

# Western Interiors

AND DESIGN

JULY/AUGUST 2003

special art issue

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Montana **ART WALK**  
**DEBORAH BUTTERFIELD**  
art school in **ASPEN**  
**SANTA FE** Indian Market  
summer **ART GUIDE**

and...

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modernism in **SEATTLE**  
**WYOMING** cabin style  
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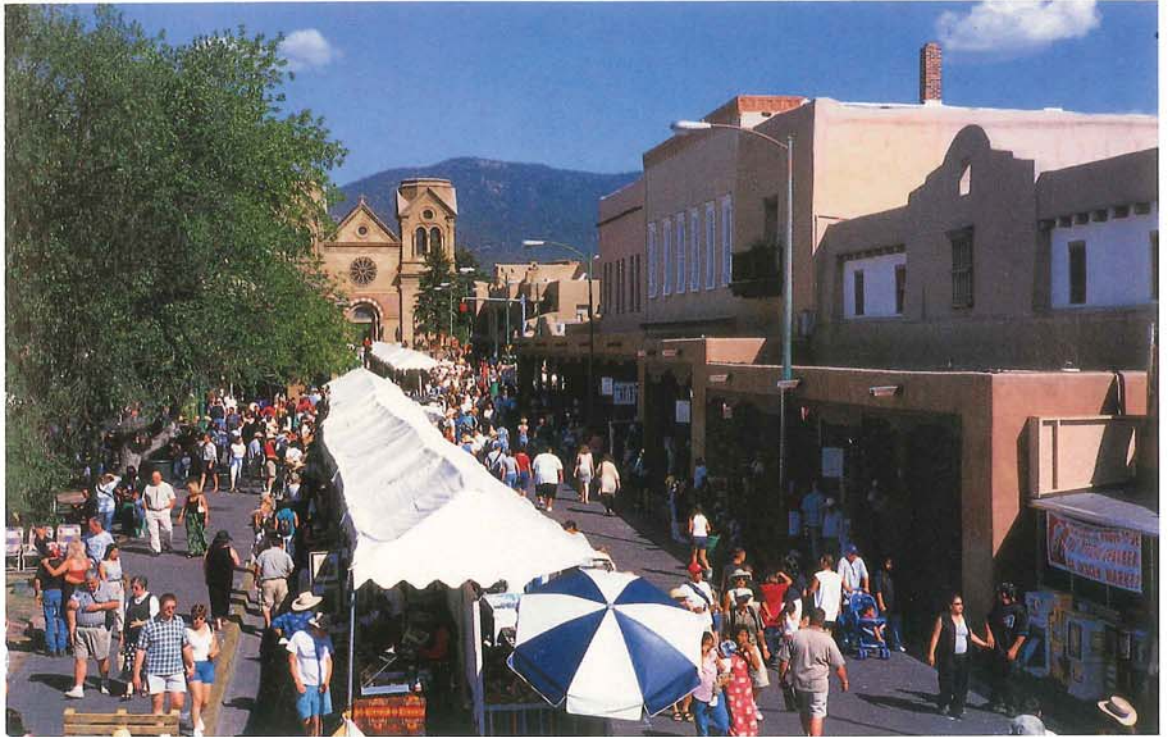


