# Indian Arts and Crafts

Century of Progress

Chicago 1934

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By Anna Wilmuth Ickes
The Indian Service must first and last serve the Indian spirit.

Must serve it, and not destroy it.

Indian weaving, Indian pot-making, Indian dance, song, poetry, drama, mythology, are not just those limited things which these words in our English language would suggest.

Rather they are, severally and in their interconnection, the repositories of the Indian spirit — and the living and future breath of Indian life. Such, too, is the multitude of native languages of the Indian.

The products of life lived by social groups across uninterrupted ages; of individual lives across many centuries, deepened and stabilized by face-to-face human cooperative relations, and adjusted to practical necessities which were imbued with mystical meanings, and to mystical necessities which never became divorced from group practicality; so brought to existence, so energized and controlled, the Indian arts are truly the heart, the spirit, the value, of Indian life.

The Indian Service must bring the Indian and the modern world together. But what Indian — and what modern world? Not, ideally, the Indian demured of his past out of which his life-power would rise; and not, ideally, a modernity demured of the greater past of our own white modern race — demured of those mighty ideas of religion, of philosophy, of beauty, of world-embracing love, which are the too-often forgotten mountain sources of our seemingly modern experience.

It is the Indian drawing upon his own native deeps, whom the Indian Service must bring together with a modernity drawing upon its own native deeps. What better life, and what creation may ensue from such a union, none can tell. None need tell, because if the law of social cross-fertilization be well served, the cultural future will make itself.

Indian life has a future. Hence, the Indian arts have a future. And the Indian life of the future, the white life of the future, the Indian-white life of the future, require the Indian arts.

JOHN COLLIER

Commissioner of Indian Affairs
THE PURPOSE OF THE EXHIBIT OF CONTEMPORARY INDIAN ART

AT THE CENTURY OF PROGRESS

The exhibit of contemporary Indian art at the Century of Progress in Chicago is a deliberate attempt by the present administration of the Bureau of Indian Affairs first, to disabuse the general public's mind of a preconceived, vague notion that Indians can create only cheap souvenirs and trashy knicknacks; and second, to replace this vague notion with a definite conception of Indian art as a fine art, consciously conceived, firmly and brilliantly executed.

It is unfortunately too true that most art critics do not know that an Indian art exists. But this is hardly to be wondered at when one remembers the endless array of ash trays, candlesticks, swastikas, pillow tops, and other atrocities too numerous to mention which confront the average traveller in Indian country. To be sure, the average traveller has no background of Indian art and so does not know for what he should seek when visiting parts of the United States where Indians still live and work. So bewildered and discouraged by the bad taste redundantly displayed in curio stores, he dismisses all Indian handicraft as cheap and bad. Unhappily for all those who might be interested in the background of Indian aesthetics, the finest early examples were eagerly gathered up by scientific workers and were then swallowed by scientific institutions. If, instead of being valued chiefly for scientific reasons, these examples had been given their due as artistic achievements, the Indian would long ago have taken his place as an authentic, if primitive, creative artist.

At present there is a possibility not only of a belated recognition for the Indian artist, but also of an appreciation and encouragement, which will vitalize the almost strangled creative impulse inherent in the Indian race, and which will permit it to grow to a full, forceful maturity, a maturity which will not be based on an imitation of European philosophy of art, but which will be rooted in Indian tradition and background.

At the Chicago exhibit each piece of pottery, each textile, each piece of silver was selected as exemplifying the best contemporaneous technique, as well as the finest examples of modern Indian design and form. Although all of the material conforms to these high standards, none of them is unique in that other pieces of equally high quality do not exist. Let the discriminating purchaser take but a short while and make some slight effort, and similarly beautiful material can be obtained in trading stores, shops or from the Indian direct.

Much of the material is traditional in that the types represented in form and decoration are those long used by the Indians; others are modern developments based on present, rather than primitive necessities.
NAVAJO WEAVING

The Navajo Indians number over 40,000. They live a semi-nomadic life in New Mexico and Arizona.

The earliest historical reference to Navajo weaving is 1790. The Navajo Indians obtained sheep from the Spaniards, and have always used wool for their textiles. The Navajo loom is of an upright type and is held in a frame of logs set in the ground. The Navajo women do the weaving. Designs of the finest types of blankets have no borders. Dyes used in Navajo blankets are commercial aniline dyes, and native dyes made from plants and minerals found in New Mexico and Arizona.

