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Figural Designs In Zuni Jewelry



Synopsis

The most prolific 20th century and contemporary Zuni jewelers established themselves by adhering to the same basic models and traditions set by their parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents. Using silver and mosaic inlay pins, bracelets, bolo ties and other ornaments, these artisans have created many successful motifs taken from the animal kingdom, including horses and cows, insects such as butterflies and dragonflies, wild animals like deer and antelope, birds of all shapes and sizes, and humans. All of these are featured in the author's fourth book in his series on Zuni jewelry. Read sixty-five biographies of Zuni jewelry-making individuals and families, with interesting facts about their extraordinary backgrounds and explanations of their design styles and methods. Nearly 300 color photos display subtle variations that indicate a particular master's work. Detailed notes on each image include design specifics and prices.

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Customer Reviews

Toshio Sei has collected Japanese kokeshi dolls, Japanese picture kites, lacquerware, and Western fine art prints for forty years. Since 1993, he has collected Zuni fetishes and antique mosaic jewelry. He recently retired as a social and developmental psychology professor in the Graduate School of Medicine at Yamaguchi University. He and his wife live in Ube, Yamaguchi, Japan.

These books have caused much controversy as to their accuracy and the bold attempt to price vintage Zuni jewelry. A few readers have stated that these books will be useful to collectors and

people wanting to learn about Zuni jewelry, which might be true if there were not so many errors in these publications. Mr. Sei's reliance upon unnamed informants, a few pictures and third and fourth generation Zuni's to form his attributions is questionable to say the least. Where the damage is being done, is not in the many lovely pictures, the introduction of several unrecognized artists, nor in his attempt to bring recognition to the Zuni artists, but in the inconsistent pricing of the pieces and multiple incorrect attributions. With some artists his cheeping of their work goes beyond common sense and then outrageous, unprecedented high pricing on other pieces. If you trust the comments by others, then this can be explained. The pricing should be left to each individual artist and with vintage to each individual seller. Toshio does not have the experience in this trade to access prices to vintage pieces, as there are many variables when pricing vintage jewelry. By no means are all his prices Gallery prices, a good portion are flea market and EBay prices which show no respect for the artists, their history, the materials used, age or the endless hours spent on making that piece. Mr. Sei lacks a knowledge and the experience which is obtained over decades of working in this trade and day to day dealing with these wonderful people. The Zuni people have suffered many trials and tribulations over the past century, with foreign interests that destroyed the value of their jewelry with mass overseas reproductions. Here again their work that was finally reaching a respectable value with a fairly strong comeback in the past two decades, is again being devalued and in some cases inflated in these books for the world to see. Everyone including dealers, collectors and artist generational family members occasionally miss-attribute pieces. Toshio however has many miss attributions along with a bundle of other errors. The difference is his mistakes will go down in history and be perceived by a new generation of collectors as fact. Before more of these books are published, I feel a revised book needs to be published with the corrections or admitting he does not know for sure who made certain pieces. Toshio Sei has two Facebook groups that call out people that they do not like or those who have disagreed with him and make accusations that they sell fakes or make miss attributions on purpose. This behavior is just wrong, especially when he himself has made so many errors. There are plenty of people that deliberately sell fakes and those are the people this group should address. Not people that make a few mistakes amongst hundreds of their correctly attributed pieces. These vicious attacks destroy people's livelihoods and reputations. I suggest all the faithful followers proceed with caution, as the Zuni people who are a fair and humble people, who hold close their religion, family treasures and respect for their elders and those that have passed on, will soon realize that any small amount of positive attention these books have brought them, will soon become an intrusion of their arts and history with little or no serious study or timely research

being put into these annually produced books. I will state that I do not know where Mr. Sei's heart was when he took on this endeavor and he might have meant these books to be a positive representation of his Zuni jewelry? I have no idea if he realized the importance his books would play in history, but without the slightest attempt to correct his mistakes and the continued pricing of pieces, it leaves many questioning his intentions and his right to do so. There is some value to his books for a visible enjoyment of beautiful Zuni jewelry. I did not prejudge his publications, nor do I find pleasure in making these comments, but after reading each book and speaking with many people involved in this industry and many Zuni artists, I felt a need to voice my opinion. I just wish he had taken the time to check, double and triple check on his attributions instead of relying on a handful of people he deems experts and avoided all together his personal thoughts as to the pricing of the work.

