

SCHOLASTIC

# ART

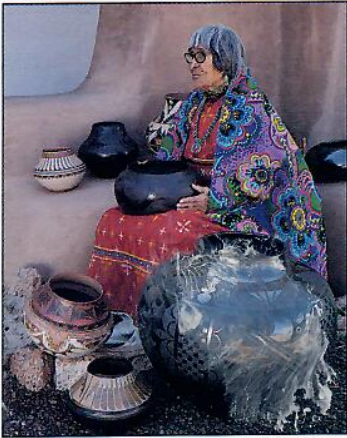
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**WORKING  
WITH CLAY**  
featuring Maria Martinez





COVER: Maria Martinez surrounded by her work. Photo by Jerry Jacka.

## THE WORLD OF

# MARIA

### SCHOLASTIC

# ART

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2 SCHOLASTIC ART

Do you know what the oldest American art form is? It's pot-  
tery—the art of making pots out of clay and then heating them  
in a powerful fire to preserve them.

Actually, peoples all over the world have been making pottery of one kind or another for most of human history. Everywhere, people have made and decorated their pots differently, depending on where they lived and what materials were available there.

The Native Americans of our nation's Southwest lived in an arid desert region that offered few trees or other building materials, so they learned to use the earth itself for many of their needs. The first true potters of the region were the Mongollon people, whose culture flourished from 1000 to 1200 AD. The Mongollon also learned to build villages of stone or of sun-dried earth. Later, the Spanish conquerors called these vil-  
lages *pueblos*, the Spanish word for village or town. And so the Native Americans of this region became known as the Pueblo Indians. Today, this name refers to many different Native American peoples, including the Hopi, the Zuni, and the Acoma.

Many potters use a wheel that helps to spin the clay into a round shape. But traditional Pueblo potters use a different method, building their pots and plates out of coils of clay. This is the tradition passed down to Maria Martinez, who was one of the world's best-known and most influential potters. She was born more than 100 years ago in the small Pueblo community of San Ildefonso, about 25 miles northwest of Santa Fe, New Mexico.

Martinez lived all her life in San Ildefonso. She stayed close to home spiritually as well, and actively took part in the ceremonial rituals and dances of her people's religion. She learned pottery as had generations before her—by watching and imitating the work of her elders. "Nobody teaches pottery," Martinez once explained.

Martinez had been making pots for many years when she and her husband and co-worker, Julian, discovered their now-famous technique for making "black-on-black" pottery. In 1908 and 1909, nearby archaeologists turned up a kind of ancient black pottery never seen before. They asked Martinez if she could duplicate the method used to make this black pottery.

By the time Martinez died in 1980, she had breathed new life into the art of pottery making and the culture of the Pueblo people, leaving a living legacy to new generations of artists.



By the age of 19, Martinez had already been making pots for almost 10 years.

The Museum of New Mexico.



# MARTINEZ

These pots of Maria Martinez, like the pueblo in the background, represent a tradition that has lasted for centuries.

Photo by Jerry Jacka.





*Bringing*  
**CLAY**  
*to Life*







**What animal has inspired the decoration on this pot?**

Photo by Jerry Jacka.

Around the world, potters have often decorated their pots by painting a scene or using human figures. But Pueblo potters prefer to use **elements from nature and geometric shapes**. The pot by Maria Martinez on the facing page is typical. It features a bird surrounded by stripes resembling feathers.

Notice that the elements on the pot are **simple, stylized shapes**. The bird's stiff feathers, flattened legs, oddly shaped beak, and rounded eye look more like a cartoon than a photograph.

This stylization helps the artist create a strong **repeating pattern**. How many repeating patterns can you find? Can you find two repeating patterns within the bird's feathers?

You can also see how Martinez created **geometric shapes**—squares, straight lines, angles, circles—from **organic shapes** found in nature.

Another important aspect of this pot's decoration is its light-colored background, which

creates a **negative shape**. It contrasts with the dark, **positive shapes** of the bird, the feathers, and the scalloped decoration above the bird.

Below, Martinez's daughter-in-law, Santana Roybal, demonstrates six of the main steps in making a Pueblo pot.

First, Roybal mixes the clay with water and volcanic ash. She then uses a *puki*, or mold, to form the bottom of her pot. Next, she makes coils of clay to form its walls. She works back and forth, stacking the coils, pinching them together, and smoothing and pushing them out from the inside to create a rounded bowl.

After Roybal forms the neck of the pot, she leaves the clay to dry. Then she scrapes, smooths, and sands the pot's outer surface to a satin finish. The sanded pot is covered with "slip" (liquid clay) and is burnished, or polished, to a shine with a special, smooth stone.

Roybal applies decorations with brushes made from the yucca plant. Finally, the pot is fired—baked in a fire smothered with manure and covered with wood ashes. Smothering the fire traps the air, creating dark smoke that turns the clay a silvery black.