The blankets on display (hanging on the panel) are contemporary, woven within the year, and are typical of the best modern Navajo textiles. The rugs on the floor, also contemporary, are saddle blankets. To make each pattern in the different weaves a special loom setup is required. There are approximately fifteen different loom setups used by the Navajos.

The finest examples of old Navajo weaving can be seen at the Field Museum.

Reference: "Navajo Weaving" —Charles Amsden.

Navajo Weaving At The Century Of Progress

The textiles of the Navajo tribe have, under white influence, evolved from the blanket which was woven for personal use and adornment, to floor coverings for the white man's house. In none of the Indian arts is the difference between traditional design and imposed white design more apparent. The textiles in the Chicago exhibit are all of traditional design, the colors are true vegetable dyes obtained from plants native to the Navajo Reservation, or are commercial dyes approximating the colors found in old blankets. The patterns are all within the Navajo design tradition. There are no borders, no complicated pseudo-oriental design motifs. The geometric elements are simple, and the effectiveness of the finished rug is dependent on their repetition and spacing. A coherent, harmonious whole results which adds restfulness and beauty to any room where these rugs are introduced.

The most striking piece which is displayed as a wall covering is about 9 feet long and 6 feet wide. The ground is creamy white, the whole is divided by narrow tan strips into three parts. In each part are large but simple figures in quiet brick red tones.

On the floor of the exhibit space, are Navajo fancy weave saddle blankets. These are among the most durable of the Navajo weaves. Instances are not infrequent where such blankets have been used continuously as floor rugs for twenty years or more, and are still in good condition. The design in these rugs is inherent in the weave, resulting from specialized loom setup and manipulation.
Left To Right: San Juan Storage Jar, San Ildefonso Decorative Jar, Zia Water Jar, San Ildefonso Decorative Jar. Foreground: Saddle Blankets

PUEBLO POTTERY

Pottery making is one of the oldest known crafts of the southwestern tribes.

The pottery displayed here is made by the Pueblo Indians of New Mexico.

The Pueblo Indians live in separate villages. There are sixteen inhabited villages today on or near the Rio Grande in New Mexico.

Although the decoration used on the pottery of each village is distinctive, the process is essentially the same.

No wheel is used. The jar is built up of pieces of clay rolled into a long thin cylindrical shape between the palms of the hand.

The surface is smoothed with a flat piece of gourd. It is dried in the sun and then polished with a small smooth stone. It is then baked in an open fire, after which the decoration is applied.

The colors used are made from native minerals and plants.


Pueblo Pottery At The Exhibit Of Contemporary Indian Art

The ceramics are with one exception from the Rio Grande Pueblos. There is an amazing variety of form and decoration. The Santa Clara jars are smooth, undecorated, two red and one black. (Pg.5.) The red small-mouthed ones are for storing meal and bread and similar ones have been so used for generations. The black jar is for carrying and keeping water. The large decorated Zia jar is also for water storage. (Pg.5.) Nearly every pueblo water jar is very slightly porous, and there is a constant, almost imperceptible evaporation from the entire surface which keeps drinking water at a de-lightful temperature. There is a round, undecorated bowl from San Juan, another strictly utilitarian piece, which is used as a container for corn meal, or for mixing the meal and water for dough. (Pg.5.)

The decorated Acoma jars are for water also, but the black decorated ware from San Ildefonso is for ornamental purposes alone. (Pg.5.) This polished black pottery showing a design in flat, or matte, black is perhaps the best known, and is certainly the best selling, of all pueblo pottery. Yet the technique of its decoration is of
comparatively recent origin. The best of it is made by two, or at most three women, all of whom live in the same village, and it is not durable enough to be of use. Nevertheless its beauty is sufficient to more than justify its creation, and if its sale provides an excellent living for the potters who create it, we of a utilization, practical white race should be grateful for this fact.

