



This exhibition demonstrates contemporary translations of dragon imagery as well: **a mola panel from Panama**, made by a Kuna woman in the 1960s, playfully interprets a dragon above the colorful letters “D-R-A-G-O-N”. The source for this image is likely a children’s alphabet book.

### **The Dragon as a Symbol of Power**

Whether creatures of good or evil, dragons in every culture were unquestionably powerful, and became a symbol for both prestige and protection.

In China, certain styles of dragons were reserved for use by the emperor and ruling class, and the way they were illustrated was determined by social rules outlined in dynastic laws. For example, use of front-facing dragons was prohibited for anyone below the noble classes. Only the imperial family was permitted to wear dragons with 5 claws. **A stunningly woven 18th century coat made during the Qing dynasty** includes several dragons with one claw painstakingly removed from each foot—indicating its second owner altered the garment to suit their social standing.

When the Buddhist faith spread to East Asia in the first centuries CE, people in this region began to regard dragons as protectors of Buddha and Buddhist law. **A rug which covered a column in a Buddhist temple** in Tibet, Mongolia, or western China illustrates an auspicious dragon surrounded by the symbols of Buddhist law. While red flames emanate from its body, this dragon protects from evil and harm.

The Year of the Dragon is said to be a year of energy and change. The image of the dragon has been shifted and reshaped in cultures throughout time and across the world, but they fascinate and delight us in all of their forms.

### **About the Textile Museum**

The Textile Museum expands public knowledge and appreciation—locally, nationally, and internationally—of the artistic merit and cultural importance of the world’s textiles. 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 Textile Museum collection encompasses more than 19,000 objects that date from 3,000 BCE to the present, including some of the world’s finest examples of rugs and textiles from the Near East, Central Asia, East and Southeast Asia, Africa, and the indigenous cultures of the Americas. The museum’s 20,000 volume Arthur D. Jenkins Library of Textile Arts is among the world’s foremost resources for the study of textiles. **Beginning in mid-2014, The Textile Museum will be a primary cornerstone for the forthcoming new museum on the campus of The George Washington University. For more information, visit [www.gwu.edu/textilemuseum](http://www.gwu.edu/textilemuseum).**

The Textile Museum is located at 2320 ‘S’ Street, NW in Washington, D.C. The museum is open Tuesday through Saturday 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sunday 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. An \$8 suggested admission is requested of non-members.

**For more information or images**, please contact Katy Clune at (202) 667-0441, ext. 77, or by e-mail at [kclune@textilemuseum.org](mailto:kclune@textilemuseum.org).