

Stories of Syria's Textiles: Art and Heritage across Two Millennia

At the Katonah Museum of Art, October 15, 2023 – January 28, 2024

Dear Educators,

We are looking forward to having your students experience *Stories of Syria's Textiles: Art and Heritage across Two Millennia*, a thought-provoking exhibition that highlights the legacy of textile production in Syria. The exhibition features ancient artifacts, Syrian garments from the 19th and 20th centuries, and photo-documentation of Syrian silk producers, weavers, and other artisans. Through careful observation and questioning of more than 30 items on view we will explore Syria's rich cultural heritage, examine sophisticated weaving technologies from ancient through modern times, consider the impact of the silk trade routes and resulting cultural influences, and gain an understanding of enduring silk production processes. Contemporary silk production and Syrian textile craft and an immersive textile installation in the Learning Center will also be explored and students will have an opportunity to use textile materials in a creative art project.

Visits to the Katonah Museum of Art provide a unique learning experience that supports classroom learning goals. Through open-ended inquiry and guided discussion, students will:

- Practice close observation and use of descriptive language
- Use critical and creative thinking to interpret what they see
- Voice their opinions, listen to each other, and make connections between concepts
- Support ideas using evidence and acquired vocabulary
- Foster empathy through guided discussion

Some of the main ideas explored in this exhibition include:

- The importance of preserving cultural heritage
- Objects tell stories: what can we learn from an object or an article of clothing?
- Trade networks, silk routes and the exchange of cultural influences and ideas
- Textile artistry: pattern, design, dyeing, and weaving techniques
- Silk production over time

Included in this packet are materials to help prepare your students for their visit. Please share with all classroom teachers. They can also be downloaded from our website: www.katonahmuseum.org under "Teacher Resources."

- Introduction to the exhibition and section texts
- Exhibition images with questions for discussion
- Pre-Visit Activities: *Textile Memories* and *Patterns all Around*
- Learn about Syria
- Glossary & Weaving Basics



Look for this light bulb to indicate ideas for older students! This packet is designed with upper elementary school students in mind; please adjust for your grade level. Please call 914-232-9555, ext. 2969 to discuss the specifics of your tour. Thank you for choosing the KMA for your class visit.

Margaret Adasko
Curator of Education

Stories of Syria's Textiles: Art and Heritage across Two Millennia

Exhibition Texts

Stories of Syria's Textiles: Art and Heritage across Two Millennia highlights textiles' outstanding contributions to Syrian culture during antiquity and between the mid-nineteenth and mid-twentieth centuries, as well as today.

Syrian textiles are remarkable for their artistic, social, and economic significance. Finely woven clothing and furnishings are the work of highly skilled weavers and other artisans. They are also important markers of status and identity that reflect the local traditions of Syrian cities, villages, and nomadic groups, and valuable luxury goods that were traded widely. Syria's climate is ideal for silk production, and historically it was a major crossroads on the Silk Routes that connected East and West.

Since 2011, Syria has been embroiled in conflict that has resulted in the deaths of over 600,000 people. Millions have been displaced both internally and as refugees in other countries. Numerous archaeological sites, historic monuments, and museums have also been damaged or destroyed. With respect to textiles, longstanding traditions and knowledge are at risk of disappearing. Many Syrians are now working to preserve their tangible and intangible heritage for current and future generations, despite these exceptionally difficult conditions.

Stories of Syria's Textiles aims to contribute to these efforts, and asks us to consider what heritage means, in its broadest sense, and why its protection merits intense commitment.

Section Texts:

A Renowned Reputation

Syrian Silk and Other Fine Textiles from the Mid-19th to the Mid-20th Centuries

Distinctive designs, sophisticated weaving techniques, and exceptional quality characterize Syrian textiles created from the mid-nineteenth until the mid-twentieth centuries. Elaborate clothing and furnishings were powerful symbols of identity and status. Collectively, the objects on view in this gallery demonstrate how the production, uses, and trade of textiles were integral to Syrian culture during an era when silk was an important cash crop.

