

Five-Minute Antiques School - Collecting Native American Art

- This is a very complex collecting field and scholars rarely agree on anything
- Pottery:, basketry, clothing, woven goods, weaponry
- » Native American artifacts are much more difficult to locate for a variety of reasons including the following
 - o 1. Scarcity of items
 - o 2. Legal protection of items being traded
 - o 3. More vigorous collecting of said artifacts by numerous international, national, state, regional and local museums and historical societies
 - o 4. Frailties of the items themselves
 - o 5. A more limited distribution network through legitimate secondary sales
- > Age, condition, form-beauty, history = price
- Blankets were worn in many ways, and also had to provide warmth. They were placed on the ground to sit on, but were never used as rugs. The Navajo rug was almost a "second skin".
 - o The integrity and balance the "wholeness" of a Navajo Blanket design is perhaps more remarkable considering the fact that preliminary drawings were never made.

¹ Pottery - Each group of people developed its own shape of pot and style of decoration from kneading coils together to hollowing a lump of clay out with a stone and paddle. Pots were made in incredible numbers. They were used for storage and cooking.

Baskets - Today fewer and fewer baskets are woven for use in the home and in ceremony.

Basketry is a bit less expensive than pottery due to the lack of fragility in comparative terms between the two. Look for perfect condition examples.

Buy the best you can afford.

Beware of fraud, intentional and unknowledgeable, non-intentional

Jewelry - When you think of the southwest many people think of turquoise and silver jewelry. Cultural tradition has changed very little over the past few hundred years and is now a hallmark of the region. Both living and deceased makers command high prices for examples of *their* work.

Weight - pre 1950 important

Under the ever-increasing pressure of low priced factory-made articles, the handcrafts have lost much of their market. At the same time it is evident that the factory can never entirely satisfy the needs of people who prefer individual designs and individual workmanship in some, at least, of their possessions.

References

Lewis, Russell. (2006). North American Indian Artifacts. Krause Publications: Iola, WI. A good beginner reference with price guide.

Berlant, Anthony and Kahlenberg, Mary Hunt. (1991). Walk In Beauty. The Navajo and Their Blankets. Gibbs Smith Publications: Layton, UT. A great book, great information and some photos! Very informative.

Hanson, James. (1994). Spirits In The Art. The Lowell Press: Kansas City, MO. A beautiful book, great photos in color. A great reference book.

Douglas, Frederick H. and Hannoncort, Rene. (1941). Indian Art of the United States. Museum of Modern Art: New York. Black and white photos but great text.