

SMITHSONIAN MUSEUM SHOPS —SHOWCASE FOR CRAFTS



Cornhusk doll from Appalachia.

To serve the varied interests of museum visitors, and to stimulate collectors young and old, the Smithsonian has developed unique shops and bookshops to complement each of its museums. Whether they be authentic crafts, original art and prints, Eskimo carvings, or cornhusk dolls from Appalachia, Smithsonian Shops have enriched homes and schools throughout the nation and around the world with objects of cultural, educational, and decorative interest.

The Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, S. Dillon Ripley, sees objects as catalysts: "Objects are documents to be read as much as the printed page," he has written. "Many people and all children need to touch objects, assess their texture, not simply read about them, in order to learn.

"A dinosaur bone, a live cow, a piece of sculpture, a stone ax: we have need for objects. Through them the truth is seeking us out."

Through displays of imaginative handcrafts from all parts of the world, and special exhibitions staged frequently throughout the year, the Smithsonian Shops reflect a growing interest in traditional and contemporary crafts.

During this festival month, the feature is an unusual collection of rubbings taken from stone-slab grave markers of Puritan and Colonial America. Their sacred and secular symbols attracted the attention of a dedicated writer-photographer team, Avon Neal and Ann Parker, who have adapted the age-old technique of stone rubbing to preserve this almost vanished art which is discussed in the following article.