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# SANTA FE INDIAN MARKET

Inside the world's premier venue for Native American arts and crafts



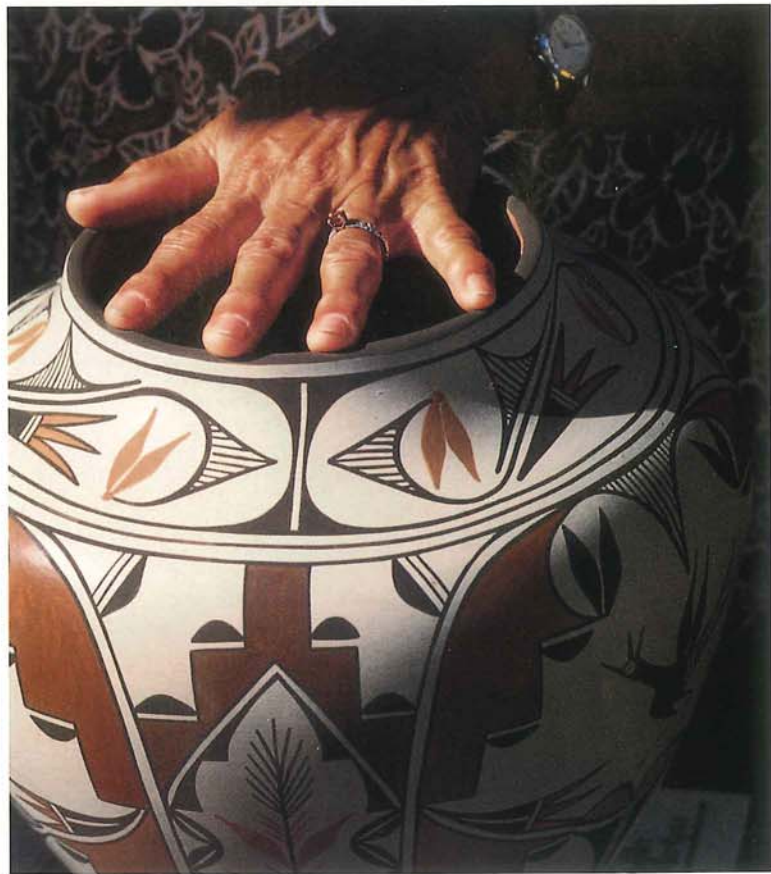
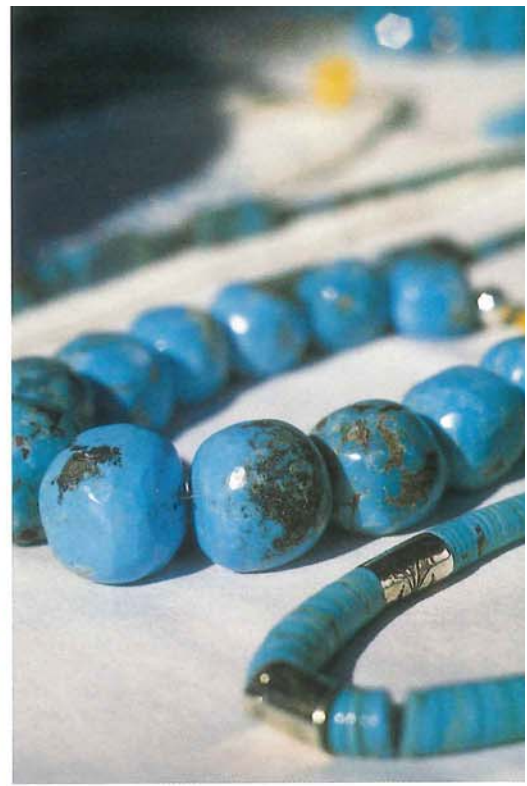
IT'S 5:30 A.M. ON THE FIRST DAY OF SANTA FE'S INDIAN MARKET, and as artists set up their booths, shadows cast by the headlights of parked trucks and cars are projected like silent movies onto the plaza. If your breath is visible in the crisp morning air, you're on time for the largest Native American art show in the world.

Die-hard collectors who have slept all night in lawn chairs or cots in the booths assigned to their favorite artists are rubbing their eyes and sipping coffee, waiting to purchase a treasure. Sleep is a luxury during the week before Indian Market. Artists pull a series of all-nighters to do late-night firings or to put the finishing touches on work that will be entered into competition. For collectors and tourists, Indian Market—which began in 1922 as a small-scale art exchange—has become the international event of the year for Native American arts. In a weeklong celebration, lectures, museum exhibitions, a film festival, auctions, gallery openings, book signings, theater, live music and parties all crowd around the main event, two intensive days of selling the nation's top Native American art at outdoor booths on the downtown plaza.

The population of New Mexico's capital city more than doubles each August when Indian Market comes to town. At this year's market, August 23–24, museum curators, art collectors and tourists, from as far away as Japan or as nearby as Albuquerque, will mingle, jostle and jockey for the pole position to view and purchase works of art that many artists have labored over for much of the past year. While Indian Market is traditionally a retail event where millions of dollars change hands, museum curators, dealers and gallery owners are increasingly buying works.

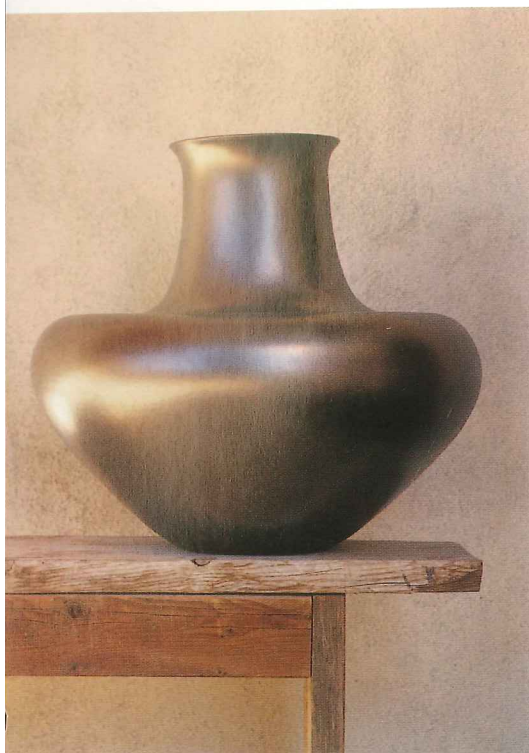
"Indian Market is a time for collectors to meet with the artist and to be able to purchase things directly," says J. Mark Sublette, head of the Medicine Man Gallery in Santa Fe and Tucson. "It shouldn't be a time for





**opposite:** Santa Fe Indian Market displays one of the world's richest collections of Native American art. **this page, clockwise from top left:** Collectors and artists dress in the spirit of the market; pottery fills one of the booth's tables; turquoise necklaces with silver details; a Pueblo pot; weavers take their place on the plaza; a beaded purse by Teri Greeves; an art buyer examines a potential purchase.





dealers to undercut their clients and then sell to them later.” It is this opportunity for face-to-face interaction that draws a diversity of visitors—from Donna Karan to curators from The British Museum or the Museum of Arts and Design—to the same venue. Where else can you hold a thirty-thousand-dollar pot or try on a fifty-dollar pendant and talk with the artist about the origin of the symbols or the color scheme?

