



---

Article: A basket case: Repair of a bamboo basket using false warps of Japanese tissue and wire

Author(s): Candis Griggs-Hakim

Source: *Objects Specialty Group Postprints, Volume Ten, 2003*

Pages: 199-205

Compilers: Virginia Greene, David Harvey, and Patricia Griffin

© 2004 by The American Institute for Conservation of Historic & Artistic Works, 1156 15<sup>th</sup>

Street NW, Suite 320, Washington, DC 20005. (202) 452-9545

[www.conservation-us.org](http://www.conservation-us.org)

Under a licensing agreement, individual authors retain copyright to their work and extend publications rights to the American Institute for Conservation.

Objects Specialty Group Postprints is published annually by the Objects Specialty Group (OSG) of the American Institute for Conservation of Historic & Artistic Works (AIC). A membership benefit of the Objects Specialty Group, *Objects Specialty Group Postprints* is mainly comprised of papers presented at OSG sessions at AIC Annual Meetings and is intended to inform and educate conservation-related disciplines.

Papers presented in *Objects Specialty Group Postprints, Volume Ten, 2003* have been edited for clarity and content but have not undergone a formal process of peer review. This publication is primarily intended for the members of the Objects Specialty Group of the American Institute for Conservation of Historic & Artistic Works. Responsibility for the methods and materials described herein rests solely with the authors, whose articles should not be considered official statements of the OSG or the AIC. The OSG is an approved division of the AIC but does not necessarily represent the AIC policy or opinions.

## A BASKET CASE: REPAIR OF A BAMBOO BASKET USING FALSE WARPS OF JAPANESE TISSUE AND WIRE

Candis Griggs-Hakim

A Japanese bamboo basket from a private collection was brought into the author's studio in 2001. The basket had been broken into three pieces -- top half, bottom half, and base -- by the owner's curious toddler. In the process, a 3 cm-high area of openwork in the center of the basket had been picked apart into dozens of small detached fragments, so that not a single join remained between the top and bottom halves. Complicating the repair further was the fact that the top half of the basket was relatively heavy, due to its bamboo-root handle. It was determined that the area of openwork would have to be partially recreated in order to both honor the original design of the basket and to compensate for a significant difference in diameter between the top and bottom halves.

Strong, stable, non-original warps were fashioned out of galvanized steel wire [1] set within a sandwich of mulberry tissue with wheat starch paste. Once dry, the strips were toned with watercolors and trimmed to mimic the actual bamboo warps. The false warps were then adhered to the basket interior via twists of long-fibered Tengujo tissue dipped in wheat starch paste and toned with watercolors. The stages of treatment are illustrated below.

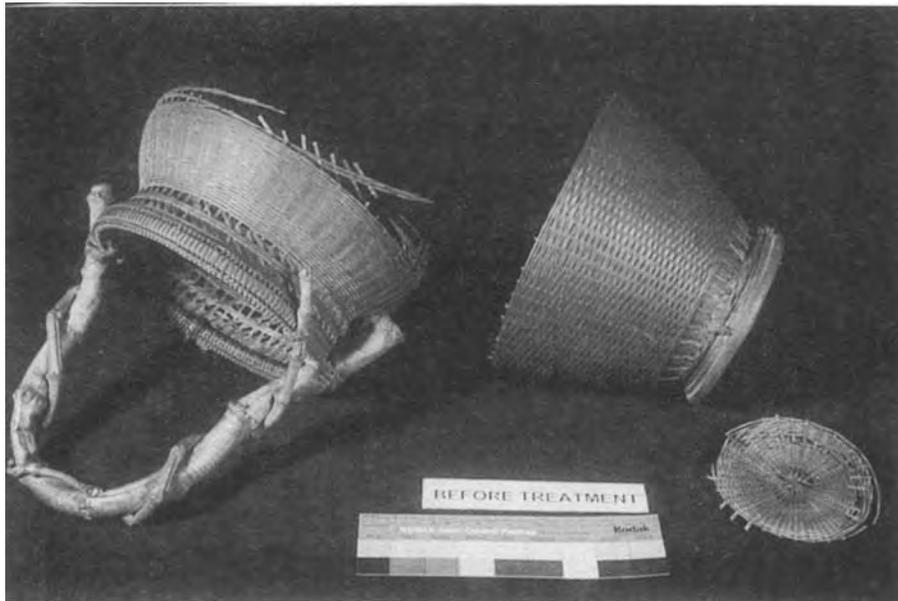


Figure 1. The damaged basket before treatment. Not pictured are dozens of detached warp, weft, and diagonal fragments from the open-work area.

