



THE INDIAN CRAFT SHOP

Department of the Interior • 1849 C Street, NW • Washington, DC 20240 • (202) 208-4056
Open Monday – Friday 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

AN INTRODUCTION TO METALS

“We currently see artists working with different metals — a continuity of earlier works as well as innovative approaches expressing individualistic pursuits.”

LOOK INSIDE...

Special Displays

- Artist of the Month
 - Did Somebody Say Saturday Hours?
- Page 2

Masterpieces and Treasures on Display at the Interior Museum
..... Page 3

Our Pick in Books
..... Page 3

There's Always Something New
..... Page 4



Today's American Indian artists are creating pieces with metals going well beyond the traditional. While many are familiar with the beauty of silver as a medium for the Navajo, Hopi and Zuni, it is fascinating to learn some history of metalworking to include other tribal areas as well. We currently see artists working with different metals — a continuity of earlier works as well as innovative approaches expressing individualistic pursuits.

Metal has been an integral component of human culture for thousands of years. The major stages in the development of classical civilizations are named for the metal working innovations of the time (such as the Bronze Age or Iron Age). In aboriginal North America, however, the use of metal was almost completely absent until European contact. Manufactured trade goods such as kettles, axes, knives and arrow and spear points were the first metal items used widely, with native trade routes distributing these objects faster than the Europeans themselves moved across the continent. It was not until the mid-nineteenth century that tribal groups began working with metal as a raw material, creating new expressions of art and utility.

The exact point at which the southwestern groups began to work with silver is a matter of some debate. By the 1880's the material had a well-established role, although the technical aspects of the craft were still being explored and developed. Silver was a popular item for trade with Mexican travelers, and many Navajo and Pueblo people were exposed to new techniques this way. Coins from trading posts provided much of the raw material for these early efforts. The items produced were generally decorative embellishments of everyday items such as bridles, belts, and archer's wrist guards, which were cast with readily available materials such as sandstone. The shape to be cast was cut into the rock, greased with tallow to prevent the metal from sticking, and then filled with molten silver, a technique still in use today. As a wider range of tools became available, ingot shapes were cast and then hammered into thinner pieces with surface designs, taking shape of the familiar concha.

At about the same time, in another region of the country, other metalsmithing complexes were developing. The tribes of the Southern Plains had been exposed to metal trade goods for some time, and a variety of items such as breastplates, neckpieces, and brooch pins were being manufactured in the east expressly for the Indian trade. By the 1860's, Plains tribes were trading for sheet metal to use as a raw material and creating original pieces which were not only functional, but also artistically reflected their cultural values. These Plains groups were working in a very different style and with different materials than the Southwestern smiths, producing pieces that were fabricated from sheet stock, with an emphasis on surface embellishment such as stamping, engraving and texturing. To understand how these evolved into separate and distinct traditions, it is necessary to understand the nature of the materials and how the different lifestyles of the Plains and the Pueblos related to the art these groups were creating.

Silver is the material most often associated with Indian jewelry, and is certainly a dominant medium of present-day artists. Naturally occurring pure silver is relatively rare but occurs as an ore which must be reduced and the metal extracted. The resulting pure silver is very soft, and must be alloyed with other elements before it can be worked. This technology was well established in Europe, and standards for the amount of alloying material were set as far back as the early 1300's. *Copper* is the most common material

(continued on page 2)

An Introduction to Metals

(continued from page 1)

added to harden silver, and virtually all silver on the market today is alloyed with copper. "Sterling" silver refers to an alloy of 92.5% silver and 7.5% copper, taking its name from the Easterling refineries of 12th century Europe. This proportion is now recognized internationally as the standard for sterling silver, which is often marked "925". Silver has a relatively low melting point, which made the coins and silver ornaments of the Spaniards and Mexicans ideal for melting down and recasting by Navajo and Pueblo smiths. Their settled lifestyle also allowed them to set up the furnaces necessary to do this type of work.

