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Knifewing & Rainbow Man In Zuni Jewelry



Synopsis

This original book delves into the origins and contemporary interpretations of the Knifewing god in Zuni mythology and the sacred being Rainbow Man from ancient Zuni traditions, neither of which is an all-powerful and important Kachina. This thorough study of the subject was undertaken to establish the identities of twenty-eight, mid-20th century and current jewelers who made silver and mosaic inlay pins, bracelets, bolo ties and other ornaments. 168 color photos display subtle variations that indicate a particular master's work and distinctive style. Detailed analysis explains the changes and connections among early and recent makers and their individual styles, materials, and designs.

Book Information

Hardcover: 144 pages

Publisher: Schiffer Publishing, Ltd. (October 28, 2010)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0764335480

ISBN-13: 978-0764335488

Product Dimensions: 9.3 x 0.7 x 6.3 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.2 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.8 out of 5 stars 10 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #790,912 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #162 in Books > Crafts, Hobbies & Home > Antiques & Collectibles > Jewelry

Customer Reviews

Toshio Sei is an avid collector and investigator of Zuni jewelry who set out to identify the makers of each distinct style in Knifewing and Rainbow Man pieces. He lives and works in Yamaguchi, Japan.

The main value of this book is in the photos, though the captions aren't as plentiful or informative as one would like. The dollar values given for each piece are already obsolete and should not have been included. Sei's text is largely derivative; more can be learned by reading the classic source materials the author cites. English is apparently not the author's first language, yet no one at the publishing company bothered to edit the misspellings and stilted language, or correct the words that are almost the right one, but not quite. All of this is annoying, but the most irksome feature of this book is that it is really a vehicle for the author to show off his own collection of Rainbow Man and Knifewing jewelry. A more objective approach would have been seemlier and perhaps more

comprehensive. To sum up: this book is only moderately informative. It could have been much more useful if it had been developed and redacted by a knowledgeable co-author or editor.

As a long time Zuni fetish collector, I enjoyed this book because of the wonderful pictures and information about the artists. I am not one who enjoys reading, so this is a great way to get me to learn, lots of photos and useful info. I also like the way the series covers the different topics by category, as I enjoy looking at the similar, yet distinctive styles displayed together. I recommend this to collectors and those who want to learn more about a very talented community of Artists from Zuni Pueblo. I would offer one word of caution, Be careful, collecting this wonderful art can be addictive but also great fun!

I'm a novice in collecting Zuni artworks, & in the area of their jewelry, Toshio has been a true guide, through the Facebook group & through his books. Because of his guidance & the discussions of other collectors, I was steered away from a fake & told why it was a fake, & then found a jewel at Goodwill, of all places. I chose the piece, a Rainbow Man, because of the excellent workmanship & a different style which included some silver pieces dividing the stones. I posted a picture of the piece & was directed by other collectors to look at an identical piece attributed to a Zuni artist featured in this 1st book. Toshio came in on the conversation & admitted that he had learned new facts about the piece & the artist would be discussed fully in the 2nd book. He didn't hold back though, like to make us wait to buy the book...he told us all about the artist he had previously not heard of. I don't understand the complaints by one reviewer that Toshio is trying to profit from his collection because he buys them cheap & then values them high. (All collectors want to buy cheap!) One reviewer, or commenter, made the valid point the evaluations can range from what you'd expect to pay in a high price gallery vs what you may pay in a small town antique store, or a Goodwill for that matter. As for the piece I found, Toshio thinks he may have undervalued it in his books. Forget all that irrelevant stuff & buy his books if you want to know more about Zuni artists & jewelry.