NAVAJO SILVER

The earliest historical reference to this jewelry is 1810. It includes bracelets, necklaces, belts, buttons and bridles. The finest pieces are traditionally hand hammered, or cast. Cast pieces were made by pouring molten silver into sandstone molds. Designs were stamped on the hammered pieces with hand-made dies. Hand-cut, hand-polished turquoise is used in the best types of jewelry. Such turquoise usually has a flat surface, and, due to the hand polishing, has a soft dull finish in contrast to the machine-polished stones.

In the silver jewelry of the Navajo is seen one of the few Indian arts which had no entirely utilitarian commencement. Originally massive and primitive, the Navajo silver, under pressure applied to secure cheap trinkets, deteriorated to such an extent that objects manufactured by machine in dark shops were being sold as "Indian made". These were imitations of Indian designs carried out in thin sheet silver, actually bearing not the slightest resemblance to the hammered, hand-made ornaments the Navajo wore for his own enjoyment and adornment. Under unfortunate white influence the Navajo was induced to imitate the white man's imitations of his once-fine art, until the local stores were full of ugly, unusable, cheaply-made, cheaply-sold, valueless rings and bracelets. There are a few silversmiths who understand and practice the old techniques and it is examples of their work which are in the cases at the Century of Progress. The best traditional silver work is being fostered at the U. S. Government Indian School at Santa Fe, and it is planned and hoped that the high standard shown in this work will spread.

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PUEBLO EMBROIDERY

In cases at the exhibit are displayed modern adaptations of Pueblo embroidered textiles. Anciently the embroidery was a ceremonial art practiced by the men in the secrecy of the kivas. But in modern times the women have learned the stitches and apply them to solely decorative purposes. The technique is interesting, in that the effectiveness of the patterns is enhanced by the elements where the base material is permitted to show through the brightly coloured wools. As in nearly all Pueblo designs, the motifs are geometric in form and arrangement. On page 10 the Hoopa Valley baskets are shown on a background of Pueblo embroidery.
PUEBLO INDIAN FURNITURE

In working out our plans for furniture for a typical Pueblo Indian home, we adopted the Spanish Colonial type; it harmonizes with the simplicity of our adobe architecture and the soft pine used is available in the Southwest with little expenditure.

Native pine, willows, yucca and hides are used in the construction of this furniture. Full mortise and tenon joining is used and no nails or screws are necessary to the solid durability of this woodwork. Wax and pale stains are the predominating finishes.

Design motifs used are traditional Indian ones. Occasionally an ancient pottery design is adapted to the furniture decoration. The principal aim in design and construction is simplicity and appropriateness throughout.

The accompanying photographs represent the work of 10th, 11th, and 12th grade boys of the Santa Fe School.

C. E. Faris, Santa Fe.
Pueblo Furniture Made In Arts And Crafts Department, Santa Fe School
TYPES OF BASKETS MADE BY SOUTHWESTERN INDIAN TRIBES

Three Hoopa Valley Baskets
Background of Pueblo Embroidery

Left To Rights: Pima Storage Basket; San Carlos Storage Basket; San Carlos Burden Basket; Jicarilla Modern Adaptation. Background: Native Dye Navajo Blanket.
BASKETRY OF THE SOUTHWESTERN TRIBES

Basketry is represented by work from the Jicarilla and San Carlos Apache tribes, from the Pima, Papago and Hopi Reservations in Arizona and from the Hoopa Tribe of California. Actually basketry can be classed as the first textile weaving of primitive peoples and it is interesting to note the persistence of certain design motives through the basketry into the later woolen textiles.

In the photograph on page 10, on the left is a Pima storage basket, the design is carried out in a dull red, outlined in black.

Next to this is a San Carlos Apache storage basket, and in front a San Carlos burden basket.

On the right is a modern Jicarilla Apache basket. This shape has been recently developed for sale to 'whites' and makes an excellent waste paper basket. The colours are from aniline dyes.

On page 10 are shown the extremely fine examples of basketry made by the Hoopa Indians. The designs are in black and shades of brown and tan on a light background.

SIOUX BEAD WORK EXHIBIT AT WORLDS FAIR

The Sioux quill and bead work shown in the exhibit of the Office of Indian Affairs at the Century of Progress is illustrative of the Lakota handicraft at its best. The exhibit consisting of four tobacco bags, two pairs of moccasins, a watch fob and a stole, was loaned by Mrs. J. H. McGregor of Pine Ridge, South Dakota.

