

Hopi Jewelry

Hopi Jewelry, also known as overlay, was introduced to the Hopi by Mary Russell Ferrrell Colton of the Museum of Northern Arizona in the late 1930's and has been part of the culture since. Although silverwork was introduced by the Spaniards the Hopi's have developed their own unique type of work through out the years.

Overlay is constructed by soldering two pieces of silver together. The top layer will have designs cut into it by using a small saw. Designs may vary with most being prayer feathers, water symbols, clouds and rain. Animal figures will also be used. The top layer will be placed on the bottom which has been textured with a hammer and a small punch. The piece is then blacked (oxidized) to enhance the design then a wheel buffer will be used to give it a high polish or a very fine piece of steel wool can be used to give it a satin look.

Traditionally, silver alone had been the primary and most distinctive look for Hopi jewelry but with the help of such contemporary artists like Charles Loloma and Preston Monongye the use of gold and stones has become common.

Navajo Jewelry

In the 1860's Mexican Blacksmith Nakai Tsosi introduced jewelry making to Atsidi Sani a young Navajo man. He was also known to be the first Navajo jeweler. Through out the years the skill has been passed down to friends and family members. Many jewelry designs came from Spanish Horse tack.

Brass, copper and Mexican coins were the first materials to be used but as traders settled on to the reservations silver was introduced. Traders had also been a big influence on what type of items to make.

There are many forms of Navajo jewelry being made and ideas were also borrowed from other tribes of the southwest, stamping and casting being the most recognized. As years went on other types of work were being introduced such as channel inlay, overlay and stone cutting. Shells and different types of stone were being used to add color. Turquoise is the most popular stone used as it has great value to the Navajos.

Many artist's today create different styles depending on their upbringing and what feels most comfortable with them. Lately, contemporary jewelry has been a favorite among most artists as they try to add a new twist to native styles.

Zuni Jewelry

Jewelry made by the Zuni tribe covers a wide range of styles and designs. The Zunis spent years developing their jewelry making skills. Each artisan strives to create his or her own distinctive design. The earliest recorded Zuni silversmith learned the art from a Navajo who came to the Pueblo in 1872, although the art was originally introduced by the Spanish.

The terms that are most often used when discussing Zuni jewelry are:

- Inlay: This word describes a technique by which pieces of stone or shell are precisely cut to fit into channels or grooves in the silver or gold and is referred to as channel work. Each stone is cut to its final shape and set into the grooves or channels in the silver or gold. The types of inlay that are most common are flat, raised and etched.
- The use of jet, coral, turquoise, and mother of pearl are the most commonly used stones for inlay, although many other types of stones are used by today's contemporary artists.
- Needlepoint: Defined by a very small slender stones shaped to a point each end.
- Petit Point: Defined by many stones are either round or tear-drop shapes.
- Snake Eye: Tiny circles of stone set into silver.
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Most Zuni artisans strive to originate their own designs. Many jewelers use traditional techniques passed down through the generations. Zuni jewelry is one of the most intricate and delicate styles of jewelry found in the Southwest. Owning a piece of Zuni jewelry is owning a piece of a proud culture.