

# Preston Duwyenie

**P**RESTON DUWYENIE MOLDS THE MEMORIES OF his childhood into clay. He is from Hopi in Arizona, although he lives at Santa Clara now. As a youngster, the outdoors was his playground. "It's kind of rare when it rains out here in Hopi," he explains. "But when it does there are lots of areas where clay is abundantly available. We had this favorite shallow pond that we gathered clay from to create things." The figures he made with this clay portrayed Hopi village life and ceremonies.

Duwyenie also grew up carving wooden kachinas, but when he went to school at the Institute for American Indian Arts in Santa Fe, he was reunited with clay. He learned not only the traditional Indian ways of making pottery but also Japanese and more experimental techniques.

Today, his work is a blend of the old and the

new. Deeply rooted in his culture, Duwyenie uses whatever tools he needs for its expression. He digs his clay and builds the sculptural forms of his pots by hand. "I've used a wheel," he says, "but the tradition of coiling is what I enjoy. It's a more intimate relationship with the clay."

The piece he has just finished is glowing white with undulating forms that seem to move across the surface. "There's a lot of sand at Hopi," he says. "When I was growing up, I played with it. I could feel the warmth of it on a hot summer day and the coolness in the wintertime. Sometimes it's very soft, and sometimes when it rains in winter it becomes real rocklike."

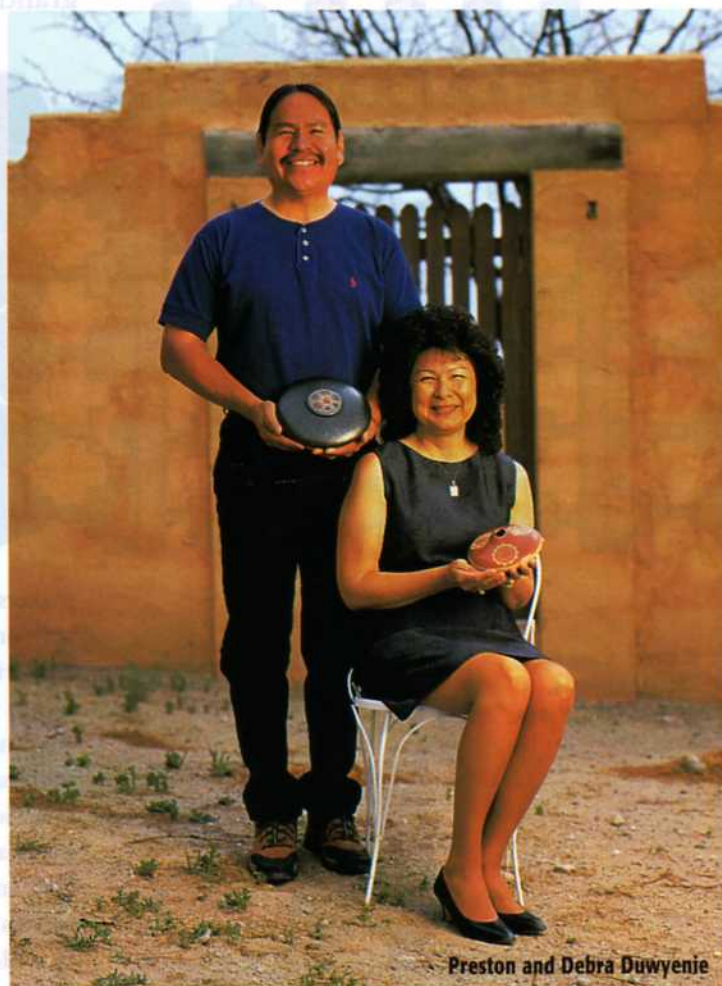
Set into the shoulder of the pot is a thin rectangular slice of silver with a wave pattern on its surface. Duwyenie cast the metal, molding it against a piece of cuttlefish bone, and inlaid it into the clay. "I use the silver to convey the preciousness of water in the desert environment," he says. "So the clay represents the sand dunes at Hopi, but the silver is the water. Both the water and the sand develop ripples when the breath of God blows across them."

His wife Debra draws from the same themes of nature to create tiny treasures in pottery. Her miniatures, incised with a world of hummingbirds and flowers or dancing corn stalks smiled upon by a benevolent sun, are the perfect counterpoint to Preston's more stark forms. They have always worked closely, bound by philosophy and shared goals. Now they are working together. "Preston makes the pots and the lids," Debra says. "I do the polish and design on the lids." Their first collaboration cracked in the firing. It sits in a place of honor. "I think it was meant to stay with us," says Debra, "to inspire us to do more."

The making of pottery in many ways mirrors modern Pueblo life. Some potters keep to the traditional path, while others live in both worlds. Somewhere at Santa Clara Pueblo the chubby hands of a grandchild pat out the shape of an animal or a small bowl. The next generation of artists waits to follow the hundreds that have gone before them. Their work is as timeless as the clay. □

PRESTON DUWYENIE IS REPRESENTED BY BLUE RAIN GALLERY, TAOS, NM; ANDREA FISHER FINE POTTERY, SANTA FE, NM; GALLERY 10, SANTA FE, NM, AND SCOTTSDALE, AZ; CASE TRADING POST, WHEELWRIGHT MUSEUM, SANTA FE, NM; KING GALLERIES, SCOTTSDALE, AZ; AND ADOBE EAST GALLERY, DELRAY BEACH, FL, AND SUMMIT, NJ. LUANN TAFOYA IS REPRESENTED BY KING GALLERIES, SCOTTSDALE, AZ.

*Marsha McEuen is a freelance writer and editor based in Santa Fe.*



**ABOVE LEFT: PRESTON DUWYENIE, BLACK MICACEOUS PLATTER WITH SILVER INGOTS FROM SHIFTING SAND SERIES [2000], DIA. 20.**

**Preston and Debra Duwyenie**