## A tradition passed down for centuries

Making a Pueblo pot involves a careful process that is hundreds of years old. Here, Pueblo potter Santana Roybal shows how raw clay is transformed into a decorated pot, ready for firing.

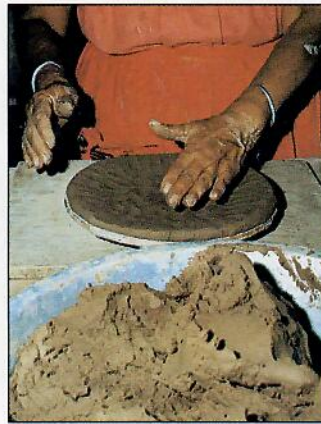
Photos courtesy of Susan Peterson and Kodansha International.

**At left, how are geometric shapes used to create this pot's picture of a bird?**

Photo by Jerry Jacka.



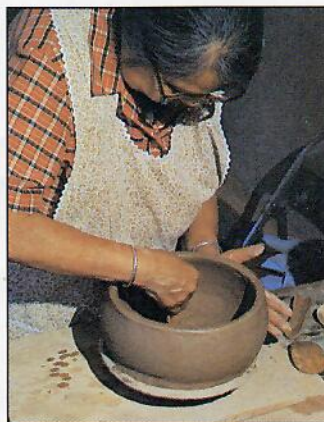
Mixing clay



Molding bottom



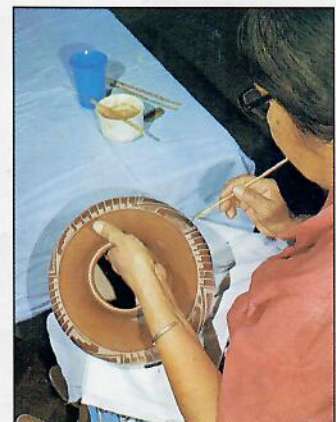
Making coils



Pushing out sides



Forming the neck



Decorating pot



What special qualities make pots like the four below created by Maria Martinez world famous? The **gently curving form** of each is perfectly **balanced** by the **stylized, repeat design** that is painted on all but one of the jars. But the main quality that sets a Maria Martinez pot apart is her characteristic use of the ancient Pueblo “black-on-black” pottery-making technique. In three of these jars, the **matte**, or dull, surface designs stand out from the **shiny**, silvery surface of the rest of the pot. These pots, which sometimes look “gray on silver” are referred to as Martinez “black on black.”

The artist’s rediscovery of this traditional technique began as an experiment to help archeologists, but it became something more. The beauty and mastery of her work brought world attention to the art of her people. She inspired Native American potters who came after her to experiment with a variety of techniques and designs, while remaining true to their age-old traditions.

One of today’s most important ceramic artists is Hopi potter Al Qoyawayma [KO-YAH-wy-ma], whose work is featured as this issue’s “Masterpiece of the Month” on pages 8-9. Born in 1938 in the Los Angeles area, he spent much time visiting family in northern Arizona. There he learned Hopi ways and art from his aunt, Polingaysi E. Qoyawayma, a Hopi potter, educator, and writer also known as Elizabeth White. The name Qoyawayma means “Gray Fox Walking at Dawn.”

As a Hopi, Qoyawayma works out of a different tradition than Martinez or Gonzalez. His pots are **monochrome** (a single color) rather than using one color for background and others for the decoration. Instead of painting his decorations, they are **bas relief** figures—standing out from the smooth surface of his pots. Qoyawayma uses organic shapes, similar to those found in nature, although his figures are also **stylized**—slightly distorted—instead of being realistic.

Qoyawayma’s work features many traditional Hopi images. On the piece seen on pages 8-9, Qoyawayma portrays *Kokopelli*, the sacred humpbacked flute player who represents wisdom, goodness, and fertility. Other traditional Hopi symbols the artist often uses include three raised ears of corn, the food on which Hopis depended for survival. Sometimes he portrays dragonflies, butterflies, or other flying insects. These insects showed Hopis where to find water, the key to life itself in the harsh southwestern desert.





