

Exhibition Highlights

The earliest textile in *The Art of Living* is a **5th-century tapestry-woven fragment found in Egypt**, which may have covered a bolster pillow. In the Roman and Byzantine Empires, as in many urban cultures around the world, professional artists drew designs on paper to be adapted for a variety of media. A few of their drawings on papyrus have survived, some of which appear to be cartoons for tapestry woven fabrics. This fragment features scrolling vines, rosettes and birds—motifs developed by artists in the Mediterranean world but adopted by designers worldwide.

An **11th- or 12th-century Chinese silk** documents how the naturalistic rendering of bird and flower patterns, as well as the tapestry technique, spread along the Silk Road from the West to East Asia. Like their counterparts in the West, Chinese artists typically drew cartoons for tapestries and designs for other fine decorative arts on paper. With the export of silks and ceramics, the flower and animal patterns developed over the centuries by Chinese artists became some of the most influential designs in the world. In this exhibition, a **throne cover from Bhutan** appliquéd with bird and flower patterns and a **colonial Peruvian wall hanging fragment** depicting phoenixes and peonies illustrate the global reach of these decorative motifs.

The Designers

Although the names of very few textile designers from the ancient world are known today, surviving records from 18th century onward, particularly in Western countries, more readily link the names of individual artists to particular designs. Four textiles in *The Art of Living* can be attributed to known designers: **Ghiyath al-Din Ali**, a designer/weaver who achieved high rank at the court of Abbas I (1571-1629) in Iran; **William Morris** (1834-1896), the seminal 19th-century British designer; and **Kenneth Noland** (1924-), an American abstract painter who provided designs for a series of tapestries woven by Navajo weavers. Bridging *Art by the Yard* with *The Art of Living* is a special loan from the Cora Gingsberg Gallery—an exquisite silk designed **Anna Maria Garthwaite** (1690–1763), one of Britain’s most prolific and highly regarded textile designers of the 18th century.

Whether anonymous or highly celebrated, the designers represented in *The Art of Living* enhanced the daily lives of the people who originally used these beautifully patterned fabrics in their homes, and they continue to delight viewers today with their artistry.

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.



Arizona Sky, designed by Kenneth Noland and woven by Mary Lee Begay.Ganado, Arizona.1996. The Textile Museum 1998.2.3. Gift of Gloria F. Ross.

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. Admission is free with a suggested donation of \$5 for non-members. For more information, call (202) 667-0441 or visit www.textilemuseum.org.

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