The Dakotas, living a nomadic life as they originally did, had no possessions which could not be moved about from place to place. It was natural then that they should satisfy their love of the beautiful by the creation of small articles which were useful in their daily life. So they ornamented the bags of skin, in which they packed their clothing, food, utensils and other equipment, with painting, dyed quills, feathers or beads. Clothing and tipis, likewise of skins, were decorated in much the same manner. Pipes and weapons were carved or decorated in some other manner.

Beads were not used until after the Indians began to trade with the white man; but before this time elaborate designs were worked out by the use of dyed porcupine quills. In both bead and quill work an awl and prepared beef or buffalo sinew are used instead of needle and thread. The porcupine quills were dyed with native herbal dyes, and flattened with the teeth, and sewed to the
hides in various designs. Among the Sioux the designs were ordinar-
ily geometrical in character, and the design elements were original-
ly symbolic. When the Indians began to use the white man's beads
for decoration they applied the beads in the same sort of designs
which they had used in the quill work. Quill work is still made but
commercial dyes are now used in the preparation of the quills.

The bag seen in the lower left hand corner is an old one,
and is decorated entirely with quill work. The triangles and
squares seen in this bag are quite typical of the old Dakota designs.
The stole or neck piece seen in the lower center of the picture is
also entirely of porcupine quill work with a fringe of dyed feathers.
The deer on this piece are illustrative of a type of design common
among other tribes but not so often seen among the Lakotas.

On all the bags shown, the strips just above the buckskin
fringe are porcupine quill work. Here the flattened quills are
sewed around narrow strips of buckskin. The strings which hold the
feather ornaments on the two bags in the upper part of the picture
are of still a third type of quill work. The most common color
used in porcupine work is red. The background of the design is
usually red. This is the case in all the pieces shown in this ex-
hibit. Other colors used are the natural creamy white and a dark
but bright purplish blue.

With the introduction of commercial beads the range of
colors used in Sioux designs was greatly increased. However, the
usual color range in bead work is fairly limited still. White is
the usual background color, though light blue and red are also used.
Colors used in the designs are light blue, white, red, bright
purplish blue, yellow, medium green, orange and lavender.

The bags and moccasins pictured show very clearly the
character of the Sioux designs, in which triangles, squares, diamonds
and bands predominate; and also the way the beads are applied in
strips.

The watch fob pictured is made of woven bead work and is
not characteristic of the old Sioux handicraft.

Audrey Jennings
Pine Ridge
Bead And Porcupine Quill Work, Made By The Sioux

Typical bead work of Sioux Indians, South Dakota.
EASTERN CHEROKEE BASKETRY

The baskets shown above are typical Eastern Cherokee baskets made from split cane, split white-oak and honeysuckle vine.

The basket in the lower left hand corner is known as the "double basket" and represents one of the best of the old types. It is said that only two Cherokee Indian women still have the art of making this type of basketry. Mrs. Bradley, a full-blood living at Cherokee, North Carolina, is one of these two women. She has been persuaded to teach her daughter how to weave the basket so as to preserve the art. The basket gets its name from the fact that it does have two thicknesses of weaving. The weaver weaves the bottom of the basket first out of vertical splints, then forms the four inner sides of the final basket, then turns the splints or runners of cane back and weaves the four outer sides and finally closes the basket by weaving the bottom.

The second basket from the left is made of fine natural colored honeysuckle vine dyed dark brown.

The third basket at the bottom from the left is the famous mellon basket made from split oak.

The lower right hand basket is a quiver basket or portable case for arrows. The upper five baskets are all utility baskets made from cane or split oak.

The good Cherokee basket maker always weaves the handle of the baskets down through the sides and laps and fits the handles together at the bottom by notching and then fastening well with strong wire. The handles of these baskets never pull out as do the handles of the modern basket made by the white man.