*A Timeless*

# TRADITION

*Continues*



**How would you compare these pots of Maria Martinez with those of Barbara Gonzalez and Al Qoyawayma?**

## *A FAMILY OF PUEBLO POTTERS*

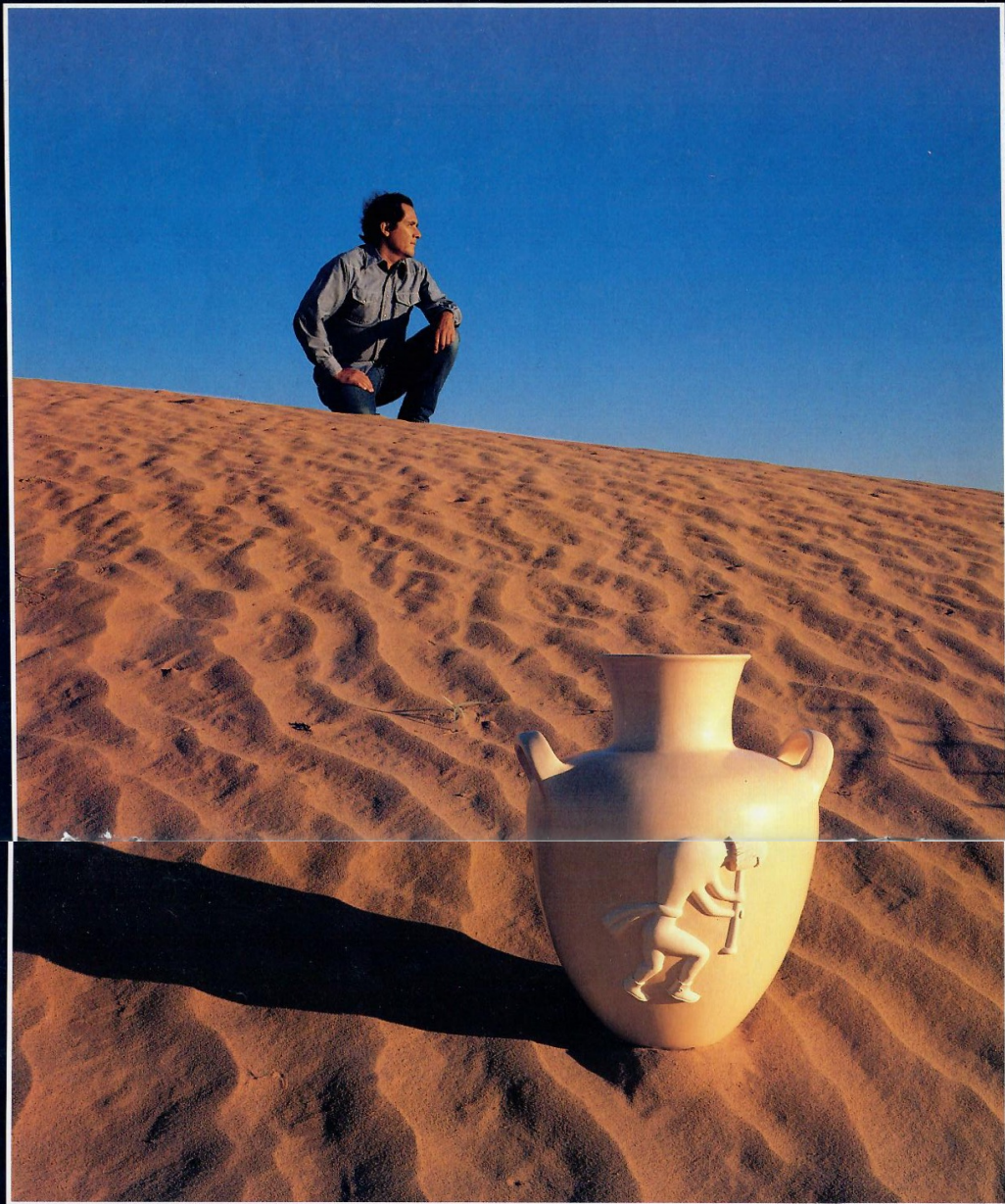


Maria Martinez's great-granddaughter, Barbara Gonzalez, is one of the best-known current Pueblo potters. Gonzalez decorates her work with less traditional designs than Martinez used, mixing the shapes and

colors in her imagination with the natural world of her people. Still, Native American traditions inspire both her art and her life, as she continues to live on the Pueblo and to sign her work with her Indian name, Tahn-Moo-Whe, given to her by Martinez in the Tewa language of their people.

Large photo by Jerry Jacka. Inset photo: Susan Peterson and Kodansha International.





Hopi potter, Al Qoyawayma ("Gray Fox Walking at Dawn") b. 1938. Pottery on a dune at the Hopi Indian Reservation. Photo by Jerry Jacka © 1985.

MASTERPIECE OF THE MONTH # 6

*A Modern Master*

# HOPI POTTER AL QOYAWAYMA

*Al Qoyawayma's work draws on the traditional Hopi culture of the sandy Arizona mesas.*



## ART SPOTLIGHT

# CLAY CREATIONS: What kind of works are today's ceramists creating?

### *Inspired by Traditional Religion*

Like generations of Navajo artists before her, Elizabeth Abeyta works in clay. But instead of pots, she makes sculpted figures based on elements of the Navajo religion, as well as the Pueblo and Aztec cultures.

Abeyta's work includes female figures dancing, chanting under the moon, or simply looking at the world around them. She also sculpts the sacred *koshare* clowns of

the Pueblos—members of a special society who represent spirits of a great power.

