



Cornhusk Bags of the Plateau Indians (Chicago Visual Library)

Cheney Cowles Memorial Museum

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"Cornhusk bag" is the popular name for a distinctive type of handwoven bag made by the Indian women of the Columbia and Snake River Plateau. Once a thriving craft, the weaving of cornhusk bags had almost disappeared by the middle of the twentieth century, and it has been only within the last few years that the tradition was revived by the Indians in an effort to preserve an awareness of their cultural heritage. Drawn from the resources of the Eastern Washington State Historical Society, this collection of 170 bags is a representative display of the variety of designs that characterize this native craft tradition. No two patterns are the same—they are improvised as the bags are woven—and each weaver relies on an intuitive sense of pattern and color in creating the designs which are integrated with a keen sense of awareness of traditional forms. In these fiche, both sides of each bag are shown to demonstrate the different but complementary nature of the designs. The accompanying text provides detailed information on the materials, dyes, and the weaving techniques of "twining" and "false embroidery" used in the composition of these cornhusk bags.

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