All Native made art and craft, whether ancient or contemporary, carries with it the spirit of purpose. The shapes, colors, textures and designs each have meaning to Native people. It is from this purpose that creativity thrives.

What to look for:

- *Purchase from a reputable source.*
- *Carvings made from one piece, or one main piece, rather than pieces glued together.*
- *Signature or mark or the carver (usually found under the base).*
- *If an old katsina, condition of any feather or natural element accessories.*
- *Quality of paintwork.*

Care of your katsina:

- *Stabilize the doll with museum putty or fine fishing line.*
- *Keep away from areas of high moisture like kitchens and bathrooms.*
- *Keep away from direct sunlight and air vents.*
- *Never use anything wet or damp to clean a katsina doll.*

Indian Arts & Crafts Association

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COLLECTING Kachina Carvings

Indian Arts & Crafts Association

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COLLECTING KACHINA CARVINGS

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KATSINA (OR KACHINA) carvings have meaning far beyond their visual appeal to collectors. The Hopi people of Northern Arizona are the most prolific and well-known katsina makers, and many also come from the Zuni Pueblo. Each katsina carving offers a unique insight into Hopi culture.

Katsinam are traditionally believed to be friendly spirit beings that live in the San Francisco Peaks, near Flagstaff, Arizona, and come down to the Hopi villages from February to July. During ceremonies, when the men of the villages assume the visual form of the katsinas and appear in the streets and plazas of the town. It is here that the katsina is his most magnificent, for the Hopis feel that when they impersonate a katsina they become the supernatural. As supernaturals they may cure disease, grow corn, bring clouds and rain, watch over ceremonies and reinforce discipline and order in the Hopi world.

During ceremonial dances they hand out handmade katsina carvings, representing these spiritual beings, to girls and women of all ages. Children use them to learn to distinguish between the different spirits and for women they personify the ideas of fertility, good crops, life-giving rain, and other good blessings.

Katsinas have been made for generations, traditionally by men, but today there are also a few women carvers. Each is carved from the root of a cotton-wood tree. After the wood is thoroughly dried, it is light and porous, and easy to carve.

Modern hand-held tools like hammers and chisels are used to make the basic form, and sharp knives are used to carve the details. Traditional symbols and designs are still used. The paints are often commercial acrylic or oil-based stains, but there are some carvers who still use natural earth and plant based pigments.

There are three main katsina styles to look for – traditional, action, and sculptural.

- *Traditional: simpler styles, usually with paints made from natural pigments, may be standing or wall-hanging.*
- *Action: as the name implies, these katsinas show movement with arms and legs usually clearly defined, usually decorated with bright, acrylic paints and standing on a base.*
- *Sculptural: more contemporary designs, usually a tall, slender figure that stands on a base, acrylic paintwork often with stylized versions of traditional symbols and patterns.*

There is enormous variety in styles, sizes and prices of katsinas. Some are modest in design with little embellishment, and others have elaborate feather, shell, leather or beadwork accessories. Some are brightly painted, while others have more muted natural colors. It is very much up to the personal taste of the individual collector, which style he or she prefers.

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