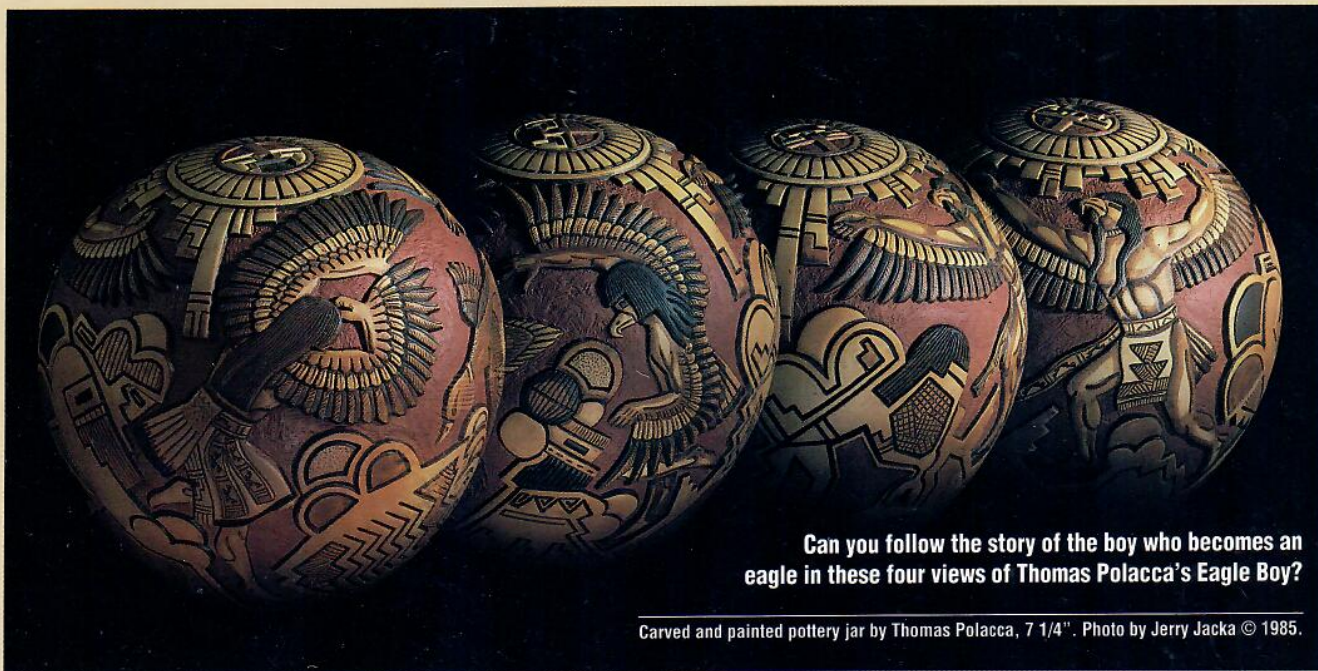
Abeyta portrays her figures' characters through their gestures, postures, and facial expressions. Although there are sometimes naturalistic elements in her work, she often paints her figures with unnatural, symbolic colors. She accents her work with colorful turquoise, silver, shells, rocks, and feathers.



**Elizabeth Abeyta  
brings traditional Navajo  
religion to life.**

Elizabeth Abeyta,  
left, *Coyote* ceramic sculpture,  
11 1/2" and *Lady* figure, 20"  
Photo by Jerry Jacka.





Can you follow the story of the boy who becomes an eagle in these four views of Thomas Polacca's Eagle Boy?

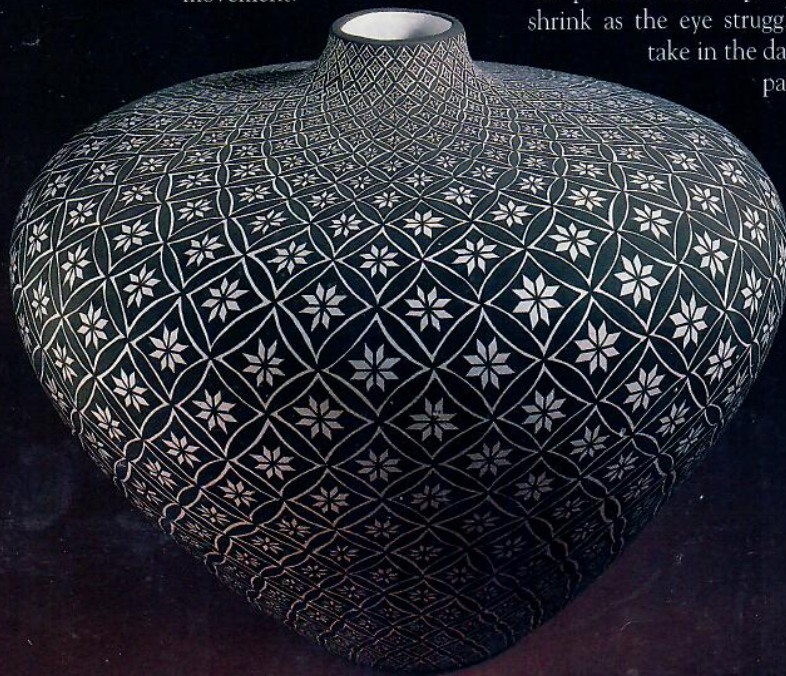
Carved and painted pottery jar by Thomas Polacca, 7 1/4". Photo by Jerry Jacka © 1985.