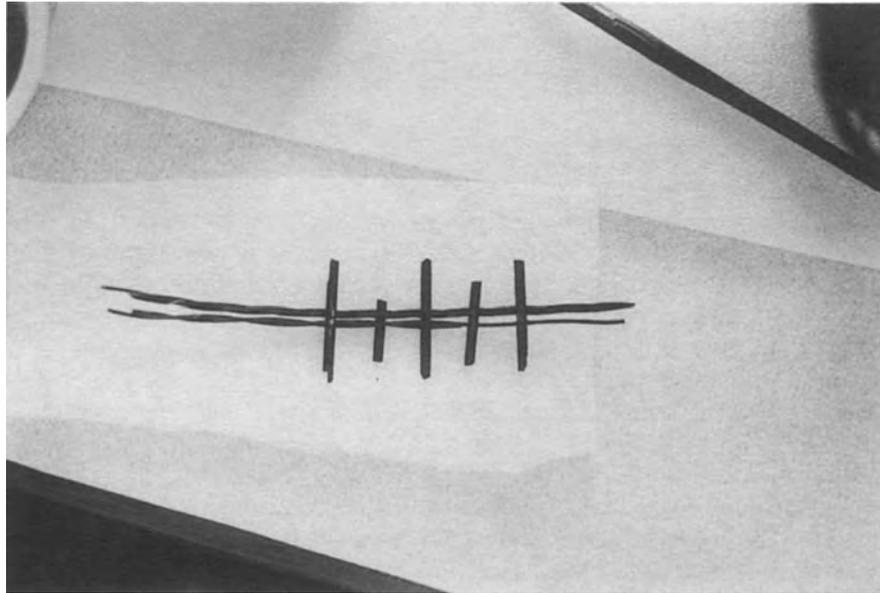


Figure 2. The largest of the detached fragments: two pairs of wefts with five barely attached warps. Twists of Tengujo tissue dipped in wheat starch paste were used to secure the warps so that the original location of the fragment could be found.

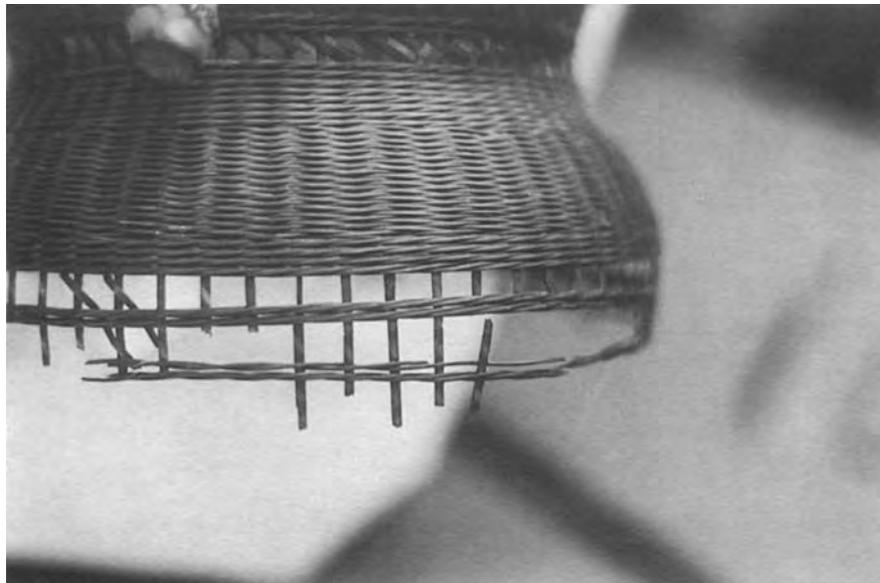


Figure 3. The same fragment after re-adhering to the basket via flat strips of Tengujo tissue, applied across the interior break edges. Note the not-yet-toned tissue twists at the far left of the fragment, and pale areas on the warps indicating lost diagonals.

