

## ***Form, Pattern, and Function: Design in American Indian Art***

December 4, 1992-January 24, 1993

The diversity of the American Indian peoples is reflected in their art. The objects in this exhibition were selected to show this diversity and how the form, pattern, and function of each is dependent on the lifestyle and environment of the people who made them.

The lifestyles of Native Americans are a reflection of their relationship to nature. They made use of the natural resources available and fashioned these resources into objects suited to their way of life, as illustrated by the containers in this gallery. The rawhide containers used by the nomadic buffalo-hunting tribes of the Plains are one example of how the parts of the buffalo were used; in this case, the hide was fashioned into containers suitable for traveling. On the other hand, the Zuni water jar, made of the plentiful clay of the Pueblo region, suited their more settled, agrarian lifestyle.

American Indians also traded heavily among each other, receiving goods not available or difficult to obtain. As the Indians came into contact with new objects, they took inspiration from them and adapted designs, patterns, and forms for their own use. The same was true of the Indians when the Europeans, mainly Spanish explorers in the southwest and French and English fur traders of the north, brought unfamiliar materials and techniques. The Pueblo Indians, who already had a sophisticated weaving technology using cotton, transformed their textiles by the adoption of wool provided by sheep introduced by the Spanish. At the same time the introduction of the horse, also by the Spanish, revolutionized the life of the buffalo-hunting Plains Indians. The French and English traded glass beads for fur pelts, and these brightly colored objects quickly replaced traditional methods of decoration such as the moose hair and porcupine quills used by the Indians of the Northeast, Woodland, and Subarctic regions.

Native Americans made use of everything they made, whether it was a knife, a religious ceremonial mask, or a military bonnet. Each object was imbued with a sense of beauty and design. As the nineteenth century closed and most Indian nations were forced onto reservations their lifestyles changed dramatically. Ironically the enforced leisure caused a flowering of Native American art, which became a symbol of enduring pride in the American Indian way of life.

## **CHECKLIST OF THE EXHIBITION**

### **Form**

The form an object takes may be related to its function, a result of the material from which it is made, or it can be symbolic. The objects in this gallery represent different aspects of form. Whether it be Choctaw ball sticks taking their form from their intended use, Pueblo clothing reflecting the shape of the textiles woven on the loom, or a kachina figure representing a spirit, the form of these objects is a response to the way of life of the individual group.

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Form can also change over time as new materials are introduced from outside peoples. The women of the Northwest Coast took advantage of iron blades brought through trade and used these blades to replace the old-style blade made out of flint. Meanwhile the opposite could occur. The Sisseton Dakota retained the traditional form of their women's dresses, originally made from animal hide, when they adopted the use of wool trade cloth. This dichotomy reflects the adaptability of the American Indian to new influences and their ability to incorporate new ideas and materials into their traditional way of life.

Some forms remained traditional and are related to cultural or religious values of the Indians. The military bonnet of eagle feathers, prized by the Plains Indians as a symbol of bravery, takes its form from the multitude of eagle feathers mounted on it. A bonnet was identified with a specific individual or it could reflect the war honors of a whole tribe. As the bonnet became a symbol of the Plains Indians in eyes of the outside world it was adopted by many Indians for public appearances. Some forms, like the eagle feather headdress, were symbolic of status while other symbolic forms were important in the religious life of the Indians. The Pueblo Indians of the Southwest carved kachina figures to represent the spirits of their gods as a means of instruction to the young, while the Eskimo carved masks like that of *Uksoak*, the spirit of Autumn, to be worn by dancers representing specific spirits.

Native North American

*Headdress*, early 1900s

Feather; leather

16.5 x 29.8 cm (6 1/2 x 11 11/16 inches) without feathers; folded

Museum Works of Art Fund 44.591



Caps of buckskin covered in split feathers of the Great Horned Owl or iridescent turkey feathers were worn primarily for important social occasions, although occasionally they were worn by members of raiding parties. Any man could wear such a cap, and it served to protect him from owls, ghosts, and harm in general. This cap has owl feathers topped by turkey feathers, combining the two customary materials over a foundation of buckskin rubbed with yellow ochre.

Kwakwaka'wakw (Kwakiutl); Native North American

*Hat*, late 1800s

Spruce root, paint; two- and three-strand twining

Height: 17.8 cm (7 inches)

Museum Works of Art Fund 44.152



Northwestern peoples made unadorned basket hats in this shape to serve as rain hats while fishing, but painted versions were used as ceremonial costume for potlatches and other important social occasions. In the precontact period the motifs on the painted hats represented clan symbols and served as instant identifying marks for those who wore them. Toward the end of the nineteenth century when hats were began to be made for sale, they were made without clan symbols. As in this hat the traditional form was retained but

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patterns became more and more abstract, until it became difficult to tell just what was being depicted. Looking down at the pattern on the hat from the top, we see some aquatic bird or animal, and on the top of the cone, a star, perhaps the signature of an individual artist.

Mi'kmaq (Micmac); Native North American

*Woman's hood*, ca. 1775

Wool twill weave with glass beadwork and applied silk ribbon

Height: 36.8 cm (14 1/2 inches)

Gift of Edward B. Goodnow 81.019.10

The Micmac Indians of the Canadian Maritime Provinces came into contact with Europeans as early as the 17th century, obtaining tradecloth and Venetian glass beads before other groups. The traditional and possibly precontact MicMac hood form has been made in red and black tradecloth instead of skin, and the traditional precontact double curve motif, derived from prehistoric petroglyphs, has been applied with beads strung on horsehair and couched down, because the beads were too small to accommodate a needle.