## Pueblo Op Art

Acoma Pueblo potter Dorothy Torivio brings a contemporary sense of design and pattern to forms inspired by tradition.

Torivio's art is known for its Op Art patterns. Op Art is short for "optical art," a painting movement that began in the mid-1960s and uses patterns that trick the viewer's eye with illusions of shimmering movement.

Torivio's pottery includes some recognizable forms, such as the geometrically shaped flowers in the pot below. Torivio also uses traditional techniques to create a **negative/positive effect**, in which a dark background interacts with a light design, or vice versa. The smooth, painted, black-and-white surfaces of her pots seem to expand and shrink as the eye struggles to take in the dazzling pattern.



## Story-telling Pots

Hopi potter Thomas Polacca makes seed jars and other vessels based on the legends, symbols, and designs of his people. His pots use a **narrative design**—a design that tells a story.

Polacca's grandfather, Nampayo, revived the many-colored pottery of the Sikyatki, ancient ancestors of the Hopi. Polacca carries on this tradition of **polychrome** (multicolored) pottery.

Like Maria Martinez, Polacca builds up his pots by the coil method, then scrapes them smooth. Next, the figures are **incised**, or cut, out of the clay surface. He then paints them in warm **earth colors** to bring out the traditional symbols and the **linear** (lined) designs that wrap around his work.

The photograph above shows four views of the same pot. The figures portray Eagle Boy, a Hopi boy who supposedly was turned into a powerful eagle.

Does this pot (at left) by Dorothy Torivio look traditional or modern to you?

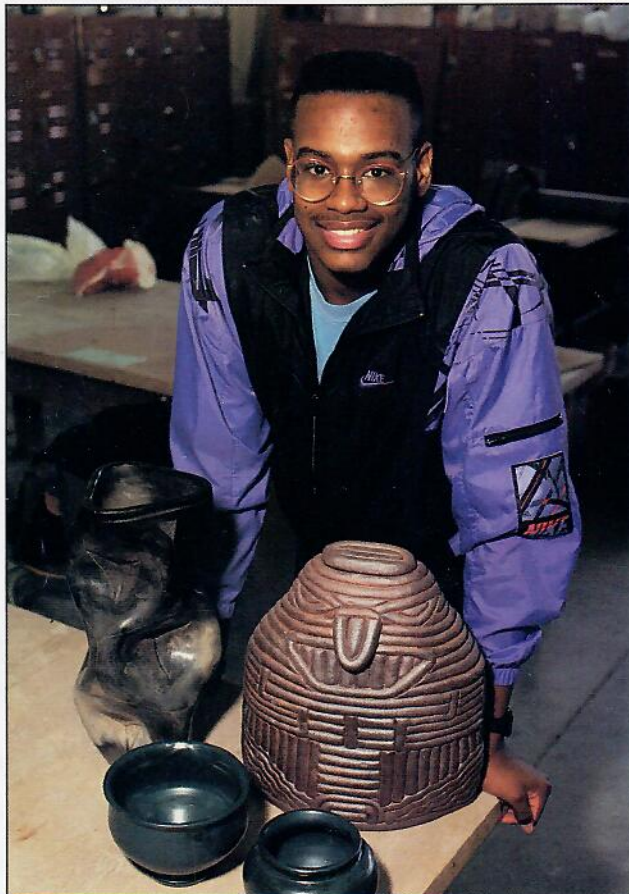
Photo by Jerry Jacka, © 1985.



# Marlon Wells: DISCOVERIES IN CLAY

This Scholastic Art Award-winning “peacock” pot (shown at the bottom of the facing page) was created by eighteen-year-old Marlon Wells during his senior year at Chamberlain High School in Twinsburg, Ohio. This year, Marlon is a freshman at Bowling Green State University, where he’s studying biology and art. In fact, this month he will exhibit three new

pieces in Bowling Green’s student art show, including one coil pot that he fired using some of the same ancient techniques that you learned about earlier in this issue.



To create his ceramic pots, Marlon Wells uses a coil method similar to that of Maria Martinez.

■ **How did you get interested in ceramics?**

I took a basic art class in ninth grade. Part of it included ceramics. I loved ceramics right away. I found it easy to work with and I could be really creative. So I decided to take more art classes and focus only on ceramics through my senior year.

■ **What was it about working with clay that you liked?**

That you can add to a piece and take away from it to get exactly what you want. With clay, nothing is permanent. If I don’t like something, I have time to change it before it dries. I can use my imagination and create something without feeling pressure to be satisfied the first time. With painting and drawing, if you create a line it’s hard to get rid of it. It’s not as flexible.

■ **How did you come to make this ceramic piece?**

It was an assignment in art class. We were asked to make just a round pot and attach a piece to

it. Our teacher wanted us to come up with our own ideas.