Then as now, the production of silk and other fine textiles involved the labor and expertise of many different specialists. Farmers cultivated mulberry trees and raised silkworms nourished by their leaves, and workers processed silk cocoons in their homes and in factories. Textile workshops in Damascus and Aleppo, Syria's two largest cities, were especially renowned. In tandem with weavers, dyers, and other artisans in rural areas, these workshops produced clothing and furnishings for Syria's culturally and religiously diverse consumers throughout cities, villages, and nomadic groups, including Bedouin.

An extensive network of merchants and traders made their living in the textile sector and sold their goods locally and internationally, and some profited immensely. Syrian textiles were exported widely throughout the Middle East and Europe, and purchased by Americans and Europeans who traveled to Syria. This key era in Syria's history encompasses the end of the Ottoman Empire, the French Mandate period, and the establishment of the present-day nation of Syria in 1946.

Luxurious Textiles and Trade along Ancient Silk Routes

In the ancient world, textiles were valued luxury goods and markers of elite status. The region known as Syria in antiquity—an area today that approximately encompasses present-day Syria and parts of Lebanon and southeastern Türkiye—played an integral role in the lucrative production and trade of silk and other fine textiles between the first and seventh centuries.

Objects from Dura-Europos and Palmyra, two cities that became part of the Roman Empire, vividly illuminate this history. Exceptional fragments of finely woven silk and wool discovered at Dura-Europos attest to artistic, cultural, and economic exchanges between the Roman, Parthian, and Chinese empires, neighboring Central Asian kingdoms, and nomadic groups. Sculptures from Palmyra feature people dressed lavishly and reclining on couches with elaborately patterned covers, demonstrating how textiles signified wealth and sophistication. Syria continued to be an important center of textile production through the fourth through seventh centuries, a period called Late Antiquity.

When considering Syria's archaeological heritage, it is important to explore both how western collections were formed and the effects of the ongoing conflict in Syria. Many works of ancient art and artifacts are dispersed in museums and private collections outside Syria, especially in Europe and the U.S. Since the conflict in Syria began in 2011, Syrian archaeological sites including Dura-Europos and Palmyra, historic monuments, and museums have been looted or systematically attacked by ISIS and others as well as damaged in internal fighting and by Syrian and Russian forces.

Traditions, Challenges, and Innovations Syrian Textiles in the 21st Century

Twelve years of conflict, a severe economic crisis, international sanctions, and the COVID-19 pandemic have threatened many aspects of Syrian textile heritage, both tangible and intangible. Silk producers, weavers, embroiderers, and other textile artisans have all been deeply affected and face significant challenges.

The production of raw silk in Syria's Western Mountains forms a key part of Syrian textile history. This gallery highlights the groundbreaking research featured in Maya Alkateb-Chami's book *Syrian Silk: Portrait of a Living Cultural Heritage*. Published in 2010 just a year before the conflict in Syria began, the book includes interviews with families producing silk as well as vivid photographs taken by Hany Hawasly, several of which are on view.

Hawasly's photographs of the weaving of silk brocade in a Damascus factory are displayed alongside brocade accessories designed to appeal to contemporary tastes. Also included in this gallery are examples of traditional crocheted, handblock-printed, and embroidered textiles still being produced in Syria today. Textile artisans are also engaged in teaching people from Syria who have been displaced outside the country and offering them work opportunities.

