



ZIA POTTERY

Zia Pueblo sits across the river from Santa Ana Pueblo. Because of its access to good water, Santa Ana Pueblo is one of the richest agricultural pueblos in New Mexico. Zia is “land poor.” In other words, Zia Pueblo is large in land area, but, with little access to water, the land is not productive. The Zia had to find ways to support themselves other than through agriculture. They turned to pottery.

Southwestern clays need to be tempered in order to fire successfully. Zia potters temper their clay with black basalt. Their pots turn a deep red when fired. A white slip is often applied which gives Zia finished pottery a brownish black-and-red on white, cream or tan background.

Zia potters have concentrated on producing practical jars and bowls. They decorate their finished works with the design known as a “Zia Sky Band,” a broad arching ribbon of color that often frames more intricate patterns. In addition to the sky bands, Zia potters add floral and geometric patterns. Their one concession to whimsy is their fanciful depiction of the roadrunner, which appears as a large-eyed bird with wings upraised and a two or three-pronged tail.

Noted Zia potters are Trinidad Medina and Seferina Bell and their descendents.