Arctic Native American; Inuit

*Eegak (Goggles)*, ca. 1900

Incised caribou antler with sinew strap and bead

3.2 x 12.7 x 12.7 cm (1 3/16 x 5 x 5 inches)

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. James A. Houston 77.160

Forms of objects that had been determined by their function also changed across time and with the influence of European culture. Everyday objects such as the knife and dipper in this case are forms that seem to be based on the most efficient shape for their use. The dipper, of bent wood, lashed together and with a shaped bottom added, is a form that is common all over the Northwest Territories and Alaska, and is sometimes made out of skin in the same shape. The knife dates to the contact period and shows European influence in the traded metal knife blade, which replaced the old-style blade made out of flint. Eskimo women used sharp-bladed knives like these to flense the fat from sealskin before making the skins into garments. The same knife with a blunt blade was used to stretch skins before sewing.



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Also shown are a pair of Eskimo snow goggles, a form worn by hunters for at least 2000 years. Made by a variety of groups in a similar form usually of wood, with slits to protect the eyes from glare, this pair is unusual in that the Iglulik hunter has taken advantage of the natural curve of the caribou antler to fashion his eye shade decorated with incised geometric forms.

Canadian; Inuit

*Woman's Knife (Ulu)*, ca. 1900

Horn; copper; iron

15.6 cm (6 1/8 inches) (length) blade

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. James A. Houston 77.161



Native North American

*Dipper*

Wood

21.6 cm (8 1/2 inches) (length) including handle

Gift of Mrs. Jesse H. Metcalf 15.236



Arctic Native American; Native North American

*Mask*

Wood; pine; feather

23.8 x 15.2 cm (9 3/8 x 6 inches)

Museum Works of Art Fund 44.362

Eskimos made masks for ceremonial use based on human, animal, or spirit forms. The forms, dictated by the shamans, were usually not carved by the shaman, at least in the Kuskokwim area, where the shaman appointed a carver to carry out his ideas. This mask represents Uksoak, the spirit of the Autumn, who makes the water dry up and causes the good weather in the far north in October. It causes the fur of animals to become thicker and prepares things in the Eskimo word for winter. The mask was collected before 1919 by A. R. Twitchell on the Kuskokwim River.



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Tlingit; Native North American

*Mask*, ca. 1830

Painted carved wood with abalone shell

21 x 19.7 cm (8 5/16 x 7 11/16 inches)

Jesse Metcalf Fund 45.089

Tlingit masks were made by artists for winter dances and festivals that usually surrounded specific spirit characters from myths. However, Captain James Cook documented a tradition of realistic portraiture on the Northwest Coast in 1778, of which this somewhat later mask is an example. The lower lip that has been pierced to accommodate a labret identifies this figure as female; she may represent a shamanistic female figure or a portrait of an important figure of the aristocracy. The mask has been dated to about 1830 because it is the same type as several masks collected in known expeditions in 1826 and 1842.



Cherokee; Native North American

*Ball play sticks*, late 1800s - early 1900s

Rawhide

81.9 cm (32 5/16 inches) (length)

Museum Works of Art Fund 44.601A

The ball playing sticks were made in the nineteenth century by a member of the Choctaw people for a game that was often used to peacefully settle conflicts between different towns. Teams of twenty or more men would gather for festivities of several days' duration that included the playing of a stickball game called "toli" in which players carried the ball down the field in their sticks and tried to throw it to hit the goal of the opposing team. Although the game involved elements of ritual and Choctaw doctors, rainmakers, and other religious and ritual people were much in evidence, these sticks are implements of superb functionality. The pair displayed here are shaped so that the player can catch the ball, a leather-wrapped projectile the size of a golf ball, tuck it into the netting of the larger stick, then keep it from falling out by placing the smaller racket on top. The rackets are beautifully crafted from bentwood, a craft that has revived with the recent renewal of interest in "toli" among the Choctaw.



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Native North American  
*Ball play sticks*, late 1800s - early 1900s  
rawhide  
73.7 cm (29 inches) (length)  
Museum Works of Art Fund 44.601B



Hopi; Native North American  
*Women's wearing blanket (manta)*, ca. 1870  
Wool; twill  
Length: 96.5 cm (38 inches)  
Gift of Mrs. Jesse H. Metcalf 13.1466

One of six types of women's manta, this white manta with red and blue stripes was often called a "maiden's shawl." It was given to a Hopi girl between the ages of 8 and 12 after her Kachina ceremony, a coming of age ritual for all Hopi children, and was most often made by her grandfather. It was also numbered among a bride's wedding garments although it was not worn during the marriage but later for dress and ceremonial occasions.

This manta which wraps around the shoulders and ties in the front (two green ties remain at the upper edge) is an descendant of the earlier mantas of striped cotton twill, fragments of cloth were excavated from prehistoric Pueblo sites. Cotton was the traditional fiber used by the Pueblo Indians until the Spanish introduced sheep and wool in the sixteenth century. Until 1850 "maiden shawls" were





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woven entirely of wool at which time white cotton replaced the white wool.

