FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NEW EXHIBIT AT AMERICAN SWEDISH INSTITUTE HIGHLIGHTS EVOLUTION OF FINNISH TEXTILE ART AND DESIGNERS

SHOW KICKS OFF MINNEAPOLIS SUMMER CELEBRATION OF FINNISH AND FINNISH-AMERICAN CULTURE CULMINATING IN FINNFEST 2014

The Living Tradition of Ryijy – Finnish Rugs and their Makers
May 31 – November 2, 2014

FULL IMAGE GALLERY AVAILABLE AT ASImn.org/finnish

The Living Tradition of Ryijy – Finnish Rugs and their Makers showcases the 300 year history and evolution of the ryijy rug across Finland. Once reserved for 16th century production of utilitarian cloth and bed covers, the hand-knotted craft has incorporated innovative techniques and experimental fabrics resulting in some of the world’s best textile art for homes and public spaces. The Living Tradition of Ryijy comes to ASI from the Savaria Museum in Budapest, Hungary and is curated from the private collection of Dr. Tuomas Sopanen, the largest collector of ryijy in Finland. The show is exhibited at the American Swedish Institute from May 31- November 2, 2014.

Coinciding with the 150th anniversary of the arrival of Finnish immigrants to the U.S., The Living Tradition of Ryijy is part of a Twin Cities-wide celebration of Finnish heritage and culture: FinnFest 2014 (Aug. 7-10, 2014). The Living Tradition of Ryijy at ASI is one of three Finnish focused exhibits at key Minneapolis cultural and arts institutions this summer including Minneapolis Institute of Arts and Textile Center.

Adapted from the Swedish word rya, the Finnish ryijy for piled rugs. The ryijy tradition began with Finnish women creating warm, bed covers to keep their families warm during the cold Finnish nights or a rug used in wedding celebrations by keeping the couple’s feet warm on the cold Finnish church floors. The traditional rugs were made for everyday use and their designs echoed centuries-old Nordic motifs.

The craft evolved in the 19th century and by the turn of the 20th century, artists like Akseli Gallen-Kallela transformed the familiar medium of rugs to modern art with new and groundbreaking designs. Realism, mid-century modern designs, creative play with color and form, and experimental designs all found their place in the rugmakers new designs. As a place was made for ryijy rugs in the art world, the traditional craft of rugmaking was preserved by artists like Eva Brummer, known for
her cold and functionalistic style based only on watercolor sketches, while it was repurposed by artists like Tenka Issakainen, known for knotting beads, pieces of lace or small objects including guitars, in to her oversized work.

“As a gathering place for all people to share stories about craft and culture, ASI is excited to showcase the incredible and diverse living tradition of the Finnish ryijy,” said Scott Pollock, Director of Exhibits, Collections, and Programs. “The Swedish rya and Finnish ryijy textile traditions share a plethora of commonalities, as well as divergences. The exhibit showcases selections from ASI’s own collection that demonstrate the relationship between the Swedish rya rug and Finnish rijya rug. ASI is delighted to be able to celebrate these Finnish makers and the contributions of Finnish-Americans in conjunction with FinnFest 2014.”

In addition to The Living Tradition of Ryijy, ASI celebrates Finnish material and social culture through two related educational projects: Explore with Moomin in the ASI Family Gallery (June 7-Nov. 2, 2014) and the installation of sauna related activities throughout the summer. ASI and the Weavers Guild of Minnesota will offer a series of workshops inspired by Finnish textile design and ASI will offer a “Introduction to Finnish” language course for the first time in more than a decade.

**ARTIST IN RESIDENCE**

Siiri Korhonen will serve as ASI Artist-In-Residence from August 6-17, 2014. Korhonen is a Finnish textile artist and will offer on-site demonstrations of the process of ryijy rug making in the ASI galleries. A current student of the University of Helsinki’s Department of Teacher Education, Korhonen will share her insight and skills as a young, emerging textile artist with a focus on composition and innovative designs.

Korhonen will lead two “Nordic Encounters” (ASI’s exciting new program which puts local audiences together with leading contemporary artists or scholars from Sweden and the Nordic region) on Wednesday, August 6 (6:30 p.m.) and Saturday, August 16 (10:30 a.m.)

**ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

*The Living Tradition of Ryijy – Finnish Rugs and their Makers* is presented with the generous support from the Finnish Honorary Consulate and supported by Anita Jain.

**THE LIVING TRADITION OF RYIJY: FINNISH RUGS AND THEIR MAKERS KEY EVENTS**

ASI hosts a series of exhibit inspired events and workshops throughout the run of the show. Additional information is available at ASIMN.org

*OPENING WEEKEND* ASI After Hours Curator Cocktail Tour: Love & Rugs

Friday, May 30 – 6:30 p.m.

Be the first to see The Living Tradition of Ryijy in this tour with ASI Curator Curt Pederson and world renowned Finnish textile expert and collector Dr. Tuomas Sopanen. Tour also includes Love Norway X. Includes three specialty wines curated by FIKA. $45 ASI members; $50 nonmembers. Register by May 23.

*OPENING WEEKEND* Exhibit Opening Talk: The Living Tradition of Ryijy with Dr. Tuomas Sopanen

Saturday, May 31 – 10 - 11 a.m.
Dr. Tuomas Sopanen speaks to the history and future of the ryijy tradition and craft in this one hour lecture. $5 ASI members, $14 nonmembers (includes museum admission). Co-sponsored by Textile Center. Space limited. Register by May 23.

*OPENING WEEKEND* Nordic Encounters: Gallery Talks with Dr. Tuomas Sopanen
Sunday, June 1 – 12:30 & 2:30 p.m.
Dr. Tuomas Sopanen leads two exhibit opening gallery talks of The Living Tradition of Ryijy. Included with museum admission.

