



Leekya, Turquoise earrings



Teddy Weahkee, Earrings

Zuni carvers

The Zuni, or as they call themselves *Ashiwi*, are descendants of the ancient Mogollon and Anasazi peoples and live in west-central New Mexico. When they first encountered the Spanish conquistadores in the 16th century they were living in seven separate settlements. The largest of these pueblos was Hawikuh, which was inhabited

approximately 1380 to 1670. They survived 16th century Spanish contact only to flee and abandon the pueblo due to constant pressure and raids from the Apache and Navajo peoples. This ancient site was excavated by archaeologist F W Hodge between 1917 and 1923. Pieces of turquoise jewellery including fetishes, figurines, and mosaic work with

shells, bone and turquoise were found. Since their discovery, these artefacts have inspired modern-day Zuni artisans to reach back to their past and revive traditional turquoise stonework. The Zuni also carved lifelike figures of Native Americans. Some of the smaller figures were made to be suspended on necklaces or pottery, while others were meant

to be set into jewellery. Most of the larger figures were commissioned by the trader C G Wallace and less than 100 are available to collectors. These figures were carved from large chunks of soft turquoise, often green or light blue in colour, which Wallace saved specifically for this purpose.

There are three Zuni artisans working in the early 20th century whose carvings have played a pivotal role in the development of Zuni artworks. They were Leekya Deyuse, Leo Poblano and Teddy Weahkee. Under the guidance and encouragement of the entrepreneurial C G Wallace carving was transformed from personal and ceremonial use to commercial use in jewellery production. He encouraged lapidary arts by supplying grinding equipment, hand tools and studio space to the carvers. He also encouraged the carving of traditional animal shapes similar to the stone fetishes and pendants recovered by Zuni labourers excavating the Hawikuh pueblo and other prehistoric sites.

Teddy's turquoise carvings are more angular than those by Leekya. The eyes and nostrils are often represented by drill holes, the mouths often consist of simple, filed horizontal lines and his carvings are generally slightly less polished



Teddy Weahkee, Figures, ring, necklace

Leekya Deyuse (1889–1966) was one of the labourers employed at the Hawikuh pueblo dig. He was able to view the artefacts as they were recovered by the archaeological field crew. He would study a stone for hours, waiting until he could visualise the figure in the stone before beginning to carve.

Leekya, as he preferred to be known, worked with C G Wallace for about 50 years. He was a maker of large tab, nugget and disc bead necklaces in the old style, but later became famous for his fetish jewellery, carvings and figurines. He was considered a pioneer in the carving of turquoise and coral and is regarded as the best-known Zuni carver of his time.

Leekya worked at home with supplies and materials supplied by C G Wallace. His tools were a hammer, chisel, an assortment of files and a hand grinder. His style is characterised by subtlety, which is evident in the soft undulations of surface and suggestions of features in his carvings.

Animal figures appear rounded with slightly uplifted and turned heads, open mouths or folds of skin. They have a strange quirky smile on their faces as if looking into the soul of the viewer. They are usually well polished. The eyes are often inlaid with other materials as well as the shoulders.

Leekya made rings, bracelets, necklaces and other types of silverwork. His small birds were