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Beyond the Bag: Textiles as Containers
January 28, 2005 – June 5, 2005

October 4, 2004, Washington, DC — On view at The Textile Museum from January 28 through June 5, 2005, the exhibition [Beyond the Bag: Textiles as Containers](#) explores the many ways different cultures create textiles to be used as containers. In addition to performing the practical functions of holding, carrying and protecting everyday items, textile containers can be objects of artistic beauty and provide insight into different cultural lifestyles.

Unlike bags or containers made from rigid materials such as clay or glass, textile containers offer flexibility of use by adapting to whatever item they are carrying. Often, textile containers collapse when not in use, providing the advantage of taking up minimal storage space. Some textiles are constructed for specific purposes while others are built to address a variety of storage needs. For example, Iranian salt bags, such as the one included in this exhibition, are suitable for carrying grain, seeds, flour, fruit and nuts in addition to the salt needed for sheep in the country's high mountain pastures.



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Different cultures use textile containers according to their own storage and transportation needs. Nomadic groups use containers that are easy to adapt to their movements by functioning as containers on pack animals during periods of travel and then as storage items within tents when not traveling. In addition to their utilitarian roles, textile containers can also convey messages of festivity, status or gender distinction. During Iranian weddings, salt bags filled with salt are sometimes exchanged by the families in a symbolic gesture. In other cultures, special bags are reserved for men who have killed a certain number of cattle or for those who participate in cultural festivities.

The objects in Beyond the Bag: Textiles as Containers give visitors an opportunity to investigate the unique properties of textile containers and to learn about the many various cultures that use them. Representing cultures from the Eastern and Western Hemispheres, the objects on view are drawn exclusively from The Textile Museum's collections and include textiles from Mexico, Central Asia, Iran and more.

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Founded in 1925 by George Hewitt Myers, The Textile Museum is an international center for the exhibition, study, collection and preservation of the textile arts. The Museum explores the role that textiles play in the daily and ceremonial life of individuals the world over. Special attention is given to textiles of the Near East, Asia, Africa and the indigenous cultures of the Americas. The Museum also presents exhibitions of historical and contemporary quilts, and fiber art. With a collection of more than 17,000 textiles and rugs and an unparalleled library, The Textile Museum is a unique and valuable resource for people locally, nationally and internationally.

The Textile Museum is located at 2320 'S' Street, NW in Washington, DC. The Museum is open Monday - Saturday 10:00 am to 5:00 pm and Sunday 1:00 pm to 5:00 pm. Admission is free; suggested donation is \$5.00. For further information, call 202-667-0441.

For more information or images, please contact Cyndi Spain at 202-667-0441, ext. 17, or by email at cspain@textilemuseum.org or visit www.textilemuseum.org/about/pressroom.htm.