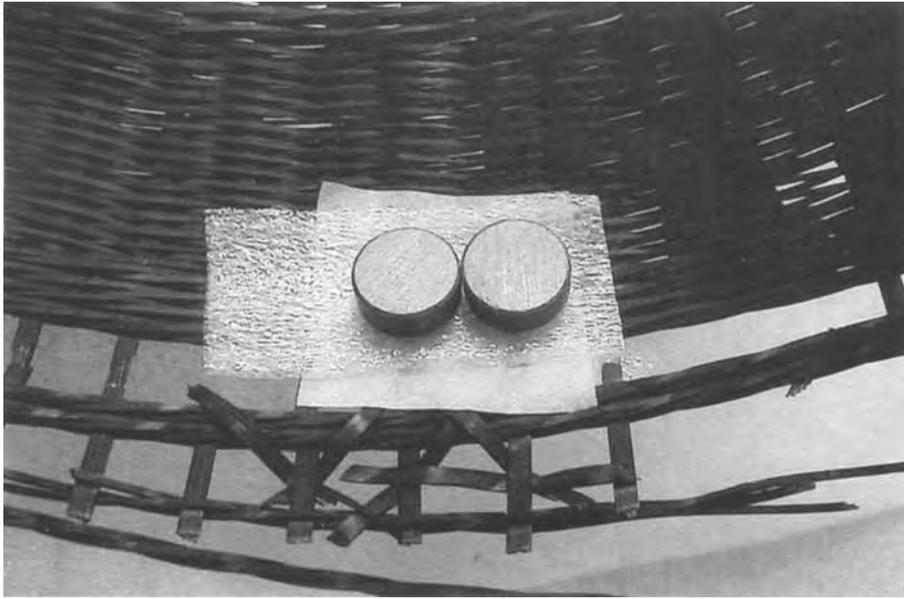


Figure 4. Detail during warp repair. The area of repair is covered with silicone release paper and sandwiched on both sides with 1/8" Ethafoam and magnets while the adhesive on the tissue strip sets.

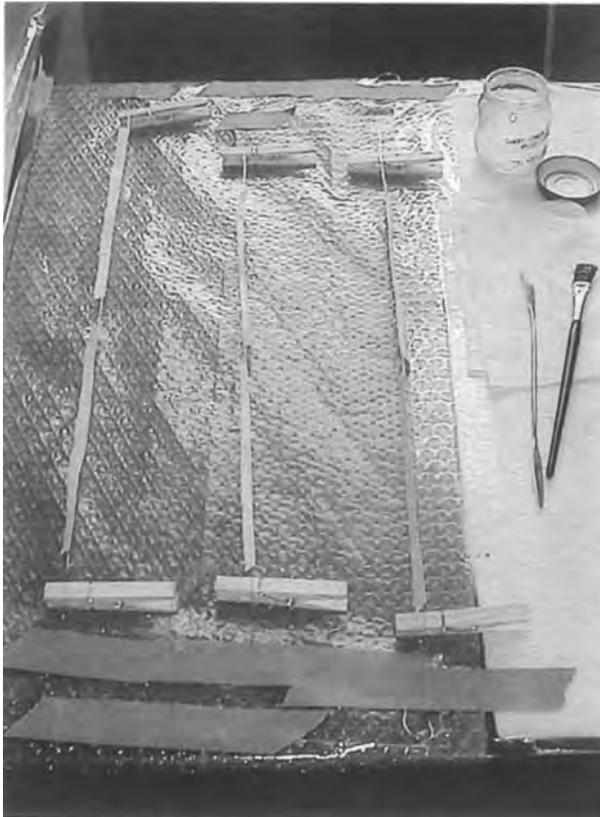


Figure 5. "False Warps" in progress. 32-gauge galvanized steel wire is stretched across a table, held down with tape and raised slightly with clothespins. Strips of mulberry tissue have been wetted with wheat starch paste and folded around the wire. These wire sandwiches were later toned with water-colors to mimic the bamboo, then trimmed to the same width as the real warps with scissors.

