

# NEWS

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**Contact:** Ron V. Wilson  
Director, Bureau of Community Affairs  
(650) 821-4000  
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**San Francisco International Airport Presents  
“African Connections: Baskets from Two Continents”**

*Exhibition from the American Museum of Natural History, New York, brings  
the tradition of coiled sea grass basketry to SFO*

**SAN FRANCISCO** -- The San Francisco Airport Museums is pleased to present “African Connections: Baskets from Two Continents”, an exhibition from the American Museum of Natural History, New York. On display through May 20, 2002, this exhibition highlights coiled sea grass basketry from its historic roots in Africa, its adaptation in the rice-growing coastal region of the southeastern United States, and its recent contemporary revival.

Perhaps the oldest surviving African craft still actively practiced in the United States, coiled sea grass basketry was originally used in west and central Africa to create vessels for processing and storing grains. Starting in the late seventeenth century, enslaved Africans brought both their knowledge of rice cultivation and their skills as basket makers to plantations of the “Lowcountry”, as the coastal wetlands of Georgia and South Carolina are known. As the plantation system declined after the American Civil War, basket makers continued to fabricate baskets for carrying vegetables and grains, storing sewing supplies and laundry, and for innumerable other functions.

In both Africa and the United States, basket makers have continued to adapt their craft to local materials and the changing uses for baskets. While once mainly utilitarian, baskets today are more often made as decorative items or works of art. Over time, by developing the decorative and expressive potentials of basketry, makers on both continents have transformed an agricultural and domestic tool into saleable folk art.

“African Connections”, organized by Enid Schildkrout, guest curator, and Dale Rosengarten, consultant curator, traces the evolution of coiled basketry through approximately sixty objects and photographs. A video segment also provides information on the coiled sea grass basketry tradition.

The exhibition is located in Gallery A-2, International South Cases, on Level 3 of the International Terminal at SFO. The exhibition is free of charge and accessible to all members of the public twenty-four hours a day.

The San Francisco Airport Museums program was established by the Airport Commission in 1980 for the purposes of humanizing the Airport environment, providing visibility for the unique cultural life of San Francisco, and providing educational services for the traveling public. Today, the San Francisco Airport Museums features twenty-one galleries throughout the Airport terminals displaying a rotating schedule of art, history, science, and cultural exhibitions. A permanent collection dedicated to the history of commercial aviation is located in the San Francisco Airport Commission Aviation Library and Louis A. Turpen Aviation Museum.

For further information, please contact Jane Sullivan at (650) 821-5123.