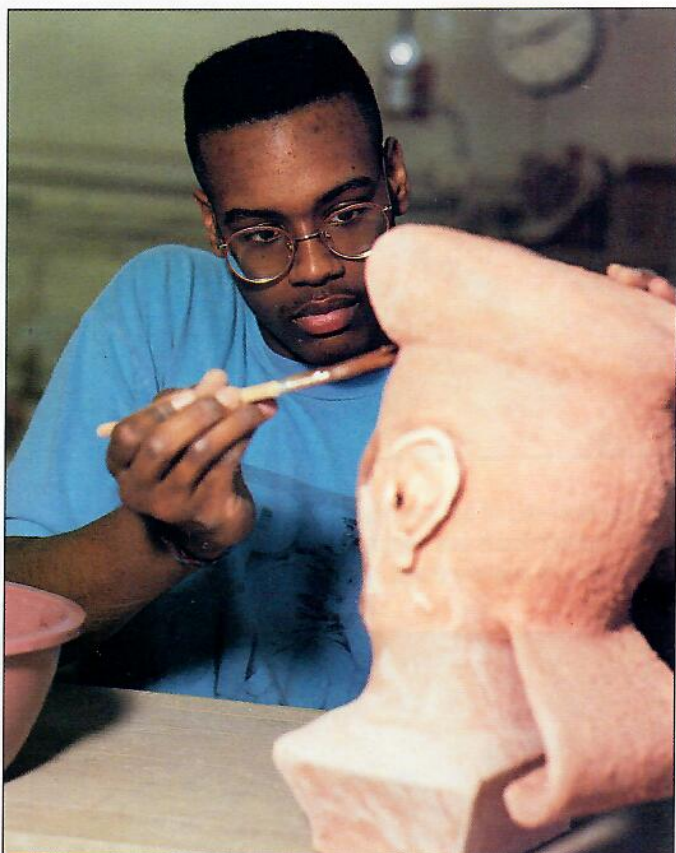
■ **Where did you get your idea for this piece?**

It came to me as I was doing it. But the final result actually didn’t come out the way I wanted it to. The pot was a result of a series of mistakes. Good mistakes, I think.

■ **What happened?**

I used the coil method to make this pot. Originally, it had a base around the bottom, but the clay was too wet and heavy for the base. The pot collapsed right over it. So the base became flat, which I like better. The jagged top is the way I designed it. I thought it balanced the round shape of the pot well. But after I fired the pot, the top piece broke off. We had to glue it back on. This created a new problem. Usually, glaze is applied after a pot is fired. But we couldn’t kiln fire the glaze onto the pot because it would dry out the glue.





*“With art, there’s a lot of potential for mistakes. In this case, my mistakes were good ... . I had to come up with ideas I might not have thought of before.”*

■ **Have you made other pottery pieces since?**

Yes. Everything I do is mainly using the coil method. I like to make things symmetrical without using a potter’s wheel. I kind of think it’s cheating to use a wheel.

Every time I work, I try something different, something more difficult. Lately, I’ve been doing a lot of busts. I want to see how much detail I can get in the face and neck.

■ **Are you going on in art in the future?**

I’m going to think about it long and hard over the summer. I might major in biology and minor in art. I’m not sure whether I want to be a doctor. I want to keep my options open.

**We select** our Artist of the Month only from among students who have won medals in the current Scholastic Art Awards Program. To enter, ask your teacher to write to the Scholastic Art Awards, 730 Broadway, New York, NY 10003 for entry deadlines and rules books.

■ **How did you treat the pot’s surface?**

First, I painted the pot black. Then my teacher gave me some color copies of peacock feathers. I cut the pictures into pieces and arranged them in a pattern all around the pot. Cutting the copies made it easier to get the design I wanted without the paper wrinkling. I left the black band so the print wouldn’t overpower the rest of the pot. The circles in the black band are little round black stickers for contrast and to fill the space.

■ **Is this pot supposed to be a snake?**

No. A lot of people said it looked like a snake. It’s really just a design. I called it a “peacock pot” because of the pattern I used. If you look real closely, you’ll see the feathers.

■ **How long did it take you to make this piece?**

It took me about three to four weeks to make this, working on it every day in class.

■ **What was the hardest part?**

Cutting the color copies and fitting them together on the pot. I had to match the grain of the feathers so they kept going in one direction.

■ **How did you know you were finished?**

I thought that I was finished after I put the copies on. But I felt it still needed a little something extra. That’s when I added the black dots to give the black band some texture. Then I knew it was done.

■ **Were you satisfied when you were done?**

Yes, real satisfied. It was one of my first really successful pieces. With art, there’s a lot of potential for mistakes. In this case, my mistakes were good. They challenged me to see things differently. I had to come up with ideas I might not have thought of before. I don’t think the pot would have been as successful with just a regular glaze on it.







