

Guide to Collecting Native American Art & Jewelry



HOEL'S INDIAN SHOP

Authentic Native American Art since 1945





Welcome

Welcome to Hoel's Indian Shop, where we are passionate about quality Southwest Native American art. Our gallery, located in the Heart of Oak Creek Canyon, north of Sedona, Arizona specializes in curating Native American contemporary and vintage jewelry, Southwest baskets, Zuni fetishes, Hopi kachinas and other Native artwork.



Humble Beginnings

In 1945, Don and Nita Hoel purchased three cabins in Oak Creek Canyon that eventually grew into 20. Don Hoel's Cabins had a small grocery store located in the front where Hoel's Indian Shop had its modest beginning. As Don and Nita's passion and popularity for Native Art and Jewelry grew, a new larger location became necessary. In 1974, the shop was moved to its current location just north, still "in the Heart of Oak Creek Canyon." It was in 1983 that Don and Nita's grandson, David Watters and his wife, Carol, took over both businesses and to this day continue the family tradition of excellence.



A Link to the History of the Southwest

We are in daily contact with Native artists, purchasing and visiting with them. The jewelry and art produced by these artists is a vital link to the history and culture of the Southwest. We are very appreciative of their talents and are happy that we are able to provide a link between the artist and the collector. Hoel's is always willing to share our knowledge and expertise with collectors, old and new alike, and we hope that the information provided in this guide aids you in your understanding of our business and your journey into exploring Southwest Native American Art.



Making Native American Jewelry

Navajo, Hopi, Zuni and other Pueblo Natives learned the art of silver-smithing in the 1850s, when they acquired the knowledge from Mexican silversmiths. They then began setting stones, mainly turquoise, in the 1880s and 1890s. The Zuni, who admired the silver jewelry made by Navajo smiths, traded livestock for instruction in working in silver. By 1890, Zuni smiths had instructed the Hopi as well.



The two techniques used to hand-make Southwest Native American jewelry are hand-fabrication and “tufa” or sand casting. When the tufa or sandstone method are used, the design is hand-carved into the stone, and the silver or gold is poured into it to create the piece of jewelry.

Hand fabrication is achieved when the artist manipulates and cuts sheet or ingot silver to the desired shape. Both techniques then will require the artist to finish by filing, stamping and possibly using a repousse or bump-up in their design and polishing.

Hopi silversmiths use hand fabrication to overlay silver, cutting the bottom piece to the desired shape, stamping it and then soldering on to the top of the desired silver designs to make their overlay jewelry.

Style Differences

Navajo artists traditionally are known for setting larger stones, while Zuni artists are recognized for the technique of inlay and needlepoint. Both chose the cluster style where many similar-sized stones are used to create a beautiful, wearable heirloom. The differences in style are not as prevalent today. Navajo artists such as Billy Betony choose the needlepoint style, while Alvin Yellowhorse is creating masterful inlay. In addition, it was the Zuni who mastered the art of carving fetishes to create lovely necklaces incorporating birds, bears and other animals. Old Man Leekya and David Tsikewa were some of the early Zuni artists to incorporate fetishes into jewelry.

Hopi artists were making similar jewelry to the Zuni and Navajo until about the late 1930s, when the overlay technique was created by Hopi artists with the encouragement of Mr. and Mrs. Harold Colton from the Museum of Northern Arizona. The designs required the use of cutout, applique, filing and stamping of the silver, with the technique being refined over the years.

The Santo Domingo cut, sand, polish and inlay turquoise and shell creating heishi and jewelry very similar to their ancestor's jewelry. Heishi is made using a technique where the artist cuts, drills and strings materials which are then hand-rolled on a rough surface and then smoothed so that all the beads are the same size. Joe and Terry Reano are famous for this technique.



Navajo Kingman
Turquoise Bracelet
by Jennifer Curtis.



