

SPENCER MUSEUM OF ART

THE UNIVERSITY OF KANSAS

For immediate release

May 10, 2004

Quilts! Imported Fabrics, American Treasures opens May 15

May 15—Sept. 26, 2004

North Balcony Gallery

MEDIA CONTACT

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PROMOTIONAL IMAGE ATTACHED (caption info at end of release)

Lawrence, KS—The Spencer Museum is pleased to announce the opening of *Quilts! Imported Fabrics, American Treasures*, an exhibition guest curated by renowned quilt historian Barbara Brackman. Featuring quilts from the Spencer's permanent collection, the exhibition considers the role of imported fabric in the history of American quilt making. *Quilts! Imported Fabrics, American Treasures* will be on view in the North Balcony Gallery from May 15 through Sept. 26.

Quilts grow from the fabric available, making them truly an art of the found object—the object being yard goods. Unless she can dye, print, or weave her own, the quilt maker relies on what is fashionable, practical and still on the shelves. In the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth, American quilters looked to foreign countries for their cottons. The United States had the raw material—the cotton—but not until after the Civil War did American textile manufacturers produce cotton prints equal to those printed abroad.

After the Revolutionary War, most American mills focused on making simple cotton cloth, bleached, plain-colored or woven into checks and plaids. In the early nineteenth century, New England mills began to specialize in calicoes, simple small-scale prints good for everyday dresses. Quilters who wanted fabrics with more detail, more color and more style paid a premium for European fabrics.

Quilts are often considered a distinctly American folk art, but these quilts illustrate the link between the American quilt maker and the fabric and dye mills of the old country. The exhibition features 15 quilts from the Spencer's collection of more than 200. The quilts on view were

selected to highlight cottons and dyes imported from English, Scottish, French, Dutch, German and Swiss mills.

In addition to the quilts from the Spencer's collection, four contemporary quilts by esteemed local quilters Brackman, Georgann Eglinski and Roseanne Smith will be on view in the Study Gallery. These quilts all employ recent fabrics that are reproductions of the antique, imported ones featured in the exhibition. This exhibition also celebrates the upcoming publication of Brackman's newest book, *America's Printed Fabrics 1770-1890* (C & T Publishing), which inspired the theme of this exhibition.

Programming for *Quilts! Imported Fabrics, American Treasures*:

- Children's Art Appreciation Class: "American Quilts," June 5, 10-30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. \$. Pre-registration required. Contact Karen Gerety at 864-0137 or kcgerety@ku.edu
- Gallery Talk: Barbara Brackman, June 10, 7 p.m., SMA Auditorium.
Barbara Brackman, honorary curator of the Spencer quilt collection, and author of the forthcoming book America's Printed Fabrics, 1770-1890, will discuss 19th-century fashions in cotton fabrics and how they affected American quilt style. She'll relate clothing, quilts and fabrics from her own collection to the quilts on exhibit.
- Gallery Talk: Quilters Georgann Eglinski and Rosanne Smith on their work, June 17, 7 p.m. Study Gallery.

For more information on these Spencer events, contact Kristina Mitchell, acting curator of education, 864-0137.

IMAGE INFORMATION

Artist Unknown

United States

Patchwork quilt, Rolling Star, hexagon & star design, 1870

Cotton

Gift of Miss Clara Gillham, 0000.0036

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Also find the Spencer...

- On the Web: www.spencerart.ku.edu
- E-mail: spencerart@ku.edu

Gallery hours

Tues., Wed., Fri., & Saturday 10 a.m.–5 p.m.

Thurs. 10a.m.–9 p.m.

Sun. Noon–5 p.m.

Closed Monday

- Free parking in Lot 91 after 5 p.m. on weekdays and all day weekends, excepting home football games.
- Parking garage adjacent to Kansas Union is \$1 per hour weekdays, free on Saturdays and Sundays (but unavailable on home football games).