Stories of Syria's Textiles: Art and Heritage across Two Millennia is curated by Blair Fowlkes Childs, Adjunct Professor, Columbia University and the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, in collaboration with consulting curator Deniz Beyazit, Curator, Department of Islamic Art, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and with organizational support from Emily Handlin, Associate Curator of Exhibitions and Programs, Katonah Museum of Art. Map of Syria (Syrian Arab Republic)

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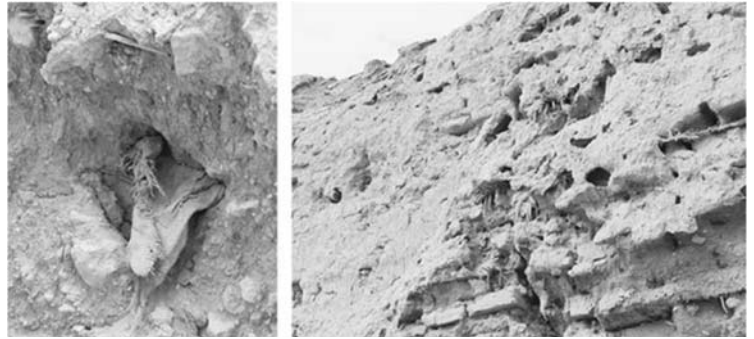
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ARCHAEOLOGY LOVES A GOOD MYSTERY

An archaeologist studies peoples and cultures of the past by excavating and examining the material that those people left behind. They use objects as puzzle pieces to create a picture of a place in time.

So, how do you learn from an object that you suddenly find in the ground?



A textile fragment found buried inside a wall at the ancient site of Dura-Europos, Syria

This small, 9 x 12 ½ inch textile fragment is from

1800 year ago: approximately 200 AD. Imagine you discovered it! Put on your archeological hat to investigate...

LOOK:

- Describe the colors, shapes, and patterns you see.
- Notice the torn edges of the piece.

THINK:

- What material could it be?
- Look closer: how are the colors woven together?

WONDER:

- What could this textile have been used for? Who might have owned it or worn it?
- Think about how it was made. Who would have been involved in making it?
- What else do you want to find out about it?
- HINT: Look at the “Banquet relief of Zabdibol and family” relief sculpture to gather more information.



Research more about new technologies that allow historians to see the extremely advanced weave structure of textiles and what we can learn from them.

Textile with rosettes From Dura-Europos ca. 200-256 Wool; weft-faced tapestry weave NEW HAVEN, YALE UNIVERSITY ART GALLERY, YALE-FRENCH EXCAVATIONS AT DURA-EUROPOS, 1933.487. Photo: Courtesy of Yale University Art Gallery.

This textile with rosettes fragment stands out among those discovered at Dura-Europos due to its extraordinarily fine weave. The motif was widespread and popular, appearing throughout the Near East on vessels, tombs, and textiles as well as in Dura-Europos's own wall paintings, ceiling tiles, and relief sculptures. This textile may have been made at nearby Palmyra (as many were) and brought to Dura.



Look. Think. Wonder.

Look. Describe the figures in this sculpture.

- How are they similar? How are they different?
- How are the figures posed?
- What might they be holding in their hands?
- What details do you notice about each person?

Think. Now turn your attention specifically to the textiles.

- Describe what each figure is wearing. What details do you notice?
- Describe how different fabrics are depicted in this carving.
- What kinds of lines, shapes, and patterns do you see?

Wonder.

- Who might these figures be? What do you see that makes you say that?
- What clues in the sculpture might tell us more about the people?
- What might their relationship be with each other?
- Why do you think the figures would be carved so carefully and realistically?

Putting it all together:

- The Aramaic text seen here tells us the names of Zabdibol and his children. This is a language still in use today.
- This was a funerary sculpture, which was found at a burial site in Palmyra. It depicts the deceased, dressed in finely woven and embroidered clothing, reclining on luxurious woven furniture covers. Although it was often thought that ancient sculptures and reliefs of this kind were the color of the stone, many were found to have traces of pigment that indicate they were originally painted in bright colors.
- Looking closely at these sculpted images of clothing and seat coverings together with the textile fragments from Dura-Europos allows researchers to reconstruct their original designs, patterns, and vibrant colors.



Digital color reconstruction
Banquet Relief of Zabdibol and his family



Learn more about the technology used to create color reconstructions:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TrYXBzH2ZUI> and <https://www.metmuseum.org/connections/eyes>

Banquet relief of Zabdibol and family

From Palmyra, Second half of 2nd century (after 148), Limestone
NEW YORK, THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, PURCHASE, 1902,
02.29.1 T20 1/4 x 25 1/3 x 6 7/8 in.