The Pueblo Indians had developed a sophisticated weaving culture before the arrival of the Spanish in the sixteenth century. This early knowledge of weaving led to clothing styles based on the rectangular or square shape of the textile as it was taken off the loom. These styles of mantas, breechcloths, and shirts did away with the necessity to cut into the textiles which took much time and skill to produce.

Hopi; Native North American

*Hopi Rain Sash*

126.4 cm (49 11/16 inches) (length) without fringe

Museum Works of Art Fund 44.581

Often called a "Big Sash," "Wedding Sash" or "Rain Sash" this white cotton belt is one of the oldest textile forms excavated from Anasazi sites. The Anasazi, ancestors of the Pueblo Indians, used finger woven sashes similar to this one. A similar cotton sash with corn husk end rings and long fringe dating to A.D. 1200 was found in Tularosa Cave in New Mexico. As its long list of names implies this sash served a variety of functions. The "Big Sash" was presented to a bride on her wedding day or worn by male dancers where its long fringe was likened to falling rain.



Diné (Navajo); Native North American

*dress fragment; saddle blanket, ca. 1900*

Wool

96.5 cm (38 inches) (length)

Gift of Henry D. Sharpe 27.002

Breechcloths and kilts were traditional men's dress in Pueblo pre-historic and early historic times. The kilt is worn over the breechcloth often with one or two belts. With the introduction of European American clothing styles the kilt and breechcloth were relegated to ceremonial wear and were replaced with trousers for everyday.



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Diné (Navajo); Native North American  
*Women's wearing blanket (manta)*, ca. 1880  
Wool; twill  
138.4 x 114.9 cm (54 1/2 x 45 3/16 inches)  
Gift of Mrs. John Sloan 42.093

The Zuni, like the other Pueblo tribes, wove many of their own textiles. The Zuni weaving tradition differed from the Hopi in that it was the women who did the weaving and embroidery and not the men. They made blankets and styles of clothing similar to the Hopi examples exhibited in this gallery. Unlike the Hopi the Zuni no longer practice the craft of weaving and concentrate instead on silversmithing.



Santee; Sioux; Native North American; Dakota  
*Woman's Dress*, late 1800s - early 1900s  
Wool plain weave with silk ribbon, sequin, and shell appliqué  
Center back length: 133.4 cm (52 1/2 inches)  
Museum Works of Art Fund 44.592

In precontact times before the 18th century, women of the big-game-hunting Dakota tribes wore dresses similar to this one in design, made out of two deer or elkskins seamed at the sides with a hole at the top for the head and the "legs" of the skin creating interesting "flags" at each side of the skirt. When tradecloth became available, the original form was kept, and dresses were sewn complete with "legs" in the new material. The dress is ornamented with \*Dentalium pretiosum\* shells traded from Puget Sound to South Dakota via established networks. The dress offers an interesting comparison to the Zuni pueblo clothing on the West wall of this gallery that were woven in rectangular shapes and draped; in this case and in the case of the Micmac hood, new materials came into play, but the traditional cut-and-sewn form of the clothing did not change.





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A:shiwi (Zuñi); Native North American  
*Kachina Doll*,  
wood; paint  
Height: 29.2 cm (11 1/2 inches)  
Gift of Mr. Henry D. Sharpe 17.024

To the Hopi and Zuni Indians, the word "kachina" has two meanings. Most important are the spirit-beings who live in the underworld and are the intermediaries between people and the gods, bringing fire, rain, and sunshine, or who represent animals, plants, ogres, war leaders and other important figures in legend and mythology. For several months a year these kachinas come to live in the pueblos, from time to time performing dances. During this time they are impersonated by men who take the form of the spirits, wearing the distinctive masks and costumes of each kachina. These personators are also called "kachinas."

Small carved wooden kachina figures are customarily given to children to teach them to recognize the kachinas in their costumes as they impersonate the spirits. They are neither idols nor dolls, but are serious and treasured teaching devices which occupy a prominent place in a home, being attached to rafters or displayed on walls. The Museum's collection includes a figure of the Zuni kachina maiden Hoho Mana, of uncertain function, but a form that derives from a kachina mask found in an Awatovi pictograph dating to prehistoric times, as well as a Zuni warrior kachina. Also in the collection is a Hopi kachina with elaborate tableta, Polik Mana, the butterfly kachina maiden, collected before 1919 in Oraibi Pueblo, Arizona, and purchased from trader Fred Harvey. This kachina has a rainbow mouth and a headdress of clouds, personifying the beauty and fertility of the earth that follows the rain. All the Museum's kachinas are of an early type with less detail than figures made in the 20th century.



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A:shiwi (Zuñi); Native North American  
*Kachina Doll*, early 1900s  
Painted wood  
Height: 18.1 cm (7 1/8 inches)  
Gift of Mr. Henry D. Sharpe 17.021



Hopi; Native North American  
*Sa'lakwmana (Shalako Maiden) figure*, early 1900s  
Cottonwood and pigments  
38.4 x 21.9 cm (15 1/8 x 8 5/8 inches) (overall height)  
Museum Works of Art Fund 44.615



## Function

Artistry is omnipresent in American Indian functional objects -- in household items, clothing, shelter, and even in tools and weapons. The selection in this gallery reveals distinct approaches to one category of functional objects, the container.

