

Do You have a Fetish for Horse Fetishes?

These Native American carvings could bring more than a little style to your life.

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They're cute, they're often colorful and they may even have a touch of whimsy to their faces. These are the artistic, hand-carved renderings of horses created by Native Americans and known as fetishes. While fetishes can be carved from a variety of natural stones, onyx, turquoise, marble and several types of jasper are most popular. The Zuni culture produces the most valued fetishes, having perfected the art over centuries. However, each Native American artist tends to add a unique touch to his or her design. Some horse fetishes are very primitive in their appearance, with almost coarse or blocky look to the figure. Others are more stylized, complete with details such as flowing manes and symbolic etchings.

While many different animals are carved into fetishes with each one symbolizing certain traits or spiritual powers, horse fetishes are said to represent swiftness, strength and enlightenment. They are also said to promote healing powers. That's quite an accomplishment for a little stone carving that easily fits in the palm of your hand!

According to Stefanie Ward from the Center for Anthropological Studies in Albuquerque, N.M., some horse lovers also consider a horse fetish to be good luck. "I have sold some through the gift shop to riders who carried them in their pocket during the Snaffle Bit Futurity."

Others have gone on to become jewelry, with a silver loop functioning as a bail so that the fetish can reside on a necklace chain.

"Each one is different and beautiful in its own right," Ward says. "There are many different types of animal fetishes, but the horse fetish is definitely one of the most popular."