Immortal Present: Art and East Asia opens May 23, 2015, at the Berkshire Museum

[PITTSFIELD, MA] – Illuminating the rich and diverse legacy of East Asian art, from its origins in the distant past to compelling current works, the new exhibition *Immortal Present: Art and East Asia* opens May 23, 2015, at the Berkshire Museum and will be on view through September 7, 2015. *Immortal Present* will feature the Berkshire Museum’s historic collection of Asian art and showcase works by a number of significant and influential contemporary artists with ties to Asia. *Immortal Present* is sponsored in part by the Taipei Cultural Center and Berkshire Magazine.

An opening reception will be held Friday, May 22, 2015, from 5:30 to 7:30; tickets are $5, free for Museum members.

Curated by Maria Mingalone, Berkshire Museum’s director of interpretation, and Gary Smith, a noted Asian art scholar, *Immortal Present* will expose visitors to a wide array of art from China, Japan, Korea, and additional works from Southeast Asia. Visitors will be able to interpret and connect the historical material to important contemporary artistic achievements. Themes explored in the exhibition include ideas from Asia’s main spiritual
traditions, humanity’s relationship with nature, fantastic animals and mythic dragons, as well as pleasures in everyday life, from love and family to beauty and entertainment.

The Berkshire Museum’s expansive collection of art from East Asia is the cornerstone of *Immortal Present*, and includes scroll paintings, sculptures, screens, prints, netsuke, and other fine and decorative art objects. These splendid objects range in date from circa 600 B.C.E. onwards, with many from the sixteenth to the twentieth centuries. Captivating images depicting life in China and Japan, set against the beauty of the landscape, as well as functional objects of exquisite craftsmanship, demonstrate the distinctive techniques utilized in East Asian art.

“We were happy to discover the depth and range of Asian objects in the Berkshire Museum’s collection,” says Smith. “Most of these objects have not been exhibited before, and certainly not in the broad contextual presentation with which we are going to show them. I was constantly delighted to discover in the Museum’s collection works that are of high quality and of historic importance. This is a great resource, far from a major metropolitan center, that we hope will excite and educate our visitors.”

The exhibition includes works by more than 20 contemporary artists with ties to Asia, from sculptors and mixed media artists to painters and photographers. Each artist incorporates their cultural background into their current work in unique ways, some producing work that clearly shows the resonance of their own origins while others are working in new and utterly original forms. The show will feature pieces by Liu Bolin, Long-Bin Chen, Wu Jian’an, Hong Lei, Cha Jong-Rye, Nobuhito Nishigawara, Shen Shaomin, Taca Sui, and Fu Xiaotong, among many others.

“The exhibition’s aim is to ignite curiosity about and increase understanding of the distinctive aesthetics, concepts, and traditions embodied by diverse Asian cultures,” says Mingalone. “We embrace that diversity, because it has the power to expand and change one’s viewpoint on life. We hope it is fascinating for visitors who will have the opportunity to appreciate such terrific and varied examples of Asian art.”
“In a world that is increasingly interconnected, with globalization a reality and artistic traditions rapidly evolving in contemporary art, *Immortal Present* offers an insightful look at how East Asian art of yesterday and today is meaningful and relevant to international audiences,” says Van Shields, Berkshire Museum’s executive director. “We are proud to bring an exhibition of this range and impact to the community.”

**About the Berkshire Museum**

Located in downtown Pittsfield, Massachusetts, at 39 South St., the Berkshire Museum, a Smithsonian Affiliate, is open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Saturday, and noon to 5 p.m. on Sunday. Admission is $13 adult, $6 child; Museum members and children age 3 and under enjoy free admission. For more information, visit [www.berkshiremuseum.org](http://www.berkshiremuseum.org) or call 413.443.7171.

In association with the Smithsonian since 2013, Berkshire Museum is part of a select group of museums, cultural, educational, and arts organizations that share the Smithsonian’s resources with the nation.

Established by Zenas Crane in 1903, Berkshire Museum integrates art, history, and natural science in a wide range of programs and exhibitions that inspire educational connections between the disciplines. *Objectify: A Look into the Permanent Collection* is currently on view. Little Cinema is open year-round. Spark!Lab, Feigenbaum Hall of Innovation, Worlds in Miniature, Aquarium, and other exhibits are ongoing.

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