Traditionally made for everyday needs and ceremonial use, containers were later created for trade or sale. Their materials, form, and design reflect the diverse cultures of their makers and the changing economies and lifestyles brought about by European/ American contact and conquest. The oldest North American containers were baskets dating back more than ten thousand years. Demonstrating virtuosity in ancient weaving techniques, the Western Apache, Pomo, and Chitimacha examples here were made for gifts or sale. They were created at a time when manufactured goods were available to satisfy many functional needs and a cash economy was changing traditional Native life. Instead of baskets, the nomadic northern Plains Indians made hide containers (\*parfleches\*), especially from the buffalo they

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hunted for sustenance and material goods. Parfleche containers, easily portable and nonbreakable, were made in the shapes of the objects they held.

North American pottery-making, beginning about 2500 BC, generally coincided with the development of agrarian cultures. Among the Native Americans who excelled in making vessels from clay were Zuni farmers, who lived in pueblos in the arid Southwest. The Museum's water jar, worn from years of use, is painted with abstract designs relating to the precious substance it was designed to contain and is formed to be carried on the head. Living in a richer natural environment, the Haida of the Pacific Northwest excelled in making objects from wood, a plentiful resource. The bentwood bowl is a luxury item associated with Haida feasting and potlaches during winter months.

Each of the containers expresses the esthetic concerns of its maker, a quality that transforms it into a work of art.

## **Parfleches**

Plains Indian women made decorated skin containers before contact with European Americans, as well as in the postcontact period when a nomadic, hunting lifestyle dependent on horses and buffalo developed. Although some were made from soft and pliable skins, most northern Plains containers were made from a tough rawhide called parfleche from the French traders' term (*par*, turning away; *fleche*, arrows). The word also refers to the containers themselves.

The shapes of parfleches derived from the objects they were created to contain. For example, tubular boxes held tall, folded feather bonnets and envelope-shaped cases were formed as meat containers or clothing bags, the contents secured by straps of hide drawn through sets of holes. These cases were easily transported when hung from a saddle or tied onto a travois, a carrier which trailed behind a horse. Because of the large size of the buffalo skins, parfleches were cut in identical pairs from one skin and painted with bold geometrical designs reflecting tribal areas.

The parfleche envelope here is typically Piegan Blackfoot with trapezoidal front flaps, painted side flaps, a large number of holes inside and out, a large natural-colored background, and both curved and straight lines. The design with four semi-circles and a triangular top is called "bear claw." The designs on the bonnet case show an older color scheme made with natural pigments, including blue earth from the Mussel Shell River in Montana. The traditional Plains geometrical motif has been individualized by the woman who made and painted it.

## **Baskets**

American Indians used basket containers as water and cooking vessels, as well as for storage and transport. Although the tall vase-shaped baskets (ollas) were probably made solely for sale, their shapes derive from traditional Western Apache forms. Both ollas are decorated with stylized figures, an indication of a late, postcontact date. Some of the motifs on the larger basket, such as the coyote track (four-part checkered form) at the top, are shown in both positive and negative form. The smaller jar has a more dynamic design with varied elements including swastikas, traditional motifs referring to the four directions of the revolving world. Both jars have black rims and black center disks, a characteristic of Western Apache work, and were made by the coil method. In coiled baskets, strands of fiber (weft) are sewn vertically over one or more long, spiraling coils or rods (warp).

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The Pomo of central California were making feather-covered vessels long before European-American contact. Decorated baskets like the example here were made as gifts for marriages and other special occasions and were often passed down in families from generation to generation. These baskets were also made as sacrifices honoring the dead and were cremated with the body. Small flag shapes represent quail plumes, while actual black quail and red woodpecker feathers were sewn into the coils of the light background. The clamshell disks and triangular abalone pieces were handcrafted.

Among the finest weavers in the Southern woodland region, the Chitimacha made river cane baskets, some of which were square at the bottom and round on the sides and top. Cane, dyed red and black with bloodroot and black walnut dyes, and intricate patterns in twill weave are characteristic of Chitimacha work. In twill plaiting, horizontal and vertical fibers pass over and under one another at varying intervals to create patterns. Made for gifts or sale, these baskets probably came from a larger set of baskets with different designs to showcase the skill of the weaver.

A:shiwi (Zuñi); Native North American

*Water jar*, ca. 1890

Earthenware

26.7 x 35.6 cm (10 1/2 x 14 inches) (approximate)

Gift of Mr. Henry D. Sharpe 16.058



The Zuni lived in adobe villages in the arid southwest, depending on uncertain river flow and seasonal rain for water. A relatively stationary farming people, they made pottery containers by the coiling method and painted them with yucca leaves. The base of this bowl is deeply indented so that it can be carried on the head, cushioned by a coil of cloth or yucca wrapped around the bottom. Characteristically Zuni is the division of the two design areas by a heavy black line which is broken by a vertical mark at one point. Called a "life line," it had to be left open or broken so that spirit of the maker would not be caught inside the vessel. Reflected Zuni closeness with nature, the stomach of the jar is painted with three cloud and rainbird motifs; the neck displays four crook-with-stripes designs, representing ceremonial drumsticks, falling rain, and ears of corn. The bowl is worn around the rim from heavy use.

Haida; Native North American

*Food box*, ca. 1900?

wood, shell

39.4 cm (15 1/2 inches) (length)

Museum Works of Art Fund 44.360



Living in an environment of relative plenty, the Haida migrated seasonally to fish and gather berries, returning in winter to villages where they created a wealth of decorated objects and participated in

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a rich ceremonial life. Food bowls such as this one were luxury items figuring in Haida feasts and potlaches where the extravagant gifts and quantities of food presented enhanced the prestige of the host. Their skill in working with wood can be seen in this beautifully carved box, the sides of which were made from a single plank of wood. First the three corners were notched (kerfed), and then the wood was steamed, bent, and joined at the fourth corner.

