



## Native Artist of North America Snapshot: Pre and Post Materials

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Thank you for participating in the Newark Museum of Art's remote learning experience. To help form connections, supplemental materials are provided to enhance your students learning experience. Each lesson includes visual images and interpretive materials, along with instructions and the aligning curriculum standards.

### DESIGNS SHAPED BY STORIES

**Lesson:** Students will explore the use of distinctive form lines in the arts of North Pacific Coast people. Students will try their hand at recreating some of the designs to appreciate the skills needed, and through looking and discussion will learn how the designs represent family stories and tribal histories.

#### "WHEN CLAY SINGS"

**Lesson:** Ideal for K-2 students. Instructor reads to class "**When Clay Sings**", by Byrd Taylor and illustrated by Tom Bahti, and provides a printable puzzle for students of a Pueblo clay pot. This activity will encourage listeners to construct meanings and connect how Native Artist tradition is related to art making.

### DESIGNS SHAPED BY STORIES

#### INSTRUCTIONS

Students will examine works by two North Pacific Coast Native artists, *Tlingit Storage Chest*, 2015, by Preston Singletary and *Chest*, late 18<sup>th</sup> century-early 19<sup>th</sup> century, by an unknown North Pacific Coast Tlingit artist, Alaska. They will study the key element design of these chests, learn the significance of these design elements to the Pacific Northwest Native artist culture and tradition, and will design their own chest.

#### LESSON OBJECTIVES

Through pre and post visit activities, students will be able to...

- Compare and contrast information from a non-contemporary and modern-day work of art on the same cultural subject.
- Locate a specific area on a map and understand how natural resources in that geographic area influenced works of art.
- Students will look at and discuss artworks, identify the materials used to create them, and understand why those materials were chosen.
- Through sketching and utilizing the two Pacific Northwest Native artists' pieces (the cedar and glass chests) the students will identify how the indigenous culture utilized designs in their artwork to share stories and apply them to their own story.

#### COMMON CORE STANDARDS

Social Studies 6.1.4.D.1-3, 6.1.4.D.10-13, 6.1.8.A.1.a, 6.1.8.B.1.a-b, 6.1.8.C.1.a-b, 6.1.8.D.1.a-c, 6.1.8.D.3.e-f  
Visual Arts 1.1.2.D.1-2, 1.1.5.D.1-2, 1.2.2.A.2, 1.2.5.A.1-2, 1.3.2.D.1-5, 1.3.5.D.2, 1.3.5.D.4, 1.4.5.A.2-

#### BACKGROUND

Native American Artists are typically grouped into six regions-Artic, North Pacific Coast, Central California, Midwestern Plains, Southwest, and Mid-Atlantic. Each geographical area has a distinct climate, landscape,



plants and wildlife. The natural resources from these regions have in turn shaped the development of Native art traditions in those areas.

Along the coasts of British Columbia, Canada, and southeastern Alaska, the climate is milder than the Arctic and the environment is rich with dense forests of huge cedar trees and many different plants by the rivers. There are lots of fish in the ocean and rivers and shellfish are close to the shore. There was more of this wilderness 300 years ago, and there are few cities where small villages were, but the resources still define this region.

*Chest*, by an Alaskan North Pacific Tlingit Artist, is dated between the late 18<sup>th</sup> century and early 19<sup>th</sup> century is carved from cedar. The front of the box represents the face of a creature, distinguished by the two oval eyes outlined with light blue paint (each with a smaller face within) and by a wide mouth delineated with operculum shells. Cedar trees still grow very tall along the Pacific coast in Washington, Alaska, and Canada and they are an important natural source of materials for Native carvers.

Cedar chests such as this were used to safely store clan treasures and ceremonial regalia such as robes, blankets, and masks, and kept for potlatches, large ceremonial feasts. The outside of Tlingit chests were carved with designs of animals and beings that symbolized clans.

Preston Singletary's *Tlingit Storage Chest*, dated 2015, is a contemporary piece in glass. His chest represents the crest that belongs to the Singletary family. As with other pieces from the Northwest Coast, the figures are crests that tell a family's history. The right to portray certain figures belongs to a family. Artists, even when using more contemporary materials and designs follow this important rule. These "rules" are important, because the designs are like a language and when you see a shape, connected to another shape they create figures (crests) that lead you to a story.

