

Collection Spotlight: Ceramics from the Southwestern Pueblos

Fuller Craft Museum has a collection of excellent ceramics made by artists from three Southwestern Pueblos: Acoma, Zuni, and Cochiti. The objects on view are all strongly grounded in the regional, tribal, and individual making practices of well-known contemporary ceramicists of Indigenous descent. The Acoma, Zuni and Cochiti Pueblos lie across Arizona and New Mexico and are some of the longest continually inhabited settlements in North America. While there are important differences between each tribes' ceramics practices, they do share several key elements. Pueblo makers that follow traditional practices use locally found clay and pigments, build their work by hand with coils, and stone polish them once dry.

A repeated story in this exhibit is the revival of ancestral ceramic techniques and styles by makers. We celebrate these creative accomplishments, but should also frame them within the centuries-long history of violence, colonization, and cultural erasure inflicted on Indigenous communities. We ask that you be mindful of not only this history but also the resilience and ongoing, rich cultures and artistry of these tribes and individuals.

Objects:

Helen Cordero, (Cochiti) 1915-94

Storyteller Figurine, c. 1965

Earthenware and clay slip

Gift of the Joan Pearson Watkins Trust, 2014.11.2

The Cochiti making tradition of ceramic figurines began in the 19th century. The earliest figurines depict a wide array of individuals, ranging from bureaucrats to circus performers. Eventually, the commercial success of these works caused them to become a hallmark of the Pueblo.

Cordero's "storytellers" are her distinct creation within this artistic tradition and imbued with both personal and cultural significance. A motif she would return to again and again, her storytellers were originally inspired by memories of her grandfather telling stories to his grandchildren. The work thus also shows the exchange of the Eastern Keres language and Cochiti legends between generations.

Josephine Arquero, (Cochiti) b. 1928

Cochiti Pueblo Figures from the "Nacimientos" Series, c. 1960

Clay, pigments, and twine

Gift of the Joan Pearson Watkins Trust, 2014.11.3

Arquero worked with Helen Cordero to revitalize the ceramic tradition of the Cochiti Pueblo in the 20th century. *Nacimientos* are small figurines created for nativity scenes, a frequent output for figural Cochiti artists. Here, Arquero uses this style to depict the biblical episode of the flight into Egypt.

Diego Romero, (Cochiti) b. 1964

Fallen, 2009

Earthenware and gold leaf

Museum Purchase, 2011.8 Half Chochiti, half White, Romero grew up in two distinct cultural communities, a border-crossing reflected in his ceramics. He draws inspiration for his ceramics from an encyclopedic array of sources. These include comic books, narrative pottery of Ancient Greece, African

ceramic techniques, prehistoric Mimbres pottery, and the legends of the Cochiti Pueblo. Romero's works often show the absurdity of human nature, as well as framing themes of cultural identity, violence, oppression, and social issues through an Indigenous perspective.

Romero often features *chongos* - or Native men from the Southwest who wear their hair in a traditional bun – in critical or satirical situations. Alcoholism, which continues to afflict Indigenous populations at disproportionately high rates, here troubles a *chongo* in the guise of a fallen angel. The signature on the rim, "Chongo made and painted me," is a nod to the signatures left by Ancient Greek potters.

Marie Z. Chino, (Acoma) 1907-1982

Acoma Seed Jar, 1960

Earthenware

Gift of the Joan Pearson Watkins Trust, 2017.1.1

Chino, along with Lucy Lewis, was a "matriarch" of the Acoma Pueblo, a group of artists largely credited with revitalizing its ceramic tradition in the mid-20th century. Acoma's distinctive pottery is thin walled and decorated with fine lines. Chino made many seed jars, a form whose origins lie in carrying and storing seeds between harvests.

Lucy M. Lewis, (Acoma) 1890-1992

Turkey, n.d.

Earthenware

Gift of the Joan Pearson Watkins Trust, 2017.1.3

One of the so-called "matriarchs" of the Acoma Pueblo, Lewis helped revive the 11th century, Ancestral Puebloan Mimbres style, characterized by fine black linear designs on a white slip background. These patterns were rediscovered on shards of old pottery that Acoma ceramicists would grind to temper fresh clay, as well as in private collections. Lewis quickly gained commercial recognition for her work, she was one of the first Acoma potters to sign her work.

A.A. Peynetsa, (Zuni) b. 1964

Zuni Deer Pot, 1996

Earthenware

Gift of the Joan Pearson Watkins Trust, 2017.1.6

A.A. refers to the husband and wife Avelia and Anderson Peynetsa. In their partnership, Anderson builds and paints the pots and Avelia sands them to achieve their characteristic smoothness. They are members of the Zuni Pueblo, whose ceramics are characterized by their lack of symmetry and black and red decoration.

The Deer Heartline motif appears often on Zuni pots, though Peynetsa bucks tradition by repeating the form more than the customary one or two times. The heartline comes from a Zuni hunting practice, in which hunters would collect the soul of the deer from its heart through its mouth.

A.A. Peynetsa, (Zuni) b. 1964

Lizard, 1994

Earthenware

Gift of the Joan Pearson Watkins Trust, 2017.1.7