

Weaving treated as art in new National Gallery exhibit



A Ukrainian tapestry made in 1930 by Mrs. Ktory of Hairy Hill, Alberta.

The first exhibition to treat Canadian weaving as an art form is on display at the National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa until November 22.

The Comfortable Arts: Traditional Spinning and Weaving in Canada was organized by Dorothy Burnham, an expert in the field of Canadian textiles, an author and researcher. The travelling exhibition, which illustrates a wide variety of Canadian weavings embracing the entire country, comprises weaving from the early eighteenth century until the 1940s.

Representative selection

For the National Gallery's exhibition, Mrs. Burnham has selected a representative exhibit of significant textiles and related objects such as spinning wheels and graphics. The 162 textiles and 41 other items begin with those of Canada's native peoples and continue on with those of early pioneers and settlers in both the east and west to reflect a varied textile tradition in Canada.

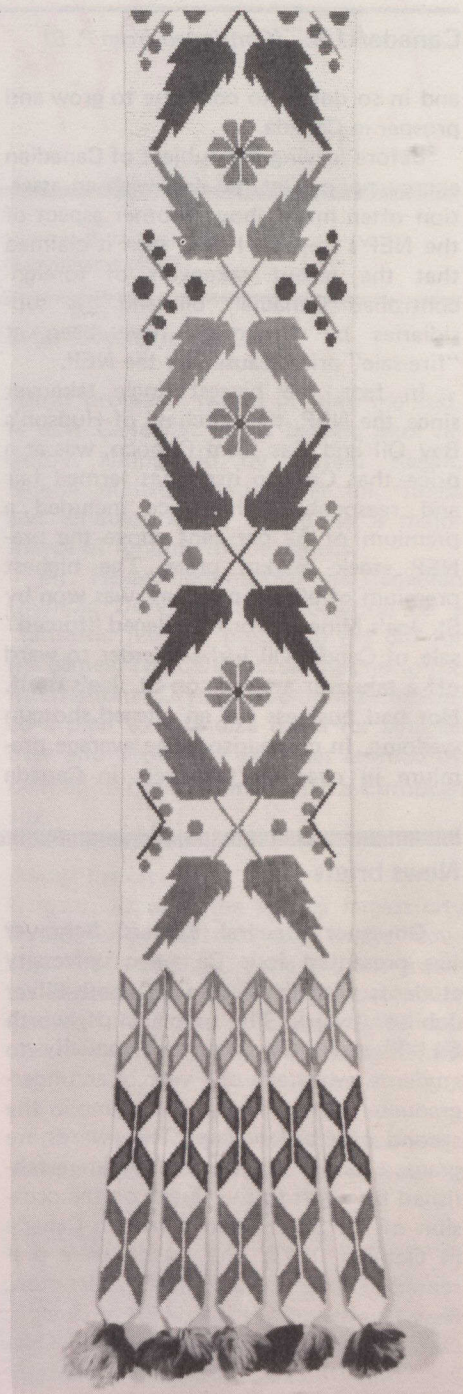
"Life was not easy for those who settled this land, but even while performing the mundane tasks of spinning and weaving for the essential purposes of covering the body and warming the pioneer bed, there was a reaching out for beauty...a well-spaced border was added to a plain blanket, heavy woollen work clothes were made of carefully designed checks rather than of plain sheep's gray, a subtle pattern was worked into the weave of a shawl..." said Mrs. Burnham.

Textiles being exhibited have been drawn from the collection of the National Gallery of Canada and the National Museum of Man. Other works have been borrowed from both public and private collections across Canada. These include: the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto; Musée du Québec; the "New Village" Museum of the Kootenay, Doukhobor Historical Society, Castlegar, British Columbia; Musée de Saint Boniface, Manitoba; Doon Pioneer Village, Kitchener, Ontario; and Newfoundland Museum, St. John's.

After its showing in Ottawa, the exhibition will travel next year to the MacDonald Stewart Art Centre, Guelph,



Doukhobor carpet, c. 1925 by Helen Hancheroff, Brilliant, British Columbia.



A neck band with beads was woven by a Cree Indian at Lake Athapapuskow on the Saskatchewan, Manitoba border, provided by the Museum of Natural History, Regina, Saskatchewan.

Ontario; Norman Mackenzie Art Gallery, Regina, Saskatchewan; Vancouver Centennial Museum; and Confederation Centre Art Gallery, Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island.

In connection with the exhibit, the National Gallery has published a book entitled, *The Comfortable Arts: Traditional Spinning and Weaving in Canada*, by Dorothy Burnham.

National Gallery of Canada photos