You will note the lovely design particularly in the cane baskets. The dark shades are of very dark brown and as the basket ages it looks almost black. The only other colors to be found in addition to the browns and natural are lovely subdued yellows and reds. Until very recently all Cherokee dyes were native and made from roots, barks, berries and nuts. However, several years ago the Cherokees found that the tourist was willing to pay the same price for the aniline dye basket as the native dye. Too that the bright aniline dye basket often took the eye of the tourist in preference to the other. These tourists, who were not connoisseurs of Cherokee native art, almost wrecked the beautiful art in basketry. During recent years the educational forces on the reservation have spent every effort to revive the use of native dyes and to encourage the basket makers to preserve the beautiful art of weaving of cane which is such an important part of their heritage. The cane used in basketry is almost extinct in North Carolina and an effort is being made to see that it is replaced.
Cane is very difficult to handle and the keen observer quickly notices the very deft fingers calloused through years of constant use by the weaver. The amateur cuts his fingers severely on the sharp edges of the cane and likely this is one reason the younger Indians have not cared to weave baskets from cane. However, a native teacher has been employed at the school to teach basketry and the children are not only interested in making basketry but appear interested in preserving the beautiful art of weaving and dyeing.

Edna Groves
After viewing and enjoying the Indian Exhibit, the appreciative visitor is likely to ask himself whether these beautiful native arts can persist in competition with the machine products of a machine age. The economic side of the question may well be considered.

It is a common mistake with relation to the Southwest Indian arts (and many others) to class everything under one heading. Especially when they are being considered from the economic point of view, the fundamental differences in methods of workmanship and the uses to which the finished product can be put, demand a different method of approach in each case.

There is, however, one important point which applies equally to Navajo weaving, Pueblo pottery, Apache basketry and all forms of Indian art; that is the necessity for maintaining the very highest standards of workmanship, material, form and design. Indians will never be successful quantity producers. To encourage them as such may spell the doom of Indian art.

Many people will tell one that the inherent qualities of the American Indian will prevent his being anything but a highly individualistic artist and craftman - that no two silver bracelets are ever the same, that every Navajo rug is a creative expression with a deep symbolism behind it.

Such is not true. Look at the immeasurable pillow tops woven only for the coffee and beans received in return! Look at the cheap examples of Navajo silverware actually made to compete with machine manufactured articles - look at the thousands of pottery ashtrays to be found in Albuquerque and Gallup. The Indian is rapidly being forced into such production by the methods that are used to sell his products. Unless this present tendency is stopped (apply an effort being made to stop it) there is little hope for the survival of the Indian as an artist.

Every trader on the Navajo Reservation admits that he has no trouble in selling a really fine rug or blanket. It is the inferior textiles that are hard to sell.

It is true that every Navajo cannot be an expert weaver and that there will always be poor rugs and blankets woven. The mistake lies in expecting every Navajo woman to weave. Only the appalling poverty of the Navajo nation has made it necessary for every family to produce textiles, however poor; the meagre return has been an important addition to the family income.

As soon as there is some other means of sustenance, this weaving automatically stops. Witness the effect of the Indian Emergency Conservation Work on the weaving of the Navajos; there is so little of it done today that every trader is complaining of the shortage of rugs and blankets.
Navajo textiles and every other form of Indian art, if it is to survive, must be sold on its intrinsic merits, and not because it is Indian. In the Indian Exhibit at Chicago is a large modern Navajo rug, essentially traditional in design, weave and color. This rug was being shown to a group of interested people in Santa Fe before being sent to Chicago. A stranger from the East happened to notice it. He asked what it was. On being told, he admitted that he had never suspected that it was Indian. Incidentally he valued it at ten times the actual price paid to the trader.

Exactly the same problem is to be faced in the development of Pueblo pottery. As the Pueblo Indians turn to manufactured containers for their food and water, and the beautiful pottery has no longer a useful place in the Indian home, unless its esthetic value is realized and an adequate price paid to the potter, the craft will eventually die. Pottery making, like blanket making and basket weaving, is a difficult and tedious work requiring the greatest patience. Through no fault of the potter, hours of effort are sometimes wasted when a piece of pottery is cracked in firing or broken through handling.

Already there are ominous signs of the approaching doom of pottery making. At Zuni, once the source of one of the finest types of pottery found in the Southwest, there is now practically no pottery made. The Zuni Indian has found galvanized tin buckets more practical for carrying water, and his crops and wages from labor sufficient for his living. Had the Zuni potter been paid enough for her ollas and bowls she undoubtedly would still be making them.

