



Kwakiutl Bear-Spirit Mask

Like tribes all over the world, American Indians never forgot that life was made easier because of the animals that shared their world. (Almost everything Indians ate and used came from animals.) So the bear was never killed in anger or fear, but addressed kindly as a friend or brother. In return for this “gift” of brotherhood, the hunter tried to please the spirit of the dead animal. He also believed that

the animal took pleasure in having his image recreated—as in this mask, for instance—for in this way, the spirit of the animal lived forever. Materials of this fierce Bear-Spirit include wood and bear fur, with inlays of sea shells for the eyes and teeth. Brilliant blue and bright red are typical colors for this powerful mask.