



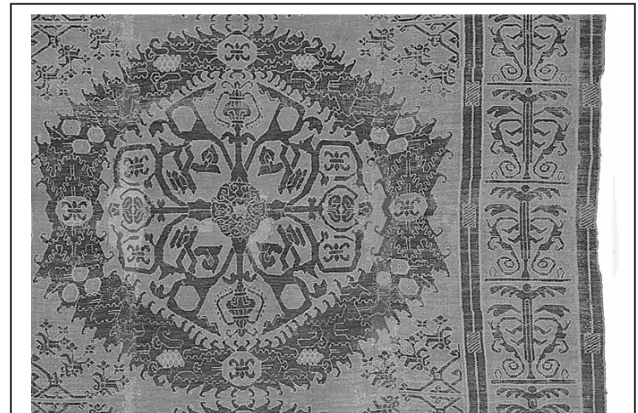
THE TEXTILE MUSEUM

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**“Carpets of Andalusia” Features
World’s Finest Collection of Spanish Carpets
March 8 – August 10, 2003**

November 15, 2002, Washington, DC — *Carpets of Andalusia*, an exhibition of 15th and 16th century Spanish carpets, will be on view at The Textile Museum in Washington, DC from March 8 to August 10, 2003. The exhibition will include almost two dozen Spanish carpets, many of which were collected by Textile Museum founder George Hewitt Myers in the early part of the 20th century. The carpets of Andalusia are among the oldest preserved carpets of the Islamic world, of which The Textile Museum has one of the world’s finest and most comprehensive collections. *Carpets of Andalusia* is curated by Carol Bier, Research Associate, Islamic Textiles, The Textile Museum.



Mid-16th Century Spanish Carpet (detail)
The Textile Museum R44.3.3
Acquired by George Hewitt Myers in 1940

Woven in Spain during a time of great political transition, the 15th and 16th century carpets featured in the exhibition reflect a unique blending of Muslim, Christian, Jewish, and indigenous Iberian traditions. Working under Christian rule, Muslim weavers incorporated both Islamic and Christian motifs into their carpet designs. Spanish carpets of the 15th and 16th century feature hallmarks of Islamic art – complex surface decoration, interlaced geometric strapwork, stylized Arabic script and floral forms – side-by-side with Christian figurative forms such as heraldic emblems and coats of arms. Spanish carpets are also known for their brilliant colors, which attest to the skill of Jewish dyers. Further influences evident in Spanish carpets include Roman pavements,

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indigenous Iberian motifs and designs found in European Gothic silks. The results are dynamic carpet designs that feature a unique blend of cultural traditions.

One of the most intriguing Spanish carpets featured in the exhibition is shown on the previous page. It features a delicate white and blue field, which testifies to the influence of Islamic artistic traditions, as well as five medallions containing Christian motifs associated with death and resurrection. The four corner medallions contain skull and crossbones, and the center medallion features a phoenix rising with the Latin inscriptions EX MEMET RENASCOR (*from myself I am reborn*) and VICTORIA DOCTORIS (*victory to the learned*). A similar carpet featuring skull and crossbones is in the collection of London's Victoria & Albert Museum.

While the exact origins of rug-weaving in Spain remain unknown, it is widely-accepted that there was a well-established tradition there by the 11th century. The name Andalusia comes from *al-Andalus*, the Arabic name for the Iberian peninsula. Arab and Berber troops crossed the narrow body of water between Morocco and Spain, called the Straits of Gibraltar after the Arab general who led the advance. Muslim rulers held parts of Spain until the final Christian reconquest in 1492 when Muslims and Jews were expelled or forced to convert. In the 15th century, many Muslims and Jews from Spain settled in North Africa or traveled east to be welcomed at the capital of the imperial Ottoman Empire in Istanbul.

The Spanish Knot

While Spanish carpets exhibit a blend of cultural traditions and draw on divergent design sources, they share a unique structural feature known as the "Spanish knot." The Spanish knot is a single-warp knot – the knot or pile is created by wrapping wool around a single warp. In all other carpet traditions, knots are wrapped around paired warps. In the Spanish knot, each knot is wrapped around alternate warps in successive rows. This staggering of knots on even and odd warps allows the weaver to create a relatively light-weight carpet with complex designs while using a minimum of raw materials.

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Founded 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 traditional societies 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 over 17,000 textiles and carpets and an unparalleled library, The Textile Museum is a unique and valuable resource for people locally, nationally and internationally. For further information, call 202-667-0441.

For more information or photographs, please contact Julia Neubauer at 202-667-0441, ext. 17. The Textile Museum is a private, non-profit museum open Monday through Saturday 10:00 am to 5:00 pm and Sunday 1:00 pm to 5:00 pm. Admission is free; suggested donation is \$5.00.