A



B

# WORKING WITH CLAY

*Use the ancient coil method to create your own pottery*

The pottery we've seen in this issue is among the finest and most spectacular made by any culture in the world. The special method of using coils to create **symmetrical** pottery was used by traditional artists like Maria Martinez, as well as by modern artists who carry on this historic tradition. For decoration, the artists developed **geometric** designs that were **stylized** and combined to create **repeating patterns**. In this workshop, you'll draw on Pueblo traditions to make a pot and decorate it with your own design.

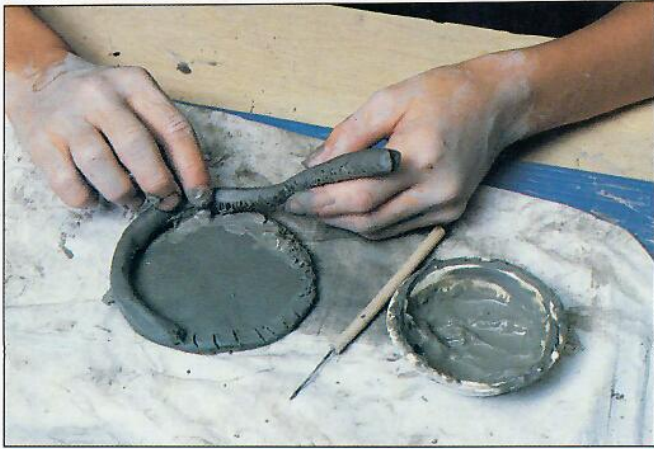
Prepared by Ned J. Nesti, Jr., Morrison (IL) High School.  
Assisted by Sara Domdey. Photos by Larry Gregory.



## Materials

- Stoneware or earthenware clay
- Container to hold water
- Small container to hold slip, or liquid clay
- Plastic wrap
- Plate or board
- Sponges
- Clay-modeling tools
- 12"x12" cloth rags
- Glaze and brushes
- Smooth pebble or metal teaspoon



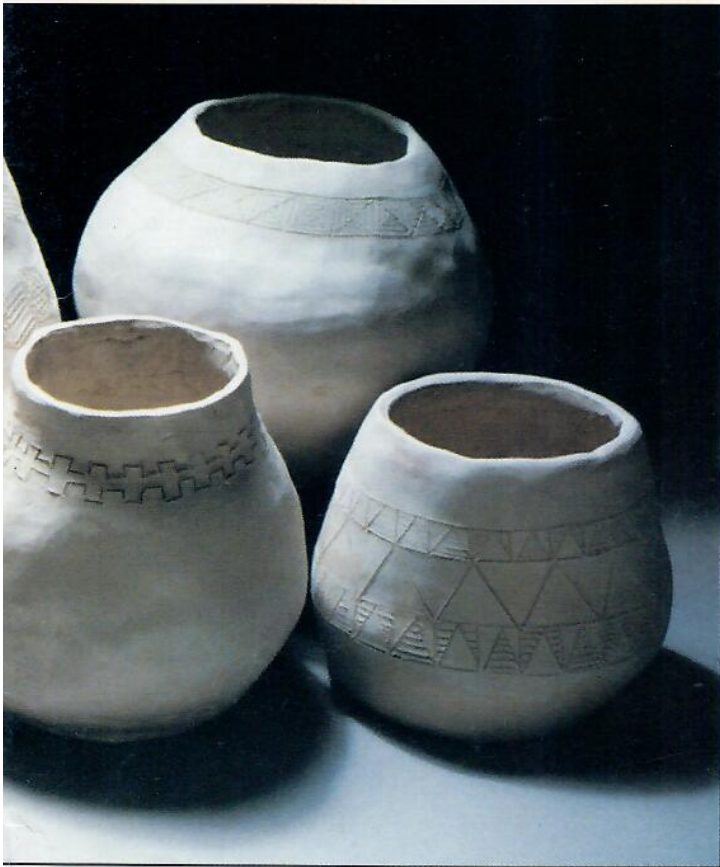


C



D

Above: **A.** Roll clay to make coil ropes the thickness of your thumb. **B.** Score the coil and the edge of the base. **C.** Add a bit of slip (liquid clay) to the scored areas, and attach the coil to the base. Bring them together using a gentle up-and-down wiping motion. **D.** As you add coils, join them from the outside and then the inside, keeping both sides smooth and uniform.



Notice how the designs are incised, or cut, into the surfaces of these pots.  
Above right: Work on all sides of your pot to keep it symmetrical.

## Starting Out

**Step 1.** Wedge clay to proper working consistency and to remove air pockets. Place a ball of clay the size of your fist on a plate or piece of plastic. Use the heel of your palm to form the base of the pot by pressing the ball of clay into a flat circle 1/4" thick.

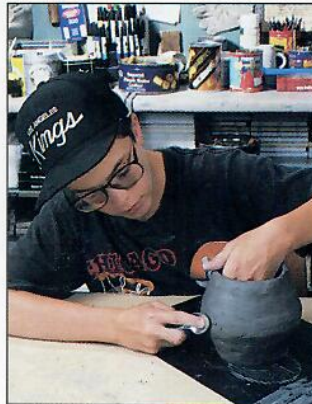
## Step 2.

