



## Japanese Enamels: The Seven Treasures

### Cloisonné from the V&A and the Edwin Davies Gift

14 June 2011 - 19 August 2012

Edwin Davies OBE has donated one of the world's finest collections of Japanese cloisonné enamels to the V&A. Thanks to his significant gift, the V&A is now able to show the most wide-ranging selection of cloisonné masterpieces existing in Europe. A special display will open at the V&A in June to celebrate the gift and tell the story of this exquisite craft.

The Edwin Davies Gift is made up nearly 90 objects, mostly dating from the period known as the *Golden Age* of Japanese cloisonné (c1880-1910). It complements the V&A's existing collections of earlier works and enamel decorated sword fittings and includes pieces made at the peak of artistic and technological sophistication by makers such as the Ando Company which are not represented in the V&A's existing collection.

Cloisonné is a way of enamelling an object, typically made of copper, where fine wires are used to outline the decorative areas and enamel paste is applied before the object is fired and polished. The Japanese term for enamelware directly translates as *Seven Treasures*, a reference to the seven treasures mentioned in Buddhist texts. These have been interpreted widely to include gold, silver, emerald, coral, agate, lapis lazuli, giant clamshell, glass and pearl – precious materials whose intrinsic qualities are reflected in cloisonné enamels.

Sir Mark Jones, V&A Director said: *"Thanks to Edwin Davies's generous gift, the V&A is now able to research and expand its collection of Japanese cloisonné and bring this superb art form to a wider national and international audience."*

Highlights of the display will include:

- Vase (c.1880-90) by the influential maker Hayashi Kodenji depicting a design of butterflies whose curves have been defined with the use of fine wires
- Vase (c.1912-26) by the Inaba Company, enamelled in blue and white floral motifs, reminiscent of Dutch Delft pottery

- Vases decorated with floral motifs by the two official imperial craftsmen to the court of the Emperor Meiji: Namikawa Sosuke (c.1900) and Namikawa Yasuyuki (c.1890)
- Unsigned bowl with floral decoration (1926-90) made in Nagoya using the French plique-a-jour technique to create a translucent enamelled vessel
- Unsigned vase (c.1910) probably made by the Ando Company of Nagoya using a highly developed technique where areas of the enamel are subtly raised to create a three-dimensional effect
- Vase made by the Ando Company of Nagoya (c.1950-60) depicting a sensuous-looking orchid on a matt-black enamel ground

In addition to this major gift, Edwin Davies has also made a substantial donation to the Museum to enable the research, study and audience development of the craft of cloisonné. This will fund the maintenance of the collection for a period of 25 years, a touring exhibition and accompanying publication, part of the curatorial post responsible for the collection, as well as a five year programme of educational activities.

Gregory Irvine, Senior Curator of the Asian Department at the V&A added: *“This wonderful collection will provide vital recognition to an aspect of Japan’s artistic legacy that has been the focus of increasing interest among museums and collections over the last 15 years.”*

## **ENDS**

### **Notes to Editors**

- The FREE display will take place in the V&A’s Toshiba Gallery of Japanese Art
- The publication *Japanese Cloisonné Enamels: The Seven Treasures* by Gregory Irvine will be published by V&A Publishing to accompany the display

### **About Edwin Davies OBE**

Eddie Davies is one of the V&A’s most generous benefactors and has been a trustee of the Museum since 2007. Until 2006, he was Chairman of Strix, a leading manufacturer of electronic heating controls for kettles and other water-heating appliances. The company won many prestigious export and innovation awards and Davies was awarded an OBE in 2000 for services to industry. A prominent philanthropist, he has supported a wide range of institutions.

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