

# Andrea Fisher

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Fine Pottery

## Candelaria Suazo

Santa Clara/  
San Juan



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Candelaria Suazo was born to Joe and Santanita Suazo of Santa Clara and San Juan Pueblos. She has been making pottery since she was 20 years old. Among her teachers and those who still inspire her are her mother and her sisters: Margie Naranjo, Martha Haungooah, Mae Tapia and Shirley Duran. Relatives Dolores Curran and Geri Naranjo also had a great influence on her work over the years.

Making pueblo pottery is a complex and time consuming occupation. The most critical moments are mixing the clay at the beginning preparations and in the last step, which is firing the finished pot outdoors. Candelaria digs and mixes her own clay. She uses a series of screens to sift and remove the impurities. Each pot is coiled and shaped by hand, not thrown on a wheel. No glazes are used, only a stone to polish the piece. The pot is fired outdoors in a traditional firing pit using "cow patties" and dry horse manure. To obtain a black finish, a reduction process is employed where the pots are smothered with a mix of ashes and pulverized manure.

Candelaria tells us her favorite shapes to work with include miniature bowls and vases. The sgraffito (etched) style that she specializes in is accomplished after the "smothering" process that turns the pottery black. A figure such as a finely etched "avanyu" (water serpent) will surround the entire pot. Often kiva steps and cloud designs will complete the work. Other favored designs are butterflies and/or hummingbirds that are intricately carved on opposite sides of a piece. She also uses a special technique that highlights part of a pot by reheating a section of the pot and changing its color.

Candelaria says, "I enjoy making pottery because I want to keep up the traditional art of pottery making that the pueblo of Santa Clara is known for." She exhibits at the Eight Northern Pueblos Arts and Crafts Show and has won several ribbons for 1st, 2nd and 3rd Places. She signs her work: "Candelaria Suazo, Santa Clara Pueblo."

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