

Box 951549, Los Angeles, California 90095-1549  
phone 310/825.4288 fax 310/206.7007  
[www.fowler.ucla.edu](http://www.fowler.ucla.edu)

**Rowanne Henry**  
[rowanne.henry@arts.ucla.edu](mailto:rowanne.henry@arts.ucla.edu)  
310/825.4288

For Immediate Release  
December 17, 2015

**FOWLER IN FOCUS: *Spirits in the Loom***  
***Religion and Design in Lao-Tai Textiles***  
January 10–May 1, 2016



*Fowler in Focus: Spirits in the Loom: Religion and Design in Lao-Tai Textiles* features 30 ceremonial and domestic textiles that showcase the diversity of imagery, interpretations and uses of weavings from the region. The exhibition opens on January 10 and will run through May 1, 2016.

On display are curtains and shaman headcloths that incorporate naturalistic and mythologized motifs, as well as tube skirts and shoulder cloths that feature skilled weaving and unique regional dye techniques. The exhibition includes three exceptional examples of large funeral banners, one of which is 30 feet long.

The textiles were collected in northern and central Laos and in neighboring areas across the border in Vietnam — a thickly forested region that is home to several groups of Tai peoples. The region's weaving traditions incorporate imagery from Buddhist and Hindu mythology and shamanic spiritualism. These motifs often work in tandem to imbue Tai textiles with protective powers, which are believed to shield those who own or wear them.

From any given motif — a Buddha, serpent (*ngueak*), or elephant (*saang*) — Tai observers may spin multiple layers of interpretation blending tradition and imaginative artistic expression, on both mundane and mythological levels. This fluidity enables the designs to record cultural change and regional variation, as well as to act as carriers of tradition.

The textiles were collected by Ellison Banks Findly, professor of comparative religion at Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut, who donated them to the Fowler Museum in 2014. Findly also recorded the stories and interpretations of the women who wove the cloths. These interpretations acknowledge that individual weavers and shamans have different caches of knowledge that evolve over time. *Spirits in the Loom* celebrates Findly's generous donation of these textiles and showcases the dynamic nature of Lao-Tai textile traditions.

**The Fowler Museum at UCLA** is one of the country's most respected institutions devoted to exploring the arts and cultures of Africa, Asia and the Pacific, and the Americas. The Fowler is open Wednesdays through Sundays, from noon to 5 p.m.; and on Thursdays, from noon until 8 p.m. The museum is closed Mondays and Tuesdays. The Fowler Museum, part of UCLA Arts, is located in the north part of the UCLA campus. Admission is free. Parking is available for a maximum of \$12 in Lot 4. For more information, the public may call 310 825-4361 or visit [fowler.ucla.edu](http://fowler.ucla.edu)

Image: Textile with a protective image of a mother tiger. Tai peoples, Nghe An Province, Vietnam. Fowler Museum X2014.11.58; Gift of Ellison Banks Findly.