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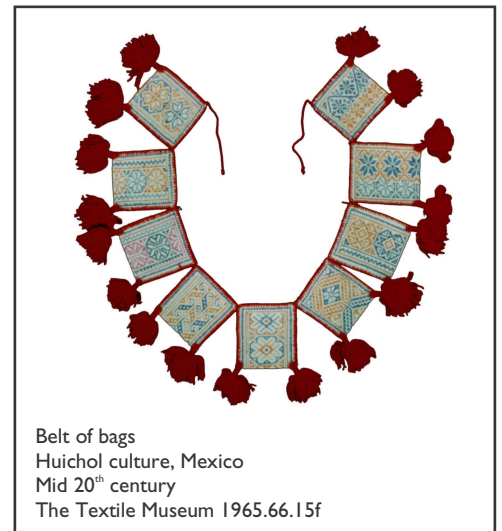
Hold It! Textiles as Containers

January 31 – June 8, 2003

October 1, 2002, Washington, DC — On view at The Textile Museum from January 31 through June 8, 2003, the exhibition *Hold It: Textiles as Containers* celebrates the use of textiles as containers. The exhibition will give visitors an opportunity to investigate the many ways various cultures have exploited the unique properties of textile containers to suit their needs. While containers perform the practical functions of holding, carrying and covering everyday items, they are also objects of creativity, made with a designing and purposeful eye.

In comparison to rigid materials such as clay, wood, or glass, containers made from fabric are closely related to that which they contain; the form of a textile container is seldom fully realized until it is in use. For example, simple looped bags, like the one from New Guinea in the exhibition, can expand as necessary to fit specific items. When not in use, some textile containers have an advantage over their non-textile counterparts in that they can collapse, taking up minimal space. Some textiles serve multiple utilitarian purposes. In Guatemala, a two-dimensional, rectangular *tzut* can be used to carry everyday items and, alternatively, it can also be folded and placed on the head for sun protection, or unfolded to serve as a wrap for warmth.

Examining textile containers gives us insight into the lifestyles of different cultures and their various storage and transportation needs. Nomadic groups from Iran use three-dimensional



bags called *mafrash* to store and carry quilts and mattresses. Heavy when full, they are made in pairs in order to balance one another on either side of a pack animal. When not being used for transport the *mafrash* are found in the tent, storing the bedding.

Moving beyond functionality, textile containers also communicate messages of gender distinction, festivity or status. Demonstrating both ingenuity and utility, the bags shown on the previous page are worn like a belt by Huichol men during festivals. In addition to being decorative, they are used to carry necessary items such as tobacco. Across the globe in Burma, a special bag serving as a status symbol may only be carried by a man who has killed three mithans (a species of cattle) at a ceremonial feast in one day.

The objects in the exhibition demonstrate the flexible and artistic nature of textile containers and shed light on the various cultures that use them. Covering both the Eastern and Western Hemispheres, all of the objects in *Hold It: Textiles as Containers* are drawn exclusively from The Textile Museum's collections.

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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 traditional societies 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 over 17,000 textiles and carpets and an unparalleled library, The Textile Museum is a unique and valuable resource for people locally, nationally and internationally. For further information, call (202) 667-0441.

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| For more information or photographs, please contact Julia Neubauer, Public Information Assistant, The Textile Museum, (202) 667-0441, ext. 17. The Textile Museum is a private, non-profit museum open Monday through Saturday 10:00 am to 5:00 pm and Sunday 1:00 pm to 5:00 pm. Admission is free with a suggested donation of \$5.00. |
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