



# Small Spirits: Native American Dolls from the National Museum of the American Indian

*Mary Jane Lenz, Clara Sue Kidwell*

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A dazzling variety of Native American dolls--from prehistoric ceramic figures to striking contemporary creations by Inuit and Pueblo artists--fills the pages of *Small Spirits*. These miniature forms have played rich and diverse roles in indigenous cultures from antiquity to the present, serving as toys and learning tools for children, sacred and magical figurines, props and performers in drama and dance, and, in recent years, items manufactured for sale. Some dolls today are created as artworks and coveted by collectors.

Stunning full-color images portray the beauty and craftsmanship of the dolls, from the simplest toy made of sticks and cloth scraps to the exquisitely dressed replica of a woman in her finest regalia. Each offers a glimpse into a particular cultural world--Navajo, Cree, or Tapirape--and into the mind of an individual maker. The great variety of form and materials--such as walrus tusk ivory, cornhusks, and beeswax embellished with the brilliantly colored feathers of tropical birds--reflects the vibrancy and range of Native American lifeways.

Mary Jane Lenz's insightful, authoritative text offers a lively discussion of the intriguing roles that dolls have played in Native American cultures and explores their significance today, while carefully chosen historical photographs bring to life the people who made and used these remarkable creations.

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