Look. Think. Wonder.

LOOK:

- What do you see?
- Describe the colors, patterns, and shapes.
- Describe any other details you notice.

THINK:

- How do you think this garment was made?
- Think step by step, what techniques and processes could have been utilized?
- What people do you think would be involved in making this?

WONDER:

- What would it feel like to wear this?
- Where might this coat be worn?
- Use your **imagination** to think of a story about something that happened or could happen to this coat.

Woman's coat

Probably from northern Syria, late 19th–early 20th century.

Cotton, silk, and glass buttons; balanced plain weave.

Santa Fe, Museum of International Folk Art, Gift of Florence Dibell Bartlett, A.1955.86.93

Many designs and motifs featured on Syrian clothing are important indicators of local cultural, social, and probably religious identity. This coat is most likely from northern Syria and features floral patterns and stylized trees thought to represent the popular tree of life motif. The piece of denim sewn onto the dress's back is noteworthy: the color blue is thought to protect from the evil eye and many Syrian garments feature designs on their backs that have protective significance. The use of denim reflects the international trade in textiles since it was imported from France.



Design a protective symbol to add to the back of your own garment.

Textile Memories

We are surrounded by textiles and fabrics. From clothing to scarves, blankets and pillows, these fabrics and textiles hold meaning. They evoke connections, memories, and feelings. They can communicate a lot about a person, place, idea, identity, or culture. Think of one piece of clothing, fabric or textile from your home or school. Draw a small picture of the item in the center below. Think about the textile from many different perspectives and write down ideas in each box.

Describe a **memory** connected to this fabric

Describe the physical attributes of the fabric. What color, shape, patterns? How does it feel? Notice details.

Where did this textile come from? When did you get this fabric? Who gave it to you?

Draw a picture of the textile here:

What **feelings** do you associate with this fabric?

What do you **wonder** about this fabric?

Use your **imagination** to think of a story about something that happened or could happen to this fabric.



Incorporate this textile into an artwork using any artistic technique.

Patterns all around!

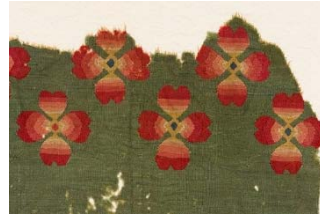
A pattern is a set of shapes or designs that repeat. You will see many different patterns in the artworks at the Katonah Museum of Art.

What patterns can you find around you? Let's go on a pattern hunt!

Look around your home, classroom, or in a book or magazine to find patterns or repeating shapes and colors.

Here are some places to look for patterns:

- Clothes
- Blankets or pillows
- Rugs or floor tiles
- Pictures in books or magazines



Draw some patterns that you find here, or cut out patterns you find in magazines and glue them here:

Syria

SOME INTERESTING FACTS

- **Official name:** Syrian Arab Republic
- **Capital:** Damascus, is the oldest capital city in the world
- **Official language:** Arabic, but people also speak Armenian, Kurdish, Circassian, Kurdish, French, English
- Syria is home to one of the oldest civilizations in the world, including the oldest library in the world.
- **Popular foods:** Shawarma (spit roasted lamb), Falafel, eggplant, zucchini, rice, lentils, and coffee!
- **Traditional musical instruments:** the Oud, Ney, Qanun and Kamancha are common in Syrian Folk Music.

GEOGRAPHY



Located in the Middle East, Syria is approximately 1.5 times bigger than the state of Pennsylvania.

Syria is bordered on the north by Turkey, on the east and southeast by Iraq, on the south by Jordan, and on the southwest by Israel. To the west lie Lebanon and the Mediterranean Sea. The Euphrates, the longest river in Western Asia, flows from Turkey through parts of Syria.