In other less prosperous pueblos, pottery is still made to eke out a meagre living. But as soon as these Indians have some other means of livelihood there will be no reason for them to continue. Only in such cases as San Ildefonso, where a demand has been established and a high quality of workmanship maintained, is this craft on a sound economic basis. In spite of the fact that pottery may have no utilitarian place in the "white home", there is an enormous market for fine decorative ware to be used purely as ornament, and as such the pottery of the Rio Grande Pueblos has few equals.

If, however, the Indian craftsman is to receive a high price for his work and his products are to be sold as works of art, only the very finest work must be encouraged. Up-to-date the prevalence of the worst type of Indian articles has prevented any real economic development. Indian products have remained essentially curios and their sale has been based on this.

Morris Burge, Santa Fe
INDIAN CEREMONIAL DANCES OF THE SOUTHWEST

By Anna Wilmuth Ickes

The origin of the dance was probably religious ritual and as such it persists in the Indian ceremonial of the Southwest. As Greeks danced in their temples, as Miriam danced before the Lord, so today the Pueblo Indian dances before the Church altar on Christmas Eve, and, in summer, takes the Saint of the Village from the Church to a bower in the plaza to witness the corn and rain dances.

So today - but before the Christian Church came into his land and before the Saint stood on Church Altars the Indian had his ceremonial dances in offering to his Deities and in recognition of his dependence upon them.

Probably no Indian dance is purely secular. Some are more concerned with ritual than others, but in all there is an underlying religious significance.

In the Southwest the purpose is threefold. An offering to the supernatural spirits of the tribe, an enacting of the ancient myths to keep them alive in the minds and hearts of the village, and a getting together for social pleasure or tribal council. Religious, historical, social.

The onlooker who fails to see in the measured step, the constant repetition of syllables, the monotonous cadence, something beyond the significance of our modern ballroom dances misses the meaning of the whole performance.

The true underlying significance of most of these ceremonials is closed to us and we must content ourselves with the names "corn dance", "rain dance" and so forth, which will be given cheerfully by any Indian acquaintance. But with experience and attention we may catch glimpses here and there of hidden meaning and guess what it all signifies to the Indian audience.

In the Pueblos the beginning and end of a dance usually hold the more important features. At the Niman Katchina ceremony it is at sunset that the bride of the year stand modestly with bowed heads beside their sponsors, dressed in their pretty wedding dresses, and then sprinkle the sacred meal on the dancers before they wend their way out of the village and across the mesa to disappear, giving way to the unmasked dances of the ensuing cycle until another Katchina season calls them back again.
The tourist who hurries away after seeing a few sections of the
dance during the day misses the beauty of the last appearance or the
solemnity of the entrance at dawn.

Of the hundreds who have seen the winter Shaliko at Zuni only a
few have seen the return of the Council of the Gods from the sacred
Lake in July. Weary after their long march and night camps, bearing
the reeds and water bottles and turtles, in their entrance to the
village before they form for the chant it is they who make the dramatic
appeal. The morning after the Shaliko, after the whites have motored
away, is full of mysterious goings and comings.

The gay romping after the Snake Dance is a contrast to the sombre
intensity of the preceding public performance.

The so-called "Squaw Dance" of the Navajo as seen by whites is dull
and almost repellent as the girls pull reluctant men about until paid off
with dimes or quarters, but go in the afternoon and glimpse tiny tots
with unexplained paint on their cheeks, see the maiden with her feathered
wand, if you can, see the race at dawn, and again you will come upon some-
ting far more interesting than the heralded part of the performance.
It is at the "Squaw Dance" that the social and communal part of these
gatherings can be seen. Groups discussing with deep seriousness some
infraction of tribal custom, the chosen head-man sitting in judgment and
listening to arguments from opposing sides. Here are talked over Govern-
ment rulings and approval or dissent given.

The two great ceremonials of the Navajo, the Night Chant and the
Mountain Chant are all-night performances and call for fortitude in smoke-
smarted eyes and long hours, but never miss a real one if you can reach
it. The farther from the Highroad the better. Cold, bitter cold, often
snow drifted expanses, add to the discomfort, but bring out sparkling
camp-fires and gay blankets.

We cannot know what it all means but we can sit in a receptive mood
and watch, catching such side hints as may come to us, and, if we do,
we will see the mystery and meaning in it all.