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Exhibition Highlights Unique Central Asian Textile Tradition
Architectural Textiles: Tent Bands of Central Asia
March 30 – August 19, 2007

November 20, 2006, Washington, DC —Architectural Textiles: Tent Bands of Central Asia will be on view at The Textile Museum March 30 – August 19, 2007. The exhibition features the utilitarian and beautiful bands of trellis tents, which have made nomadic life possible across Central Asia for at least 1,500 years. Through the display of approximately 40 objects drawn from The Textile Museum's collections and private holdings, Architectural Textiles will provide a window into the lost world of nomadic life on the Central Asian steppe.

The woven tent band is an important component of trellis tent construction, used to girdle the lower part of the wooden roof struts. This critical engineering element provides the tension necessary to brace the roof dome against outward collapse under the load of heavy felts and the force of strong steppe winds.

Beyond their utilitarian function, tent bands are objects of great beauty and design. They are often elaborately decorated with a wide range of colors, patterns, structures and materials, resulting in vibrant textiles. Designs of tent bands generally differ from those of other nomadic textiles, including bags and carpets. The weaving skills and the quality of dyes and materials used for the bands are of the highest order, reaching their technical and artistic peak in the bands made by Turkmen women.

A Central Asian tent band is typically one foot wide by 45 feet long – an imposing scale. Because of the large size, a tent band would be woven in one piece on a narrow horizontal loom placed on the ground outside the trellis tent, rather than inside the shelter of the tent. It could take one to three years to complete a single tent band.



Tent band fragment
Kyrgyzstan
The Textile Museum 2004.7.77
Gift of John and Donna Sommer

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The finished tent band would be installed on a young couple's first home and become a treasured family heirloom, used on special occasions and passed on for several generations. Turkmen used a very special decorative white band with knotted design in connection with their wedding festivals.

Architectural Textiles: Tent Bands of Central Asia includes tent bands made by different Central Asian ethnic groups, including Turkmen, Kyrgyz, Üzbek and Kazakh. The objects on view represent a diverse array of structures, designs and materials. Tent bands were occasionally transformed in function by their owners, both in Central Asia and in the West. Through examples and photographs, the exhibition will show how they were recycled by nomads into rugs and animal decorations and by Europeans for use as home furnishings.

Supplemental materials will complement the textiles and provide a richer context for greater understanding of the lost world of the nomads. These will include period photographs of nomadic life and weaving and an educational gallery, where visitors can learn how to "read" a tent band. A scale model of a nomadic tent, complete with miniature bands and furnishings, and a film on the assembly of a real trellis tent, will help provide a better understanding of the context in which the bands were used.

Architectural Textiles: Tent Bands of Central Asia is curated by Richard Isaacson, a member of The Textile Museum's Advisory Council.

Related Educational Programming

GALLERY TALK & TOUR

Saturday, March 31 • 11:00 am

Join exhibition curator Richard Isaacson for a tour of Architectural Textiles: Tent Bands of Central Asia, featuring the utilitarian and beautiful bands of trellis tents, which have made nomadic life possible across Central Asia for at least 1,500 years. **FREE; no reservations required. Limited to 35 participants.**

"ASK ME" DOCENTS

Docents will be on hand in the galleries as noted below to answer any questions that you may have as you visit the exhibition.

Friday, March 30 • 12 pm – 1:30 pm

Friday, April 27 • 12 pm – 1:30 pm

Friday, May 25 • 12 pm – 1:30 pm

Friday, June 29 • 12 pm – 1:30 pm

CELEBRATION OF TEXTILES

Saturday, June 2 • 10 am - 4 pm & Sunday, June 3 • 1 - 4 pm

Visitors of all ages are invited to explore the textile arts and cultures of the world through a multitude of activities and demonstrations in the Museum's exhibitions, historic buildings and garden. *Presented in connection with the Dupont-Kalorama Museums Consortium's Museum Walk Weekend.*

FREE; no reservations required.

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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 Molly McMullen at 202-496-5074, or by e-mail at mmcmullen@textilemuseum.org or visit www.textilemuseum.org/about/pressroom.htm.