



THE TEXTILE MUSEUM

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Contact: Cyndi Bohlin, Communications & Marketing Manager
(202) 667-0441, ext. 78 or cbohlin@textilemuseum.org

***The Finishing Touch: Accessories from the Bolivian Highlands* Extended Through January 11, 2009**

September 8, 2008, Washington, D.C. — The Textile Museum announced today that the current exhibition *The Finishing Touch: Accessories from the Bolivian Highlands*, originally scheduled to close on September 18, 2008, **has been extended through January 11, 2009**. Now visitors to The Textile Museum have more time to explore the many regional variations of technique and design that characterize textiles from the Bolivian Andes.

The Finishing Touch features a charming group of belts, bags and other accessories made and used by the indigenous people of the Bolivian highlands. A large group of traditional Bolivian textiles acquired by the Museum in late 2007 inspired the exhibition and comprises the bulk of the more than 100 objects on view. Complementing these objects are other Bolivian textiles drawn from The Textile Museum's collection. *The Finishing Touch: Accessories from the Bolivian Highlands* is organized by Ann P. Rowe, curator of Western Hemisphere Collections at The Textile Museum.



Knitted bag, Bolivia, probably La Paz, early to mid-20th century. The Textile Museum 2007.37.7. Latin American Research Fund. Photo by Jennifer Heimbecker.

Textiles in the Exhibition

Although small, the belts, bags, hats and other accessories from this region are often made with great care and even more fully decorated than larger shawls and ponchos. Some are worn as part of the daily dress, while more elaborate examples were made solely for festival costumes. The bags serve a variety of purposes, from decorative accents in festival dress to utilitarian

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containers for the farmer's lunch in the fields. The exhibition also features other garments, such as the Charazani area women's headband, still called by its Inca name, *wincha*, and the small shoulder ponchos of the Tarabuco area, still called *unku*, the Inca word for tunic.

Representations of Changing Traditions

The broad range of techniques and patterns in the exhibition reflects the many variations of Bolivian highland textiles. The textiles in the exhibition were made by the indigenous Aymara and Quechua-speaking population in the early to mid-20th century using handspun wool yarns. Collected in the late 1970s and early 1980s, when such examples were readily available, they now represent an earlier tradition that has evolved – and changed the overall look of handmade cloth – with the now more prevalent use of commercially produced yarns.

The changing political landscape has also impacted the region's textiles. The items in the exhibition incorporate indigenous techniques, patterns and garments that date back to the pre-Hispanic past as well as motifs and techniques adopted from Spanish culture. A unique indigenous tradition includes the development of several complex three-color patterning techniques, used to create designs on one side of a piece that repeat in reversed colors on the other side, but without color mixing so that the piece is double-sided. Beyond the techniques used, the large variety of design motifs adorning the belts, bags, hats and other items in the exhibition reveal both Spanish influence – such as motifs of horses – as well as indigenous derivation – including fanciful animals and a large variety of geometric designs, capable of endless permutations.

A Knitting Technique No Longer Used in Europe

The Spaniards introduced knitting to the Bolivian highlands in the colonial period, some 200 to 500 years ago. The relative isolation of the groups in the Bolivian highlands has resulted in the preservation of these original knitting methods, which are no longer practiced in Europe. In this method, the yarn is passed around the neck to keep it under tension and the knitting is done in the round on the purl side, throwing the yarn with the left thumb. Unlike weaving, knitting can easily be used as a sculptural technique, and the Museum's exhibition includes several examples of peaked caps derived from regional weaving traditions, and charming bags made in the form of dolls.

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About The Textile Museum

Established 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 18,000 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, D.C. The Museum is 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 for non-members. For further information, call 202-667-0441 or visit www.textilemuseum.org.

For more information or images, please contact Cyndi Bohlin at (202) 667-0441, ext. 78 or cbohlin@textilemuseum.org or visit www.textilemuseum.org/about/pressroom.htm