



Press Release

Symbols of Identity: IKAT Textiles from Indonesia

December 12, 2025

The University Museum and Art Gallery, The University of Hong Kong, is honoured to present *Symbols of Identity: IKAT Textiles from Indonesia* a highly focused exhibition highlighting the artistic virtuosity of weavers across the Indonesian archipelago. Building upon the Museum's presentation of IKAT Textiles of the Indonesian Archipelago in 2017, and two new publication projects, including *Noble Virtuosity: Hidden Asymmetry in Ikat Textiles from Sumba*, the display reveals forms of asymmetric design that scholars so far have consistently overlooked or explicitly negated in the past. Today, investigations of early specimens reveal that high class weavers from these islands excelled in hiding tiny visual elements that disrupted expected symmetry in a way that was made to be overlooked. They exploited insights in the way we process visual information by simulating regularity, while deceitfully tying in elements that break it. Thereby they were so successful in their deceit that in academia it remained unnoticed for over a century.

The opening of the exhibition was held at UMAG on December 11. Officiating guests included the collector and author Dr Peter ten Hoopen, and UMAG Director Dr Florian Knothe.

The creative virtuosity of these highly skilled artists was a product of the islands' highly competitive culture, suffused by an ancient headhunting ethos. As the weavers strove to outsmart each other, naturally they guarded their repertoire of tricks. This secrecy increased the social distance between the nobility, commoners and slaves, reinforcing the islands' feudal societal structure. Only high-caste initiates would even begin to look for hidden devices.

The exhibition displays the dyers' virtuosity, as well as the playfulness and the element





of ‘flow’ that inspired their work. This ode to the artists’ ingenuity aims to create a new global class of initiates and to inspire even greater admiration for their art. We thank the HKU Museum Society for supporting this remarkable exhibition.





Details of the Exhibition

Period: December 12, 2025 (Friday) to January 15, 2026 (Thursday)

Opening Hours:

9:30 am–6 pm (Tuesday to Saturday)

1 pm–6 pm (Sunday)

Closed on Mondays, University and Public Holidays

Venue: Study Gallery, G/F, Fung Ping Shan Building, UMAG, HKU, 90 Bonham Road, Pokfulam, Hong Kong

Tel/Email: (852) 3917 5500 (General Enquiry) / museum@hku.hk

Admission: Free admission In light of the HKU Tourist Flow Management Scheme, please enter via the ground floor of the Fung Ping Shan Building

Website: <https://umag.hku.hk/exhibition/symbols-of-identity-ikat-textiles-from-indonesia/>

Connect with UMAG on Social Media:

Facebook: http://bit.ly/umag_facebook

Instagram: @umag_hku, #UMAG, #IKATTextile

YouTube: http://bit.ly/umag_youtube

LinkedIn: http://bit.ly/umag_linkedin

rednote: [香港大学美术博物馆 UMAG](#)

About UMAG

UMAG was founded in 1953 as the Fung Ping Shan Museum. It was originally established as the Fung Ping Shan Library in 1932 in honour of its benefactor. For more information on UMAG, please click [here](#).

Media Enquiries

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Captions

For more images and exhibit captions, please click [here](#).

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