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SIMMONS COLLEGE TRUSTMAN ART GALLERY PRESENTS
Skirting Identity: Women and Weaving in Laos, Thailand and Myanmar

BOSTON (February 18, 2015) — Simmons College presents *Skirting Identity: Women and Weaving in Laos, Thailand and Myanmar*, an exhibition curated by Simmons Professor Margaret Hanni, Ph.D. from March 17- April 16, at the Trustman Art Gallery, located on the fourth floor, Main College Building, 300 the Fenway in Boston. A reception from 5-7 PM. will be held on Wednesday, March 18. The exhibit and reception are free and open to the public.

Skirting Identity: Women and Weaving in Laos, Thailand and Myanmar is the fruit of two sabbaticals Professor Hanni spent visiting Southeast Asia. This exhibit is a scholarly and visually rich examination of how traditional textiles create a narrative of gender roles, status and wealth. These gorgeous labor-intensive fabrics in cotton and silk are integrated into everyday life in multiple ways. The exhibit at the Trustman is focused primarily on textiles worn by women.

The exhibit documents a way of life in danger of vanishing. Traditional weavers are barraged by modern manufacturing methods. Young weavers wear mass-market clothing while creating textiles in the old way. Yet, as Professor Hanni explains, “hand woven textiles remain crucial to cultural identity, for both genders, but especially for the women who create them. *Skirting Identity* considers the role textiles play in displaying and transmitting personal, social and spiritual identity in communities within Laos, Thailand and Myanmar.”

Professor Hanni helps us unpack meaning in both the symbols and the types of textiles – what clothes woven and worn by women convey in and to their cultures. We learn how these textiles mark significant passages in life, such as courtship and marriage, the protection of newborns and to honor the dead. The religious and cultural symbols woven into the garments are explored, with historical photographs and background provided for nuance and understanding. But without doubt it is the textiles that steal the show. The intricacy of the weaving, and their evolving place in a global marketplace allows us to celebrate tradition but also to inquire how it will persist.

The Gallery continues its Lunchtime Lecture series on March 24 from 12:30-1:30 with a panel discussion with Professors Margaret Hanni, Jyoti Puri and Sarah Leonard delving into societal roles both traditional and contemporary, and our ideas about how clothing constructs identity.

In addition, a performance and discussion of traditional Tibetan music by Penpa Tsering, a Massachusetts Cultural Council Traditional Artist, will inaugurate our new *Music in the Gallery* series on April 7 from 2:00-3:15 pm. The exhibit and concert are supported respectively by the Simmons College President's Fund for Faculty Excellence and the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences.

Trustman Gallery hours are 10 AM- 4:30 PM, Monday through Friday. The gallery is free, open to the public and wheelchair accessible. For more information, contact Marcia Lomedico at 617-521-2268, or visit the Trustman Art Gallery website at www.simmons.edu/trustman and like us on Facebook.

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