

Decorative Art of the Southwestern Indians (Dover Pictorial Archive)

By Dorothy S. Sides

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The decorative art of the Indians of the American Southwest has long been recognized as one of the most beautiful art traditions in the primitive world. It demonstrates a technical skill with simple materials, a symbolic richness, and a faculty for creating rich effects by the imaginative use of ornament that are all almost unique. Museums use Pueblo ceramics for display pieces, and modern artists and crafters have turned eagerly to the handwork of prehistoric Indian women for inspiration and working ideas.

Mrs. Dorothy Sides, a noted artist and collector, has gathered together and redrawn in black and white nearly 300 examples of the finest authentic Southwestern Indian decoration that she has seen in a lifetime of study. She has not limited her selection to one period or style, however; to make her book as useful as possible, she has selected material ranging from the thirteenth century great geometric art of the Pueblos to the handcrafts carried on by the nomadic and Pueblo peoples of the present.

The main emphasis of this volume is on ceramic decoration, and Mrs. Sides includes pieces from the rich archeological sites of Pecos, Sikyatki, the Mimbres, and modern Pueblo pottery from Acoma, Zuni, Cochiti, and the Hopi. She also includes designs and motifs from the basketry of the Apache, Pima, and Papago; beadwork from the Mohave; authentic Zuni masks; Hopi kachina dolls; and sand paintings and blanket designs from the Navajo. This broad coverage of beautiful ornament illustrates many different art styles to fit every situation: geometric designs based upon balanced mirror fields of design, symbolic figures of the thunderbird, and modern stylizations. All is beautiful and imaginative.

Any crafter working with ceramics will find this book indispensable as a source of rich, easily used, powerful design; workers in wood, weavers, metal workers, and leather workers will find that it will enlarge their decorative resources considerably. It also offers unusual and eye-catching designs for commercial artists who wish to do work suggesting travel, handcrafts, the Southwest, or the social sciences. Individual drawings are royalty-free and may be reproduced without fee or permission.

"Worthy of an honored place in the library of aboriginal American art." — F. H. Hodge, Director, Southwestern Museum.

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Editorial Review

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