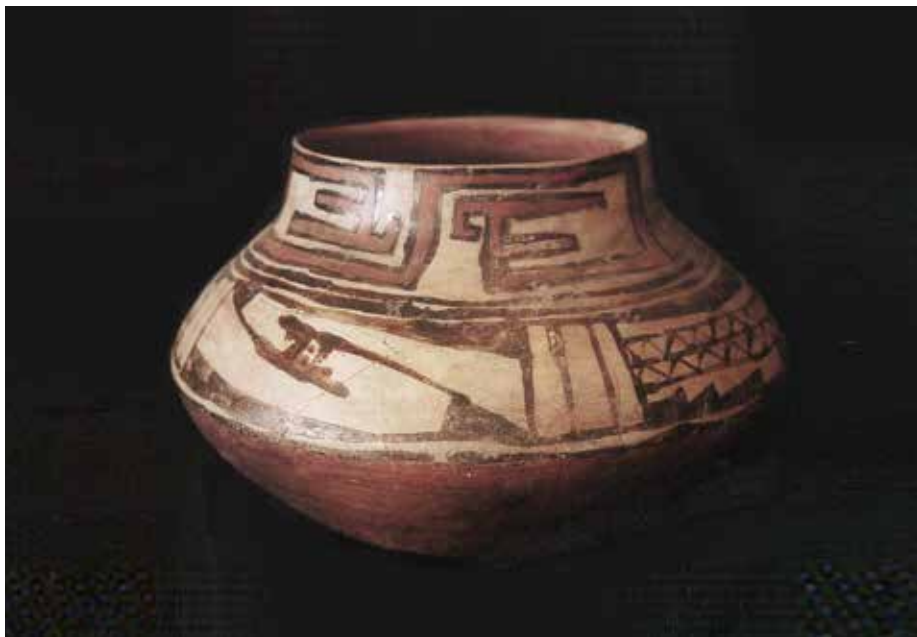


# GLAZE PAINT POTTERY



*Pottery Discussion #3*

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**T**he first thing you're warned about when you start collecting Southwestern pottery is IT'S NOT GLAZED. Its shine comes from polishing, not from a silicon-based glass surface that makes it dishwasher-safe. You'll hear horror stories about clueless people who bought extravagant Maria Martinez jars, used them as flower vases and watched them dissolve.

However, that doesn't mean that glaze never appears on Indian pottery of the Southwest. Thanks to Alan Ferg, I learned that glaze paint first showed up in southern Utah in the 700s, and it happened simply because of geography.

The local clay that potters used for their black paint on pieces like this 6" diameter Rosa Black-on-white bowl from around 775 had something in it, perhaps lead, that vitrified when they fired it.



That glaze was just an accident, but sometime around the beginning of the fourteenth century, potters got serious about glaze. Zuni potters began decorating otherwise unglazed pieces with black glaze paint.

It caught on and became the Zuni style. They did this for a few centuries, then stopped doing it. Glaze disappeared by 1700 and didn't resurface for a couple of hundred years after. Considering that the early potters licked their paintbrushes and that the paints contained metals like lead, it was probably a good thing that glazes went away.



This is an example of one of the earliest types from the glaze paint period, an 8-1/2" diameter Heshotauthla Glaze Polychrome bowl. It's from Zuni, was made about 1350, and has a black paint with so little glaze content that it barely looks shiny.

No one knows why Zuni potters started using glaze paints, but Nancy Yaw Davis, a University of Washington anthropologist, offered an explanation in her book, *The Zuni Enigma*.

Based on similarities between the Zuni and the Japanese languages, she suggested that in the late 1200s, a group of Japanese found their way across California and Arizona, made their way to Zuni, merged into the tribe, taught their language, and introduced a copper-based glaze pottery technology similar to what they used in Japan.

So far, her theories haven't gained much acceptance.

The earliest Zuni glaze pieces were carefully painted. We've never seen a later prehistoric glaze piece from Zuni or anywhere else painted as accurately as the bowl on this page.



