

Case labels

Case 1

This box, undoubtedly commissioned for a duck hunter, features a carved-shell hunting dog pointing out its quarry that has been realistically rendered in low relief. Two mosaic mallards appear, out of harm's way, at the lower left and upper right atop of this ornately stamped silver box. The lapidary work is likely by Leo and Daisy Poblano while the silverwork was accomplished by a Navajo silversmith.

Case 2

Four of these boxes have been set with carvings by Leekya Deyuse, considered one of the finest Zuni stone carvers. He produced thousands of carvings over the course of his lifetime. His nearly limitless repertoire included animal, plant, and human forms carved in local stone, shell, coral, and turquoise. Here, a large leaf, bears, and frogs have taken up residence on Navajo-made silver boxes.

Case 3

This silver box has been fashioned with arched ends to fit the curve of the bow guard. The basic bow-guard design concept became an accepted format for cover layouts. This trend set a style, as can be seen on covers—none of which saw use as actual bow guards.

Case 4

The figure of the Knife Wing Man appears prominently in Zuni traditional stories and is sometimes referred to as a Knife Wing Bird. Teddy Weahkee is credited as the first lapidary artist to reproduce the image in stone mosaic. The resulting popularity of Weahkee's creation led to innumerable similar renditions appearing as jewelry and on boxes.

Case 5

A box top could be viewed as a blank canvas waiting to be filled with inspired artistry in silverwork and stone. Collaborations between expert Navajo silversmiths and equally talented Zuni lapidary artists created masterpieces, with entire tops of boxes inlaid with figures of dancers or images from Zuni traditional stories.

Case 6

The central box is by Jennifer Curtis, who, having learned from her father Thomas Curtis, now follows in his footsteps, creating her own masterpieces in silver. The raised,

silver hollowware boxes are all by the late Thomas Curtis, a talented Navajo silversmith. Growing up watching his blacksmith uncle at work, he gained an understanding of ironworking that would enable him to design and fabricate the stamps he used on his silver pieces.

Case 7

This box depicts a Zuni olla carrier identified as Amy Chuyate and made by Daisy Poblano, granddaughter of the famous Hopi potter Nampeyo. Daisy spent two years studying painting and sculpture at L'École des Beaux Arts in Paris and later marrying Zuni artist Leo Poblano. Combining her sculptural training with Leo's lapidary talents, they started producing naturalistic inlaid figures.

Case 8 San Ildefonso artist Maria Martinez's use of her signature on her pottery encouraged Native artists across the Southwest to sign their works. Each of these boxes has a maker's hallmark. The box at the left is the work of Perry Shorty, known for his precise workmanship. Shorty's work fits well into the contemporary genre while maintaining a strong historical influence.

Case 9

Seven of these boxes are the work of master silversmith Kenneth Begay. Considered to be the father of modern Navajo silverwork, Begay received his early training in a silversmithing program at Fort Wingate, New Mexico, where one of his instructors was Fred Peshlakai. Later, after becoming a partner in the White Hogan shop in Scottsdale, Arizona, Begay conceived of and created a line of Southwest-inspired mid-century modern silverware and jewelry. He was one of the first silversmiths to incorporate local ironwood into his designs.

Wall case 1

This grouping of boxes exhibits styles common in the pre-World War II years. One of the earliest dated boxes, collected between 1911 and 1914 is in this group. The techniques employed here—stamping, repoussé, and appliqué—mirror those used to create jewelry during the same era. These basic techniques would change little over time and would be used to great advantage, prevailing until the present day.

Wall Case 2

Initially, the boxes produced for the commercial market were small, with utilitarian intent. Pocket-sized pill boxes were common, as were paperclip containers.

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