Hopi bracelet by
Beauford Dawahoya



Vintage Zuni
Needlepoint Bracelet

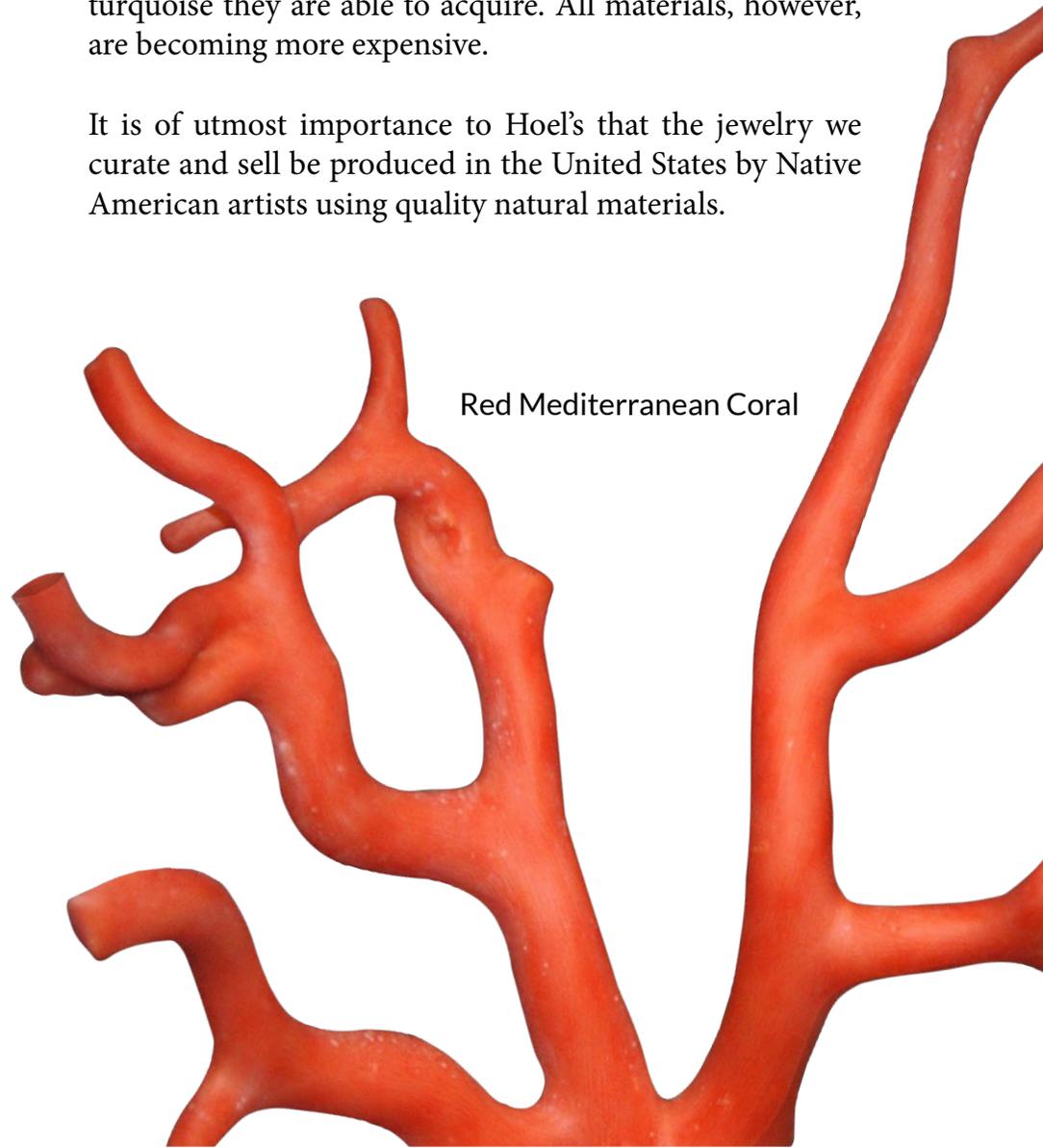


Authentic Native Jewelry

Authentic Southwest Native American jewelry and art is continually increasing in value and desirability. Although faced with challenges, contemporary Native American jewelers continue to create the highest level of quality and mastery of their craft.

Both the artist and the materials are important factors to consider in collecting. Sadly, turquoise has become quite difficult for artists to acquire, as most turquoise mines have closed. Stones from highly desirable rare turquoise mines such as Lone Mountain, Bisbee, #8 Mine, Lander Blue or Red Mountain are especially coveted, making these stones highly desirable to the artist. Fortunately, today's artists do still have a variety of other stones, shells and materials from which to choose, such as natural red Mediterranean coral, spiny oyster shell, and black jet in addition to the turquoise they are able to acquire. All materials, however, are becoming more expensive.

It is of utmost importance to Hoel's that the jewelry we curate and sell be produced in the United States by Native American artists using quality natural materials.



Red Mediterranean Coral

Real, Authentic Turquoise
Mined from Southwest Mines

Southwest Tribes

Tribes in the United States Southwest area producing jewelry in the last two centuries include the Navajo and Hopi in Arizona, and the Zuni, Laguna, San Filipe and Santo Domingo in New Mexico.

