



Untitled, natural clay
pottery, 14¾ x 14"

UPCOMING SHOW

Up to 21 new pieces on show
August 16 – 19, 2007

Blue Rain Gallery
130 Lincoln Avenue
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87501
(505) 954-9902

SHOW LOCATION SANTA FE, NM

TAMMY GARCIA

Storyteller

Tammy Garcia is nationally respected for the sheer artistry of her consistently spellbinding pottery, as well as her glass and bronzework. Garcia blends the traditions of the Santa Clara Pueblo Indians with her own modern experiences to create one-of-a-kind masterpieces in clay. Here's what she has to say about the pottery being revealed at the Blue Rain Gallery in August.

"My designs will be based on historical pottery imagery as well as a contemporary sensibility. On one hand I use the native clay from my own pueblo going through the refining process. The imagery, on the other hand, has more of a contemporary feel, where I'm incorporating more of my personal experiences."

It is this bridge between the potting traditions of the Pueblo people and the reality of life today that sets Garcia's work apart. She explains her thought process this way:

"My children are inspiring to me and sometimes I may incorporate an experience with them in it. Here's an example. At 5 years old, my daughter asked me how you lose your sense of humor and how do you get it back if you lose it? In response to her question, I said you have to learn to laugh at yourself when you make mistakes. That made me think of a Koshari—a Pueblo clown. His role in the pueblo is to teach the people what's right. One way he does that is to do what's contrary. This inspired a design I put on a pot. I put a Koshari who was playing a game 'guess which hand' with



a little girl. Behind the Koshari is a horse that is coming up to snatch the apple he's using in the game from his hand.

"I always have my eye open for inspiration. I'm not limited to only the Pueblo imagery. In reflecting back on why Native Americans designed their pottery—it took the place of a book. They used their pottery to tell a story. I look around in my life and see what can inspire me to record."

While Garcia takes her inspiration from the here and now, the pots are created in the same way the ancients formed them.

"The coil method I use to build pots is inspired by historic and pre-historic

practices. I'll start with a ball of clay the size of my fist. That's the base. I'll create a shallow bowl. After that, I'll make coils—rope-like shapes—and apply them one at a time until I have the size and shape that I want for the pot. All of it is hand-built.

"Once the pot is formed, I carve the imagery into it. Then the piece will be dried. It can be refined while it's drying, and again while it's dry. Then it is sanded and then polished. I use natural clay slips as paint [clay and water]. I use a smooth polishing stone for burnishing. Then the piece is fired. For those pots that I wish to stay in the natural red, I use an electric kiln.

"For the pieces that I want to be black, I'll fire those outside in an open pit fire. I will determine the time of smothering depending on the color of the pot—it'll go through color changes. It's in a metal crate on a stand about 6" off the ground. I use cedar wood underneath and pine slab wood around the crate. So the whole pot is encased in the fire. When the piece is ready, the fire gets smothered out with dry manure. It's the oxygen reduction that causes the pieces to go black. It's a matter of seconds where you can under-bake or over-bake a pot. If the wind picks up it can cause your fire to get too hot on one side. You need perfect weather conditions to create a piece this way."

Even though she is best known for her exquisite pottery, Garcia is not content to limit herself to one artistic medium. These days, she is creating both glass and bronze sculptures, as well. Along with the

ten or so exquisite new pots, her upcoming show will also feature her work in these media.

Glass

"The designs for the glass are based on traditional imagery. Working in glass allows me another type of medium as my canvas. Glass is special because of the translucency it offers. It allows a whole new look for what I do.

"I've chosen a clear glass. There's something classical about clear glass that has its own beauty. In the future when I go into other colors, etcetera, I think the clear glass is still going to hold its own.

"Eventually I'm going to start fusing gold-leafing, etcetera. The ones I have created so far are on the simple side right now. This is just the beginning. With more experience that comes with this I'll be getting my own kiln, designing the forms and casting them. I want total control."

Bronze

Garcia has created three bronze sculptures for the new show that build on her experience with the clay.

"I take what I know from my pottery and incorporate imagery into a more sculptural form. These are more contemporary in form. This is a wonderful time in my career to go from pottery to sculpture. Working in oil-based clay for the bronze pieces gives me greater flexibility. The oil-based clay doesn't dry, and that allows me to work on forms I couldn't do with water-based clay. The oil-based clay liberates me as an artist and allows me to push my boundaries."

One such work is a five-sided, three-dimensional bronze sculpture made of separate tiles.

"It's a picture of a Zuni Pueblo-inspired deer. It's very stylized, very simple, with really clean lines. The imagery is inspired by Pueblo historic and pre-historic design.

"When it comes time to designing, I'm always looking at the space I have to work with. For this piece I used up all the available space—the deer fit perfectly. I was able to put in the ground design, bushes, etc., because of the way the space worked. There's a ribbon that goes from the top side behind the deer and carries over to the bottom side. I put a floral pattern—a tulip design—there which you find on a lot of the historical pottery. The bushes carry over to the sides. Each side of the sculpture is very unique.

"I love it when a piece becomes a challenge because you want to be able to see the top. If I was a collector and I got this piece, where would I display it? It will be interesting to see where someone puts it. It would be nice if the collector had levels in their house, or even a stairwell. As you look over the rail you'd see the top. That's what makes 3D art interesting—you see it head-on, but then you have to examine it from all sides to see the imagery all together."

Garcia explains how she came to design a three-dimensional piece.

Untitled, natural clay pottery, 11 x 9½" ▶

Out of Sight, sand-carved glass sculpture, 92 x 36 x 18"







Garcia's 3-D, five-sided bronze sculpture, in its early stage (right), and the chemical colors and picture used to make the patina.



Garcia in the process of refining one of her famed pots.

*The Gallery says:
Tammy is undoubtedly a pioneer in contemporary Native American art and it is often emulated, but never duplicated given the stylized and intricate designs that define her work. Tammy's pottery, bronze and glass pieces continue to be cornerstones of Blue Rain Gallery's offerings and yield the highest demand by collectors. Without question, Tammy is changing the perception of Native art which is good for her and great for collectors and the gallery."*

- Ceroy Garcia, Owner, Blue Rain Gallery

"Everything seems to happen or is a continually evolving process. I did the flat tiles for five years. Maybe I had a total of ten tiles before the idea came 'I'm going to raise these tiles up so I can put images on it.'

"One idea leads to another. That is the way my whole career has been—based on a step by step progression. What I've learned on one project informs what you do with the next. There's something in me that I need to be challenged on a continual basis."

Collectors are grateful for Garcia's hunger to create new and interesting works.

"When I started doing bronzes a lot of collectors didn't know anything about my pottery background. When they loved the bronzes and learned that I did pottery they began collecting pottery and vice versa. Most of my collectors seem to love everything I do, no matter in what medium. Working in glass is certainly another medium. It's another type of work that new collectors like in addition to previous collectors, and I'm getting the same kind of crossover." 🍷

For a direct link to the exhibiting gallery go to



www.westernartcollector.com

Price Range Indicator

Our at-a-glance Price Range Indicator shows what you can expect to pay for this artist's work.

Small	(an original clay pot 14" high) for the smallest box (bronze)	\$2,000 \$2,000 - \$4,000
Medium	(pots) (glass)	\$10,000 to \$30,000 \$7,000 to \$30,000
Large	(an original clay pot that's 25")	\$150,000



Garcia tends to have several pieces in process at one time.

Garcia creates pots in a variety of shapes and sizes.