Syria's terrain and climate are diverse. Mountains dominate the western and southwestern areas and separate the narrow coastal plain from the interior. The Anti-Lebanon Mountains are the highest range in Syria. The mountains straddle the country's

boundary with Lebanon and are high enough to receive heavy snow in winter.



More than half of the country is covered by the Syrian Desert. Rock and gravel, not sand, cover the desert. Most of Syria has a dry climate with cold winters and very hot summers. The coast receives more rain and has milder temperatures.



PEOPLE AND CULTURE

Most of the Syrian population are Arab. Minority groups living in the country include the Kurds, an ethnic group from a mountainous region called Kurdistan, who mostly live in northeast Syria; and the Bedouins, nomadic animal herders who move from place to place throughout North Africa and the Middle East. The majority of Syria's population lives on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea or in the Euphrates River valley.



The official and most widely spoken language is Arabic. Other languages spoken in Syria include Kurdish, Armenian, Turkish, Circassian, English, and French.

Most Syrians are Muslim, or people who practice Islam. Some Syrians are Christians, and an even smaller part of the population follow Druze, a religion that combines Islam, Christianity, Judaism, and a few other faiths. Damascus, Syria's capital city, is considered a holy city in the religion of Islam and is one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world.

People have lived there since the second millennium B.C. It's also famous for music, especially classical Arab music.

Popular dishes in Syria include tabbouleh, a vegetarian salad made with tomato, mint, onions, and other ingredients; sujuk, or spicy fermented sausage; and shawarma, or thinly sliced meat stacked in a cone-like shape inside of pita bread. Arabic coffee is one of the most popular drinks and is typically served during family gatherings or when guests are visiting.

NATURE

Forests make up a very small percentage of the country's total area and are primarily found in the mountains. Yew, lime, and fir trees grow on the mountain slopes. The date palm is found in the Euphrates valley. In both coastal and inland regions, plants include grains, olive trees, grapevines, apricot trees, oaks, and poplars. Lemon and orange trees grow along the coast. Drought-resistant shrubs such as myrtle, boxwood, turpentine, and broom abound to the south. The desert region lacks natural tree cover, except for some scattered hawthorns.

Wild animal life is sparse. Wolves, hyenas, and foxes can still be found in remote areas. Deer, squirrels, martens, and polecats are also found. Desert animals include gazelles, jerboas (long-tailed leaping rodents), vipers, lizards, and chameleons. The country's domesticated animals include mules, camels, horses, donkeys, sheep, cattle, and goats.

HISTORY/SILK ROUTES

Syria has one of the world's longest recorded histories. Humans have settled in Syria for nearly 5,000 years. The earliest recorded civilization in the area was the Kingdom of Ebla, founded around 3,500 B.C., and Palmyra around 3,000 B.C. Syria is strategically located between the East and West and was an important part of the Silk Road, whose preferred name now is the Silk Routes because of the multiple ways one could travel.



The Silk Routes included a large network of strategically located trading posts, markets and thoroughfares designed to streamline the transport, exchange, distribution and storage of goods. Trade caravans travelled between the Greco-Roman, and later European cities, to the Mediterranean coast of Syria, across the Syrian Desert, sometimes down the Tigris or Euphrates River, on to India and China and back again.

Trade along the so-called Silk Routes economic belt included not just silk threads and fabrics, silk worms, and mulberry trees to feed the worms, but also fruits and vegetables, livestock, grain, leather and hides, tools, religious objects, artwork, precious stones and metals, gunpowder, paper, and—perhaps more importantly—language, culture, religious beliefs, philosophy and science. It is believed that the silk industry in Syria is a result of this exchange.

Because of its strategic importance, several empires fought for then ruled Syria during these early centuries, including the Babylonian, Persian, Greek, and Roman empires. Muslim Arab armies—some led by the Prophet Muhammad (the founder of Islam)—invaded Syria in the A.D. 600s. The Ottoman Empire, or what’s now Turkey, seized power in the 16th century. They didn’t allow trade with China, so the Silk Routes effectively ended and European traders had to take a sea route around Africa. This also encouraged exploration of a Western route to China.