Native North American

*Basket*, 1800s

7.6 x 11.4 cm (3 x 4 1/2 inches) (height x depth) approximate

Gift of Edward B. Aldrich 18.052

Pikuni Blackfeet (Piegan); Native North American

*Parfleche*, 1800s

61 cm (24 inches) (length)

Museum Works of Art Fund 43.099



Apache; Native North American

*Jar (olla)*, ca. 1910

Willow, black devil's-claw/martynia; three-rod coiled

Height: 28.9 cm (11 3/8 inches)

Gift of Edward B. Aldrich 18.063



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Apache; Native North American  
*Storage jar*, 1800s  
plant material  
55.2 cm (21 11/16 inches) (height)  
Gift of Miss Ellen D. Sharpe 39.068



Pomo; Native North American  
*Bowl*, early 1900s  
Willow, sedge root, dyed bulrush or fern root, red acorn woodpecker  
feathers, quail topknot feathers, abalone and clamshell disc beads;  
three-rod coiled  
9.5 x 46.4 cm (3 13/16 x 18 5/16 inches)  
Gift of Mrs. William Edgar 44.286



## Navajo Blankets

Although well known for their textiles, the Navajo's knowledge of fine weaving is a relatively recent skill acquired from a wide range of cultural influences - techniques were learned from the Pueblo Indians, wool came from sheep introduced by the Spanish, and designs were adapted first from the Pueblo of the Southwest and the Mexicans of the Rio Grande, later from traders who established posts on the reservations and most recently from collectors who request certain types of designs.

The Navajo, part of an Athapascan-speaking group related to the Tlingit of the Northwest Coast, migrated to the Southwest about 500 years ago and under the influence of the cliff dwelling Pueblo Indians their lifestyle began to change from a primarily hunting-gathering-farming one to a more sedentary one. The Pueblos have inhabited the Southwest for centuries and developed a sophisticated knowledge of weaving. The Navajo learned these new skills and the first fabrics they wove were based on the styles already produced by the Pueblo which are exhibited in the opposite gallery. While the Pueblo styles of dress changed slightly over time the Navajo weavers quickly adapted new designs and styles and made them their own.

Archeological evidence suggests that the first blankets woven by the Navajo were striped similar to those of the Pueblo. As they came into contact with the Spaniards and the Mexican refugees who settled in the Upper Rio Grande after the Mexican Revolution they adopted the spots, diamonds, and triangle zig-zag motifs present in the poncho and serape commonly worn south of the border. By the beginning of the nineteenth century the Navajo had mastered the art of weaving and their blankets, serapes and saddle pads, were known far beyond their homeland. They were prized by the Plains



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Indians and the Navajo "Chief's blanket" probably derived its name from its use by the leaders of the Plains Indians who wore them as a sign of their status.

After the Navajo were moved to reservations in the mid-19th century they continued to produce textiles. Now under the influence of the white entrepreneurs who set-up trading posts, their functional textile forms gave way to the demands of their new clients, non-Indian people, who desired furnishing fabrics such as floor coverings. The transition of Navajo weaving forms continues today when Navajo blankets, now considered art objects, are made to be hung on walls.

Diné (Navajo); Native North American

*Man's wearing blanket (Chief blanket, phase III)*, ca. 1865 - ca. 1880

Wool; tapestry weave

Width: 141 cm (55 1/2 inches)

Gift of Mrs. John Sloan 42.088

The style of Navajo blanket known as the "chief's" blanket went through three distinct phases of design. The first phase blankets are made with contrasting stripes of white and brown/black, with blue and/or red stripes. This design is similar to the Pueblo-style manta which influenced the early Navajo weavers. As the Navajo became more adept weavers they began to incorporate their own patterns based on basketry designs. First blocks of color were introduced into the ends and centers of the stripes. As the second phase style developed the blocks got larger and eventually were replaced by stepped triangles, characteristic of the third phase chief blanket.



The first textiles woven by the Navajo were used primarily as wearing, sleeping or saddle blankets. The "Chief's" blanket was worn over the shoulders, with the two ends meeting at the front. The characteristic half triangles at each end to the blanket would then meet at the center front, enveloping the wearing in a symmetrical pattern both front and back.

Diné (Navajo); Native North American

*Man's wearing blanket ("Moqui" style)*, 1870s

Wool; tapestry weave

Length: 198.1 cm (78 inches)

Gift of the Estate of Mrs. Gustav Radeke 31.182



In 1864 the United States Government forced the Navajo people, who continued to resist Mexican and European settlement of the Southwest, to Bosque Redondo in eastern New Mexico. After five years of hardship in this inhospitable land they were resettled in their original homeland onto a permanent reservation. The sedentary life, first at Bosque Redondo and later on the reservation fostered the

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Navajo weaving tradition while the 4,000 Rio Grande blankets distributed at Bosque Redondo, with their serrated diamond and line motifs, influenced Navajo blankets for decades. The striped background of this rug, also known as moki, is a traditional style used in serapes during the middle of the 19th century. Here it is used in this blanket with the serrated diamonds adopted from the Rio blankets and crosses which became popular in the late 1860s and were used often in the 70s.

