

Andrea Fisher

Fine Pottery

Robert Tenorio

Santo Domingo



Born in 1950, Robert Tenorio grew up on Santo Domingo Pueblo in northern New Mexico. He began working with clay early in life, learning the basics with his grandmother Andrea Ortiz and his great-aunt Lupe Tenorio. However, when he finished high school and moved on to the Institute of American Indian Arts (IAIA) in Santa Fe he began studying art and jewelry design. Before too long he switched back and began formal training with clay under Otellie Loloma.

When he returned to the Pueblo, though, he had to learn some of the traditional art of potting all over again as he no longer had access to the clays and the kiln available to him at school. He began collecting and processing native clays and learning the traditional firing methods used by his people. Robert began creating pots, canteens and polychrome jars characteristic of the centuries old styles of his Santo Domingo ancestors.

Potting full time since 1970, Robert's work reflects his reverence for his heritage. Santo Domingo is known for its utilitarian ware decorated with birds, fish, flowers and simple geometrics, and that's what Robert says he most enjoys making.

Robert earned his first award at the Heard Museum Guild Indian Art Fair in 1971 and has won enough ribbons since to "make two quilts!" he says. One piece he entered at the SWAIA Santa Fe Indian Market earned a ribbon in the new category it created: Prehistoric Pottery. In 2000 he was awarded the Governor's Award at the Santa Fe Indian Market and earned two more First Place ribbons in 2004. His work can be found in the collections of the Peabody Museum at Harvard University in Cambridge, MA, the Nagoya Museum in Japan and the Royal Family of Great Britain collection. He signs his work "Robert Tenorio, KEWA, N.M."

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