Great Pictures but Too Many Errors in Attribution and Pricing Unfortunately this fourth book in Mr. Sei's series, continues his efforts to value his personal collection and identify some of the great Zuni jewelry artists with even less care and accuracy than his prior books. This volume is filled with obvious and serious errors. For example, he puts a frog on the cover and attributes it to Leo Poblano at a fabulous price, but these frogs were not made by Leo Poblano and were made in Asia. They are nothing like Leo Poblano's work and if Mr. Sei were applying an expert eye he could see that the work is very different from Leo Poblano's. Careful research reveals that these pieces are fakes; they are Asian imports. Mr. Sei is attributing them to the great Zuni artist, Leo Poblano and pricing at \$1600 to \$3000. They are not Zuni and they are not made by Leo Poblano, and their pricing is very modest, not fabulous. Unfortunately Mr. Sei takes a cruel attitude toward others' mistakes of this kind, while frequently making his own mistakes like this, and his mistakes are published in books, which influence many people, over many decades. He should be more careful and also more kind. He presents himself as an expert on Zuni work but if he can't spot fakes, does not do thorough research, and misattributes a vast number of pieces in his books, where lies his expertise? One of the first mistakes that leapt out of the pages when I opened this book was an incorrectly attributed series of butterflies which Mr. Sei incorrectly attributes to "Juralita Lamy" but her name was Julalita Lamy and she did not make any of those butterflies. They are on pages 38 through 41. Howard Leekela made those butterflies, and his wife Catherine, made the black ones, although one black one on page 40 of this 4th Sei book was made by another Leekela family member. Dr. Ernie Bulow did the work of interviewing the families on this but why didn't Mr. Sei do equally careful work? There's no excuse for misspelling Julalita Lamy's name, nor for misattributing

all those butterflies to her instead of the true artist: Howard Leekela. He could have gotten the correct spelling from Bell's books or from any number of sources but misspelled her name about a dozen times. He has no fact checker and no copy editor. In my day my editors provided both, but had they not, I'd have myself obtained them. It's important to be accurate in published work. One interview with Julalita Lamy's family (he previously claimed families were the source of his information) would have sorted out that she did not make those butterflies. Another obvious mistake in this book is the "Merle Edaakie" roadrunner on page 61, which was actually made by Edward A. Beyuka. One signed piece by Eddie Beyuka, like it, is listed on eBay, and in fact Mr. Sei depicts several as Eddie Beyuka's which are almost identical. His motive for misattributing this piece is concerning: he prices it four or five times that of similar, correctly attributed, Beyuka pieces. All of the pieces are gorgeous pieces and it's a pleasure to see them but it is not a pleasure to see sloppy work in a book of this kind. Why not take the time to get it right? On page 67 he attributes a roadrunner to Gary and Paulinis Vacit but on eBay you can find a signed one, signed by Edward and Pablita Quam. As with the NOT Merle Edaakie piece, signed pieces have to trump attributions. He studies eBay closely, so there must be a reason he missed the information which is readily available to all. There are a huge number of mistakes, but the other hand there are gorgeous pieces depicted in this book that are not seen elsewhere and it's a pleasure to see them. But one must wish more care were taken to accuracy. Mistakes in attribution are easy to make, but books are hard to correct. So it is important that Mr. Sei try harder to get his attributions right. I believe he should cross check his information. Basic scientific method requires cross checking but Mr. Sei doesn't do that. Also, as mentioned, copy editing is still nonexistent. He talks about "sin face" in this book, when he means "sun face." It is hard to decipher many of his mistakes. I'm sure many people would be happy to do the copy editing job and others the fact checking work. I know I would! As time goes by Mr. Sei publishes more volumes but does not publish new editions correcting the mistakes in the published volumes and those mistakes have been piling up. Some eBay sellers treat these volumes as bibles, so when Mr. Sei publishes fakes as genuine and misattributes, but fails to correct these mistakes as the years go by, the consequences are counter to the stated purpose of these books. Sadly Mr. Sei stops referring to anonymous informants and now simply declares his attributions. You can see from my examples that there is a high degree of inaccuracy. Furthermore, he only depicts his own collection in all four books to date. And Mr. Sei continues to appraise his personal collection, as he did in his prior books. He values them without evidence and without accuracy, based on his personal feelings rather than documented pricing. He pays low, but generally values very high. In the United States appraisers generally consider it unethical to value

their own pieces, but if documentation were provided, there could be validation of the prices he sets based on realized pricing, and that would help provide credibility. It's particularly suspect when he attributes disproportionately low prices to a great artist like Quincy Peynetsa. Perhaps it reflects some personal slight he felt from the family? The work of this artist is sometimes equivalent to the greats, and no I don't own any, but I have seen it. Usually he overstates the pricing but there are these occasional pockets of understatement. I can recommend this book for the pleasure in viewing the pieces, being exposed to examples you would otherwise never see, and also the low price of the book makes it affordable for most. Keep in mind that there's a high ratio of incorrect information in both the works of art and even in the biographical information, and there are ethical and accuracy issues about the nature of the pricing he assigns to his own collection. but it is wonderful to see the works and have them displayed to be appreciated. He does have many beautiful works of art, but he also has some fakes which he is presenting to us falsely, as being authentic and much of the information is not correct.

Nice Pixs and I'll be honest with how he has BEEN BERATED for inaccuracy on inaccuracy that is all you can use these for to at least have an idea how something looks. Wish the info would be good cause you really can't find allot out trying to figure out who did a hallmark!!! wish someone in each nation would start a hallmark directory so one could find something out. I've for years copied and kept a catalog of stuff I like from ebay and over time someone knows who did a hallmark and I can backtrack and identify past pieces. So that is something.

Guess I was expecting more. It's an OK book, just a little disappointed. Should have picked out another book!! My choice.

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