The first Zuni glazes were a glaze on red and a glaze on white. These are also from around 1350. The 7-3/4" diameter Springerville Glaze on red on the left and the 7" diameter Snowflake Glaze on white on the right both came from within a few miles of the Zuni villages, all located about halfway up the Arizona-New Mexico border. Springerville is the nearest town, and Snowflake is just a few miles beyond.

Zuni became the center of the glazeware movement.



White quickly became Zuni flavor of choice. We found more Kechipawan Glaze Polychrome than any other Zuni glaze style. This 8-1/2" diameter bowl was made around 1400, fifty years after the bowls on the top of the page.

The painting is less careful, and the red coverage is less complete.

Over the next three hundred years, glaze painting never came back to the standards of the earliest examples.

Other Kechipawan pieces show the same quality level. These two bowls from the same years are 8" and 9" in diameter, and all three look like they could have been made by the same potter. Since they all came from different ruins, you get the feeling that there was broad general agreement on the right way to make and decorate a pot.



This 4-3/4" diameter Pinnawa Glaze on white ladle from the same period tells a lot about Zuni's copper-based glaze. The paint on the inside fired green, while the paint on the outside fired a reddish black. It



shows how difficult it is to control what happens to those glazes during firing. The explanation has to be variation in firing temperatures. The glaze on the Kechipawan pieces on the previous pages mostly came out black, but thanks to the firing, the paint inside one of the bowls is greenish,

Later on, in other areas, the glazes were lead-based and always fired black. Green was an only-in-Zuni phenomenon.

Whiteware stayed popular at Zuni, but they made their share of glaze-on-reds over the next hundred and fifty years.

During the glazeware years, Zuni Pueblo sat at a confluence of cultures. Hopi lay to the northwest, the Anasazi/Ancstral Puebloans to the northeast, the Mogollon to the southeast and the Salado to the southwest.

The Salado made widely traded, highly decorated redwares, and the Zuni saw a lot of it over the years. Zuni's Kwakina Glaze Polychrome seems like a Zuni effort to cash in on the marketability of the showy Salado pieces.

This 8-1/2" diameter jar and the 8-1/2" diameter bowl on the next page were made fifty years after the Kechipawan pieces, around 1450.





As the years passed, painting precision got worse and worse. The glaze paint got so thick and unmanageable that fine control was too difficult.

Even if you looked past the glaze paint, you'd never mistake a Kwakina piece for a typical well painted Salado polychrome.



In fairness, not all Kwakina pieces were as crudely painted as the jar and this bowl. Also, there are better painted examples of Kechipawan than the ones on the previous pages. but the precision of the the early days was rare.

Then Zuni pottery went somewhere else. Around 1475, Zuni stopped making glazeware and started making precisely painted yellow pots with matte paint decoration.

The reason was cross-cultural. The new Zuni type, Matsaki Polychrome, was an unashamed imitation of what the Hopis were making next door to the northwest. The Hopi type, Sikyatki Polychrome, became the prime inspiration for today's Hopi pottery.

Glaze paint wasn't done, however. It showed up in several unexpected places. Two hundred years later, it even found its way back to Zuni.

To us, the most surprising place glazeware surfaced was a hundred miles below the border in northern Mexico.

Frank Harlow wrote that Carretas Polychrome, a late type made at Paquimé, the center of the Casas Grandes culture, had glaze paint. We have several Carretas pieces with little evidence of glaze paint, but we took his word for it.

Then, in 2018, I found this bowl at a show in Santa Fe. It's a clear example of Carretas Polychrome and it has heavy, drippy black glaze paint. When I turned it over, I saw HARLOW-80 carefully painted on the back. It explains why Harlow was so sure about his statement.



It's 10-1/4" in diameter and it dates at circa 1500. It's absolute proof that glaze technology traveled 300 miles south to Chihuahua. We know that pieces were traded all over the Southwest during the pre-Spanish years, but this suggestion of a Zuni-Paquimé connection came as a bit of a surprise.

The technology may not have made it to Mexico from Zuni,



however. Glaze paint also traveled east to the Rio Grande, and while the Zuni were making their Hopi imitations, other Pueblos, primarily in the Albuquerque area, were making glazeware.