France took over the country in 1920, after World War I. Finally, after nearly 30 years of French occupation, Syria declared independence in 1946. Syria and Egypt united to form what was called the United Arab Republic in 1958, but the countries split apart after just three years.

Syria and other Middle Eastern nations fought several wars with Israel in the mid-20th century. In 1967, Israel took over land located at Syria’s southwest border, called the Golan Heights. The two countries continue to have border disputes today.

In 2010, a pro-democracy movement known as the Arab Spring began sweeping through countries in the Middle East and North Africa. Following Arab Spring protests in Syria over the rule of President Bashar al-Assad, a civil war broke out in the country in 2011. Assad’s forces used violence to try to stop the protests, but the protests—and the violence against them—continue under his presidency. The war has pitted different Muslim sects in the country against each other and has led to the death of more than 400,000 Syrians.

Millions of Syrians have fled the country since the war started to seek a better life elsewhere. The war has destroyed many of the country’s historical sites, including the city of Palmyra, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Resources:

<https://kids.nationalgeographic.com/geography/countries/article/syria>

<https://kids.britannica.com/students/article/Syria/277994>

<https://www.history.com/topics/ancient-middle-east/silk-road>

Stories of Syria's Textiles: Art and Heritage across Two Millennia

Glossary

Geographical/Historical Context

Aleppo: A city in Syria during the Ottoman empire located 220 miles north of Damascus. The city actively traded silk, linen, and other fabrics from as far as India in the east and Europe in the west.

Archaeology: The study of the human past using material remains. These remains can be any objects that people created, modified, or used, such as the textiles and sculptural reliefs found in this exhibition.

Damascus: The capital of the first Islamic caliphate (661-750), which was a key center of artistic production even in medieval times.

Dura-Europos: A Hellenistic, Parthian, and Roman border city built in 300 B.C. on an escarpment 90 meters (300 feet) above the southwestern bank of the Euphrates river. It is located in present-day Syria.

Cultural Heritage: The customs, practices, places, objects, artistic expressions, and values passed on from generation to generation that help to maintain a groups' sense of cultural identity.

Historical Context: Refers to the social, religious, economic, and political conditions that existed during a certain time and place. Historical context can help us understand what motivated people to behave the way they did and give us further insight into why events may have occurred in specific ways.

Palmyra: An ancient city in the eastern part of the Levant, now in the center of modern Syria. The city grew wealthy from trade caravans; the Palmyrenes became renowned as merchants who established colonies along the Silk Route and operated throughout the Roman Empire.

Refugee: A person who has fled their country because of war, violence, conflict, or persecution

Silk Route: A series of ancient trade networks (both land and sea) that connected China and the Far east with countries in Europe and the Middle East.

Stereograph: A stereograph is two photos taken from slightly different perspectives and mounted together on a card, which when viewed through a "stereoscope" the images merge to make the object appear to be three-dimensional.

Tradition: The handing down of statements, beliefs, legends, customs, information, etc., from generation to generation, especially by word of mouth or by practice.

Art and Textile-Related Terms

Abaya: Full length outer garment worn by some people in the Middle East. countries.

Aghabani: A traditional Syrian embroidered textile with elegant patterns inspired by the flora of the Middle East. Cities like Aleppo and Damascus were known for producing *aghabani* textiles.

Appliqué: This is stitchwork in which pieces of fabric are sewn together or stuck onto a large piece of fabric to form images/patterns/motifs.

Aqul: A head cord, an Arab man's clothing accessory. It is a cord, worn doubled, used to keep a head scarf in place on the wearer's head. It is traditionally worn by Arab men throughout much of the Middle East. The use of the *aqal* and head scarf is dated through antiquities. The ancient *aqal* was unique headwear that distinguished them from other nations.

Block printing: An art technique that uses hand-carved wood blocks and ink to create designs and images.

Embroidery: A method used for decorating fabrics using thread or yarn and needle.

