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Kachinas And Ceremonial Dancers In Zuni Jewelry



Synopsis

This fascinating work delves into the origins and contemporary interpretations of Kachina and Ceremonial Dancer designs. This groundbreaking study establishes for the first time the identities of Zuni artists and their works from the 1940s through the 1960s. Their mosaic stone and shell inlay pins, bracelets, bolo ties, and other ornaments appear in 240 vibrant color photos revealing subtle variations that indicate a particular master's work and distinctive style. For the first time, this research introduces John Lucio's earlier pieces and confirms Anna Rita Homer and Lambert Homer Jr.'s pieces clearly, as never before. It also introduces Robert Cachini Sr. (formerly known only as R. C. Sr.) and his pieces. The author's analysis explains the changes and connections among early and recent makers and their individual styles, materials, and designs. For anyone with a passion for jewelry of the Southwest, this book will be a treasure.

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Customer Reviews

Toshio Sei has collected Western fine art prints for more than 40 years. Since 1993, he has collected Zuni fetishes and antique mosaic jewelry. He and his wife live in Ube, Yamaguchi, Japan.

This 3rd installment offers a stunning array of Katsina and ceremonial dancers portrayed in Zuni inlay. Many of these pieces can are museum quality pieces and it is a treat to view them in this book. Invaluable to the collector who wants to familiarize themselves with design, style and workmanship of many of Zuni's best artists.

For me this was the most educational volume as I am not as familiar with the Zuni Kachinas. They are wonderfully displayed and described as the others. Many of these designs, are unique to me and I look forward to seeing them in person some day....in the wild. This set will be a great resource for years to come!

This is an invaluable book for anyone interested in collecting Zuni jewelry. The author is very knowledgeable and the pictures are excellent. It is obvious that the author has spent years developing his expertise and knowledge of the topic. He brings to light information about this fascinating topic not heretofore known. I highly recommend this book as a reference source for anyone who is interested in Zuni jewelry.

Incredible book, well written with great photos. Good price, arrived quickly. Would recommend to anyone who loves Indian Art and culture.

Mr. Sei continues his efforts to value his personal collection and identify some of the great Zuni jewelry artists with a third volume, discussing kachinas and ceremonial dancers in this work. In some ways this is a more difficult attempt than the previous two volumes, because the Zuni consider their ceremonials and their actual kachina to be private so Mr. Sei has to walk a fine line by providing some information but not too much information, and because of the sensitivity of the subject, he also is more likely to be given incorrect or partial information by the Zuni people. In addition Mr. Sei is limited by his superficial researching methods, which leads to many mistakes that could be avoided with a more thorough methodology. Any effort to discuss these matters is noteworthy, however, and contributes to the knowledge already available. Remember, there were books by other authors previous to those by Mr Sei. In this book, the pictures are much less bright and crisp, are poorer in resolution than in his two prior books but there are many more illustrations than before, so that may have been the trade off. Unfortunately his text may refer to an identifying detail for an artist but the pictures are so poor that they don't display the described feature, even when magnified, so the degradation of the pictures is an important problem for those studying the artistry. Despite that, anyone who collects or wants to learn about the Zuni artwork, which is truly wonderful, would certainly find this book of some use. But there are some more serious problems with this volume. Where Mr. Sei relies on one anonymous informant who cannot be held accountable, Mr. Sei is also not accountable, passing the responsibility to these anonymous people.

And the mistakes pile up. He also relies in some cases on just a picture for his attributions. Thus, he has recently said that all three pieces on pages 80-81 which he attributes to Porfilio Sheyka, are fakes. Mr. Sei bought the fakes on the basis of a picture in an old magazine, proudly displayed them in this book as genuine, and when he went to authenticate them after publication, learned they were fakes. So one could say "caveat emptor" about not only this book but buying anything based on any of his books. Sadly, people do try to buy what he proudly displays in his books, so readers might be running around trying to buy fakes like his. It is years later and Mr. Sei has not published an update to this book correcting egregious errors such as these. He has purveyed fakes as being genuine in this book and owes the readers a published update and detailed correction. That would be instructive to the readers. Instead he sweeps his egregious errors under the rug. In addition to his having published fakes as being authentic, Mr. Sei published many pieces which he attributed incorrectly. Currently he is saying his Frank Vacit pieces in this book include several which weren't made by Frank Vacit and he does not know who made them. He's claiming only the best quality are Frank Vacit's and the others were by an unknown Zuni artist. I submit that all artists produced a variety of quality in their work so it's probably another mistake to say only the best was Frank Vacit's. In addition, Mr. Sei is saying while the hallmark means they are made by Frank Vacit, because the same hallmark was used by more than one other family member, the hallmark does not actually mean Frank Vacit made them. Yes, this is unclear. It is good it is being explored, and the subject in considerable flux, but it is one reason I would disqualify this book as a definitive authority. These issues were not raised within the book nor in his subsequent books. On page 73 Mr. Sei says the Turkey Kachina depicted is made by Myra Tucson, but every family member says she did not do that kind of work and did not make the Turkey Kahina bolo. Why didn't Mr. Sei explore the subject more thoroughly before publishing mistakes that are easily researched in Zuni? Or did he expect no one else would know enough to check on his work? Did he expect to deceive the readers? A book becomes a permanent record, so it's important to sort things out before publication and to indicate the questions within the publication rather than in private discussions after publication. This is a problem with Mr. Sei's scientific method. It's very weak! That is a limitation not only of this book but all of his books. His primary method is this: Mr. Sei brings his personal collection to Zuni. He asks the Zuni people to identify the artists and to provide what information they can. Mr. Sei collects the information and usually attributes a work on the basis of only one "anonymous informant," which may lead to inevitable errors. All Mr. Sei's information is provided to him by others, so these books are not so much creative efforts as compilations of material from others. The Zuni tend to be private and don't share freely with outsiders, especially not in regard to

