

National Museum of Scotland – Kabuki: Japanese Theatre Prints



Kabuki: Japanese Theatre Prints is a new exhibition at the National Museum of Scotland that reveals the spectacular artwork and larger-than-life characters from a 19th century Japanese cultural phenomenon and it opens this weekend.

The exhibition features many rarely seen prints of artworks including the only surviving impression in existence of a scene in a public bathhouse at New Year, (c. 1815) by Kuninao. The print shows seven leading actors of the day at the bathhouse, and is an example of the sort of ‘celebrity’ image of actors off stage and off duty which became extremely popular during the period.

Striking designs present vivid depictions of Kabuki, the popular form of traditional, all-male, Japanese theatre which combines drama, music, dance and acrobatics in convoluted plots concerning dramatic, emotional conflicts and feats of derring-do.

Their visual style will be familiar to fans of Manga comics, Japanese cinema and even David Bowie, some of whose 70s costumes and performances were influenced by the Kabuki style.

Dr Rosina Buckland, Senior Curator – East & Central Asia at National Museums Scotland, said:-“These prints are a really vivid reflection of Kabuki as a cornerstone of 19th century Japanese popular culture, and yet the visual style will be immediately recognisable to a lot of 21st century audiences. The exhibition affords a rare opportunity for a Scottish audience to view this material and to learn more about a

fascinating cultural and social period in Japanese history”.

Friday 4 October 2013 – Sunday 2 February 2014

National Museum of Scotland, Chambers Street, EH1 1EW