



THE TEXTILE MUSEUM

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Dr. Jon Thompson to Receive 2008 George Hewitt Myers Award

Award Recognizes His Exceptional Contributions to the Field of Textile Arts

June 4, 2008, Washington, D.C.—The Textile Museum announced today that Dr. Jon Thompson, one of the foremost scholars in the field of Oriental carpets, has been chosen as the 2008 recipient of the Museum's George Hewitt Myers Award, the highest honor given in the field of textile arts. The Myers Award, named for The Textile Museum's founder and given by the Museum's Board of Trustees, recognizes Thompson's lifetime achievement and exceptional contributions to the study and understanding of the textile arts. He will be honored with the award at a Tribute Dinner on Thursday, October 16 in Washington, D.C.

"Jon Thompson's scholarship has significantly influenced the field of Oriental carpets," said Bruce P. Baganz, president of the Museum's Board of Trustees. "Through publications, exhibitions and lectures, Thompson has progressed the appreciation of carpets and textiles as works of art and expressions of culture, values closely aligned with The Textile Museum's mission and the legacy of our founder, George Hewitt Myers."

About Jon Thompson

Thompson became interested in carpets and textiles while practicing medicine in London. His interest in the study of rugs and resulting publications earned the attention of Louise Mackie, then curator at The Textile Museum. Mackie invited Thompson to work with her on an exhibition of Turkmen rugs, which opened at The Textile Museum in 1980. The exhibition was highly influential in the recognition and appreciation of Turkmen rugs and textiles, and generated collecting interests in this area that still exist today. The exhibition was accompanied by a landmark volume, *Turkmen Tribal Carpets and Tradition*, co-authored by Jon Thompson and Louise Mackie and published by The Textile Museum.

What began as a private interest became a second career and, from 2001 to 2007, Thompson held the position of May Beattie Fellow in Carpet Studies at the Ashmolean

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Museum of Art and Archaeology and the Khalili Research Centre, at the University of Oxford. In this capacity, he directed the Beattie Carpet Archive, working towards the establishment of a database of images and notes on carpets made by May Hamilton Beattie (1908-1996) in order to make her research available to scholars. His work also involved teaching courses on carpets and textiles of the Islamic world at Oxford University and at the British Museum. Though now retired from Oxford, Thompson continues to teach in London at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) and at the Victoria & Albert Museum.

Thompson's recent projects include a study of regional variations in the content of sulphur isotopes in wool, for the purpose of seeing whether it is possible to establish the geographical source of the wool in a carpet. This in turn would help in identifying the carpet's provenance. Another interest of his has been the study of carpet weaving in the 15th century. Thompson's ideas on the subject were published in his 2006 volume *Milestones in the History of Carpets* (Moshe Tabibnia, Milan), which was also published in Italian.

This year Thompson is guest curator of an exhibition celebrating the 75th anniversary of the New York-based Hajji Baba Club, the nation's oldest and most prestigious rug and textile collecting group. The exhibition is on view at the New York Historical Society through August 17, 2008 and will open as *Timbuktu to Tibet: Rugs and Textiles of the Hajji Babas* at The Textile Museum on October 18, 2008. The exhibition is accompanied by a beautifully illustrated catalogue, *Timbuktu to Tibet; Exotic Rugs and Textiles from New York Collectors*, also written by Thompson.

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About The Textile Museum

Established 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 18,000 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, D.C. The Museum is open Monday through Saturday 10:00 am to 5:00 pm and Sunday 1:00 pm to 5:00 pm. Admission is free with a suggested donation of \$5.00 for non-members. For further information, call 202-667-0441 or visit www.textilemuseum.org.

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In fall 2009 The Textile Museum will open an expansion site, dedicated to exhibitions and educational activities, in Washington, D.C.'s thriving Penn Quarter neighborhood. For more information about this exciting initiative, visit www.textilemuseum.org/expansion.htm.

For more information, please contact Cyndi Bohlin, communications and marketing manager, at 202-667-0441, ext. 78, or by e-mail at cbohlin@textilemuseum.org or visit www.textilemuseum.org/about/pressroom.htm.