Colors have social, spiritual, and cultural significance everywhere, and this is no exception for the Great Basin Native Americans. The way in which tribes display color combined with symbols varies between tribes; occasionally there are similarities. Yet, each piece is individually designed and crafted by the hands of the artist. From media to color, each serve a purpose and communicate different messages. These truths have not changed with time; building an understanding of these things is crucial for designers and craftsmen alike in the 21st century.

Natives not only made things functional, they also strove to go above and beyond to make items beautiful and meaningful. So by going through objects they used for ritual ceremonies as well as every day living, you find many similarities and attention to detail. When you cross reference the symbolism and color with mythology and religious beliefs, the results are astounding.

The same attention was given to communicating social status with design and color. The development of symbols and motifs is very sophisticated and very deliberate. We can learn a lot about the significance of color and symbols by studying these objects.

These themes and ideals are still used in modern day designs and crafts. Not only by Native American tribes, but by other well known artists and designers.

**M.O.A. PIECE**

Pair of moccasins located in the Museum of Anthropology at Utah State University. Intricate beading and hand sewn leather, these moccasins are what inspired and drove my research.

**METHODS**

Natives not only made things functional, they also strove to go above and beyond to make items beautiful and meaningful. So by going through objects they used for ritual ceremonies as well as every day living, you find many similarities and attention to detail. When you cross reference the symbolism and color with mythology and religious beliefs, the results are astounding. There is something to be said about this because they couldn’t afford to waste resources, one of those included time. There was importance in taking the time to show your devotion to spiritual beings. The same attention was given to communicating social status with design and color. The development of symbols and motifs is very sophisticated and very deliberate. We can learn a lot about the significance of color and symbols by studying these objects.

**CONCLUSIONS**

These themes and ideals are still used in modern day designs and crafts. Not only by Native American tribes, but by other well known artists and designers.

**INTRODUCTION**

Native American 2-Dimensional design is simple in nature visually. However, the symbolism behind the decisions is complex. By studying different pieces, specifically a pair of moccasins it is very clear every detail, down to the color choice is thought out and planned in order to get a very distinct message across. Whether that be spiritual or social, there is meaning behind it all. These symbols and their meanings, while they may seem to be older, have followed us from generation to generation and still have significance now.

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**References**


**Pow Wow**

noun; a North American Indian ceremony involving feasting, singing, and dancing.

**Sandpainting**

noun; an American Indian ceremonial art form, important among the Navajo and Pueblo peoples, using colored sands, used especially in connection with healing ceremonies.

**Wedding Basket**

noun; The Navajo Wedding Basket is seen as a map through which the Navajo chart their lives. The central spot represents the sipapu, this is where the Navajo people emerge from the prior world through a reed. The inner coils of the basket are white to represent birth.