

THE ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO

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RICH VARIETY OF RARE INDONESIAN TEXTILES

ON VIEW AT THE ART INSTITUTE

The E. M. Bakwin Collection Reveals

History, Iconography, and Traditions of Indonesian Culture

Exhibition on View through March 2, 2008

The Art Institute of Chicago presents a rare, in-depth look at Indonesian culture and tradition through striking textile pieces, and investigates the sources, motifs, and uses of some of Asia's most spectacular art forms. On display for the first time in the museum, the *E.M. Bakwin Collection of Indonesian Textiles* is on view through **March 2, 2008**, in **Galleries 108–109**.

The magnificent Bakwin textile collection—two-thirds of which come from western Indonesia, including the islands of Bali, Java, and Sumatra—became part of the Art Institute permanent textile collection in late 2002. The exhibition of nearly 50 works also represents examples from the Eastern islands of Babar, Flores, Lembata, Savu, Sumba, Timor, Borneo, and Sulawesi.

A textile's major purpose might be to illustrate ethnic identity or descent, to offer spiritual protection, to act as a link to the gods, to announce the wearer's status, or to strengthen social alliances. Each piece of the E. M. Bakwin Collection can be read as an image of the local culture that produced it and is full of information about political alliances, cosmic belief, venerated customs, technical know-how, social structures, trade links, and sometimes even historical events. The objects in this exhibition represent the finest examples of Indonesian's textiles and evoke the great cultural complexity of this crossroads region, which was shaped by influences from China, India, Europe, and the Middle East.

In the Indonesian Archipelago, with its more than 17,000 islands, weavers have long used many of the world's known techniques of textile production, and almost every ethnic group has a legend that tells how the art of weaving was brought about by a celestial being. Traditionally,

women were in charge of all the stages of the process: collecting plant fibers and forming them into threads, dyeing with natural substances, installing the loom, patterning through weaving, resist-dyeing techniques, and other means of decoration.

Research accumulated in the last few decades reveals the Bakwin collection to be a comprehensive assortment of textile traditions. In addition to the traditional works from western and eastern Indonesia, the collection also includes examples of recent manufacture, which along with their antique counterparts, demonstrate some of the transitions that the textiles have undergone in recent history. As a whole, the E. M. Bakwin collection offers an excellent window into the history of textiles as well as bearing evidence of the Indonesian Archipelago's long history of foreign influences and cultural change.

The *E.M. Bakwin Collection of Indonesian Textiles* is accompanied by a lavishly illustrated issue of the Art Institute's journal, *Museum Studies*. This beautiful volume features essays written by Indonesian textile expert Brigitte Khan Majlis, curator of the textile department at the Rautenstrauch-Joest-Museum of Ethnography, Cologne, Germany. Generously illustrated, *The Art of Indonesian Textiles* also features fascinating contextual photographs and engaging entries on each of the featured objects.

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FALL/WINTER HOURS:

10:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m. Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday

10:30 a.m.–8:00 p.m. Thursday. Target Free Evenings after 5:00 p.m.

10:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m. Saturday, Sunday.

Closed Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day, and New Year's Day.

Please check www.artic.edu before your visit.

Admission: Adults, \$12.00; children 12 and over, students, and seniors, \$7.00; children under 12 free; members always free. Target Free Evenings are free to all, except for certain special exhibitions that may require full or extra admission fee. City of Chicago residents with Chicago Public Library cards can borrow a "Check Us Out" card from any library branch for free general admission to the nine members of Museums in the Park, including the Art Institute of Chicago. To reach the Art Institute on the World Wide Web, contact us at: <http://www.artic.edu/aic>

The Art Institute of Chicago is a museum in Chicago's Grant Park, located across from Millennium Park.