## **MATERIALS**

Map of Native North American cultural regions

Printed black and white copies of the Singletary's *Tlingit Storage Chest* and cedar *Chest*

Printed copy of the blank chest template

Felt tip markers

Pencils

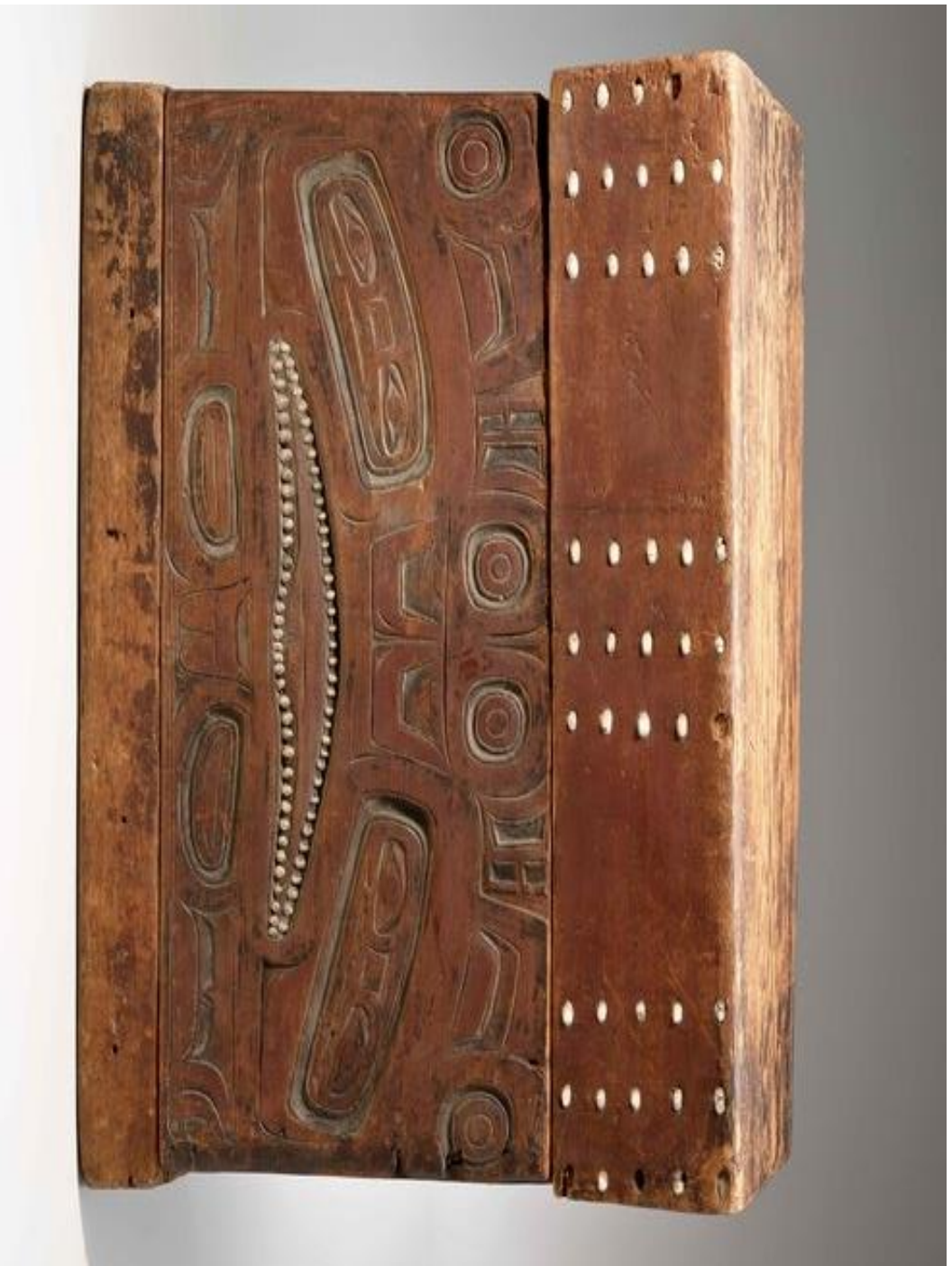
## **INSTRUCTIONS**

- Have students locate the Pacific Northwest on the map. Discuss the climate and resources available for Native artists.
- Have students print black and white copies of the cedar *Chest* and the glass *Tlingit Storage Chest*.
- Have students observe the printed pictures of the wooden cedar *Chest* and have them find the face in the center. Then look for the blue oval "cheeks" above the white teeth. That thick line (called a formline) and the shape it creates is called an Ovoid. That is a second type of formline called a U-line. Now look above the cheeks-on both sides. These are the two key design elements in North Pacific Coast arts. This chest is over 200 years old. Notice how they repeat. Is there a pattern?
- Have them find Ovoid formlines and then U form lines (they can be facing in any direction and be hard to spot.) Have the students trace the Ovoid form lines for the whole chest. Can they do it without lifting a finger? The continuous Ovoid form line is one of the design rules artists strive to achieve.
- Now look for matching pairs of the formlines. Fold the cedar *Chest* photo in half and then see if the placement of the Ovoid and U formlines are in the same place on either side. The two forms always

come in pairs. Having design elements balanced on both sides is another requirement! That is called symmetry and is another important design rule the artists incorporate.

- Ask are the U and Ovoid formlines used together as a part of any figures-people or animals? Can you tell what the figures are? If there are Ovoid and U formlines that are not part of a figure, why are they included? Do you like the way artist filled the entire surface of the front of the chest?
- Compare the two chests. Look at the glass chest by artist Preston Singletary. He has taken a very innovative approach to his Tlingit chest! What did he do? Do you think the material of chest affects whether it is functional, or does it look like a decorative piece only? Why?
- Ask students why cedar wood and shell were used in the 18<sup>th</sup> century chest as opposed to the contemporary chests use of glass? How do available resources influence an artwork?
- Utilizing the blank chest template, pencils, and felt tip markers, have students design their own chest utilizing patterns and symmetry. The symbols, animals, or shapes should tell their story, and serve as their crest.



