

JUDY M. LEWIS | ACOMA PUEBLO

In 1966 Judy M. Lewis was born into a family full of potters from Acoma Pueblo's Yellow Corn Clan. The Lewis family would eventually become known for their unprecedented works in clay simply by carrying on their family traditions. At an early age, like many Pueblo potters who have taken up the tradition, Judy began learning her ancestor's techniques from her mother, Katherine Sanchez Lewis. However, Judy was most influenced by her older sister, Marilyn J. Lewis Ray. Both Marilyn's enthusiasm and ambitiousness regarding her own take on their family's traditions is what truly spurred Judy's decision to pursue making Pueblo pottery and clay sculptures at age twenty.



At that time Judy had already acquired the traditional skillsets needed for making figurines and pottery from Acoma Pueblo's crisp white clay. After removing debris from the gathered rock-hard clay shards, she must first pound the shards into a fine powder that will become her clay after she has added water. This is an extremely brief description of a long process that Judy must accomplish simply to begin making her creations. Her contemporary forms are then shaped by using the old-fashioned methods of hand coiling or pinching the clay. Using only naturally derived pigments, Judy then paints her pieces with traditional designs and colors. Judy and her siblings are all well-known for their richly-hued, home-made organic and mineral based pigments.

Even with this similarity amongst the sibling's work, each member of the Lewis family has carved out their own distinctive niche over the years. Judy is most known for her complexly painted polychrome corn maidens, storyteller figures, nativity scenes, friendship vases and bowls. Nonetheless, she is also renowned for her black on white designs. Viewers and collectors alike admire the delicately detailed and expressive faces Judy paints on all of her storytellers and figurines. All of her storytellers are distinctively female with open mouths 'singing' to their children or grandchildren. Additionally, she is celebrated for adorning her works with raised butterflies, bluebirds, cats, dogs, ladybugs and lizard heads.

Judy has enjoyed being a contemporary artist with gallery representation since the mid-80's. Impressed by Judy and her sister's innovative pottery works, galleries such as the Penfield Gallery in Old Town Albuquerque, NM, have helped admirers and collectors connect with the "Lewis Sister's" unrivaled pieces since the 1970's. Judy's creative siblings are Marilyn J. Lewis Ray (b. 1954), Carolyn Concho (b. 1959), Diane M. Lewis Garcia (b. 1961), Bernard Lewis (b. 1963, who collaborates with his wife Sharon Lewis) and Rebecca Lucario (b. 1969). Examples of their work can be found in galleries throughout the Southwest as well as in private and public collections worldwide. Katherine and Edward Lewis's offspring have been responsible for some of the most innovative pottery to be produced at Acoma Pueblo.

Over the years Judy has participated in and won numerous awards from the annual Santa Fe Indian Market for SWAIA, the Indian Fair and Market for the Heard Museum in Phoenix, Arizona and the Eight Northern Pueblos Arts & Crafts Show in Espanola, New Mexico. Judy has also had her works published in Allan Hayes & Jon Blom's reference book titled *Southwestern Pottery | Anasazi to Zuni* published in 1996, the Indian Market Magazine for SWAIA's annual fair in Santa Fe from 1994 to 2000, also in the 1997's winter issue of *The Messenger* which was the Wheelwright Museum's triannual newsletter, the Schiffer book for collectors, *Pueblo and Navajo Contemporary Pottery and Directory of Artists* by Guy Berger made available to the public on March 16, 2000 and Gregory Schaaf's *American Indian Arts Series Volume Southern Pueblo Pottery | 2,000 Artist Biographies* released in 2002. She signs her art work as Judy Lewis, Acoma, N.M.

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