Diné (Navajo); Native North American  
*Man's wearing blanket (Chief blanket, phase II), 1855-1863*  
Wool and cotton tapestry weave  
Length: 179.1 cm (70 1/2 inches)  
Gift of Mrs. Murray S. Danforth 45.083



Blankets became a valuable commodity for barter at the trading posts established by the European Americans and as the blanket's fame spread throughout the US, traders began to introduce new designs, yarns, and types of textiles to the Indians to please this new market. On this rug, an example of a style favored by the trader Lorenzo Hubbel in the 1890s, crosses are placed against a striped blue and white background. It was woven with Germantown yarns introduced by the traders so that stronger blankets more appropriate as floor covering could be made.

Apsáalooke (Crow); Native North American  
*Cradleboard, early 1900s*  
Skin; wood with Intermontane-style beading  
Length: 94 cm (37 inches) (excluding fringe)  
Gift of Henry D. Sharpe 17.017

Indian children spent most of their first two years in a cradle, which served as a crib, playpen, carriage and highchair. Cradles were often prepared by one of the child's female relatives, an aunt or grandmother, and their elaborate ornamentation attests to the love of a child by its parents and relatives. These two cradles are beautiful examples of the late nineteenth century beader's art. The Crow cradle is beaded in a style typical of the Indians of the Plateau or Transmontane at the end of the nineteenth century, in which designs remained similar to older patterns used on raw hide *parfleches*. The Kiowa cradle is beaded in a representational style which developed on the Plains around 1885, when Indian women began to depict representational scenes formerly reserved for men in painting and pipe stone sculpture.



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Ka'igwu (Kiowa); Native North American  
*Cradleboard*, ca. 1900  
Wood, leather, beadwork, and brass tacks  
Length: 111.1 cm (43 3/4 inches) (brace)  
Museum Works of Art Fund 44.610



Native North American; Sioux; Dakota  
*Northern Plains Cradle wrap*, late 1800s - early 1900s  
skin; wool; bead; brass (alloy); cotton  
124.5 cm (49 inches) (length)  
Gift of Henry D. Sharpe 17.019

In many Plains Indian cultures after a child's birth its umbilical cord was dried and saved as a link between the child's life in the womb and after birth. The cord was sewn into a pouch, often in the shape of a turtle for a girl or a lizard for boy. This navel amulet became the baby's first toy and remained with the child as a charm to protect it and ensure a long life.

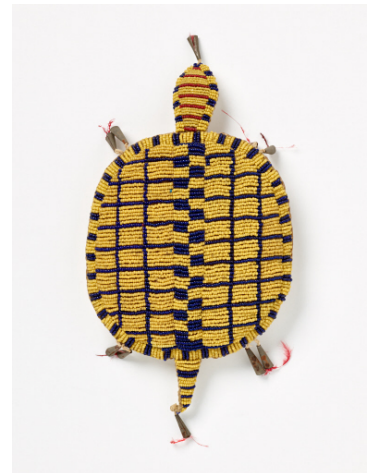
By taking the form of a turtle the navel amulet was imbued with its protective power. In many Plains Indian creation legends while the world was still covered with water, the first human life entered supported on the back of a turtle, when the first dry-land mass was created. Because of its important role in the creation of the world, the turtle is closely associated with "mother earth" and was thought



# RISD MUSEUM

to provide protection during birth and infancy. The symbol of the turtle was often used on objects related to childhood or women's clothing, as in the baby carrier exhibited in this case where the beaded design representing the turtle or the four corners of the earth is on either side of the hood. These soft carriers were used by some tribes of the Central Plains and were carried by the mother or could be attached to a stiff board for travel. The cloth skirting would wrap around the child and be secured with straps.

Apsáalooke (Crow); Native North American  
*Umbilical amulet*, 1900s  
Leather; bead; tin; feather  
Length: 26.7 cm (10 1/2 inches)  
Museum Works of Art Fund 43.111



## Navajo Silver

Navajo craftsmen learned to copy Mexican silver techniques around 1870 after their long imprisonment at Fort Sumner. At first, bracelets and earrings were hammered from American silver dollars, and by 1875 the technique of casting was in use. Sparse decoration was applied by engraving and stamping, using straight lines or geometric designs achieved with the use of a chisel. By the late 19th century necklaces with central "naja" and distinctively shaped small "squash blossom" pendants became a standard item of a Navajo adornment, a style that was encouraged by traders, who settled in the area after the building of the Santa Fe railroad in the 1880s and almost immediately began selling the necklaces on the eastern market. In 1899, trader Fred Harvey provided southwestern silversmiths with turquoise in bulk, together with sheet silver and silver wire that could be bent to accommodate the stones, encouraging craftsmen to make lighter weight pieces that would display quantities of turquoise. This traditional shape and pattern is still being made by Navajo silversmiths and continues today in beautifully crafted contemporary pieces.

Shown in this case are three necklaces illustrating three stages in the transition to the outside market. On the right is a necklace that dates probably to the 1880s or 1890s and was made for the Navajo market, with its heavy round beads and lack of stones. The center necklace has one stone in a low bezel with stamped decoration characteristic of the first market phase, and the third necklace, heavy with turquoise, is expressive of the trader's demands later in the twentieth century. In contrast, the two "naja" both date to before 1912. Both illustrate the use of stamped decoration on the traditional crescent embellished in one case by a cross motif also borrowed from Spanish prototypes. The pendant

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from Acoma Pueblo is an early example in silver of the double-barred cross, which became a staple of Pueblo design, appearing again and again in necklaces mainly for local use. Navajo buttons, which were one of the first objects made from silver, were also meant for local use and were not "discovered" by traders until the 1940s.

