Grounded in Clay: The Spirit of Pueblo Pottery Activity Book

For centuries, Pueblo pottery has served not only as a utilitarian art form but also as a powerfully intangible element that sits at the very heart of Pueblo cultures. Whether it exists in the forefront of one person’s life or remains a gentle hum in the background of another, pottery and the clay from which it is born are reflected throughout the origins, histories, and homes of Pueblo families and communities.

Pueblo pottery vibrates with the stories and experiences of the those who made them, as well as the many people who have become a part of their history since then. Centered around contemporary voices coming from Southwest Pueblo communities, Grounded in Clay: The Spirit of Pueblo Pottery is a rare opportunity to explore these intrinsic relationships and stories from a first-person perspective.

Recognizing the diverse viewpoints and multitude stories held within and on the walls of these vessels, Grounded in Clay highlights just some of the thousands, if not millions, of stories that are contained within and spill forth from these vessels. Thank you for becoming a part of the history of these creations.

The Grounded in Clay Activity book was illustrated by several members of the Pueblo Pottery Collective for Grounded in Clay: The Spirit of Pueblo Pottery exhibition. We hope that you enjoy coloring these pages and become inspired to create as you bring your own uniqueness to each page. A big thank you to following artists who contributed drawings to this book:

Tony Chavarria  Josephine Kie  Ehren Kee Natay
Tara Gatewood  Evone Martinez  Michael Namingha
Marita Hinds  Diego Medina  Rose B. Simpson

Grounded in Clay: The Spirit of Pueblo Pottery, the exhibition, was curated by the Pueblo Pottery Collective and organized by the School for Advanced Research and Vilcek Foundation.

Exhibition Travel dates

Museum of Indian Arts and Culture, Santa Fe
July 31, 2022—May 29, 2023
Metropolitan Museum of Art & Vilcek Foundation, New York
July 13, 2023—June 4, 2024
The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston
October 27, 2024—January 20, 2025
Saint Louis Art Museum
March 9, 2025—June 1, 2025
Evone "Snowflake" Martinez
How Pottery is Made

Gathering clay

Processing clay

Building a pot
Evone "Snowflake" Martinez

How Pottery is Made

Polishing the pot

Firing the pot
I grew up seeing my grandmother make pottery. Her table had her materials that she used, clay, yucca, and polishing stones. Most of the pieces I encountered were not complete, but works in progress. The pottery I chose for the exhibition was created by her in 1980. I remember seeing issues of Arizona Highways in her house. I included a cover of Arizona Highways dated 1980 to reference the creation of my grandmother’s pottery.”

Michael Namingha
"As I began to paint it, all I could think of was how blessed I was to have a gorgeous granddaughter, and how pleased I was that my new creation was evolving with such ease."

Josephine Kie

Acoma vase
c. 1880–1900
Clay and paint
14½ x 10¼ in. (36.8 x 26 cm)
IAF:2796
"Rain gods are also called munas, which means "funny makers" or "clowns." Munas are meant to bring humor into our lives. You cannot help but smile when you take the time to look closely at this piece. It is humorous yet simplistic in nature."

Marita Hinds
“When I look at the pots, bowls, storytellers, and other figurines of our ancestors, I hope, too, that the traditions of our clay work will always live on through the younger generations.”

Jonathan Loretto
Pueblo Pardo jar
c. 1550–1672
Clay and paint
4 1/4 x 6 1/4 in. (10.8 x 15.9 cm)
IAF.2184
Arroh-a-och | Laguna
Storage jar
C. 1870–80
Clay and paint
20¼ x 24½ in. (51.4 x 62.2 cm)
IAF.1026
“It is often said that the clay is alive, and you must listen to it; listen to what it wants to become and learn from it. I truly believe this, but I also believe that our ancestors are with us, guiding us while we are working.”

Melissa Talachy Romero
Isleta jar
c. 1880–1920
Clay and paint
12 x 15 in. (30.5 x 38.1 cm)
IAF869
Acoma jar

C. 1920

Clay and paint

8¾ x 10¼ in. (22.2 x 27.3 cm)

VF2019.02.04
“With its own intelligence, it may have recognized Shawn’s connection to his mother, aunties, and grandmas, and aspired to the figure of a resilient Pueblo woman, strong and nurturing as she cradles her precious dough bowl, which is used for making bread for her community and family.”

Ehren Kee Natay
“Back then, I started out as a helper for my family as they made pots to sell to the trading posts. I chose this piece because it reminds me of those old times. The designs are simple but beautiful.”

Juanita Fragua
“Much like well-made pieces of pottery, we human beings are strong yet so fragile, susceptible to cracks, accidents, and breaks through no fault of anyone.”

Camille Bernal

Kewa dough bowl

c. 1900

Clay and paint

9½ x 17½ in. (24.1 x 44.5 cm)

IAF.2263
"While the familiar design of this jar brings me comfort, the unusual incurving rim makes it seem edgy. Some people, including me, might speculate that this is a design flaw that ended up working out."

L. Stephine "Steph" Poston
“The stylized bird design on this pot is one that has been handed down from generation to generation. In our collection, my wife and I have a smaller pot by my aunt Camille Quotskuyva (Nampeyo) with the same design.”

Arlo Namingha
Tortugas (Manso) jar

Diego Medina

C. 1910
Clay and paint
10 x 11 in. (25.4 x 27.9 cm)
IAF:1455
Zia water jar
C. 1900
Clay and paint
13 x 13 in. (33 x 33 cm)
IAF.1410
“Pindii (turkeys) have lived with us for many centuries. They are an important part of our history and culture. Their feathers, meat, and bones are used to sustain our bodies and spirit. They inspired the tale of Turkey Girl, a Pueblo Cinderella story in which they tolerate their “irksome captivity.”

Tony Chavarria

Tony Chavarria

Teson jar
C. 1870–80
Clay and paint
15 1/2 x 17 in. (39.4 x 43.2 cm)
VF2016.01.08
Extra challenge! See if you can find the following

___ 1. An image of a deer painted on a jar.

___ 2. A pot that looks like a coffee mug! Despite looking very modern, this mug was made between 1150 and 1300, making it at least 700 years old!

___ 3. A pot that was made by six potters. This is also the newest jar in the exhibit!

___ 4. A Pueblo Pardo jar that is black and white. This pot was made between 1550-1672, which makes it hundreds of years old!

___ 5. A dough bowl from Kewa Pueblo with geometric designs. Did you know that these bowls are used to knead dough during the breadmaking process before being placed into tins for baking?

___ 6. A tall vase with a water serpent design made by mother and son duo, Lela and Luther Gutierrez. This water serpent is named Avanyu and is associated with water.

___ 7. A jar from Acoma Pueblo with a big red-orange triangular design.

___ 8. A jar with dinosaurs painted on it. This jar was made by William Pacheco, a dinosaur lover, in 1987 when he was just 12 years old. What is your favorite dinosaur?

___ 9. How many birds can you find in the exhibit?

Still working on this coloring book while at home? You can continue your search and view pottery from this exhibit by visiting www.groundedinclay.org
Mimby Rabbit is thinking up designs for a pot.
What should Mimby draw?

Front cover and back cover art by
Tony Chavarria