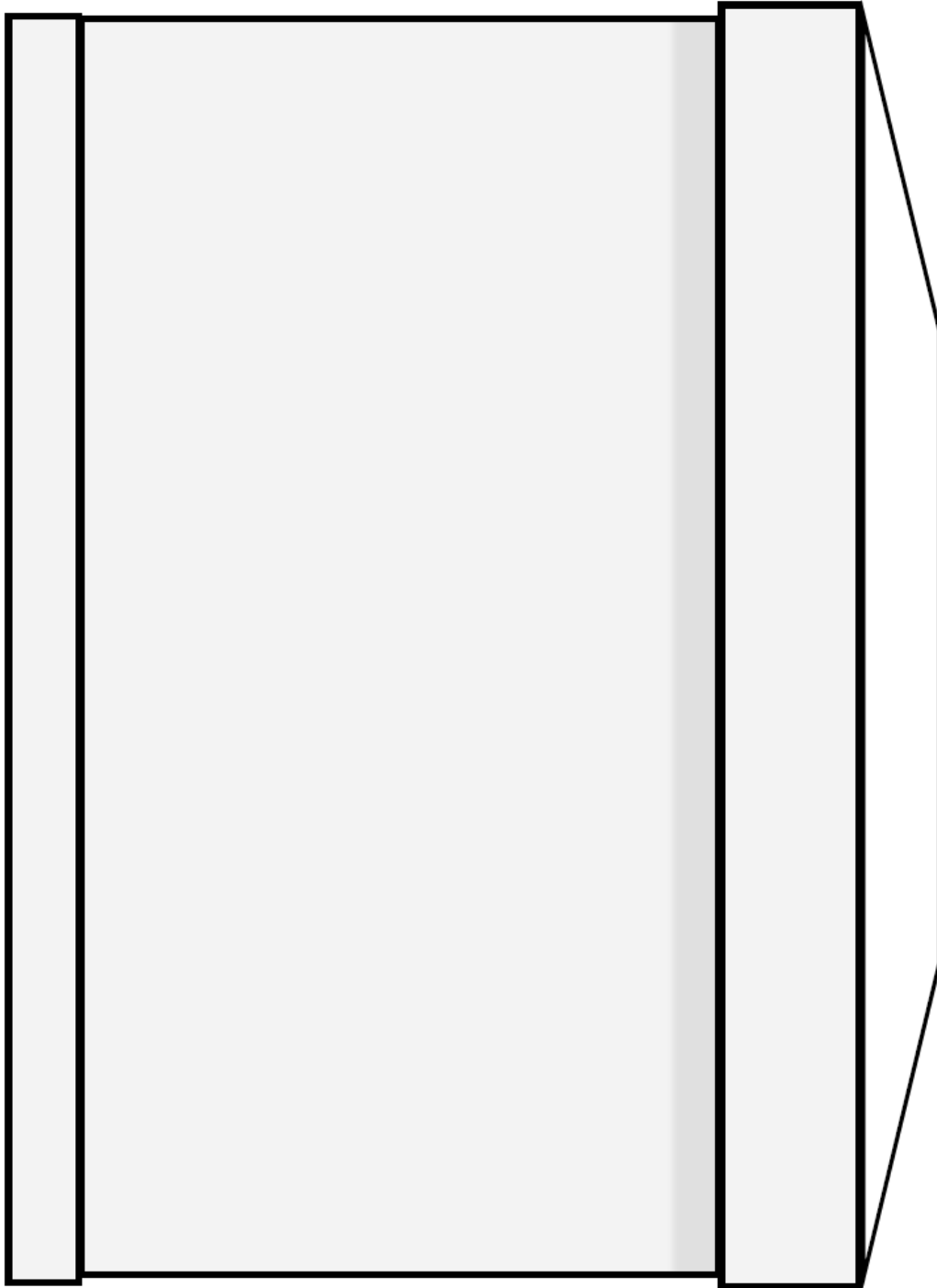


Tlingit artist, Alaska, Chest, late 18<sup>th</sup> century-early 19<sup>th</sup> century, cedar, paint, operculum shell, H: 22.5 in,  
L: 27.9 in, W: 13.2 in





Tlingit Storage Chest, 2015, Preston Singletary, Seattle Washington, Glass, H 24:5 in, L: 31in, W: 19 in





## **“WHEN CLAY SINGS”**

### **INSTRUCTIONS**

Instructor will read “When Clay Sings” to the students and discuss the multi-generational tradition of clay pot making, and how it was functional (used to hold water and food) and a cultural tradition (the appreciation of past generations). Then Students will print the puzzle of the clay pot, cut out the shapes, and solve the puzzle. They will learn the significance of these design elements to the southwest Native American artist culture and tradition.

### **LESSON OBJECTIVES**

Through the pre and post visit activities, students will be able to...

- Locate a specific area on a map and understand how natural resources in that geographic area influenced works of art.
- Analyze and discuss a work of art by a Native North American artist and how the work is a part of their cultural tradition.
- Read along with teacher, interpret a story, and apply it to the hands-on puzzle activity.

### **COMMON CORE STANDARDS**

Social Studies 6.1.P.D.1-3, 6.1.4.D.1-20

Language Arts Literacy (Common Core) 3.3.3 A, B, C; 3.3.5 A, B; 3.3.7 A, B; 3.3.8A,B

Visual Arts 1.1.2.D.1-2, 1.3.P.D.1-6, 1.3.2.D.1-4, 1.4.P.A.1-4, 1.4.2.B.1-3

### **BACKGROUND**

The American southwest region extends through present day Arizona, New Mexico and into Colorado, Texas, Utah, and Mexico. It is a beautiful but adversarial environment to live in. It is an arid desert climate where daytime summer temperatures can climb above 100 degrees. It may not rain for months but then the southwest monsoons in July and August hit causing flash floods that wash down previously dry streambeds. The winter temperatures are a stark contrast to the summer's, because the temperature drops below freezing, and some high elevation mountains receive snow. In short, the southwest climate is an example of extremes.

