

Zuni Pueblo artists take a stand for Native American art authenticity

Written by By Zuni Pueblo ArtWalk Organization
Friday, 12 October 2018 08:21



In the center of the Universe sits the Pueblo of Zuni. Here all things exist in an intermingling balance represented best by the pueblo's artwork. Using the gifts of the Earth, Zuni Artists transform natural materials to tell the story of their people.

Zuni Pueblo artists are internationally recognized for their master craftsmanship in silversmithing, stone inlay, beadwork, fetish carving, pottery and more.

For the Zuni people Art is more than a part of culture and traditions, it is a way of life.

Eighty-plus percent of households in Zuni pueblo make a portion of their income from the sale of arts and crafts. However, as Wells Mahkee Jr., Executive Director of Zuni Pueblo MainStreet explains, this way of life is being threatened:

Zuni artwork is being replicated and manufactured en masse to be sold as 'authentic' Zuni art. This makes it very difficult for our artists to get fair prices for their work, and also targets

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unsuspecting buyers who end up buying cheaply manufactured replicas.

A group of artists in Zuni Pueblo is taking a stand against faux Native art and cutting out the middle man all together.

During the ArtWalk Tour on Oct. 13 and 14, more than 20 traditional and contemporary Zuni artists open their workshops, such as potter [Noreen Simplicio](#) , silversmith Carlton Jamon, and fetish carver Jeff Shetima.

“I was amazed to actually hold a piece of clay. Totally different than what I thought. Ms. Simplicio’s demonstration and presentation were wonderful,” said an ArtWalk attendee. “We were delighted not only by the great talent of the artists but also by the impeccable organization, and the warmful, smiling welcome we got from everybody in Zuni,” said another visitor.

Tucked away in the Zuni River Valley in Western New Mexico, the Zuni people have held on to their native language, culture and traditions. All of which still hold a significant part of day-to-day life in the pueblo.

“Art is a way of life, art is a form of life, and art is life in Zuni. Art has been handed down from generation to generation for centuries,” artist Jeff Shetima said. “It is our culture, our heritage, and our tradition in Zuni. I am proud to say that ‘I am a Zuni artist.’”

Zuni is a welcoming community and invites visitors in to explore and experience their

culture. Visit Zuni Pueblo and experience the authentic culture and traditions through the eyes of Zuni artists.

The Zuni Pueblo ArtWalk invites visitors in to artists’ workshops to see them at work and purchase one of a kind items directly from the artists.

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The next ArtWalk Studio Tour event is Oct. 13-14 from 10 am-6 pm on Saturday and Sunday. Visit: www.zunipuebloart.org . Facebook and Instagram: @zunipuebloart #madeinzuni

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