We found a few of those pieces, including a couple of early ones.



These both date from about 1425. The 12-3/4" diameter bowl on the left is a Cienguilla Glaze Polychrome, and the 8" bowl next to it is an Espinosa Glaze Polychrome. Both are reasonably well painted, like the earlier Kechipawan pieces from Zuni. The Espinosa piece piles on the black paint emphatically, which was a characteristic of most of the Rio Grande glaze pieces.

Later pieces showed an evolution similar to what happened at Zuni.



The 12-3/4" diameter bowl on the left is a Medio Glaze Polychrome. It's from 1475, fifty years later, and its painting is still reasonably well controlled. It came from the north end of the Rio Grande glaze area, closer to Santa Fe, and it's remarkable in that it shows parrots, late evidence of trade from Mesoamerica and a suggestion of a possible source for glaze paint in Mexico at Paquimé.

The 9-1/2" bowl on the right is from another hundred years later. It's Puaray Glaze Polychrome, probably made at or near Pecos Pueblo. By 1574, painting was way sloppier, the black piled up and runny.

Over the next years, painting got even worse. Forest Fenn, an important collector, bought an abandoned Pueblo south of Albuquerque. He found a large quantity of glazeware at San Lazaro, including the jar on the cover of this piece.

He examined the latest pieces and told us, “They were great potters, but they were lousy painters.” The two examples below prove his point.



They're a type called Kotiyiti Glaze from around 1600, and they're both about 11" in diameter. The potters turned them upside down, slopped some heavy lines around their shoulders and let the excess paint dribble down the side of the pot. They demonstrate glaze paint's ultimate triumph over artistry.

Meanwhile, glaze reappeared at Zuni after its 150-year absence. They stopped making their Hopi-influenced Matsaki Polychrome and started putting glaze paint on redware again.



This bowl is Hawikuh Glaze Polychrome. It's 9" in diameter, and

it dates from 1650, after glazeware had just about disappeared from the Rio Grande Pueblos. The painting is better again, perhaps because Zuni potters had spent more than a century painting their accurate Matsaki pieces. With Hawikuh glaze, the standards improved.

That was the last Pueblo glazeware type, and almost glazeware's last gasp. After the 1680 Pueblo Revolt, some fugitives from the Rio Grande area found refuge at remote Gobernador Canyon in the upper left-hand corner of New Mexico. They lived side-by-side with Navajos and continued their pre-Spanish lifestyle.

About 1700, they made this 9-1/2" bowl.



More cross-culturation. Here we have black glaze paint on the brown clay the Navajos used for their pottery.

Shortly after they made this, the exiles returned to their Pueblos. When the lights went out at Gobernador, glaze pottery was gone.

Until the 20th century.

**G**laze did reappear, but only in tiny amounts and at widely spaced times. Its first reincarnation didn't come from Native potters. It happened because a nice Anglo lady from Maryland couldn't leave well enough alone.

Josephine Foard had a mission. Her friends brought Southwestern pottery home on the train, filled it with water and used it for flower arrangements. Since the pottery was unglazed, it discolored and pieces fired at lower temperatures decomposed.

Foard decided that, since the Indians could make beautiful pottery, they should learn how to make it practical. She'd seen the big Acoma jars her friends bought at the railroad station and thought she should show the Indians how to make their pottery correctly.

So Josephine moved to Laguna Pueblo in 1899, the railroad stop just across the tracks from Acoma. She gathered good pieces, mostly from Acoma, coated the insides with a commercial ceramic glaze and refired them. They were now practical by her definition, but the Indians hated them. Once the pots were glazed, they lost their natural porosity and no longer cooled water from exterior evaporation.

The 13" tall Acoma jar on the left is an example of Josephine's finest work, its interior lined with shiny yellow-orange glaze and its exterior yellowed and slightly pitted from her second firing.



Josephine Foard's failed crusade was the end of glaze on Pueblo pottery until the 1970s, when Evelyn Vigil of Jemez Pueblo tried to make new pieces like the old ones. She did the 7" bowl on the right in 1975.