The four corners region of Utah, Colorado, Arizona, and New Mexico were inhabited by Native Americans collectively known as the Pueblos. This geographic area is abundant in clay. They used this clay soil mixed with straw to form bricks they would then dry in the sun, called adobe to build homes. The clay was also used to make pots.

The Pueblo women are skilled clay pottery artisans. Before clay was available to purchase, Native artists often dug up clay close to a source of water and carried it to where they worked. Handling the clay with water softened it. The potters then rolled the clay into coils and wrapped them around and around until achieving the desired width and height. Then the surface was patted smooth. The smooth surface and even shape are measures of artistic skill. The finest artists were also known for making pots with strong, but thin walls. Pots were needed to carry water and other necessities, so the lighter the better.

To decorate their pots, artists would thin clay into a paint-like mixture colored with minerals. Painting on Southwestern Native artist's pottery often includes images from the plants and wildlife native to their region.



Pottery from past generations is used by archeologist to try and piece together the still enigmatic puzzle, of Pueblo history, religious beliefs and culture.

## **MATERIALS**

Map of the Native North American cultural regions

Printed copy of Pueblo pottery puzzle

Safety scissors

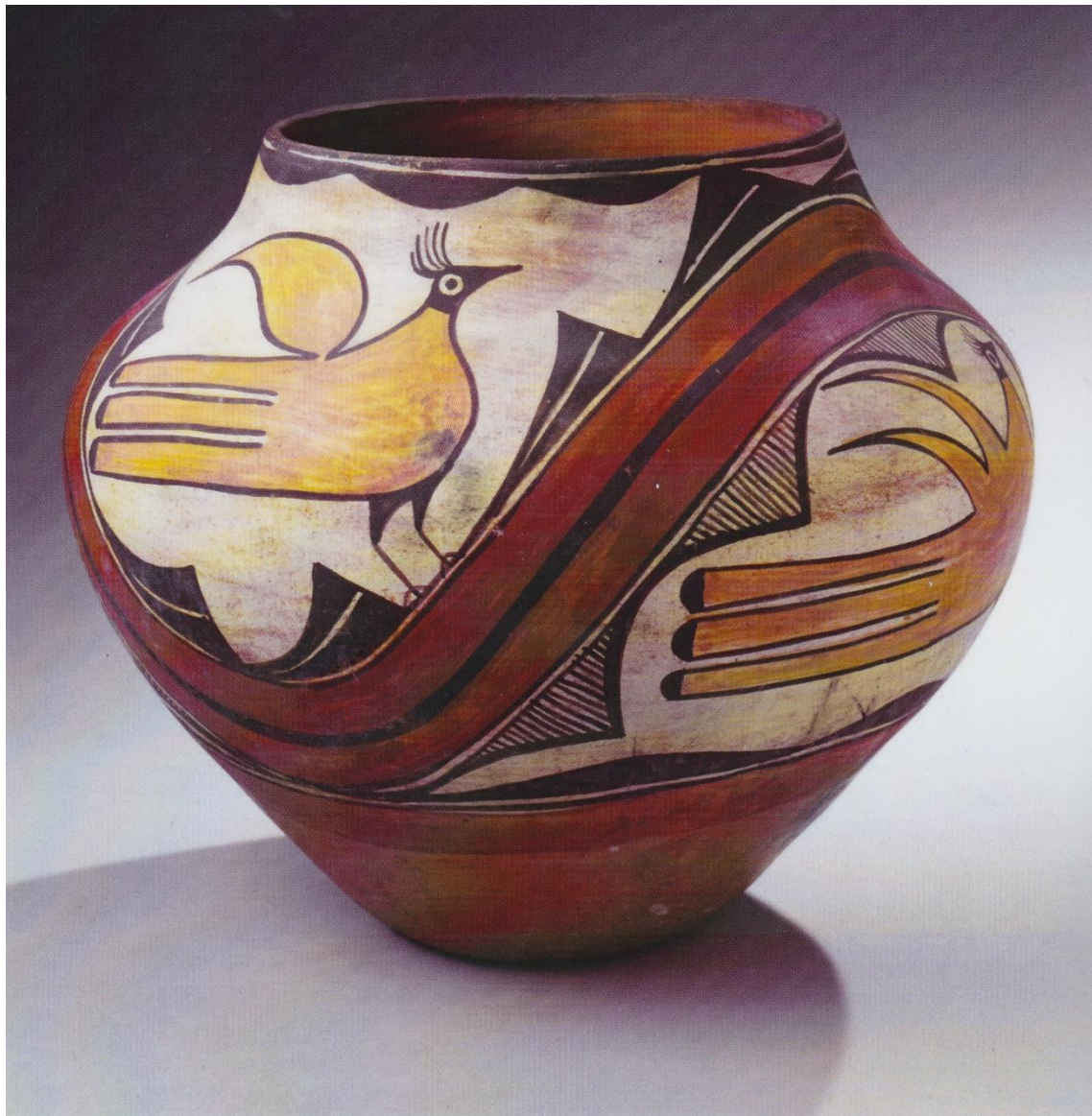
Teacher only: book, "When Clay Sings" by Byrd Baylor and illustrated by Tom Bahti available through [Amazon](#)

