



ZALE :: LIPSHY UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL

A teaching and referral hospital at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center

News Release

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****Asian textile collection featured
in new hospital

The new Zale Lipshy University Hospital, Dallas, will be the home of what may be the largest collection of traditional Asian textiles in a public building in the country, say collectors who assembled the works.

Approximately 300 textiles, funded by a gift from the Eugene McDermott Foundation, will hang as art throughout the hospital, including the patient rooms. Carol Robbins, curator of textiles at the Dallas Museum of Art, headed the project.

The art consists of silk and cotton weavings, some containing gold threads, and other pieces that are beaded or trimmed with shells, as well as bark cloth head mantles. The textiles range in age from approximately late 18th century thru mid 20th century.

Included in the collection are ceremonial cloths, sarongs, headdresses, shoulder cloths and wall hangings. The textiles--intricately designed and using traditional dyes--vary from small, napkin-sized pieces to some 6 feet or more in height or width. The majority of the textiles come from Indonesia, while others are from

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such countries as India, Pakistan, Laos, Japan, Sarawak, the Philippines, China, Afghanistan, Bhutan, Cambodia, Thailand and Uzbekistan.

Mrs. Eugene McDermott, a Dallas patron of both medical research and the arts, originated the idea for the Asian collection. She played a critical role in the earlier acquisition of the Dallas Museum of Art's well-known Indonesian textile collection. However, she stressed, "It was Carol Robbins who made it a reality."

Robbins, in turn, credits a number of people who helped prepare and exhibit the textiles. Wooden pieces used to strengthen the individual textiles were designed by experts at the Los Angeles Museum of Art. These "strainers" serve as backing for the textiles and were made by housing contractor Richard Hunt and his wife, Claudia, of Paris, Texas.

Nancy Wyatt, a Connecticut textile conservator who worked with the Hunts in Paris, Texas, and architect Enslie O. Oglesby Jr. designed the finished mounting of each textile. Wyatt began the delicate job of stitching the textiles to the strainers, which were covered with tightly stretched navy or beige sailcloth. The architects for University Hospital are The Oglesby Group of Dallas and Page Southerland Page of Austin, Texas.

Robbins soon realized that one person--even a professional of Wyatt's caliber--wouldn't be able to complete such a big job in time for the Nov. 10 hospital dedication. She then called on the group of volunteers who help her prepare textiles for showings at the museum.

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Even with the extra hands, the job was too large, so the volunteers were hired to work long days and weeks. The workers--all textile artists--were responsible for cleaning, pressing and patching damaged textiles. Some of the works required the cooperation of two seamstresses at once, and it was sometimes necessary for the workers to wear white gloves to protect certain pieces from the natural oil of their hands.

Natural fibers, mostly cotton, were used to stitch the textiles. Some threads were taken from the ravelings of the original textiles and some came from former museum projects. Margaret Anne Cullum, a museum volunteer who headed the sewing project, said that she used thread from her grandmother's old sewing room. Old millinery needles and surgical needles also were used.

Cullum said each textile presented a different restoration problem. Sarongs and tubular skirts were especially difficult because they had to be undone and stretched for hanging. These garments were "rump-sprung" and tended to "pooch," she commented wryly. A chieftain's bark headdress also caused problems when it would not lie flat.

The textiles will be encased in glare-free plexiglass shadow boxes for protection. Although most of the textiles will hang individually, an arrangement of large pieces will hang in the lobby. Staff members of the Dallas Museum of Art will hang the weavings. Working with them on placement is Linda Berne of The Oglesby Group.

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Robbins said that the project, which has been in the making for about four years, is very exciting. The textiles bought at the beginning have increased in value, and there are no longer pieces comparable to many of the oldest and rarest acquisitions purchased early in the project.

A studio arts major from Trinity University and the University of Colorado, Robbins has been working with textiles since 1976.

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