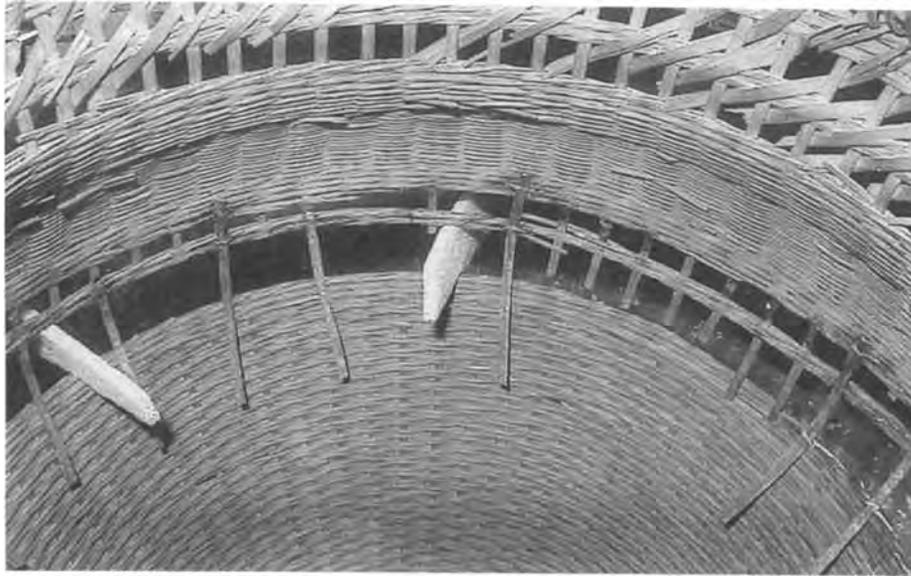


Figure 6. False warps in place. The warps were applied every few centimeters along the break edge of the top half of the basket first, using Tengujo tissue twists as above. Once the adhesive had set, the top half was lowered onto the bottom half and the warps adhered to the bottom half in the same way.



Figure 7. Quarter-inch thick Ethaf foam wedges supported the weight of the top and kept the two halves the desired distance apart while the paste dried on the twists adhering the warps to the bottom half of the basket.



Figure 8. Once the two halves were joined, detached weft fragments from the openwork area were re-attached with tissue twists wherever possible. Here thread and wire are used to hold a segment in place while the adhesive sets. Loose diagonal fragments were not re-adhered. Additional treatment steps included adhering the base segment to the basket, toning all Tengujo repair strips and twists, and trimming off excess length from the false warps.



Figure 9. The basket after treatment. The wire-in-tissue warps helped to retain the artist's intended design, proved strong enough to support the top half of the basket, and were all but indistinguishable from the actual bamboo.

## Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank Nancy Odegaard for her advice during the treatment of this basket. The author would also like to thank the owner of the basket for allowing photographs of the basket to be used in this publication.

## Endnotes

[1] The author used galvanized steel wire due to its ready availability. However, stainless steel wire as supplied by beading and jewelry suppliers would have equal or superior corrosion resistance and is available in a wide variety of gauges and weaves.

## Suppliers

Ethafoam (polyethylene foam, manufactured by Dow), 1/4" and 1/8" thicknesses: Conservation Support Systems, 924 West Pedregosa Street, Santa Barbara, CA 93101, Tel (800) 482-6299, Fax (800) 682-2064, ([www.silcom.com/~css/](http://www.silcom.com/~css/)).

Magnets and water color paints: art supply and craft stores

Mulberry Tissue (45 gms) and Tengujo Tissue (7.5 gms): Talas, 568 Broadway, New York, NY 10012, Tel (212) 219-0770, Fax (212) 219-0735, ([talasonline.com](http://talasonline.com)).

Silicone Release Paper: Conservator's Emporium, 100 Standing Rock Circle, Reno, NV 89511, Tel (775) 852-0404, Fax (775) 852-3737, ([www.consemp.com](http://www.consemp.com)).

Galvanized Steel Wire, 32 gauge: hardware stores

Wheat Starch- Pregelatinized: Conservation Support Systems, 924 West Pedregosa Street, Santa Barbara, CA 93101, Tel (800) 482-6299, Fax (800) 682-2064, ([www.silcom.com/~css/](http://www.silcom.com/~css/))

## References

Dignard, C. and C. Schlichting. 1991. La réparation d'un panier au moyen d'un support temporaire et de torsades de papier. *Journal of the International Institute for Conservation-Canadian Group* 16:35-40.

Dignard, C. and C. Schlichting. 1993. A treatment support for a damaged basket and its repair using twisted paper strands. Ottawa: Canadian Conservation Institute.

Mehaffy, M. 1990. Basket repair technique. *Newsletter of the Western Association for Art Conservation* 12:16.

Peacock, T. 1989. Japanese basketry repair. *Conservation News* 40:20-22. London: United Kingdom Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works.

Wills, B. 1995. Methods of basketry repair, using Japanese tissue paper and starch paste. *Where to start, where to stop? Papers from the British Museum/MEG, ethnographic conservation colloquium, London, 9-10th November 1989*. Museum Ethnographers Group Occasional Papers 4:109-114.

**Author's Address**

Griggs Conservation, 3780 26<sup>th</sup> Street, San Francisco, CA 94110, Tel (415) 412-1415, (griggsconservation@earthlink.net).