## **INSTRUCTIONS**

- Have students locate the Pacific Northwest on the map. Discuss the climate and resources available for Native artists.
- Read the book aloud to students. While reading, point out the different animals the illustrator has included, and note that they are native to the southwest. Also point out the book's color theme. Ask, does it remind you of the color of clay that would be dug up from the ground?
- Then foster a discussion by giving the students a few things to think about:
  - Is it possible for an object to have a spirit and sing? In other words, maybe they can't really sing using mouths and sounds like us, but if we study them closely, can they tell us a story about the people who once owned them?
  - What is the object? What was it used for? How did it work?
  - Was it used every day or only for special occasions like birthdays or holidays?
  - How was it made? Was it made by hand or machine? What is it made of?
  - Who do you think made it? How can you tell?
- Have students print the puzzle of Pueblo pottery, cut out shapes, and solve puzzle.



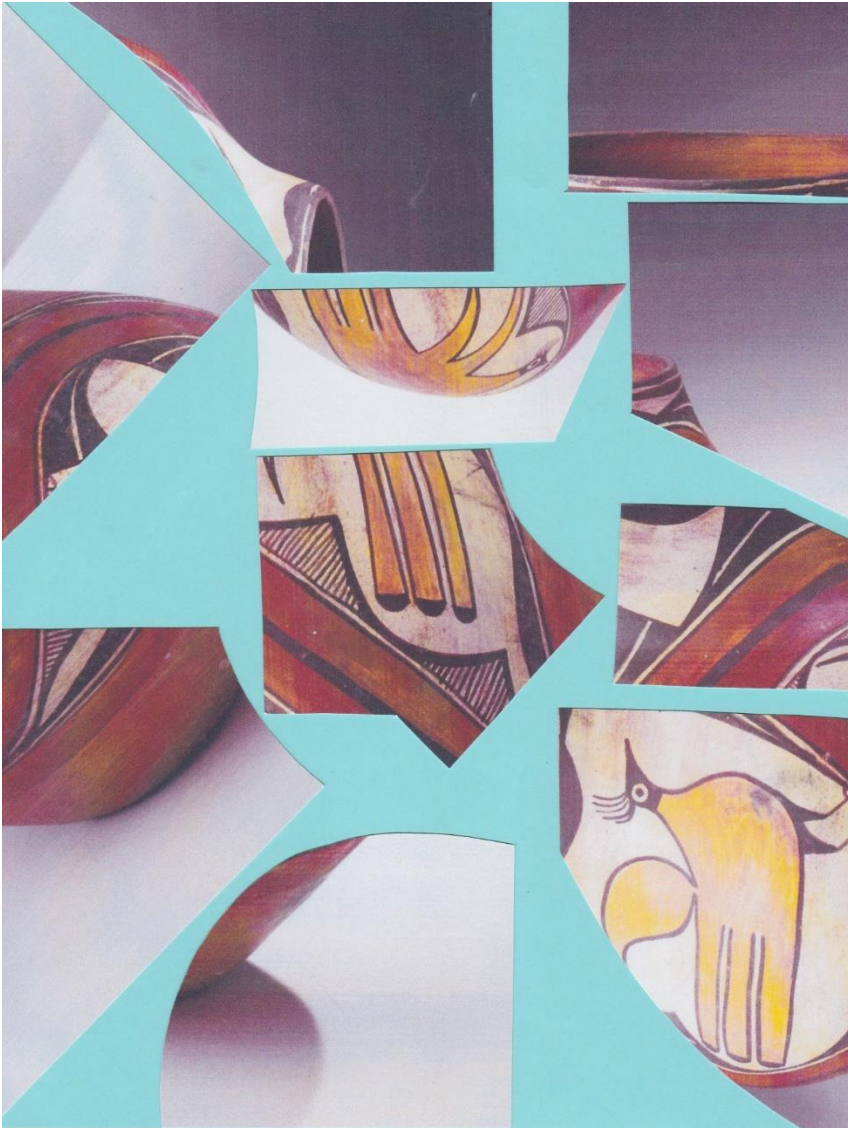




Pueblo pottery from the Southwest  
Zia Pueblo artist, New Mexico  
Clay, pigment  
Purchase 1928 28.947



## Puzzle



### Native Artists of North America Vocabulary:

**Natural resources** are materials found in nature (humans did not make them) that can be used by people. Examples of natural resources are water (seas and fresh water like lakes and streams), plants, trees, rocks, minerals, and animals (including fish).



**Minerals** are a solid substance at normal temperatures on Earth and are a natural resource. A few examples of minerals are: iron, copper, and gold, and gems; diamonds, emeralds, and sapphires.

**Indigenous** sometimes known as First or Native peoples, are the earliest known inhabitants of a geographical area. In the Americas it refers to the Native peoples who inhabited the Americas before the colonization by Europeans.

**Traditions** are customs and beliefs that passed down from one generation to the next.

**North Pacific Coast** is a region of the United States bounded by the Pacific Ocean to the west and the Rocky Mountains to the east. It encompasses the states of Northern California Oregon, Washington, Alaska and British Columbia in Canada.