Native North American

*Necklace, 1800s*

Silver

38.1 cm (15 inches) (length) doubled

Bequest of Martha B. Lisle 67.292



Diné (Navajo); Native North American

*Necklace, ca. 1900*

Silver; turquoise

53.3 cm (21 inches) (length) string of beads

Gift of Mrs. William C. Baker 12.199





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Diné (Navajo); Native North American  
*Necklace*, 1880 - 1900  
Silver  
63.5 cm (25 inches) (length) string of beads  
Bequest of Isaac C. Bates 13.720



Native North American  
*Pendant*, late 1800s  
Silver  
Width: 3.2 cm (1 1/4 inches)  
Gift of Mrs. William C. Baker 12.198



Diné (Navajo); Native North American  
*Button*, ca. 1900  
Silver  
Length: 2.2 cm (7/8 inches)  
Gift of Mrs. William C. Baker 12.205





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Diné (Navajo); Native North American  
*Button*, ca. 1900  
Silver  
2.4 cm (7/8 inches) (diameter)  
Gift of Mrs. William C. Baker 12.208



Diné (Navajo); Native North American  
*Button*, ca. 1900  
Silver  
3 cm (1 3/16 inches) (diameter)  
Gift of Mrs. William C. Baker 12.209



Diné (Navajo); Native North American  
*Button*, ca. 1900  
Silver  
Diameter: 2.4 cm (15/16 inches)  
Gift of Mrs. William C. Baker 12.211



Diné (Navajo); Native North American  
*Pendant*, ca. 1900  
Silver  
Width: 6 cm (2 3/8 inches)  
Gift of Mrs. William C. Baker 12.196



# RISD MUSEUM

Diné (Navajo); Native North American  
*Pendant*, ca. 1900  
silver  
Length: 7.6 cm (3 inches)  
Gift of Mrs. William C. Baker 12.195



## Pattern

Pattern The patterns used to decorate the art of the American Indian are as diverse as the people who made them. The designs used by the people of the Southwest Pueblos, Northwest Coast, and Arctic show a continuity with their prehistoric past. The Pima and Pueblo Indians of the Southwest continued to use designs in their basketry and weaving which can be found in examples of prehistoric pottery made by their ancestors, the Anasazi and Hohokam. In other cases as people were pushed out of their ancestral homelands by other Indians or Euroamericans, contact led to change in pattern and materials.

Europeans came into contact with Indians in the sixteenth century as Spanish explorers arrived in the Southwest and as the French and English established the fur trade in Canada and the Northeast. As the demand for pelts, especially beaver, grew through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries - the fur was used to make beaver hats which were in great demand throughout Europe - traders moved along old trade routes long in use by the Indians. The European traders introduced new materials like beads, cloth, and thread, while also supplying household tools and guns. As trading posts were established throughout the Northeast the Indians became dependent on the trade to supply many of their daily needs. Tribes like the Crow of the Central Plains prospered by the fur trade and their new wealth led to elaborate methods of ornamentation using glass trade beads to decorate their personal belongings as a show of their prosperity.

As trading posts were established throughout the Northeast, missionaries arrived to teach and convert the American Indian, establishing schools where young women were instructed in embroidery and floral designs so common in the education of European girls. This floral style of embroidery spread throughout the Woodland Northeast and into the Plains and Plateau. During the nineteenth century trading posts were also established on reservations in the Southwest. They provided an outlet for Indian goods to the European-American market. As the posts prospered traders influenced the design, especially of Navajo blankets and Southwest jewelry, to meet the demands of the market. As in most cases the Indians adopted and transformed these new designs and materials while preserving their customs and beliefs.

# RISD MUSEUM

Native North American  
*Bottle*, 1875-1925  
earthenware  
15.6 cm (6 1/8 inches) (height)  
Museum Works of Art Fund 44.612

When Hernando de Soto arrived in southeastern North America in 1540, a native American civilization involving hundreds of sites thrived along the Mississippi river and eastward from Illinois to Florida. This Mississippian culture built large towns like Cahokia, Illinois, which at its height had an estimated nearly 300 small platforms that supported individual dwellings as well as a huge platform structure more than 100 feet high and 900 by 600 feet at its base, the largest earthwork ever built anywhere, that served as a base for temples and houses of priests and of chiefs. Archeologists have uncovered hundreds of examples of pottery from Mississippian sites across the southeast related in their techniques, shapes, and decoration, such as the examples shown here. The two bowls represent typical Mississippian shapes common throughout the area and have scratched and incised decoration in double spiral and other geometric motifs. The blackware bottle is of shell-tempered pottery with red paint rubbed into the the incised lines that form its "sun circle" design, an image related to what archeologists have called "The Southern Cult" of apparent religious ritual.