Signed Versus Unsigned Art

The skill of the Southwest Native American artist is sometimes recognizable when examining a piece of jewelry, whether it was made before 1900 or after 2000. Southwest Native jewelry and art is almost always signed now, but that was not always the case. Signing jewelry became more common in the 1950s.

When purchasing Native art, it is important to look for a sign but it is also important to examine the quality of the work itself.

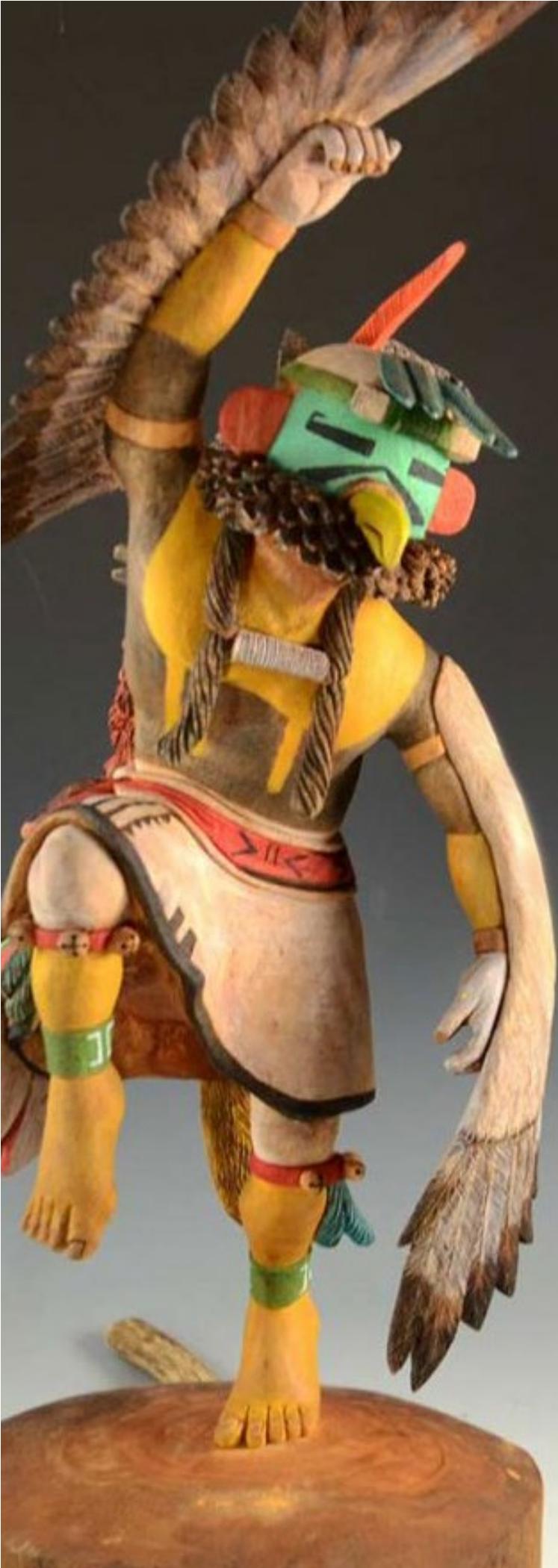
Some of the early masters in Native American

Jewelry are Kenneth Begay and his brothers at White Hogan, who signed their pieces with their signature and the White Hogan sign. Additional early masters include Fred Peshlakai, Mark Chee, David Tskiwa, Leo Poblano, Austin Wilson and Ike Wilson. Some of the contemporary masters include Lee and Raymond Yazzie, Jesse Monongye, Charles Loloma, Julian Lovato, Charles and Don Supplee, Ray Lovato, Fidel Bahe, Thomas and Jennifer Curtis, Darryl Dean Begay, McKee Platero and Edison Cummings.

When examining a piece of jewelry, look for a sign but also let the quality of work and materials, distinctiveness of the design and beauty speak to you.

Artist stamps are a good indicator of authenticity for newer pieces. Older pieces were often not stamped.





Hopi Katsinas/Kachinas & Zuni Fetishes

The Hopi of Arizona and Zuni of New Mexico have a Kachina culture but we rarely see the Zuni carve Kachinas. The Zuni are well known for the wonderful fetishes that they carve.

Kachinas are the spirit essence of everything in the world of the Hopi Indians. The Kachina season begins in late December and starts the dances, which continue through July. The Kachinas dance for precipitation, the growth of crops and the increase of both wild and domestic plants and animals. Kachina dolls are carved to give to children at the dances.

Hopi Indians carve Kachinas out of cottonwood root. They have been carving Hopi Kachina dolls for sale since the mid-1800s. The detail has gotten considerably finer since the 1960s.