**Tlingits** are the indigenous people of the Pacific Northwest coast of southeastern Alaska and British Columbia. Tlingit means "People of the Tides."

**Crests** represent clans (shared ancestors) of the North Pacific Coasts people. A crest is usually represented by a specific animal or being.

**Potlatch** is a ceremonial feast held by Native Americans of the North Pacific Coast which celebrates a marriage, birth, or rise to a place of leadership. The host gives gifts to attendees in a display of their wealth.

**Regalia** is clothing or ornaments worn at formal occasions which indicate the wearers status.

**Cedar** is a tall tree from the pine tree family. Along the Northwest Pacific Coast, red cedar trees can grow upward of 200 feet and have trunks as wide as 8 feet. The wood of the cedar is resistant to rot and is a soft wood that easy to carve.

#### **Pacific Northwest Coast Native Art terms:**



**Formlines** are lines that swell and thin as they outline the part of each figure. Formlines create ovoids and u-lines.



**Ovoids** are a bulging oval- to- rectangular shape. They are typically used to portray a creature's eyes, mouths, nostrils, and ears. Small faces are usually placed inside an Ovoid.



**U-lines** can be facing in any direction and be hard to spot. They are thickest on top, thinner on each side, and taper down to a fine tip where they met other formlines.

**American Southwest** is a region of the United States that extends through present day Arizona, New Mexico and into Colorado, Texas, Utah, and Mexico. The southwest climate is an example of extremes. It is an arid desert climate where daytime summer temperatures can climb above 100 degrees and winter temperatures that dip below freezing.



**Pueblo** is a collective name for contemporary and ancient communities indigenous to the southwestern United States, primarily in present day Arizona and New Mexico. The name Pueblo was given by the Spanish which means little town or village. Pueblo villages are made from abode clay, a mixture of clay, mud, and straw.

**Clay**, before it was available for purchase, was dug up close to a water source by female Pueblo artisans for pot making. Clay is a mixture of soil that sticks together to form a heavy moldable material. When molded into an object such as a pot it is dried to a hard concrete like surface which is used to hold water or other goods.