



**Autry National Center**  
of the **American West**

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**For Immediate Release**

**Autry National Center to Present the Major Exhibition**  
***The Art of Native American Basketry: A Living Tradition***  
**On View November 6, 2009, through May 30, 2010**

**First Comprehensive Exhibition of Autry's Premier Collection**  
**of Native American Baskets from the Southwest Museum**

Los Angeles (July 16, 2009) —The world's largest—and among its most important—collection of Native American baskets, representing eleven regions and more than 100 cultural groups, will be revealed to the public for the first time when the Autry National Center presents *The Art of Native American Basketry: A Living Tradition*, a comprehensive exhibition that opens November 6, 2009, and runs through May 30, 2010.

More than 250 objects will be on view, ranging in size from small Pomo feather baskets made for sale to tourists, to massive Apache olla baskets used for storing large quantities of seeds. Because the works shown have been selected from a remarkably wide-ranging and distinguished collection, visitors will be able to see how the materials, techniques, and designs of the baskets vary from region to region, reflecting different physical environments and traditions. Also evident will be the distinctive styles of individual artists, whose signatures can be instantly recognizable to other weavers. The Autry has invited thirteen contemporary basketweavers to serve as consultants in research and planning and will purchase a basket from each consultant to add to the permanent collection.

*The Art of Native American Basketry* is drawn from the nearly 14,000 baskets in the collection of the Southwest Museum of the American Indian, considered to be one of the premier holdings of its kind in the world. The exhibition will be presented at the Autry's Museum of the American West in Griffith Park. Both institutions are part of the Autry National Center, an intercultural organization dedicated to expanding our understanding of the diverse peoples of the American West.



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“Basketry is one of the most important traditions of Native American peoples, and therefore of the nation as a whole,” said John Gray, President and CEO of the Autry National Center. “We are proud that the Autry can use its great collection to provide the public with such a complete and compelling overview of this tradition, thanks to careful conservation efforts and the expertise of our curators and our consultants.”

“The Southwest Museum’s unparalleled collection reflects the great cultural and artistic diversity of the Native peoples of North America,” said Steven M. Karr, lead curator of the exhibition and Interim Executive Director of the Southwest Museum. “This rich display of historic and contemporary baskets, combined with multimedia elements, tells the story of a living art tradition through the voices of the weavers themselves.”

Although the Southwest Museum’s holdings date back over a century, many of the baskets in its collection were contemporary works made by living artists at the time they were acquired. The works on view in *The Art of Native American Basketry* vary in date from a mid-nineteenth-century Huron birch bark basket decorated with porcupine quills and moose hair, to baskets made just this year by the exhibition’s consultants. Native American basketry’s many functions will be represented, from domestic uses such as cooking or gathering, to symbolic or ritual purposes such as gift-giving and ceremonial observance, to the commercial function of being sold in the marketplace to non-Indian buyers. A full range of geographic regions will also be represented, including the Northeast, Southeast, Great Plains, Arctic and Subarctic, Great Basin, Northwest Coast, Plateau, Southwest, Northern California, Central California, and Southern California.

“It’s great to have a show like this that includes basketry from all over North America and to educate people about the different materials baskets are made from,” said Kelly Church (Ojibwe/Ottawa), one of the exhibition’s consultants. “It’s also important that people understand that these are sustained traditions, but that because of changing environmental conditions, there are fewer materials available today from which to make baskets.”

Visitors will enter the exhibition through a dramatic visible storage area allowing for the display of a broad range of baskets. The main interpretive section is organized by geographic region. Each section will include significant examples of baskets from that region, video footage of contemporary basketweavers, and other interpretive elements such as basket-making materials and audio components providing descriptions from Native consultants. To provide further cultural and historical context, the gallery will include historic photographs from the Institute for the Study of the American West’s Braun Research Library.



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Exhibition highlights include a lidded basket made by renowned Wiyot weaver Elizabeth Hickox, Inupiaq whale baleen baskets topped with ivory carvings, and a vintage Chitimacha alligator motif basket made of river cane.

Because baskets are complex and often delicate objects, conservators have been working to restore, preserve, and catalog the Southwest Museum's vast collection for the past six years. Their efforts, including such techniques as freezing baskets for pest mitigation, have been crucial in the creation of *The Art of Native American Basketry*.

The consultants for *The Art of Native American Basketry* are:

Ruby Chimerica (Hopi)  
Kelly Church (Ojibwe/Ottawa)  
Sue Coleman (Washo)  
Roberta Conner (Umatilla)  
John Darden (Chitimacha)  
Mary Jane Dudley (San Carlos Apache)  
Carol Emarthle-Douglas (Northern Arapaho/Seminole)  
Sue Hill (Cahuilla)  
Deborah McConnell (Hupa/Yurok/Quinault)  
June Pardue (Alutiiq/Inupiaq)  
Lucy Parker (Pomo/Miwok/Paiute)  
Theresa Secord (Penobscot)  
Lisa Telford (Haida)

*The Art of Native American Basketry: A Living Tradition* is made possible by the generosity of the San Manuel Band of Mission Indians, Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation, and the Institute of Museum and Library Sciences.

### **About the Autry National Center**

The Autry National Center is an intercultural history center dedicated to exploring the experiences and perceptions of the diverse peoples of the American West. The Autry celebrates the cultures of the American West through three institutions on two Los Angeles campuses: the Southwest Museum of the American Indian in Mt. Washington; the Museum of the American West in Griffith Park; and the Institute for the Study for the American West, which comprises the Braun Research Library and the Autry Library and is headquartered in Griffith Park. The Autry is



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also home to Native Voices at the Autry, a Native American theater company that develops and performs work by Native American playwrights in the Wells Fargo Theater at the Griffith Park campus. Other Native American events of note include the Intertribal Arts Marketplace and annual shows and sales of jewelry, pottery, and rugs highlighting contemporary artists from around the country.

The Museum of the American West is open to the public Tuesday through Friday, 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. and Saturday and Sunday from 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. From July 1 through August 31, the museum offers extended hours on Thursdays from 10:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. The museum is closed on Mondays. Admission is \$9 for adults, \$5 for students and seniors 60+, \$3 for children 3–12, and is free for Autry members, veterans, and children 2 and under. Admission is free on the second Tuesday of every month.

For more information, the public may visit [www.AutryNationalCenter.org](http://www.AutryNationalCenter.org) or call 323.667.2000.

### **About the Southwest Museum of the American Indian**

The Southwest Museum of the American Indian holds one of the nation's largest and most significant collections related to Native peoples of the Americas, as well as extensive holdings of pre-Hispanic, Spanish Colonial, and Western American art and artifacts. Founded in 1907 by Charles F. Lummis, the Southwest Museum supports research, publications, exhibitions, and other educational activities to advance the public's understanding and appreciation of the Indigenous cultures of North, Central, and South America. It merged with the Autry National Center in 2003. During the rehabilitation of the museum's historic site in the Mt. Washington area of Los Angeles, the museum's galleries are closed. The gift shop and grounds are open on Saturdays and Sundays from noon to 5:00 p.m., and the museum regularly hosts public events, lectures, and temporary displays. The Southwest's Mt. Washington campus is home to the Braun Research Library, which is part of the Institute for the Study of the American West. The Braun is open by appointment only, Monday through Friday, by calling 323.221.2164, ext. 255.

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