

DOROTHY HERRERA | COCHITI PUEBLO

Dorothy Herrera is a notable Native American potter from the Cochiti Pueblo in New Mexico and is most known for her distinct style of handmade, clay storyteller figures. Born into a family of fine Cochiti potters in 1970, Dorothy learned her artistic trade from her late mother, Mary Frances Herrera. During the 1930s through the 1970s, her grandmother, Laurencita Herrera, was one of the finest Cochiti potters of that era. Dorothy's siblings, Edwin Herrera and Mary Ramona Herrera (goes by Mona), are also well-known potters that along with Dorothy carry their family's practices using traditional pottery making methods that have been passed down through their family for generations. Similarly Dorothy taught her daughter, Hannah Pecos, their family's methods of traditional pottery making. Hannah used her mother's instruction throughout her high school years to make pottery storyteller figurines in a similar style to her mom.



In Pueblo cultures, pottery figurines eventually evolved to what we know now as storytellers. The first contemporary storyteller was made by the now famous Helen Cordova in 1964 in honor of her grandfather, who was a renowned storyteller. Storytellers then and now represent the importance of oral traditions as an adult/elder shares stories, their history and lessons of life. Presently, the term storyteller refers to any human or animal figure with smaller children or animals clinging to them. Storytellers have grown into one of the most collectible and highly desired forms of clay art.

Dorothy has been producing pottery for the marketplace since the 1980's. Dorothy is a creative potter who specializes in both miniature and full body storyteller figurines. Her forms vary from some human to mostly animals, bears especially, however she is also known for her cats, frogs, horses or owl storyteller figurines. She uses red, black and creamy white mineral slips as her paints. She is known to accent her figurines with beautifully painted designs as well as putting her bears in overalls. These charming bear figurines or storytellers may be standing on all fours or seated comfortably with cubs on their lap, arms or shoulders.

SOURCES CITED:

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