



“Can I justify making pots? Once I was hoping to change the world, and now I am making dishes. Am I making any contribution at all? Or is it just self-indulgence? I would like to believe that the making of objects that flow from our hands and hearts ... contributes to a more human world...”

—Malcolm Davis

Phoebe Lawrence is a native New Mexican potter whose work often reflects the spirit and images of the Southwest. After living many years in Denver where she exhibited in a number of galleries and shows, she moved to Silver City in 2003 and has experienced a surge of creativity, back in her home state.

Phoebe is an active participant in the Expressive Arts Department of Western New Mexico University where, after a professional career in pottery that began in 1980, she is now studying formally for the first time while working toward a Bachelor of Fine Arts.



Phoebe's work has been molded by a number of influences. She has enjoyed attending workshops by Tom Coleman, the late Malcolm Davis, Warren MacKenzie, and others, and has studied extensively with Claude Smith III and Curtis Dinwiddie. A beloved grandfather who was part Native American also contributed to her artistic vision, along with her Scandinavian ancestry.

Her art was influenced by visits to Nicaragua in the wake of the Contra conflict where she was taken with the images of doves and of the legendary revolutionary leader Sandino, which were displayed on houses, bullet-ridden walls, and storefronts.

She also has traveled in Europe, Japan, Africa, and other parts of Central America, and has lived and studied in Mexico. These experiences, too, have provided inspiration for her clay work.



Phoebe's ceramics have been described as "unique, beautiful, and highly sought after." Her strengths are form and design, color combinations, and interesting surface textures.

A signature work has been her free-form "pasta sets"—seven-piece serving sets consisting of one large open bowl and six smaller dishes. She often uses these sets as a testing ground for unique color combinations as well as for experimenting with new glazes and designs.



"I found I could say things with color and shapes that I couldn't say any other way—things I had no words for."

—Georgia O'Keeffe

In recent years, Phoebe has been experimenting with slab work: altering thrown forms, adding to the forms, or combining them. She began playing with soft slabs to create “raven wrap” sculptures. Working with three-dimensional forms ultimately led to a more refined and stylized type of sculpture, the *kachinas*.



A recent idea of combining architectural forms with miniature clay birds has given rise to the “raven havens.” Birds are an important ingredient in Phoebe’s life and have long been a theme in her clay work. In a large lot filled with trees in the upper reaches of Silver City, she is surrounded by colorful, migrating tropical birds, ever-present ravens, and the echoing cries of white-wing doves.



Phoebe strives to create new forms, or adapt old ones, that express her sense of independence and a balance between refinement and spontaneity.

In the last analysis, Phoebe's designs are unique and constantly evolving. She has a need to create, to implement the ideas that come to her. Many of them come in dreams and in periods of silent reflection.

Phoebe says, "I feel a connection to—a part of—the universe through creative process."



THE KACHINAS

Kachinas are important figures in the Pueblo cultures of northern New Mexico. They are the spiritual essence of all things that occur in the natural world.

Ceremonial kachina dancers typically have elaborate, colorful costumes. Woodcarvers create kachina dolls that represent the dancers, as a way of passing on tribal traditions. Renowned Hopi kachina-carver John Fredericks says, "We use kachinas to pray through."

Phoebe's kachinas represent various natural phenomena, native spirit figures and symbols (imagined as well as traditional), and at times a much-revered individual. Highly stylized, they are born of my own imagination, have simple lines, and are of the earth.

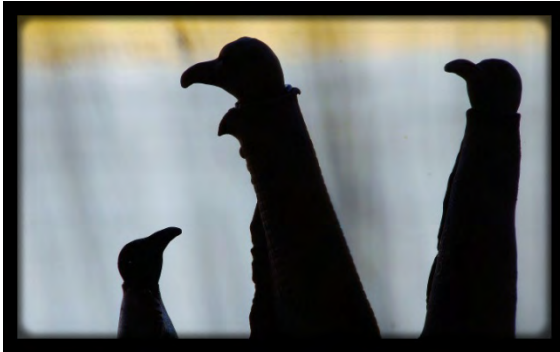


THE RAVENS

In much of Native American lore, the raven is honored as the source of the creation of man. It brings the light of the sun, and thus the dawning of understanding. The raven is the bearer of magic, and a harbinger of messages from the cosmos.

The raven is a keeper of secrets, instrumental in clarifying one's visions and innermost thoughts, and is often called upon for healing purposes. A creature of metamorphosis, it is a symbol of change and transformation.

For some, the raven is a trickster with a playful sense of humor.



SELECTED RECOGNITIONS

"There's no such thing as competition if you're working on a style."

—bluesman Larry Johnson

Gilpin County Arts Association annual juried show,
Central City, CO, 1987-2002; awarded
Juror's Choice in 1994 and 1996
Mizel Arts Center (Denver) annual potters' show
since 1983; featured artist in 2009
Sundowner Gallery, Tucumcari, NM, 1988-2006
Mustard Seed Gallery, Boulder, CO, guest artist,
summer 1989
Exhibitions in Philadelphia, San Diego, and
Minneapolis, 1992-1995
Howell-Cole Gallery, Denver, 1995-2001
Mimbres Region Art Council (NM) 2009 exhibit
Copper Quail Gallery, Silver City, NM, since 2007;
special kachina showing, summer 2010
Western New Mexico University juried art
exhibitions since 2006; awarded
first place in 2012
Potters for Peace (supporting ceramic efforts
worldwide) since 1987; has served as
western regional coordinator,
advisory board member
Kachinas y Más, show sponsored by the
Biological Psychiatry Institute, 2012

LIFE BEYOND CERAMICS

When not potting, Phoebe can be found in a large, backyard garden, trying to nurture life in native plants while fending off the deer and javelina. Photos of her xeriscape gardens have appeared in Time Magazine, Dry Climate Gardening, and in several water conservation publications.

She has a lifelong interest in music and began her college career as a flute/piccolo player in the University of Oklahoma marching band. It is said that she buried her head in math books during the football games, rising to play “Boomer Sooner” whenever the home team scored.

It's all about joy. And grace.

—phoebe

