



Intrinsic Beauty

Celebrating the Art of Textiles

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Since its founding by collector and connoisseur George Hewitt Myers (1875–1957) in 1925, The Textile Museum has built one of the world’s most significant collections of handmade textile art, with more than 21,000 artworks representing five continents and five millennia. This exhibition celebrates the museum’s centennial with more than sixty masterworks created worldwide over the last two thousand years. Each exemplifies the “intrinsic beauty of design, color, and technique” that Myers prized.

With this gallery guide, you can explore four different pathways through the exhibition that highlight the technical achievement and aesthetic richness of the textile arts, the legacy of the collection established by George Hewitt Myers, and intriguing stories of cultural and artistic exchange that led to innovative textile design.

As you explore the exhibition *Intrinsic Beauty: Celebrating the Art of Textiles*, look for artwork labels in the four pathway colors to follow each theme.

FOUNDATIONS OF A COLLECTION

Museum founder George Hewitt Myers established a world-class collection that he believed would inspire public appreciation and academic study of the textile arts. To further this pursuit, he established The Textile Museum and its library in 1925 with a collection of some 350 rugs and other textiles. One hundred years later, the collection includes over 21,000 artworks from the non-Western world.

By collecting multiple examples of textile or rug types, Myers created opportunities for comparative study in an emerging field of textile studies. Some groups that Myers emphasized—including Mamluk carpets, 10th-12th century tiraz fragments, dragon carpets from the Caucasus, and early archaeological textiles from Peru—established the museum's reputation as a serious location to find, study, and enjoy textiles as an art form.

● Look for Red Dots to find artworks in this pathway:



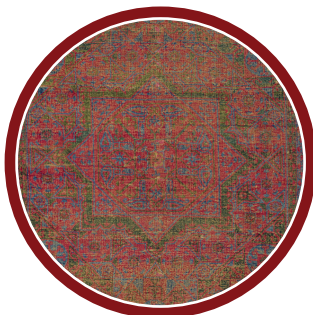
1. Surcoat, China
(1662-1722), 51.23
Level 2



2. End of a turban cloth,
Yemen and Egypt, 10th
century, 73.59
Level 2



3. Mantle, south coast Peru
(200 BCE-600 CE), 91.192
Level 3



4. Carpet, Egypt and Syria,
16th century, R16.1.1
Level 3



5. Hanging, Egypt,
4th-5th century, 71.18
Level 3

VIRTUOUSITY IN TEXTILE ART

The Textile Museum Collection expanded based on George Hewitt Myers's philosophy of seeking textile artworks with “intrinsic beauty of design, color, and technique.” While all the textiles displayed in the *Intrinsic Beauty* exhibition are evidence of masterful artistry, several are considered to be among the best examples of their kind.

Combining the highest quality materials with the expertise of the most skilled artists of their day, these textiles reflect the pinnacle of quality and aesthetic sensibilities brought forward by global cultures. Many of these luxurious fabrics would have been reserved for royalty or made to adorn the most prestigious people and places in society.

Look for Blue Dots to find artworks in this pathway:



1. Kilim, Iran, late 16th–early 17th century, R33.28.1
Level 2



2. Buddhist priest's mantle, China (1736–1795), 51.66
Level 2



3. Tunic, Peru, (ca. 750–950), 91.341
Level 2



4. Embroidered cover, Türkiye, 16th–17th centuries, 1.22
Level 3



5. Shoulder cloth, Indonesia, 19th century, 1986.13.2
Level 3

ARTIST PERSPECTIVES

Textile artists have long admired The Textile Museum Collection and find inspiration from great designers of the past and the long heritage of their practice. A skilled weaver, dyer, or embroiderer, for example, can easily spot the hand of a master. For this pathway, we invited living artists to share their perspectives on the quality and craftsmanship they see revealed in these works. Find their commentary in a label beside each artwork and practice seeing like an artist.

● **Look for Gold Dots to find artworks in this pathway:**



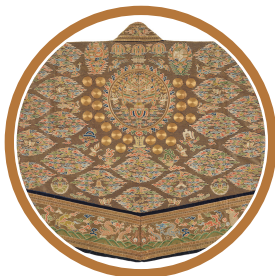
1. Dragon carpet,
Caucasus, mid-17th
century, R.36.1.1
Level 2



2. Chief's tunic or cape,
Congo basin or Angola,
possibly 19th century, 1962.1.14
Level 2



3. Hip wrapper,
Indonesia, 1930s,
1985.51.2
Level 2



4. Daoist priest's robe,
China, late 18th/early 19th
century, 51.24
Level 3



5. Man's tunic, Peru, Wari
style, (ca. 600-1000),
1962.30.1
Level 3



6. Royal robe, Ryukyu
Kingdom, 19th century,
1963.15.8
Level 3



7. Fragment from a
curtain, Spain, 14th-15th
century, 84.11
Level 3

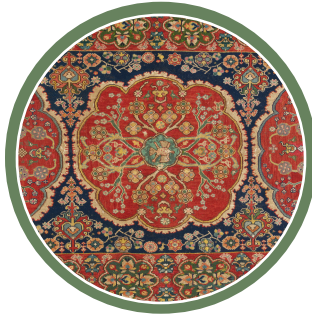
AN INTERWOVEN WORLD

When cultures collide, evidence of artistic exchange can be seen in the textile arts. A textile can reflect the exchange of technical knowledge and aesthetic preferences, resulting in new design outcomes. These encounters could result from trade, as textile producers adapted to meet market demands, or from conquest, when an invading group imposed its conventions on another. The textiles in this pathway tell stories of the artistic fusion of materials, motifs, and meanings that emerge when disparate societies interact.

Look for Green Dots to find artworks in this pathway:



1. Hanging, Peru,
Spanish Colonial, 17th
century, 91.504
Level 2



2. Cover, Portugal,
17th century, R44.6.1
Level 2



3. Carpet, Türkiye,
16th century, R34.18.1
Level 2



4. Man's robe, Iran, India,
17th-18th centuries, 3.112
Level 2



5. Ecclesiastical garment
(?), Türkiye and Iran,
16th/17th centuries, 1994.27.2
Level 3

Gallery Tours

Book a custom exhibition tour for your group with one of our experienced docents.

www.museum.edu/visit#tours

Centennial Celebrations

Join us throughout 2025 for special exhibitions, programs, and events that celebrate the museum's first 100 years.

www.museum.gwu.edu/centennial

Textile Library

The museum's Arthur D. Jenkins Library is open Tuesday–Friday, 1–4 p.m. during the academic year, and by appointment.

www.museum.gwu.edu/library

Artisans Gallery

Purchase and learn about handmade textiles representing global traditions, as well as limited-edition centennial merchandise inspired by the museum collections.

www.museum.gwu.edu/artisans-gallery

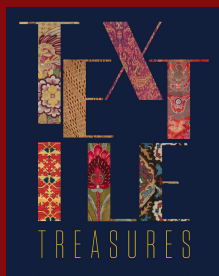
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www.museum.gwu.edu/support, call 202-994-5579 or stop by the front desk.

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Textile Treasures is the museum's first major publication to bring together global masterworks from The Textile Museum Collection, including artworks on display in *Intrinsic Beauty*. You can place an order at 202-960-5311 or artisansgallery@gwu.edu.



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