Entari: The *entari*, or robe, was the primary garment of indoor dress for women in the Ottoman Empire for several centuries.

Fabric: Material produced by weaving, knitting, crocheting, spreading, or bonding textile fibers that may be used in the production of further goods.

Fiber: A thread or filament from which textile is formed—for example, thread or yarn.

Ikat: A general term for a form of resist dyeing technique in which the warp and weft threads are colored prior to the weaving of the cloth.

Installation Art: A genre of art characterized by immersive, large-scale, three-dimensional, mixed-media constructions, often designed for a specific place or for a temporary period of time.

Linen: A textile made from the fibers of the flax plant. Linen is very strong and absorbent and dries faster than cotton. Because of these properties, linen is comfortable to wear in hot weather and is valued for use in garments. Linen textiles can be made from flax plant fiber, yarn, as well as woven and knitted.

Motif: A recurring fragment, theme, or pattern that appears in a work of art or textile.

Pattern: The repetition of an element (or elements) in a work.

Pigments: Natural substances that produce color. Pigments most often seen in our exhibition were derived from local indigo plants (blues), madder roots (dark red to orange), and kermes insects (crimson red), and pomegranate (yellow).

Plangi: A technique of cloth decoration in which a woven fabric is bunched or bound before it is dyed.

Quilted weave: A quilted weave is when fabrics are layered, consisting of two cloths (textiles) that encase a filling and are stitched together to form a puffy unit.

Relief: A sculptural method in which the sculpted pieces remain attached to a solid background of the same material.

Resist Dye: A traditional method of dyeing textiles with patterns. Methods are used to "resist" or prevent the dye from reaching all the cloth, thereby creating a pattern on the cloth.

Reverse Appliqué: For reverse applique, the fabric is layered and the top fabric is cut away and stitched in place to reveal the design.

Silk: A natural protein fiber, some forms of which can be woven into textiles. The protein fiber of silk is composed mainly of fibroin and is produced by certain insect larvae to form cocoons. The best-known silk is obtained from the cocoons of the larvae of the mulberry silkworm *Bombyx mori* reared in captivity.

Stola: Traditional ancient Roman garment worn by men and women, that usually went over the toga or tunic.

Symbol: A design or an object that represents something else.

Textile: An umbrella term that includes various fiber-based materials, including fibers, yarns, filaments, threads, different fabric types.

Thob: A pullover dress with triangular shaped sleeves.

Tunic: A loose garment, typically sleeveless and reaching to the wearer's knees, as worn in ancient Greece and Rome.

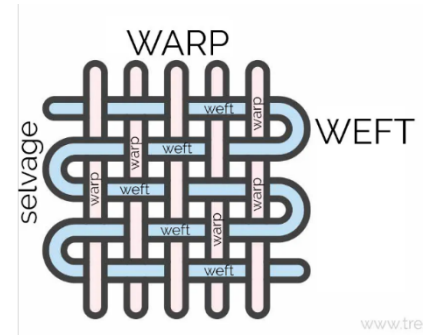
Wool: The textile fiber obtained from sheep and other mammals, especially goats, rabbits, and camelids. The term may also refer to inorganic materials, such as mineral wool and glass wool, that have properties similar to animal wool.

TEXTILE WEAVING BASICS

Warp: is the lengthwise threads on a fabric loom. These threads lie parallel and are stationary. They are the support network for the weft.

Weft: is the horizontal threads that are threaded over and under the warp threads. A single thread of yarn that goes across the warp is known as a pick.

Selvage: is the "self-finished" edge of a piece of fabric which keeps it from unraveling and fraying.

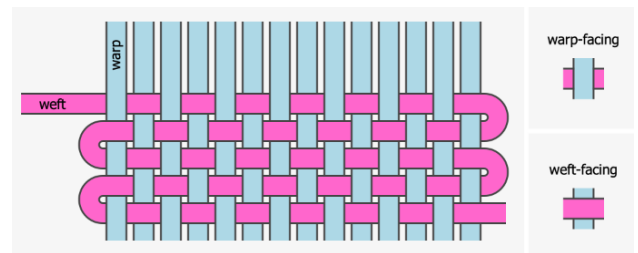


Plain weave: is executed by interlacing warps and wefts. Each successive pass of the weft thread goes just under and over the warp thread.

