



American Indian & First Peoples Art



UIMA K-12 School Programs Collections | American Indian & First Peoples Art

Original, contemporary pottery, carvings, sculpture, and drawings by artists with American and First Peoples ancestry comprise the American Indian & First Peoples Art Collection. The works are from the eastern, Midwestern, and southwestern United States, as well as the Northwest Coast of Canada. While the works in the collection reflect traditional motifs and techniques, they also display modern technologies and idiosyncratic designs, which demonstrate how American Indian and First Peoples art is not static, but influenced by changing cultural conditions. While the American Indian & First Peoples Art Collection includes many types of artwork, the three main groups are southwestern Pueblo pottery, Pueblo power figures, and Northwest Coast wood carvings.

Hundreds of years ago, the Pueblo peoples began horticultural societies in an area that is now part of the southwestern United States. In order to store surplus crops, the Pueblos began crafting pottery. Other uses of their pottery included cooking and serving, as well as water storage. Over time, a distinct type of ware was produced in each of the six or more Pueblos. Each Pueblo developed different construction techniques, motifs, and decorative styles. Today, Pueblo artisans continue to the handcrafted pottery tradition.

The Pueblo Indians believed power figures possessed spiritual powers. An artist carved each figure out of stone into the form of an animal. The purpose of a power figure is to assist humans. When traveling outside their communities to hunt, gather, and fight, Indians would observe the behavior and habits of animals. Each type of animal, and power figures crafted in their likeness, were attributed powers. These power figures were highly prized and cared for in Pueblo culture. Religious leaders called upon power figures for help and blessings for a variety of purposes, including hunting, diagnosing and curing diseases, initiations, war, gambling, propagation, and detection and protection against malevolent spirits. Contemporary Pueblo artisans carry on the tradition of power figure carving.

The first peoples of Canada who live along the Northwest Coast have created wood carvings in the formline design for over 3,000 years. The origins of this curvilinear style are unknown; it may have been inspired by dreams, visions, natural elements, or adopted from another culture. The style is typified by U-shaped and ovoid lines. The line widths of the shapes are varied to create more complex designs. Today, First Peoples artists continue to use the formline design.

The following pages show examples of objects in the collection.





Erik Fender (USA; San Ildefonso)

Pot

7 ½ x 7 ½ x 8 ¾ in.

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Adrian Trujillo (USA; Acoma Pueblo)

Pot, 9 x 9 x 9 ¼ in.

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Various Artists
Pueblo Indian Power Figures
Stone
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Janice Morin (Canada; Salish/Cree, b. 1952)

Shaman's Mask

Red alder (wood), acrylic paint, natural fibers, 6 ½ x 10 in.

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African Art

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Art of India: Folk Art

Art of India: Hindu Icons

Gee's Bend Quilts

Graphic Novel & Comic Art