



## Eiteljorg Museum

of American Indians and Western Art

### Specific Native American Art and Artifacts on Exhibition

Welcome to the Eiteljorg Museum! We hope that you enjoy your visit and learn something new about the art, history and cultures of the Native Peoples of North America.

### Why don't you have objects from \_\_\_\_\_ tribe on display in the gallery?

**First, of the 500 tribes within the continental United States and Canada, there are very few museums that can claim that they have objects from each and every tribe.** Most have only a small-to-moderate representation. While the Eiteljorg Museum has an excellent collection with holdings from all the cultural areas, and many of the tribes, we do not, unfortunately, have objects from all of them. In some cases we have only a few objects from a particular tribe and in addition, these objects may be limited to one category, such as baskets.

**Secondly, objects from the Northeastern and Southeastern Woodlands tribes are very rare because of the forced relocation of Woodlands peoples in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Collecting Native American objects is a more recent activity among private individuals and public institutions.** Native Peoples were removed before many non-native people became interested in collecting and preserving such artifacts. (An interest in collecting Native American artifacts became more prominent in the late 1800s, after many Woodlands tribes had been removed and much of their artifacts were used up, lost or destroyed.) At the Eiteljorg Museum, for example, we have little more than a handful of objects from the Native Peoples who originally lived in the Southeastern United States -- the Cherokee, Creek, Choctaw, Chickasaw and Seminole tribes.

**Third, museums are responsible for making sure that an object is properly cared for to insure its survival for future generations.** Museums hold objects for the public trust. Exposure to light, varying temperatures and excessive handling all have negative effects on an object. Because of this, there are limits to the amount of time an object can be on display. Objects routinely have to return to our storage area to "rest," even if that means a particular tribal heritage or tradition will be underrepresented or not represented at all. So, if one of your favorite items is not on exhibit, or if a particular culture is not represented, there may be a very good reason.

**Fourth, like the great majority of museums, the Eiteljorg does not have unlimited funds to purchase additional objects or art for the collections in order to fill the gaps.** So, like other museums, we must rely on the generosity of patrons, members and the public to donate objects or funds to the museum. We also work to borrow artifacts from other museums, so please visit again to see our constantly changing galleries.

**So, how can I find out, before my visit, if my favorite art is on display, or if the tribe I am researching is represented in the galleries?**

Call our museum when you are planning a visit. Individuals can contact the Curator of Native American Art and Culture at (317) 636-9378, ext. 123, Monday-Friday. If you are a teacher, and want to assign students to look for artifacts and art from specific tribal traditions, you can fax our education department a list, (317) 264-1724, and we will respond if you include a phone number or email address. To schedule a guided tour or self-guided group visit call (317) 636-9378, ext 150.

Thank you for asking about the collections.

Ray W. Gonyea  
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Curator of Native American Art & Culture  
Eiteljorg Museum

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