



ACOMA POTTERY

Acoma Pueblo sits atop a 347-foot sandstone mesa 65 miles northeast of Santa Fe. Historically, it is best known for the conflict that occurred in 1598 in which Don Juan de Oñate and his Spanish troops overpowered the pueblo and brutally punished the survivors through mass execution, mutilation and enslavement. In the world of art, Acoma is known for its excellent, distinctive pottery that features fluted rims, thin walls and geometric designs.

Acoma artists use slate-like clay, which they temper with pottery sherds. This mixture, when fired in the traditional manner, produces pottery with a light cream, almost white color. The mixture also allows the artist to create pieces with very thin walls. Contemporary Acoma pottery is dominated by the *olla*, with a narrow base that gradually widens to the center and narrows again toward the top. Designed to be of fine quality and perfectly symmetrical, Acoma pottery will “ring” when lightly tapped.

Most Acoma pottery is painted typically using red and orange (*terra cotta*) outlined in black. Traditional Acoma designs include rainbow bands, parrots, deer and black and brown motifs with geometric patterns. Acoma artists are known for their fine line designs. Symbolizing rain, the fine lines are painted close together. Line direction varies in order to create larger geometric patterns.

Currently, some Acoma potters have chosen to use molded unpainted greenware rather than complete the laborious process of building coiled pots. This greenware is decorated in the traditional Acoma fashion. The most famous of contemporary Acoma artists using traditional methods are Lucy Lewis and Marie Chino.