She wanted to honor her heritage and decided to recreate the pottery of Pecos, a long-abandoned Jemez-language Pueblo forty miles southeast of Santa Fe. The Puaray Glaze Polychrome piece four pages back is an example of what she was trying to make.

She succeeded admirably. The black glaze paint on that little bowl piles up every bit as high as it does on that sixteenth century Puaray bowl. The only real difference is the quality of painting. Evelyn was working at a time when painting standards were high, and she managed to control the glaze far better than her Pecos Pueblo ancestors usually achieved.

Several Jemez potters followed Evelyn's lead and toyed with the challenge, but interest waned. By 1980, they'd moved on.

We thought that was the end of glaze painting on Pueblo pottery. Then, in 1999, we visited the Heard Museum in Phoenix, went into an empty room and saw Rosemary Lonewolf sitting alone at a table.

Rosemary is a member of one of Santa Clara Pueblo's most prestigious pottery families and an important potter herself. She had some glazed ceramic tiles on her table.

We were startled when we learned she'd made them and bought this 6" square one. She explained that she had a commission to do an



exterior mural for a civic building in Chandler, Arizona and needed to learn more about commercial pottery technology.

She took ceramic classes at Arizona State University, where she told us she was impressed by her fellow students' tool kits. Her idea of tools was a stone and an orange stick. She combined what she learned at ASU with her own pottery experience and found that when Santa Clara clay was glazed, it turned yellow after firing.

The tiles on her table were a side trip for her, and once she finished the commission, she returned to Santa Clara and went about making the polished pottery that made her and her family world famous.

We thought Rosemary's tile might be the last we'd see of glazeware, but it wasn't. In 2006, we went to Santa Clara's Feast Day and saw artists from other Pueblos selling their work at tables on the road into the Pueblo.

Our next surprise came from an Acoma potter. We were aware of C. Maurus Chino's meticulous work and had included a fine traditional black on white piece of his in the First Edition of our *Southwestern Pottery, Anasazi to Zuni*.

The last thing we expected to see from an Acoma potter was a piece like this 6" diameter jar. It has applied turquoise pieces, which potters





don't do at Acoma. It has incised Mimbres lizards. They use the design at Acoma, but incising usually appears only on low-end tourist pieces. And except for the lizards, it's fully glazed, like Rosemary Lonewolf's tile.

Maurus told us that he knew Rosemary and that they'd worked together. Apparently, she still remembered her Arizona State education.

We were so taken with Maurus's jar that we put it in our *Pottery of the Southwest* and thought we'd put it in our next book, but we never had a chance. Our book partner, John Blom, bought a bigger one, and it's on the cover of the Second Edition of *Southwestern Pottery*.

Maurus wasn't finished with glazed pottery. In 2008, we went to the Santa Clara Feast again and found him at the same table. By then he'd taken another step. He's primarily a painter, and he painted *Acoma Mesa Approaching Storm* on this fully glazed 9-1/2" diameter jar.



We bought it instantly, but he told us he'd probably never try anything like it again. He realized that he could only see half his image when he looked at the jar, and when he got around to the back, he had to figure out some way to bring the two ends of the scene together.

The experience probably finished Maurus with glazes. When we saw him again in 2013, he was back to making traditional Acoma

whiteware, and the scenes he painted on them were all on one side.

Rosemary Lonewolf wasn't finished, however. On a visit to the Nambe Trading Post in 2015, we learned that Rosemary had been to China and learned how to make traditional porcelain.

We took home this 2-1/2" tall bird. Glazeware in the Pueblos had started as a bit of messy black paint on an unglazed pot. Now it had evolved into classic Chinese porcelain.



Will we see more glazeware in the Pueblos? Who knows? As long as there are restless artists, there'll always be something new.

The one thing we know for sure is that we'll continue to find surprises.

The cover image is from *The Secrets of San Lazaro Pueblo* by Forrest Fenn.

The image on page 2 is from *Pottery Typology Project* by the Museum of New Mexico's Office of Archaeological Studies

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