A Kachina carved from one piece of wood with very fine detail will be much more expensive than one with more added pieces. One with a lot of motion will be more expensive than a Kachina that is standing still. Collectors should make sure that Kachinas are carved by Hopi Indians as opposed to “look-a-likes” made by other tribes.

Zuni Fetishes

A fetish is an object, manmade or natural, in which a spirit is thought to reside and which can be used to positive or negative affect. Fetishes have been carved out of stone and shell since prehistoric times and were always very simply done. It has been in about the last 80 years that fetishes were more realistically carved.

The most famous of those early carvers were Leekya Deyuse, Leo Polano, David Tsikewa, and Teddy Weahkee. Their descendants have carried on their fine

tradition of carving and many other families of excellent carvers are now creating wonderful fetishes. The Zunis and those who buy fetishes continue to use them for many purposes. It is believed that a bear, especially a white bear is very powerful as a healing tool.

A hunting fetish such as a mountain lion might be carried to help a hunter to catch game. It is believed that a frog can be used for fertility and to invite rain.



Hummingbird on flower
by artist
Arvella Cheama



Owl on log
by artist
Derrick Kaamasee



Mountain lion
by artist
Dan Quam



Butterfly
by artist
Michael Laweke

Pueblo Pottery

Pottery making is still thriving today at many of the Southwest Indian pueblos and on the Navajo reservation. Much of it looks very contemporary, yet traditional methods are still used. Some of the well-known pueblos where pottery is made are Santa Clara, San Ildefonso, Hopi, Acoma, Zuni, Cochiti, Laguna and Santo Domingo.



Pottery, old or new is traditionally made without the use of a wheel. The walls of the piece are built up by coiling ropes of clay on top of one another, then scraping and smoothing the surface to obliterate any trace of the coils. After the pot has dried, a watery clay soup, called a slip, is wiped on the surface, and then polished with a smooth stone. If a design is to be painted, this is done after polishing, but before firing. If it is to be carved, the carving is done after the slip is applied and before firing.

The firing is mostly done outside in the open. The pots are placed on a metal grate and covered with scrap metal or large pottery fragments. The fuel, usually dried dung cakes or wood, is placed under, around, and over the pile, and then ignited. Generally, the fire is simply allowed to burn down.

If black pots are desired, the entire heap is completely smothered with powdered manure and fine ash after the fire has reached its peak. If the pottery is to have graffito or light carving, this is done after firing.

How to Determine “Real” Native Art

We are often asked, “How do I know if I’m getting quality handmade Native American jewelry or art?” The answer can be difficult, especially for new collectors. There is a tremendous amount of manufactured jewelry that “looks” handmade. The stones used in these manufactured pieces are often stabilized or use manufactured polymers to look like real stones. We always encourage new collectors to deal with reputable galleries who source and sell handmade Native American art, who will take the time to educate you on the art you are considering.



Final Thoughts

It is always interesting and frankly exciting for us when we find unique, rare and collectible pieces. We are always on the lookout for jewelry, Kachinas or pottery by the most skilled artisans. Navajo, Hopi, Zuni and Santo Domingo artists come almost daily to sell their jewelry and art. In addition to working directly with Native artists, quality vintage jewelry, rugs, baskets and pottery is sought and purchased from collections.

Arts and Crafts Act of 1990

Under The Indian Arts and Crafts Act of 1990, an Indian is defined as a member of any federally or officially State-recognized Indian Tribe, or an individual certified as an Indian artisan by an Indian Tribe. All products must be marketed truthfully regarding the Indian heritage and tribal affiliation of the producers, so as not to mislead the consumer. It is illegal to market an art or craft item using the name of a tribe if a member, or certified Indian artisan, of that tribe did not actually create the art or craft item. (<https://www.doi.gov/iacb/act>)

The logo for ATADA (The Antique Tribal Art Dealers Association, Inc.) features the letters 'ATADA' in a bold, stylized, red font. The letters are interconnected, with the 'A's and 'D's having unique, tribal-inspired shapes.

The Antique Tribal Art Dealers Association, Inc.

Hoel's Indian Shop is a member of The Antique Tribal Art Dealers Association (ATADA). It is an important organization that was established in 1988 to help combat the unprincipled selling of fake art, crafts and jewelry. Members of the ATADA pledge "to guarantee authenticity and to provide the buying public with the available information on the age, source, integrity and collection history of the objects that they sell." It is important to reiterate that buying jewelry or art not actually made by Native Artists is harmful to the artists who make a living with their art and carry on that tradition as well.

Visit Us Online, or Stop By Our Shop In The Heart of Oak Creek Canyon!

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