



Morocco's Berber baskets were originally used to hold rice and flatbread. They are coiled and then decorated with leftover wool from the country's famous Berber rugs. Besides being master weavers, basket-makers are master mathematicians — a fact that often goes unrecognised. Weaving is based on mathematical principles, and weavers have to be highly skilled in the field of geometry to translate ideas of symmetry into complex patterns.



Wire weaving is a typical Zulu craft. When Zulu men left rural areas and moved to cities, some became night watchmen with much time on their hands. Far from grasses, palms and reeds, they decorated traditional sticks and beer-pot covers with telephone wire (also known as scoobie wire). This material offered a kaleidoscopic choice of colours — and strength — very different from natural fibres. These patterned vessels are by master weaver Alfred Ntuli, who works with the African Art Centre in Durban. [@africanartcentre](#)



The Garlic Gourd made from ilala palm was a "happy accident", a design that happened by chance when South African designer Binky Newman of Design Afrika was at a basket workshop in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. She was working on a shape that mimicked the traditional clay pot. However, without an internal structure, the weave kept collapsing. It took a huge amount of persuasion to get the weavers to accept this imperfect weaving, and to continue in this vein. By deliberately changing the tension of the weave, a very organic shape is formed, and no two baskets are ever identical. [@design.afrika](#)



BASKETS FOR AFRICA

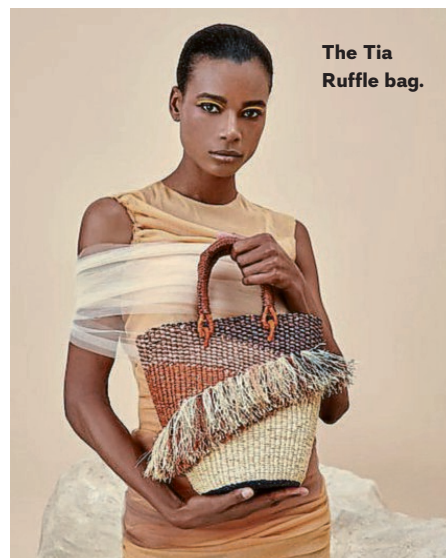
The 100 Beautiful Baskets exhibition featuring more than 300 woven objects opened this week at the V&A Waterfront

TEXT: TRACY LYNN CHEMALY, IMAGES: SUPPLIED

In northern Niger, Tuareg weavers indicate the time spent making their baskets by weaving a small bit of indigo thread at the point where they stop weaving each day. These markers tell the human tale of how each day's work is carried out at a different pace, with family responsibilities or traditional obligations sometimes taking priority in these rural communities. The exact hours dedicated to the Points du Jour (markers of the day) baskets may be unknown, but the succession of many days spent weaving is vividly documented. We fill homes with pot-plant holders, beach bags and fruit bowls all expertly handwoven by a craftsman, yet we seldom know where the basket was made, with which material it was coiled or twined, or how long it took to be created.

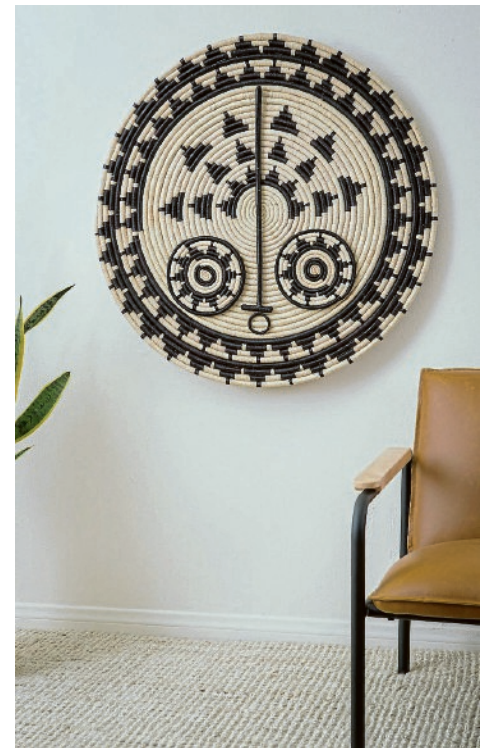
The 100 Beautiful Baskets exhibition enlightens the viewer as to the highly artisanal nature of weaving, offering glimpses into the communities who made the objects on show, which range from baskets and bowls to furniture, jewellery, tableware, hats, handbags and more. The exhibition places a spotlight on our continent's rich weaving heritage, but is focused on contemporary applications of basketry, showing how it has been adapted for the modern age. Curated by Platform's Cathy O'Clery, a long-time advocate for African design, the summer exhibition allows visitors to Cape Town's V&A Waterfront the opportunity to see the best Buhera baskets from Zimbabwe, Iringa baskets from Tanzania, Wolof baskets from Senegal, Injera baskets from Ethiopia, and so much more.

[joyfromafrica.co.za](#), [@vandawaterfront](#), [@platformsa](#), [#100BeautifulBaskets](#)



Gone Rural's Sitfwefwe Collection was produced by weavers who are part of the Eswatini-based company's Artisan-Led Design Program. The programme trains weavers to become product designers, advancing their creativity and promoting their growth beyond simply being artisans. They design, name and negotiate prices for their items, and receive a royalty for their design. These baskets are made from lutindzi and lukhasi grass and sisal.

[@gonerural](#)



During lockdown, South African designer Anelle Mostert entered a competition run by Kazi to design baskets that could be created by its weavers in Uganda during the slow months of the pandemic. She was one of a handful of international designers selected to develop their designs. Through many Zoom calls, Mostert worked with Kazi's weaving artisans to create the Woven Sun Masks collection, made from sweetgrass and raffia. [@anelle.mostert](#) [@kazigoods](#)

The Ball bag made from sisal by Khokho in Eswatini, and the Tia Ruffle bag made from raffia by AAKS in Ghana, are sold in prestigious stores and on e-commerce platforms around the world. Using traditional African weaving techniques, with fine workmanship, original designs and innovative finishes, beautifully untraditional handbags are created for the international luxury market. [@khokho_collection](#) [@a.a.k.s](#)