

Ceramic jar from *Earth In Balance* series by Preston Duwyenie



Artist Introduction

Preston Duwyenie (Hopi) was born in 1951 and is from the village of Hotevilla on Third Mesa in Hopi, Arizona. He is a well-known ceramicist and silversmith. Duwyenie's pottery is full of meaning and symbolism. He can visually retell Hopi stories through his ceramic work. He comes from a talented family of artists; his father Lorenzo Hubbell Duwyenie (Hopi) was a katsina doll carver and his mother Edith Kuyiyesva (Hopi) was a basket weaver.

About the Art

The ceramic jar is part of a series called *Earth In Balance* that incorporates the Hopi legend of Gatayo. The jar is made from natural white clay found on the Hopi reservation. It was carefully polished by hand using a smooth stone. Duwyenie uses visual details in his ceramics to tell traditional stories and teachings in his work. In an interview, Duwyenie tells the legend of Gatayo:

“This bowl recounts the Hopi prophecy of Gatayo, an angry serpent that resides below the surface world. He is subdued at all times by the two hero twins, the Pööganhoyas. The older of the two controls the head, the younger the tail. If the Hopi people should stray away from the teachings of the Creator, he will send a message to his nephews to release the serpent. Gatayo will slowly awaken from his long slumber, and as he gains consciousness, he will start to violently twist and roll. His thrashing will create vibration upon the surface of the Earth. Thus, the punishment sent upon the wicked people will be in the form of violent earthquakes. If the Hopi people remain steadfast in those teachings, the ‘Earth’ will be ‘in Balance.’”

—Preston Duwyenie

Discussion Questions

How would you interpret a traditional story into a visual medium?

Which traditional art medium would you use and why?

What would the process look like to prepare your materials?

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