Southwestern Native American; Native North American  
*Bowl*, 1300s - 1500s  
3.8 x 14 cm (1 1/2 x 5 1/2 inches) (height x depth) approximate, of top  
Museum Works of Art Fund 44.611



Caddo; Pre-Columbian  
*Bowl*, 1250  
Earthenware  
Height: 6.4 cm (2 1/2 inches)  
Museum Works of Art Fund 44.589



# RISD MUSEUM

Caddo; Southeastern Native American  
*Bowl*, ca. 2000 BCE  
Earthenware  
Height: 11.8 cm (4 5/8 inches)  
Gift of Granville S. Standish 38.112

Although its function is unknown, the effigy pot with its animal shape is a common Mississippian form, of unglazed pottery deeply incised.



Native North American; Innu  
*Hunter's Coat*, late 1800s  
Caribou hide with paint; mended  
97.8 cm (38 1/2 inches) (length)  
Museum Works of Art Fund 44.593

Naskapi hunters have worn painted coats since at least the 17th century, when they were first recorded by Champlain. The coat, made and painted for a hunter by his wife according to designs that he had dreamed would give him power during the hunt, was symbolic of the deep dependence of the hunters of the North on the caribou and of a desire to treat the caribou well so that good hunts might continue. Like all of the extant coats, this one echoes the shape of European fashion of its date, but the triangular gusset in the back represents the Magic Mountain where the Lord of the caribou lived and whence he sent forth the caribou to be caught by the hunter, and is the source of the coat's power. The coat was collected by the famous ethnologist Frank G. Speck.



Native North American  
*Belt*, 1800s  
cotton; wool  
190.5 cm (75 inches) (width)  
Gift of the heirs of Ellen E. Bartlett 14.183

The Pima, like the Pueblo Indians, developed a sophisticated weaving technology, producing thousands of undecorated, finely woven white blankets, few of which have survived. They also wove colorful belts like these on a backstrap loom with weft patterning in designs which relate to those used on baskets and which can be traced back to similar patterns used by their prehistoric ancestors, the Hohokam. Hohokam farmers occupied Southern Arizona near the Gila and Salt rivers from about 300 BC to AD 1400, and in turn were influenced by



# RISD MUSEUM

Mesoamerican cultures, which also produced geometric repetitive patterns like those on Pima belts.

Native North American

*Belt*, 1800s

cotton; wool

190.5 cm (75 inches) (width)

Gift of the heirs of Ellen E. Bartlett 14.184



French Canadian; Metis; Native American (culture)

*Sash (ceinture fléchée)*, 1800s

Wool

Length: 193 cm (76 inches)

Gift of Mrs. Jesse H. Metcalf 23.092

As the Europeans came in contact with the Indians of the Northwest through the fur trade they not only introduced new ideas to the Indians but were in turn influenced by them. The Indians had long produced sashes finger woven in the technique known as oblique interlace, a type of braiding. These sashes were adopted by many traders and Metis involved in the fur trade, who replaced the plant fibers and cotton originally used with a variety of colored wool threads, creating finely woven bright sashes.





# RISD MUSEUM

Anishinaabe (Ojibwe); Native North American

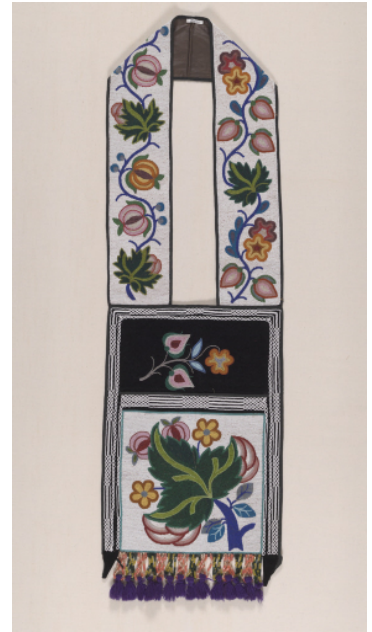
*Bandolier Bag*, 1875-1899

Linen plain weave and cotton velvet with glass-bead embellishment

121.9 x 36.8 cm (48 x 14 1/2 inches)

Gift of Margaret McCarthy 1991.027

One of the results of European contact with Native Americans was the introduction of floral beadwork and embroidery motifs into their traditional design repertoire. As traders moved West so too did missionaries who established schools to instruct the Indians. By the 1860s schools were established in the Subarctic region, around trading posts along Hudson's Bay and farther west. Missionary nuns instructed Indian girls in needlework and introduced them to floral styles which were adapted for their own uses. The mittens in this case are an example of the type of work being done by the Cree Indians living near the Hudson's Bay posts. Floral motifs were strongest in the decorative arts of the Indians around the Great Lakes as is evident in the Chippewa bandolier bag and mittens exhibited in this case. As floral styles moved westward they became more stylized as can be seen in both the man's vest, a clothing style also adopted from the Europeans, and in the pipe bag which shows how this floral style was adapted by members of the western Plains Ojibwa.



Native North American

*Pipe Case*, late 1800s- early 1900s

skin; silk; cotton; bead

53.3 cm (21 inches) (length)

Gift of Dr. Gustav Radeke 91.008





# RISD MUSEUM

Anishinaabe (Ojibwe); Native North American  
*Man's Vest*, ca. 1860  
leather; cotton; beads  
47 cm (18 1/2 inches) (length) shoulder to vest point  
Museum Works of Art Fund 44.596



Cree; Native North American  
*Pair of Mittens*, ca. 1865  
Buckskin, fur and wool  
Length: 22.5 cm (8 7/8 inches)  
Museum Works of Art Fund 44.613