Precious metal was not used for the widely manufactured trade goods, but instead, copper, brass, or a white metal known as *German silver* was used. Brass is an alloy of copper and zinc, used primarily for ornaments. The amount of copper in brass can vary from around 60% to almost 90%, affecting the color and malleability of the alloy. German silver, also referred to as nickel silver or white brass, is an alloy of 60% copper, 20% nickel, and 20% zinc. This alloy has a very high melting point and is not conducive to being melted down and recast. The migratory lifestyle of the Plains groups precluded the establishment of the furnaces and forges necessary to melt and cast precious metals, and German silver emerged as the primary medium for the early Plains metalworkers. With a small, easily transported toolkit that was essentially shears, hammers, punches and stamps, the artist was able to cut outlines from sheet stock and execute a wide variety of surface designs.

By the 1930's, no longer restricted by geography or the limited availability of tools and materials, native artists were exploring new designs and techniques, as well as commercial markets for their crafts. It was during this time that many of the modern styles associated with particular tribes emerged. In the Southwest, Navajo and Pueblo smiths had been producing similar styles of jewelry and the market emerging for these products was more interested in the jewelry being "Indian" than in knowing which group a piece was from. In the late 1930's, Mary-Russell Colton, a curator from the Museum of Northern Arizona, sent letters to a number of Hopi silversmiths encouraging them to develop a distinctive style of jewelry based on traditional Hopi design motifs. Reaction was mixed among the Hopi, but the trend had been set in motion and by the late 1940's a new movement in Hopi art was underway. In 1946, William Beatty, the Director of Indian Education, attended a Hopi Craftsmen Show and approached Fred Kabotie and Paul Saufkie with the idea of creating a silversmith training program for Hopi veterans and servicemen returning from the war. Kabotie and Saufkie became instrumental in the emergence of the overlay style of jewelry, in which an image is sawed out from a flat piece of silver and then soldered onto another piece, providing a negative image. In only fifty years, this style, coupled with design components from other areas of Hopi culture, has become identified as the "traditional" style of Hopi silver work. Fred Kabotie's son, **Michael Kabotie** (Hopi), continues his father's path and has taken overlay further, incorporating abstract designs sometimes into raised overlay patterns.



"Corn Stalk" bronze
by Charlie Pratt

Today, Native metalsmiths and jewelers have much more access to materials, tools, and techniques. Bronze, an alloy of copper and tin, is usually associated with classical sculpture, but many modern Native artists are creating innovative pieces in this ancient metal. **Charlie Pratt** (Cheyenne-Arapaho) is an artist who makes conventional bronze sculptures as well as wrought objects and pieces cut from sheet and embellished with surface designs, a technique not commonly used with bronze. Two other innovative artists represented at The Indian Craft Shop are **Lyndon Tsoisie** (Navajo) and **George Willis** (Choctaw) who are now working with silver, karat gold and platinum. Platinum is a silver colored metal that is very hard and does not tarnish. It occurs in nature in a pure form rather than as an ore, often in nuggets or veins. Gold also does not tarnish, a property that persists even in gold alloys. The karat of gold is a reference to the proportion of gold in the alloy, since in its pure form it is much too soft to hold designs. Twenty-four karat gold (abbreviated 24K) is pure, so an alloy containing 50% gold would be 12K. The most common

(continued on page 3)

ARTIST OF THE MONTH

Commencing in June, The Indian Craft Shop will begin its "Artist of the Month" program. A special display area in the shop will highlight works from an individual artist selected from a different tribal area each month. Biographical information will be provided as well as detailed descriptions of the artists' work.

We hope to enlighten you on both emerging artists and the well established, as well as different craft areas and techniques in American Indian art today. Be sure to look for our **Artist of the Month** display, beginning in June!

Did Somebody Say SATURDAY Hours?

The Indian Craft Shop and
The Department of The Interior
Museum will be open the
third Saturday of each month
beginning in June.

That's right! For public
convenience, beginning in June,
on the third Saturday of each month
in 1999 The Indian Craft Shop will
be open from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
and The Department of The Interior
Museum will be open from 1:00 p.m.
to 4:00 p.m.

Mark your calendars now!

Saturday, June 19th

Saturday, July 17th

Saturday, August 21st

Saturday, September 18th

Saturday, October 16th

Saturday, November 20th

Saturday, December 18th

(continued from page 2)

alloys are 14K and 18K, containing 58% and 75% gold, respectively. The other metals in karat gold are usually some combination of silver, copper, and zinc. By manipulating the proportions of these materials, different colors such as white or rose gold can be obtained. The working temperature of platinum is much higher than the melting point of gold, making it very difficult to use both metals in a single piece of jewelry. However, there are some artists doing this today.

