as unforgettable artistic details. This set of armour is an example of privileged aesthetic while it also retains elements of functionality.

**Hartwig Fischer**, Director of the British Museum, said: 'The Museum is delighted to continue our long standing partnership with Mitsubishi Corporation and we are hugely grateful to Mitsubishi Corporation for the opportunity to refurbish this important gallery. The British Museum has one of the most comprehensive collections of Japanese art and objects outside Japan and actively collects contemporary and modern works. Thanks to our partnership, the

newly refurbished galleries will allow for a deeper understanding of an important collection and ensure the displays remain lively and engaging, attracting repeat visitors.'

**Haruki Hayashi**, Regional CEO for Mitsubishi Corporation, said: 'Mitsubishi Corporation has already enjoyed a 10-year partnership with the British Museum and we are delighted to be able to renew our commitment to the Mitsubishi Corporation Japanese Galleries, one of the most prestigious displays of Japanese artefacts outside Japan, for a further 10 years. This is part of our global commitment to bring Japan and its history and culture to a worldwide audience'.

Whilst the galleries are closed, other activities will showcase the British Museum's Japanese collections including the UK touring exhibition *Dressed to Impress: netsuke and Japanese men's fashion* exploring the accessories worn by Japanese men during the Edo Period. This will travel to the Museum of East Asian Art in Bath and the Worthing Museum & Art Gallery in 2018.

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## **Notes to editors**

### **About Mitsubishi Corporation**

Mitsubishi Corporation is a global integrated business enterprise that develops and operates businesses across virtually every industry, including industrial finance, energy, metals, machinery, chemicals, and daily living essentials. MC's current activities have expanded far beyond its traditional trading operations to include investments and business management in diverse fields including natural resources development, manufacturing of industrial goods, retail, new energy, infrastructure, finance and new technology-related businesses. With over 200 offices and subsidiaries in some 90 countries worldwide and a network of approximately 1,200 group companies, MC employs a multinational workforce of over 77,000 people.

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### **Further information**

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