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The Textile Museum to Honor Mattiebelle Gittinger with the 2009 George Hewitt Myers Award

April 30, 2009, Washington, D.C. — The Textile Museum announced today that Mattiebelle Gittinger, one of the foremost researchers and scholars in the field of Southeast Asian textiles, has been chosen as the 2009 recipient of the Museum’s George Hewitt Myers Award, one of the highest accolades 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 an individual’s lifetime achievements and exceptional contributions to the field. Previous recipients include scholar Jon Thompson (2008); collector and philanthropist Lloyd Cotsen (2007); the late Josephine Powell, an ethnographer and photographer (2006); and textile designer and collector Jack Lenor Larsen (2005). Gittinger will be honored with the Myers Award in October 2009.

“Mattiebelle Gittinger is a world-renowned expert on Southeast Asian textiles,” said Bruce P. Baganz, president of The Textile Museum’s Board of Trustees. “The Textile Museum has been enriched by Ms. Gittinger’s scholarship, exhibitions and curatorial guidance for more than 30 years. She has built the Museum’s collection of Southeast Asian material into one of the finest holdings in the world,” Baganz continued. “Her publications and other scholarly contributions will have a lasting impact on the study and understanding of Southeast Asian textile traditions.”

About Mattiebelle Gittinger

Mattiebelle Gittinger became interested in Southeast Asian art and culture while traveling and living overseas for 10 years from 1955 to 1965, after earning her B.S. in technical journalism from Iowa State University. During this time, while living in Vietnam and later in Iran, she was inspired



Mattiebelle Gittinger in the current Textile Museum exhibition *Recent Acquisitions*. Batik. Java, ca. 1960. Cotton; batik. The Textile Museum 2005.8.1. Gift of Ralph H. Redford. Photo by Cyndi Bohlin.

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by individuals working in the mountains with local ethnic groups. In 1965, Gittinger conducted field research on textiles and house carvings in the Lesser Sunda Islands of Indonesia, then returned to the United States to study art history at Columbia University in New York (M.A., 1968; Ph.D., 1972), specializing in Indian and Pre-Columbian art. Since the 1970s, she has conducted extensive fieldwork across Southeast Asia, India, Myanmar (Burma), Europe and the Middle East. This research was made possible through numerous fellowships and grants from the Asian Cultural Council, Columbia University, the Fundacao Calouste Gulbenkian, the Indo-U.S. Subcommittee on Education and Culture, the National Endowment for the Arts and National Endowment for the Humanities.

For more than three decades, Gittinger has been an invaluable resource to The Textile Museum as research associate for Southeast Asian Textiles. She has researched, curated and organized numerous exhibitions related to Southeast Asian textile traditions. Her 2005 exhibition, *Textiles for This World and Beyond: Treasures from Insular Southeast Asia*, was the first exhibition of a group of 19th- to early 20th-century Southeast Asian textiles acquired by The Textile Museum in the last 25 years. Many of the more than 60 objects had not been exhibited at The Textile Museum or elsewhere. A grant from The Christensen Fund in Palo Alto, California, received in 2000, funded the acquisition of a number of these objects. The exhibition was accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue of the same title, also written by Gittinger (The Textile Museum, Washington, D.C. and Scala Publishers, London: 2005).

Previous exhibitions, each accompanied by a highly regarded catalogue, include: *Textiles and the Tai Experience in Southeast Asia* (1992-3); *Master Dyers to the World: Technique and Trade in Early Indian Dyed Cotton Textiles* (1982-3); and *Splendid Symbols: Textiles and Tradition in Indonesia* (1979). These exhibitions were shown at The Textile Museum and other national and international venues, including the Asia Society Gallery, New York; the Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago; the Thailand Cultural Center, Bangkok; and the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto. Gittinger also organized the outstanding Textile Museum exhibitions *Fighting Words: Proverbs in Asafo Flags of Ghana* (2001), *Sweet Yarns: The Story of a Noble Fiber from the Philippines* (1998), *From East to West: New Treasures for The Textile Museum* (1986) and *Fabled Cloth: Batik from Java's North Coast* (1984). Most recently Gittinger was co-curator of The Textile Museum's 2008 exhibition *BLUE*, which chronicled the use and cultural significance of indigo dye in cultures around the world.

In addition to her work in developing and organizing exhibitions, Gittinger has chaired international conferences on Southeast Asian textile traditions and served in leadership positions within the field. She was one of the founders of the Textile Society of America and served as president of the organization from 1995 to 1996. From 1990 to 1991, Gittinger consulted on a "Festival of Indonesia" held in Washington, D.C., and over the course of her career she has lectured across the United States and in Europe, Australia and Southeast Asia. Her consultation to museums around the world on the

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artistic merit and cultural significance of their textile holdings has been invaluable. Through Gittinger's research, the importance of textiles has been made more evident to the world at large. She has also given Southeast Asians the impetus to appreciate and conserve their own material cultures.

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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, 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 Tuesday through Saturday 10 am to 5 pm and Sunday 1 pm to 5 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.

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