their religion, or what they may feel is personal or socially sensitive information, so some of the information Mr. Sei collects must inevitably be incorrect. For example, if there are personal liaisons that are extra marital which historically allowed one artist to use the designs of another artist, they will not speak of that, so the attribution may be given incorrectly. Also, some Zuni may wish to please him and to give him information that makes him happy, so some may give him incorrect information with such a motive. This doesn't mean the book is entirely useless. The Zuni jewelry is wonderful and any attempt to identify it is important, but because of the weaknesses inherent in his methodology, this book cannot be considered a bible. As with the other volumes, there is a fair number of incorrect attributions in the volume, even fakes presented as genuine. In addition to the limitations in his methodology which I have detailed, there are ethical considerations. The fact that Mr. Sei only publishes pictures of his own collection, and then sets price ranges on them which are up to many thousands of percent what he paid for them, means he puts himself in the position of appraising his own collection and setting a much higher value on it than can be proven. He doesn't document the basis for his pricing and it appears to be arbitrary. While most are disproportionately high, there are a few that aren't his favorites which he undervalues. If he would document the basis for this pricing it would be substantiated and would not raise such serious ethical questions. It would be valuable if he included his actual cost and date of purchase. That would be an accurate and useful reference. But he usually buys very low and then sets very high valuations. For example, Mr. Sei prices some items in this book as \$4000 to \$6000 in value, but similar items haven't been able to sell at less than half the lower value in numerous recent offerings! No, they did not sell at \$2000 or even lower, but he sets the value at \$4000-\$6000 and that becomes the book value by virtue of it being published in a book! Mr. Sei says he buys on eBay and buys inexpensively there, so it's not clear why he doesn't use his purchase price and date for the valuations. By inflating the value to the extent he often does, he brings too much into question. And it isn't necessary. This is not in any way a problem with the jewelry or the Zuni people. The jewelry is wonderful and documenting it is an important effort. But the methodology in only discussing his personal collection and in buying inexpensively and then setting a so much higher valuation on each piece, is his "contribution" as the author -- everything else in the book is compiled from the comments of the Zuni people who were interviewed. It seems most if not all the attributions come from the Zuni people (Mr. Sei simply collects that information), but the pricing is something only he is providing. The Zuni artists never realized anything like those prices for their wonderful work! As far as I can tell no one else has obtained those prices, either. It does seem like Mr. Sei set the prices based on what he wishes the value to be and that is something he can easily correct in future volumes by

documenting his pricing if he must include it. Sadly, some of his apologists say that the publisher requires pricing, but a perusal of other books from this publisher proves definitively that the publisher doesn't require that the pricing be documented or that it be so much higher than have occurred. Indeed, some of their books have no pricing at all. This pricing is one of the few actual contributions to the book by Mr. Sei and I think it is ethically problematical. Another ethical question is raised by his discussion on pages 92-93 of how he traded identification information for personal lower pricing at a museum shop. There are also serious flaws due to English not being his first language. There are many mistakes, some of which even change the meaning. For example, he speaks repeatedly of "the clowns" when he means "the crowns." It can be hard to decipher the true meaning, so a professional copy editor would provide considerable improvement. There is no problem with mistakes in English in normal speech but in a book it should be correct and it's not that hard to get it corrected prior to publication. Another constructive suggestion I would make (in addition to improving the method, using a different price structure and obtaining a copy editor, is that there be an updated edition of each volume with corrections. This book has an ambitious scope in content and there is much value in studying the works of art. But I recommend the book within only with the limitations I've mentioned.

Great guide for purchasing Zuni Jewelry. Buy all three. Text is a bit repetitive but helpful. No more to say.

Let me start out by saying that this isn't Louisa, but her very lucky husband. As a fairly recent collector of Zuni inlay, Mr. Sei's first two books are my 'go-to' references on the subject. I understand he has traveled to Zuni dozens of times to seek out advice and collect information from the individual artists' families and friends....thus giving the old pieces 'new life' by reconnecting them with their talented creators. It's not an infallible method....but what is? It's an organic process, and attributions will undoubtedly change as our knowledge grows. With regard to pricing, I find the listed estimates in line with gallery and dealer prices. I just purchased a Zuni item, estimated by several dealers to be worth \$750+, for \$125 on Ebay. Does this 'great deal' cause the value of the piece to plummet into a lower price range? I don't believe so. Mr. Sei's passion has been a gift for us all as he continues to share his findings and discoveries. I look forward to adding his third book to my library. StoneHawk

The third book in Toshio Sei's series on Zuni Jewelry brings to light more unknown Zuni artists and

more than a hundred fabulous pieces. Bravo!

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