



ZUNI POTTERY

Zuni Pueblo is the largest pueblo in New Mexico. Zuni pottery reflects the importance of water in the life of the pueblo peoples. The Zuni believed in an important symbol, known as the rain bird, which they used in designing much of their pottery. The design does not look much like a real bird, but is a combination of triangles, circles and curves. The secret of the rain bird is the triangle-shaped body. If the triangle is tilted in a certain way, it could mean that the bird is calling for rain. If the triangle appears vertical, it might mean that the bird is happy because there is rain. If the triangle appears to be lying down, it is because the bird is weak because of a lack of rain. Other common designs on Zuni pottery are the frog and tadpole (rain symbols), the dragonfly (the summoner of clouds), and zig-zag lines (flowing water). Zuni potters create more “open” pieces – bowls and pottery baskets – than they do pitchers, *ollas*, or seed jars.

Zuni pottery is made of clay that uses crushed pottery sherds as temper. This gives the finished pot a white color. Most pots are coated with a white or red slip and then painted with black and red paints. In addition to the rain symbols listed above, Zuni potters also employ the “heartline deer” image that features an open-mouthed deer with a red arrow extending from the mouth to the inside of the deer. Zuni artists are also well-known for their “lizard” fetish bowls which feature serpent, frog and tadpole designs and appliqués. Well-known, contemporary Zuni potters are the Nahohai, Peynetsa, and Kelestewa families.