

HOW TO CREATE YOUR OWN PERSONAL AMERICAN INDIAN ART MUSEUM

You can easily create your own personal American Indian Art Museum without breaking your wallet by considering a few simple tips.

- **Do not expect to build your collection overnight.** You want to buy quality American Indian art. Your collection will grow over time. Take your time to develop it. It is better to purchase one quality piece at a time than to go for the lowest price item that you can find.
- **American Indian Art is an expression of individuals from many different cultures.** You should appreciate the difference between cultures so that you can truly appreciate your collection, and be able to explain it to others.
- **You may want to focus on a specific item, or artist as the foundation of your collection.**
- **Be absolutely certain that the items you include in your collection are authentic.** Always ask for documentation about the items that you choose when acquiring items for your collection.
- **Purchase items that *speak to you*.** Be selective in what you buy for your collection. If it is the right item, you will enjoy it forever.
- **Always purchase from a trusted source.** Look for the IACA seal wherever you purchase items for your collection. This seal guarantees you of the honesty and integrity of the people you work with in building your collection.

Take your time, be selective, and enjoy developing your very own American Indian Art Collection.



INDIAN ARTS & CRAFTS ASSOCIATION

SINCE 1974



THE WORLD'S LEADING AMERICAN INDIAN ARTS ALLIANCE

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The IACA Mission

*To promote, preserve and protect authentic
American Indian arts and crafts.*

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COLLECTING AMERICAN INDIAN FETISHES



AMERICAN INDIAN FETISHES

are small carvings made from a variety of natural materials. Many tribes throughout the U.S. handcraft and use fetishes, but the Zuni people in New Mexico are the most prolific and well-known carvers, and are generally acknowledged as doing the finest and broadest spectrum of work.

Fetish carvings serve a ceremonial purpose within American Indian culture. It is a cultural tradition to honor everything in nature – Native American Indians believe animals, inanimate objects and the forces of nature have a living spirit force within them. Fetishes represent these spirits and so they are well-treated – usually kept in a special place and, when carried, placed in a soft leather or cloth pouch or in a pocket.



Each animal fetish is believed to have powers or qualities that may aid the owner – to protect a herd from disease, to assist with a hunt, to bless a home and new growing crops, and many others. According to Zuni tradition, specific animals guard the six sacred directions – north is the mountain lion; south, the badger; west, the bear; east, the wolf; sky, the eagle; and underground, the mole.

Traditionally, fetish carvers used materials found locally or obtained through trade. Zunis consider turquoise to be a sacred stone so this is the most important material used. Other traditional materials include shell, coral and jet, but almost anything that can be carved will be used – malachite, jasper, marble, clay, lapis lazuli, bone and antlers.

Some fetishes have small decorative bundles tied on the back or side made of any combination of feathers, turquoise, heishe (tiny beads) and leather strips. This is an extra offering to the spirit, sometimes called a prayer bundle or offering bundle. Another feature is an inlaid line, often turquoise, extending from the animal's mouth to the center of the body called a "heartline".

Carvers' styles are unique and, in modern times, certain styles are highly sought by non-Native collectors. Many collectors enjoy fetishes of a particular animal or a particular material, while others enjoy whatever happens to appeal to their own taste and budget. Fetishes are a very affordable art form, especially for a new collector.



WHAT TO LOOK FOR:

- Purchase from the carver or from a reputable dealer.
- Older fetishes often appear soiled or dirty, but should be left in their original condition to maintain their value.
- Chose what appeals to you – it always comes down to personal taste, like any art form.

CARE OF FETISHES:

- Dust with a soft, dry cloth.
- Leather and feathers on prayer bundles should be kept dry.