



THE TEXTILE MUSEUM

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## **TRIBUTE DINNER HONORING JOSEPHINE POWELL A SUCCESS**

**October 30, 2006, Washington, DC** — On Thursday, October 19, 2006 more than 200 Trustees, patrons and friends of The Textile Museum in Washington, DC gathered at The Ritz-Carlton Hotel, Washington, DC to celebrate the presentation of the George Hewitt Myers Award to Josephine Powell, internationally renowned ethnographer, photographer and expert on nomadic weaving and traditions in Turkey. Named for The Textile Museum's founder, the award for lifetime achievement recognizes her exceptional contributions to the study and understanding of the textile arts.

His Excellency the Ambassador of the Republic Turkey and Mrs. Nabi Senşoy were Honorary Patrons of the Tribute Dinner. The Honorary Host Committee included Nurhan Atasoy, Nur Emirgil, Marta Mueller Guicciardini,



Josephine Powell is greeted by His Excellency the Ambassador of the Republic of Turkey and Mrs. Nabi Senşoy. Photo by Bill Petros.

Charles Lave, Bethany Mendenhall, Murad Megalli, Ralph Redford and Jeffery B. Spurr. The Museum's Board of Trustees served as the Host Committee for the event. In addition to honoring Powell, the event raised funds to support the Museum's varied programs. Platinum Sponsors of the event included Nancy and Carl Gewirz, Hannelore and Jeremy Grantham, Eleanor T. and Samuel J. Rosenfeld and Alice Dodge Wallace. Gold Sponsors included Aramco Services Company, Bruce P. and Olive W. Baganz, Virginia McGehee Friend, Matthew S. Polk, Jr. and Amy L. Gould, Ev and Joan Shorey and Daniel B. and Sybil M. Silver.

The festive evening program began with an elegant cocktail reception and the opportunity to visit with Powell. Guests then enjoyed a sumptuous dinner prepared by the

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Ritz-Carlton's prestigious chef and were treated to a display of photographs taken by Powell throughout her 20 years of travel.

Daniel Walker, Director of The Textile Museum, welcomed attendees to the event. "Josephine Powell's life work reflects her pioneering spirit and dedication. Through her 30,000 photographs, field notes, ethnographic objects and textiles, Josephine has given the world entrée into the unique world of nomadic Turkish groups and the splendid kilims they produce. Her travels through Turkey and beyond reveal a life even more peripatetic than that of the nomads she has studied." Following his welcome, Charles Lave, Professor of Economics, University of California-Irvine and a close friend of Powell's, provided a personal reflection on her life and personality. A video presentation of an excerpt from a recent interview with Powell, commissioned by The Textile Museum, was then shown.

Bruce P. Baganz, President of The Textile Museum's Board of Trustees, gave the award to Powell. "It is my privilege to present the George Hewitt Myers Award on behalf of the Board of Trustees, and her many friends and admirers, to Josephine Powell, whose remarkable ethnographic accomplishments in documenting the last of the Anatolian nomadic traditions, and their flatwoven textiles, distinguish her as the 2006 recipient," remarked Baganz during the award presentation.

In a statement given after the Tribute Dinner, Powell said "I hope it is not too late to say thank you to The Textile Museum for such a sumptuous evening, to all of you for your gracious support, and for choosing me to receive the George Hewitt Myers Award."

### **About Josephine Powell**

Born in 1919, Powell received a BA degree from Cornell University and an MA from Columbia University. Between 1946 and 1952 the U.N.'s International Refugee Organization recruited her to assist with the resettlement of WWII refugees. Her work with one group, the Kalmuk, a western Mongolian tribe, was so successful that the tribe adopted her as "Mother of the Kalmuks." Her extensive travel as a freelance photographer, from 1952 on, included fieldwork in the Middle East, the Indian sub-continent and North Africa, including a horseback journey to the Minaret of Jam, the famous Seljuk monument in western

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Afghanistan. Her photographs have been published in hundreds of books and are regarded as the standard documentation of the architectural creations in these areas.

Powell visited Turkey for the first time in 1955 to photograph Byzantine mosaics, and became interested in their relationship to Turkish flatwoven textiles. She soon concluded that the conventional wisdom regarding the provenance and designs of these textiles was inaccurate. She set out to work with the Turkish nomads themselves, gathering information about their handicraft – what purpose the objects served, why they were made and how they were created. Over the course of the next 20 years, Powell photographically documented the nomadic way of life, which had been largely ignored by scholars. During this time she began amassing the Anatolian kilims, sacks, bands and related artifacts in a collection that reflects the role and importance of weaving in rural Anatolia.

Her belief that the lives of women were more purposeful and dignified prior to contemporary urban living led her in yet another direction in the 1980s. Working with the chemist Harald Boehmer, she played a major role in the revival of the art of natural dyeing in Turkey, and in establishing the DOBAG Project – the first Turkish women's cooperative – which makes carpets using authentic designs and natural dyes.

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Founded in 1925 by George Hewitt Myers, The Textile Museum is an international center for the exhibition, study, collection and preservation of the textile arts. The Museum explores the role that textiles play in the daily and ceremonial life of individuals the world over. Special attention is given to textiles of the Near East, Asia, Africa and the indigenous cultures of the Americas. The Museum also presents exhibitions of historical and contemporary quilts, and fiber art. With a collection of more than 17,000 textiles and rugs and an unparalleled library, The Textile Museum is a unique and valuable resource for people locally, nationally and internationally.

The Textile Museum is located at 2320 'S' Street, NW in Washington, DC. The Museum is open Monday - Saturday 10:00 am to 5:00 pm and Sunday 1:00 pm to 5:00 pm. Admission is free; suggested donation is \$5.00. For further information, call 202-667-0441.

**For more information or images**, please contact Cyndi Bohlin at 202-496-5061 or by e-mail at [cbohlin@textilemuseum.org](mailto:cbohlin@textilemuseum.org) or visit [www.textilemuseum.org/about/pressroom.htm](http://www.textilemuseum.org/about/pressroom.htm).