Form the coils and add them to the base, placing the first coil

1/4" inside the edge of the base. This will help you build a strong base. The base should round up slightly on the outer edge. Look at the pot from all sides to keep the shape symmetrical. If the pot begins to sag because the clay is too soft, set it aside to dry—but do not let the clay dry out.

## Step 3.

When you finish shaping the pot, cover it loosely with plastic, allowing air inside for slow drying. When the clay has dried to what is called a leather-hard stage, use a teaspoon or smooth pebble to **burnish** or rub the surface using small, circular movements.



## Step 4.

Decorate by either making a simple pattern on a piece of newsprint paper that fits the contour of your pot, or cutting a design directly into the surface with a modeling tool. Next, fire the pot to bisque stage. Then glaze and refire.

## Some Solutions

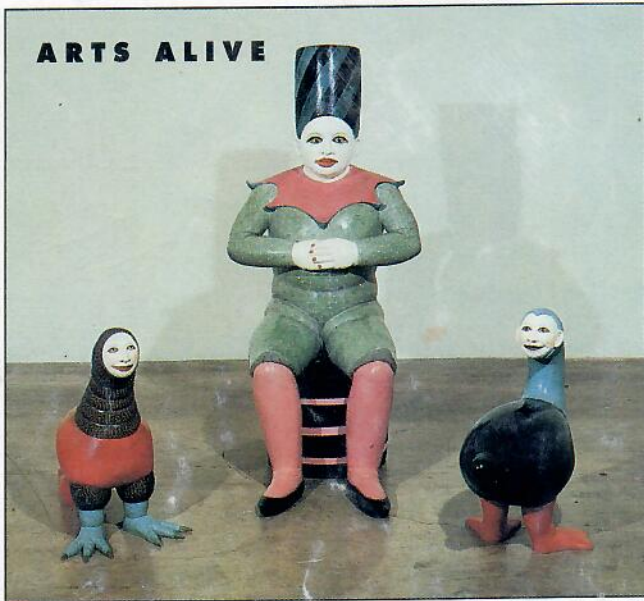
Maria Martinez was inspired by the elements in nature, and the traditional pottery of the Pueblo Indians. What inspired your design? Does your pot look traditional or modern? How does the design show this?

Does the decoration depict or relate to the things around you in your world, or did you create a fantasy? When you look at your pot from all sides, does it look **symmetrical**? Is your pot **monochrome** (one color)

or **polychrome** (many colors)? Did you decorate with glazes, painted images, or designs incised in the surface? Did you use **organic** shapes from nature or **geometric** shapes? Are the decorations raised in **bas-relief**?



## ARTS ALIVE



### *Fantasies in Clay*

Who are the three strange creatures on the left? They were created by ceramist Elaine Carhartt who invents a fantasy world populated with imaginary figures. *The Wizard and Imaginary Beings*.

**Ceramist Elaine Carhartt creates strange life-size beings.**

Elaine Carhartt. *The Wizard and Imaginary Beings*, 1985. Ceramic. Collection of Dr. and Mrs. Arthur Mr. Kahn.

*Beings* are life-size and realistic, but do they look like people you've ever seen? Carhartt's smooth, shiny, simplified shapes resemble small commercially produced, overly "cute" figurines. The bright, unreal colors and simplified, organic curves add to the unearthly, dream-like quality of the sculpture. Are these beings from another culture, another planet, or do they originate in a very personal inner dimension?

## Three contemporary Americans who create ceramic figures that are larger than life

### *Ceramic Self-Portraits*

This life-size clay sculpture titled *California Artist* (right) is a self-portrait of its creator, Robert Arneson. Known for his satiric self-portraits, Arneson was one of the first sculptors to mold full-size figures in clay rather than casting them in bronze or carving them in stone. Arneson works with classical busts, pillars, and monuments, altering them to comment on contemporary culture. This roughly textured, realistically painted half-figure in sunglasses rests on a decayed-looking pedestal covered with vines and surrounded by soda bottles.

**Robert Arneson is known for his inventive ceramic self-portraits.**

Robert Arneson b. 1930. *California Artist*. Photo, Frumkins/Adams Gallery.



### *Fractured Figures*

Can you even find the figures in Stephen DeStabler's two ceramic works shown above? In these sculptures, nearly unrecognizable fragments—legs, arms, bodies—seem to be struggling to pull themselves out of their rock-like surroundings. The monochrome color, the crumbling, irregular textures, and the unexpected breaks and fractures in the raw clay suggest



**Are these two figures ancient or modern?**

Stephen DeStabler b. 1933. *Standing Figure with Ribs*, 1978. Ceramic, 79"x17"x28". *Standing Figure with Missing Hip*, 1978. Ceramic, 81"x13"x30". Photo, CDS Gallery.

the untamed power of nature. Are these figures emerging from, or dissolving back into, the clay from which they were made?