Bruce Caesar (Pawnee) has continued in the tradition of his father, Julius, working in German as well as sterling silver. Today, Bruce and his son, **Adam Caesar** (Pawnee/Kiowa), produce pieces that demonstrate a beautiful continuity of design with earlier Plains metalwork. **Phil Pvo** (Kiowa-Creek) is working in sterling and gold, using



"Neckerchief Slide" Julius Caesar, Pawnee, 1968. Nickel Silver, U.S. Department of the Interior, Indian Arts and Crafts Board, Southern Plains Indian Museum.

a wide range of techniques including overlay and stamped embellishment to create modern jewelry designs around themes from his heritage. Another artist using themes from his heritage to create unique jewelry is **Mitchell Zephier** (Oglala Lakota) who uses sterling and German silver, brass, copper and gold as well as stones and shell in his designs. Many of the images in Mitchell's work are traditional Lakota designs. Using traditional designs of the northwest, **Douglas and Gene Chilton** (Tlingit) create subtle yet striking works in sterling silver.

Metal has become an integral element of the Native American world, from early tools and trade items of everyday use to modern examples of exquisite creativity. The adaptability and ingenuity of Native American artists is reflected in the history of their relationship with metal.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. McCreight, Tim. *The Complete Metalsmith*. Worcester: Davis Publishing, 1991.
2. Wright, Margaret Nickelson. *Hopi Silver*. Flagstaff: Northland Publishing, 1998.
3. Jacka, Lois Essary. *Navajo Jewelry*. Flagstaff: Northland Publishing, 1995.
4. Indian Arts and Crafts Board with the Oklahoma Indian Arts and Crafts Cooperative. *Contemporary Southern Plains Indian Metalwork*. Anadarko: Oklahoma Indian Arts and Crafts Cooperative, 1976.
5. Adair, John. *The Navajo and Pueblo Silversmiths*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1944, 1989.

Masterpieces and Treasures on Display at The Interior Museum

Many of our customers are familiar with the Interior Museum across the hall from The Indian Craft Shop. To celebrate The Interior Department's 150th anniversary, the Museum placed on exhibit some of its finest treasures and masterpieces.

Two dazzling and immense landscape paintings by artist Thomas Moran are featured in the Museum. Moran accompanied an Interior Department-sponsored survey to the Yellowstone region in 1871 and to the Grand Canyon in 1873. The paintings, are Moran's dramatic interpretations of the wild and expansive scenery that he saw in the western United States.

Also on exhibit is a selection of Edward S. Curtis photographs focusing on the native people who lived in the Grand Canyon and Yellowstone areas, as well as artifacts related to Major John Wesley Powell, the first scientific explorer of the Colorado River. At the Museum entrance is an innovative contemporary photography show featuring two very different photographers. Kenji Kawano is black and white portraits and Adriel Heisey created his photographs he took from his homemade 450-pound aircraft. The show is called *Navajo Now* and presents an unusual juxtaposition of black and white with color, of close ups with aerials, and of people with landscapes to provide a distinctive view of the modern Navajo Nation.

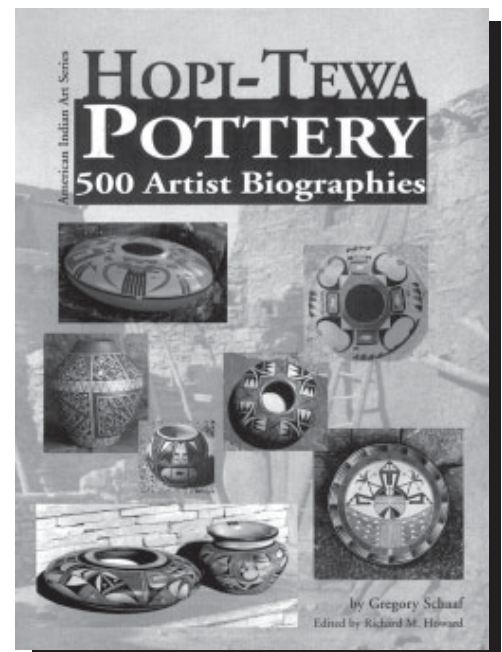
These wonderful new exhibits along with the 1930's era dioramas and other displays can be seen Monday - Friday from 8:30am - 4:30pm with the exception of Federal holidays. Beginning in June, every third Saturday of the month the Museum will be open from 1:00 - 4:00 p.m. Visitors must present some form of photo identification (such as a driver's license, student ID, or employment card) when entering The Interior Building. For more information, call 202/208-4743.