I Love this book! It not only provides some identifying information and values; it also provides some info on individual artist. High quality hard cover; highly recommend

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

Author, Mr. Sei's, contributions to understanding and appreciating both Zuni artists and the meanings of the knifewing and rainbow man design elements of the Zuni artists' unique and magnificent jewelry, is in many ways, a welcome addition to the literature that was existing at the time this book was released. The photography of each piece is very good as is most background information about each piece's creator. On the other hand, I have several concerns (in addition to a need for better copy editing to address problems of English language usage). Mr. Sei brings his entire personal collection to Zuni and asks the Zuni people to identify who made Mr. Sei's pieces. Sometimes they tell him what he wants to hear, or they guess, and sometimes their memory may be faulty, or there may be cultural reasons not to share some information, and this is in part how some incorrect attributions end up in his books. Often, he'll cite just one anonymous "informant" as the source for his identification. It's not much of a scientific method, leading to inevitable errors in both identification of the works and even the biographical information about the artists. Sometimes it's obvious just by looking at the pictures that the same artist could not have made some pieces he attributes to just one. There's a tendency toward oversimplification and the longer the book has been released the more errors are appearing. When only one anonymous informant is cited as the reason for an attribution there is not only a high chance of error but there is no accountability. He passes responsibility to an unnamed source! Here's my first constructive suggestion: a better method from the point of view of ethics and science would be to cite the names of the informants and require confirmation from multiple sources. There are a high percentage of incorrect attributions. For example, there are signed pieces by Lolita Natachu listed on eBay which Sei attributes in this book to Frank Vacit. An ethical conflict of interest lies in the fact he bought and still buys most of his collection very inexpensively on eBay then uses his books to arbitrarily set a value which can be hundreds to thousands of percent higher than he paid. He only depicts pieces he personally owns (no one else's at all) in his books and always, seemingly arbitrarily, assigns a current dollar value. His valuations aren't based on fair market value, which might be what he paid or an average price of several similar items; he provides no validation so they seem to be based on what he'd like to get if he sold them. As people read this book and try to buy similar pieces to his, the values in the eBay auctions of pieces similar to his gradually escalate and his personal collection rises in value. Appraising one's own collection is ethically questionable. It isn't done! Sadly, some of his apologists say (at his request) that the publisher requires pricing, but a perusal of other books from this publisher proves it is not true. Paula Baxter's ring book only provides a general range of pricing and Dennis June's Fred Harvey Jewelry has have no pricing at all. Simple research disproves Mr. Sei's

claim. A second constructive suggestion: It would be useful in future editions if Mr. Sei would indicate his purchase price and date of purchase for each of his items and also documented his sources for his claims of current valuation. Any pieces which are depicted in any books have to rise in value even without an author inflating the pricing, because they are authenticated by being in a book. Also, without regard to published pricing, there may be competition to own a piece similar to the author's, so the value of his personal collection would be enhanced. Therefore published pricing may be viewed as icing on the cake, setting a standard as this author does, usually very much higher than the actual prices being paid on eBay. As a result, when he decides to sell or donate, the higher values will be beneficial to him. He has created his personal market through his books. Here are three more constructive suggestions: 3. The mistakes in English are so serious that the meaning is changed. Using a professional copy editor in the future would be valuable. 4. Given that there are so many mistakes in attributions and that he is admitting to buying fakes that he has published as genuine, revised editions with corrections should be published instead of reprinting the same edition. 5. Rather than sending friends to come here he should be responding himself. I had hoped had he done so, that there would have been a positive result. All collectors gain and can use his books as at least one valuable resource for understanding and identifying what they have of Zuni jewelry despite the numerous mistakes he made in his identifications. He has shed an important light on the Zuni culture. The Zuni are a humble people in many ways and did not feel it appropriate to sign their art work. But these characteristics of humility and privacy have not always served the Zuni well and now this book sheds important light on their seminal creations of beautiful works of art in their jewelry. More work can be done now to identify their works of art because Mr. Sei has enhanced interest in owning, buying and understanding Zuni jewelry. This book is a valuable tool; it is a good service providing impetus to the quest to identify the old handmade and wonderful pieces which were rarely signed. I do recommend this book to anyone interested in the subject, especially keeping my proscriptions in mind about the self-promoting and self-serving nature of the enterprise, and the attempts we've seen here to cover up his mistakes rather than correct them.

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