

Basic Detail Report



Owl effigy jar

Date

c. 1875-1900

Medium

Terracotta with paint

Description

Clay effigy jar in the shape of an owl with white, brown, and yellow paint. Said to be from Arizona. "The A:shiwí tribe of the American Southwest, formerly known as the Zuni tribe, are among the Pueblo people. A pueblo is a settlement of Native Americans composed of adobe style homes. Adobes are made from sun-

dried clay bricks. Clay was a staple for art and architecture in these New Mexico based communities, providing the material for homes and decorative pottery. Southwestern tribes made ceramic vessels with functional and aesthetic value, ranging from bowls and storage to urns and artistic sculptures. This owl effigy jar is a relatively recent creation, as Native American pottery dates back thousands of years. The jar is estimated to have been made between 1875 and 1900 AD. The term effigy means that this vessel was made to resemble a specific figure, in this case an owl. The jar represents the owl's likeness and may have served the cultural tradition of fetish carving for the A:shiwí. Fetishes are inanimate objects worshipped for their magical powers. According to A:shiwí culture, the owl fetish serves to protect the home. It also symbolizes truth, wisdom, and unique perspective, as it can see what others cannot. According to some tribes, the owl can also be a dark omen because it is creature of the forest and of the night. A:shiwí people drew inspiration for art and these magical figures from their surroundings of the varied landscape of New Mexico: mountains, rivers, forests, and deserts all within range of the reservation. The magic of this terrain speaks to the strength of Pueblo culture, as the land has been an important part of and platform for A:shiwí tradition and culture. Like other Southwest American tribes, the A:shiwí tribe established enduring roots in Southwest, built permanent homes in the form of clay, and decorated these homes with items such as the owl effigy. This effigy was created during a difficult time for the United States. The Civil War, a battle between the Northern union and the Southern confederacy over slave states, broke out in 1861 and lasted until 1865. This war coincided with westward expansion. The desire to move westward raised new questions about territory, expansion, and the preservation of Native American communities. While this new frontier promised a new home, a prosperous future, and gold to white settlers, it brought far reaching consequences to Native American groups like the A:shiwí who already inhabited the land. However, the A:shiwí have managed to survive such conflicts and preserve their traditions to this day." (Written by Annelise Vought, Class of 2019)

Dimensions

Overall: 10 x 9 x 9 in. (25.4 x 22.9 x 22.9 cm)