OUR PICK IN BOOKS

Many will find this book series especially attractive. People interested in Indian art in general, and Hopi pottery in particular, will treasure this first handsome volume. The book introduces 500 artists who share a part of their lives, their ancient culture and their passion for maintaining a tradition of pottery making that has continued for over a thousand years.

The book offers portraits of the artists, photographs of their artwork, family trees, exhibits, awards, favorite designs, collections, techniques and over a dozen more categories. The book represents a united effort by the artists, the author and six major institutions: Heard Museum, Museum of New Mexico, Museum of Indian Arts & Cultures, Museum of Northern Arizona, Southwestern Association of Indian Arts, coordinated by Dr. Gregory Schaaf, Director of the Center of Indigenous Arts & Cultures in Santa Fe.

For readers interested in American Indian art, the "American Indian Art Series" will offer a book a year, every year for twenty years. The series will be like an encyclopedia of American Indian art, featuring the finest quality printing, binding and photography.



THERE'S ALWAYS SOMETHING NEW

There's always something new at The Indian Craft Shop and sometimes work which might go unnoticed! A list of a few selected items to peak your interest follows:

Beadwork: We have some outstanding dimensional pieces from beader **Rosemary Hill** (Tuscarora). There are some wonderful pieces great for gift giving by **Arlene Ceasar** (Kiowa) ranging from beaded earrings (some shaped like ears of corn) to pieces with buckskin such as small cedar bag effigies and fringed pouches. We also have a great variety of beaded dancers and koshares from the Zuni Pueblo including a tree full of koshares eating watermelon.

Folk Art: We are always looking for fun new pieces. At the moment we have some Navajo pieces that include a skiing dog by **Harrison Juan**, a wooden turtle by **Matt Yellowman**, a dog wearing a bandana by **Sandy Beyale**, as well as some new monotypes from **Anthony Chee Emerson**, including one called "CNN Buffaloes" with buffaloes flying around a globe. There are also two watercolors by **Mike Chiago** (Tohono O' Odham) depicting a village and the saguaro harvest.

Jewelry: Our main article talks about a few artists who demonstrate the versatility and diversity in metalwork today: **Lyndon Tsosie** (Navajo), **George Willis** (Choctaw) and **Bruce and Adam Caesar** (Pawnee/Kiowa), and **Douglas and Gene Chilton** (Tlingit). We also have olive shell chokers and bracelets by **Donecio Cheama** (Santo Domingo Pueblo) that are rarely seen for sale outside the Pueblos and several pieces by **Augustine Lovato**, whose work is being featured in an exhibit at the Southwest Museum in Los Angeles. Aside from different metals, **George Willis** also uses different stones, such as fossilized Horn Coral, Mexican agates, Lapis from New York and buffalo horn. **Orville Tsinnie** also likes to use unusual stones, and we recently received a squash blossom necklace with dinosaur bone set in the naja.

Masks: **Myron Wheeler** (Inupiat) has sent a large wooden mask of the North Wind – it is quite spectacular.

Northwest Carvings: **Micah Vogel** (Makah) has sent a wooden wolf rattle and a carved eagle bowl.

Pottery: We have some rain gods by **Martha Arquero** (Cochiti Pueblo). Martha does wonderful figurative pieces including Santas and mermaids, too. We also received some new pots from **Pearl Talachy** (Nambe Pueblo). And **Randy Nahohai** (Zuni Pueblo) has been helping his sons make clay pendants with athletic shoe imprints!



Clay Sculpture - Travis Emerson,
Monotype - Anthony Emerson

Address Correction Requested

Guest Services

Washington, DC 20240

1849 C Street, NW

Department of the Interior

THE INDIAN CRAFT SHOP



Bulk Rate
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 48
Merrifield, VA