

Andrea Fisher

Fine Pottery

Oralia Lopez

Mata Ortiz and
Casas Grandes



Oralia Lopez was born in November, 1984, to Uriel Lopez and Jesus Guillen of Barrio Lopez in the village of Mata Ortiz. She learned to make pottery as a teenager, learning from her mother and her older sister, Maribel (Lopez). Leonel Lopez (also a well-known potter) is her uncle.

Since the late 1990's Oralia has been setting the bar in Mata Ortiz for finely executed geometric designs on ceramic pottery. She uses locally-derived red, black and white mineral paints on white clay, sometimes to draw patterns of triangles and squares with such exactitude that one's eyes see a secondary design of diamonds.

Oralia says her designs are inspired by the rich Native American religious symbolism embedded in geometric patterns applied to prehistoric pottery shards that she has found lying on the ground near the neighborhood where she grew up (Barrio Lopez in Mata Ortiz). She has been doing this for so long that new variations of the old designs continually pop into her head and demand that she paint them.

Oralia's work has been shown all over the western US and in Hawaii. Pieces of hers are in the collections of the International Folk Art Museum in Santa Fe, NM, and at the Mingei International Museum in San Diego, CA.

Oralia told us if she were to make a pot for herself she would make it large and paint it with many triangles. Most of her pots that we see are small-to-medium size and painted with triangles and squares in different patterns. Many are also lidded.

When we asked her what she likes to do when she's not working on her pottery she responded, "I love all animals but especially dogs. So I'm an activist in favor of animal rights."

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