Weaving techniques related to the ancient textiles on view:

Brocade: is a patterned, woven fabric, and unlike embroidered fabric, the patterns in brocade are woven into the fabric. Brocade is added only in specific areas to create patterns rather than being continuously woven throughout the fabric.

Weft-faced fabric: is characterized by the weft yarn being the only yarn that is visible once woven. This is achieved in tapestry weaving when the weaver passes the weft through the warp yarn (bring the weft over two warp threads and under one), and packs down the weft to cover the woven warp yarn completely. Weft-faced weaving tends to be stiffer than other types of weaving and is usually meant as decorative and not wearable art. Most woven wall-hangings are weft-faced weavings.

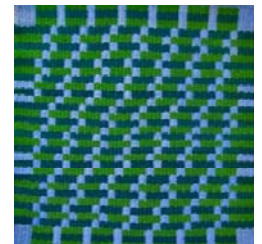


Warp-faced twill weave: In warp-faced compound twill, two warps are used, a weft on the surface of the cloth, and an inner warp. The outer weft floats on the surface of the weave to show the pattern or the ground color while the inner weft hides the warp strands of the other colors of the pattern. This weave structure preserves the clarity of patterns even in textiles with complex multi-color patterns.

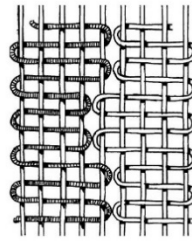


Compound weave: Any type of woven structure which involves more than two sets of elements - such as one (or more) warp sets, plus two (or more) weft sets, which are manipulated through different pathways to create a pattern.

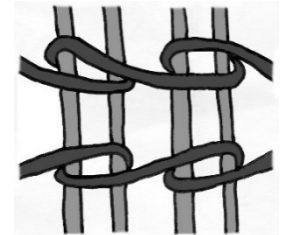
Taqueté is a complementary-weft structure usually used for sturdy pieces, especially rugs. The warp is spaced relatively far apart, and two wefts interlace so that one of them shows on the face in a block, the other on the back, or vice versa. Taqueté is a compound plain weave.



Slit-tapestry weaving: is a technique used in tapestry weaving that leaves an open slit between adjacent areas of color. This is the most common weaving technique used to create geometric and diagonal patterned kilims.



Soumak: is a type of flat weave, with a strong and thick weave, a smooth front face, and a ragged back. Its ancient origins are with weaving cultures in the Caucasus – from the Eastern Mediterranean and the adjacent areas of the Caucasus Mountains and Southwestern Turkmenistan. It is usually woven with supplementary weft threads as continuous supports.



Weft-wrapping: is a technique in which "extra-weft" threads are wrapped around warp threads in a variety of directions: horizontal, diagonal, or vertical, adding rich textural diversity. An example of weft wrapping in the exhibition can be seen here, in the Tunic Decoration.

Tunic Decoration with Alexander the Hunter on Horseback, seventh century Syria. Wool, linen; eccentric weft, soumak, weft-wrapping, slit-tapestry weave. 13 1/4 x 12 3/4 in. (seen in our exhibition)



Eccentric weaving: Eccentric passes are woven areas or passes that run up, over and down another shape and then back. The wefts are not perpendicular to the warp, but move at an angle to the warp, thus they are called eccentric.

Kilim: A type of weave, technically weft-faced plain weave, in which the horizontal weft strands are pulled tightly downward so that they hide the vertical warp strands. When the end of a color boundary is reached, the weft yarn is wound back from the boundary point. An example of a Kilim in the exhibition is shown here:

Kilim, detail, probably from Aleppo, late 19th–early 20th century. Cotton and wool; slit-tapestry weave; brocaded. 108 x 61 in. (seen in our exhibition)

