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**The Muscarelle Museum of Art Announces Opening of
The Bones of the Earth:
Scholars' Rocks and the Natural World in Chinese Culture
Selections from the Robert Turvene Collection**

Williamsburg, Va. (April 21, 2017) -- The Muscarelle Museum of Art is pleased to announce the opening of **The Bones of the Earth: Scholars' Rocks and the Natural World in Chinese Culture**, which will be on view until August 13, 2017. The selections on view at the Muscarelle Museum of Art are highlights from the collection of Robert Turvene (W&M'53), who has studied and collected Scholar's rocks over many decades.

In Chinese philosophy and ancient legend, Scholars' rocks were viewed as "the bones of the earth." These highly prized stones are the sculpted result of millions of years of natural processes such as erosion, melting, pressing and shift in the earth's crust. In some instances, the rocks were placed in areas such as river beds to alter their formation. Since the Song dynasty (960–1279), these natural sculptures have been regarded as artifacts of the sacred relationship between man and nature. The earliest collectors were scholars who kept them on their writing tables for inspiration. Larger stones were placed in gardens for their beauty.

The Chinese term *gongshi* is also translated as "spirit stones" and "viewing stones." Many tales recounted in folklore describe the otherworldly powers of Scholars' rocks, as well as the high regard by their collectors as "friends" and "mentors." As rock formations have existed since time immemorial, the collecting of these spirit stones has been compared to a conversation between the collector and the earliest days of the universe. Rocks are also admired for their resemblance to mountains or caves, particularly the magical peaks and subterranean paradises believed to be inhabited by immortal beings. The many different kinds of Scholars' rocks are traditionally named after their geographic origins.

The Bones of the Earth features every revered type of Scholars' rock. These types include Lingbi, Ying, Taihu, Mohu, Nine Dragon, Meng, Kun and Three Gorges. The magnificent examples in this exhibition are part of a larger collection and promised gift to the Muscarelle Museum of Art from Robert Turvene (W&M '53)

The exhibition was curated by William & Mary students Lowry Palmer '17 and Elizabeth Dowker '20.

About the Muscarelle Museum of Art

The Muscarelle Museum of Art is located on the campus of William & Mary at 603 Jamestown Rd in Williamsburg, Va. For more information, call 757-221-2700 or visit muscarelle.org. Follow on Twitter (@Muscarelle), Instagram (@muscarellemuseum) or on Facebook (Muscarelle Museum of Art).

Admission is \$10 per person at the museum on the day of your visit. Admission is free to Muscarelle Museum members, William & Mary students, faculty and staff, as well as children under twelve.