2014 ASI Midsommar Celebration
Saturday, June 14 – 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.
Enjoy The Living Tradition of Ryijy and Finnish artists Diane Jarpi (kantele player), the Kaze Quartet (saxophone quartet) and Kisarit Dancers (Finnish dancers) at ASI’s best summer tradition. $10 adults, $5 ages 5-18; free ASI members & kids under 2.

ASI and Tönösäuna at NorthernSpark 2014
Saturday, June 14 – 9:01 p.m. – Sunrise
With Futures North art collective, ASI brings the Finnish sauna tradition to NorthernSpark, Minneapolis’ all-night arts festival. The five person artist team - including Daniel Dean, John Kim, John Moore, Molly Reichert, Emily Stover – will repurpose Tönösäuna, a mobile sauna unit built from a salvaged 1966 Avion travel trailer to project conversations that take place inside the sauna outside, to the larger world. Social geographer and artist/activist blogger, Bill Lindeke, will facilitate conversations in the sauna about our shared dreams for the city. Free. Visit northernspark.com for more information.

Film Screening: “Steam of Life”
Wednesday, June 25 – 6:30 p.m.
A candid and thoughtful look at one of Finland’s most time honored traditions: the sauna. Mika Hotakainen, Joonas Berghäll. In Finnish with English subtitles. 84 min. $7 ASI members, $10 nonmembers. Reservations recommended.

Nordic Encounters – The Art of the Ryijy with ASI Artist in Residence Siiri Korhonen
Wednesday, Aug. 6 – 6:30 p.m.
Saturday, Aug. 16 – 10:30 a.m.
Some museums bring you recorded voice overs of artists talking about their work on an exhibit audio guide. ASI brings you the real thing – the artist. Nordic Encounters are new frameworks that allow visitors to ASI to interact directly with the artists and curators whose work is on display by inviting you to for an intimate walking tour with the artist. Hear about their art work first hand. Ask questions about their processes and inspiration.

ASI Artist-in-Residence Siiri Korhonen leads a 45-minute walking tour of The Living Tradition of Ryijy, sharing her own insight - as a practicing textile artist - about the processes, history and composition of the rugs on display. $5 in addition to museum admission. Space limited. Reservations recommended.

“SLÖJD” WORKSHOPS OFFERED WITH THE WEAVERS GUILD OF MINNESOTA

Explore & Weave Finnish Patterns on the Rigid Heddle Loom Workshop
Saturday & Sunday, June 28 & 29 – 12-5pm
Over, under, over! Start your weaving exploration in this two-day workshop and weave your own Finnish fabric. Learn the basics of warping and weaving cloth on a portable and versatile rigid heddle loom. We’ll explore traditional Finnish techniques to create delicate borders and accents with leno, embellish with inlay, or add bold texture with ‘rya’. If available, bring a rigid heddle frame loom in good working condition and a 12 dent heddle. Looms are available, if needed, please indicate when registering. Workshop is intended for all levels, including beginners. Instructor: Carol Johnson, Weavers Guild of Minnesota. Location: ASI. $90 ASI and WGM members / $110 nonmembers. Yarn included. A $10 handout fee will be collected in class, payable to the instructor. Registration required by June 20, space is limited.

Rya Weaving Workshop
Monday –Thursday, July 14-17 – 10am-3pm at WGM
Rya is fun and offers something different from throwing the shuttle! The Swedish term ‘rya’ means ‘long-pile rug’ in English and is a traditional weft-faced pile technique that was originally used for warm bed coverings. Explore this creative, centuries-old process by selecting a yarn palette, and learning how to warp a floor loom. We will be weaving a plain weave backing with a sett of six ends per
inch and then build upon rows of colorful knotting for a wall hanging or cushion cover. Workshop intended for all levels, including beginners. Instructor: Jan Molstrom.

Location: Weavers Guild of Minnesota, located in the Textile Center at 3000 University Ave SE, Minneapolis.

Cost: $165 ASI & WGM members / $200 nonmembers. $10 materials fee for handouts and warp will be collected in class, payable to the instructor. Registration is required by July 11 through ASI, space is limited.

Smorgasbord of Scandinavian Weave Structures Workshop
Friday, Saturday & Sunday, August 15, 16 & 17 – 9am-5pm at WGM

Scandinavian weaving patterns are fascinating and true treasures to explore! Create something beautiful as you learn to read and follow a weaving draft, warp a floor loom, and weave a variety of structures in this “round robin” collaborative participation class. Participants will circulate to one another’s looms and weave small, individual cotton woven pieces in traditional twills, laces, monk’s belt and raanu styles that hail from Finland, Sweden and Norway. This workshop is intended for all levels, including beginners.

Instructor: Carol Johnson, Weavers Guild of Minnesota. Location: Weavers Guild of Minnesota, $240 ASI, WGM members / $280 nonmembers. $10 handout fee to be collected in class, payable to instructor. Registration required by Aug. 7 through ASI, space limited.

ABOUT THE AMERICAN SWEDISH INSTITUTE

The American Swedish Institute (ASI) is a vibrant arts and culture organization and historic home located at 2600 Park Avenue near downtown Minneapolis. ASI attracts more than 75,000 people each year for tours of the landmark 1908 Turnblad Mansion, exhibits, classes and events that connect the community to contemporary Nordic culture and cultural heritage. Founded in 1929 by Swedish immigrant newspaper publisher Swan J. Turnblad, ASI serves as a gathering place for people to share stories and experiences around universal themes of tradition, migration, craft and the arts, all informed by enduring ties to Sweden. For more information, visit ASImn.org.

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