

REEDS & WOOL

Patterned Screens
of Central Asia



Reeds & Wool: Patterned Screens of Central Asia

Exhibit Concept *Reeds & Wool* features 19th and 20th century screens made by nomadic Kyrgyz women as traditional furnishings for a yurt dwelling. The screens and their story were largely unknown outside of Kyrgyzstan while it was part of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (1920-1991). Integral to the exhibit is a complete installation system with color photographs that provide cultural context, interpretive text, and object labels. The easily assembled modular system fully supports the artifacts and will adapt to multiple exhibit configurations.

Exhibit Content The exhibition contains 11 Kyrgyz screens from the Sommer-Krieger Collection: long *kanat chiy* are placed between the yurt's lattice frame and its outer felt covering, helping to insulate against winter cold; *ashkana chiy* function as space dividers, separating the central fire and cooking area from the women's area where food and utensils are stored. The screens are made by wrapping unspun dyed wool around tallgrass stems according to a pattern retained only in memory. The full design emerges when the reeds are twined together with binding cords.

The motifs of Kyrgyz reed screens are similar to patterns seen on flatwoven kilims, mosaic felt rugs, and silk ikat fabrics made by Central Asian nomads. Some scholars have suggested that Turkish tribal carpets have their origins in the design and function of these reed screens. Ten pile woven and felted textiles from Central Asia are included for design comparison. The technique is explained through a hands-on reproduction "weaving" frame.

Exhibit Team Guest Curator Dr. John L. Sommer of Fremont, California, was a member of the board of directors of the Textile Arts Council, San Francisco, a trustee of the Textile Museum, Washington, DC, and president of the San Francisco Bay Area Rug Society. *Reeds & Wool* was produced by Kauffman Museum whose projects have received awards from the American Association of Museums, American Association for State and Local History, Mountain-Plains Museums Association and Kansas Museums Association.

Exhibit Tour *Reeds & Wool* is available to galleries with monitored access for 8-12 week venues. The fee of \$7,000 includes wall-to-wall insurance, a Kauffman Museum staff person to assist with installation, and one copy of *The Kyrgyz and Their Reed Screens* by John L. Sommer (plus consignment of additional books for resale). Host is responsible for transportation cost one way.



For Further Information

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