A thousand artists from more than eighty tribes sell their work and compete in the official market each year. The majority are from the Southwest, but others come from the Pacific Northwest or the Great Plains. “It’s the biggest Native American art show there is. It’s the hardest competition because people tend to save their best stuff for now,” explains Jodi Naranjo, an artist who enters her pots into competition. “Getting a ribbon is very prestigious.”

The coveted ribbons, awarded in myriad categories, make for swift sales when the market opens for business. The Southwestern Association for Indian Arts (SWAIA), a nonprofit organization, produces both the competition and the market. Most artists rely on the income or commissions earned there to sustain them throughout the year. “SWAIA has a unique place of importance in the recent history of southwestern Native American art,” says Jai Lakshman, executive director of the association. “It has really set the table and provides a major forum for display, education and the commerce of the art.”

Getting the most out of Indian Market in Santa Fe involves some advance preparation, especially when it comes to hotel reservations. It also pays to research the genre you’re most interested in and some of the artists who will attend. Pottery and jewelry are the big shareholders, but rugs and weavings, sculpture, paintings, glass and other art forms are also well represented.

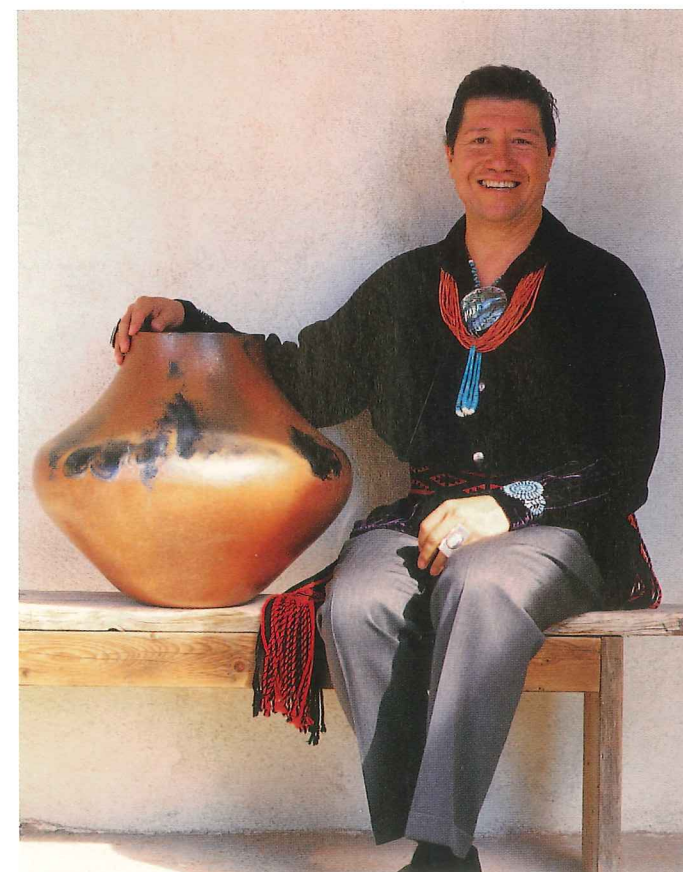
Most of the artists who come to Indian Market welcome the concentrated weekend of business and customer interaction. “It’s an event like a feast day where we all get together: artists, friends, collectors and any new people we happen to meet,” says artist Lonnie Vigil, who uses micaceous clay to create hand-coiled traditional Nambe Pueblo pottery. One of Vigil’s large water jars, which had been fired twice to produce an iridescent gunmetal color, won Best of Show in 2001. He created a similar one for the 2002 market, in addition to his signature burnt-orange pottery with dramatic fire clouds (black or gold markings created serendipitously during firing). Vigil is among a number of artists who host receptions, at either their homes or their studios, prior to Indian Market to showcase and sell their work.

Serious collectors who don’t live in the area typically arrive up to one week prior to Indian Market to visit with dealers and galleries, which often retain a special inventory of collectible work in preparation for the rush. And collectors don’t wait for Indian Market to begin purchasing: Last year at Packards, a handful of twenty-thousand-dollar contemporary kachina dolls sold the weekend before the market.

Indian Market is a perfect time to browse and learn, regardless of whether purchasing art is on your agenda. The Museum of Indian Arts & Culture, a part of the Museum of New Mexico, offers a number of lectures the week of the market. Bruce Bernstein, the assistant director for cultural resources at the Smithsonian’s National Museum of the American Indian, speaks annually and is writing a book about the history and traditions of Indian Market. “We’re very interested in acquisition,” Bernstein says of the museum’s mission at the market. “There are a lot of people collecting. We’re hoping we can talk with them about moving things from private to public hands. The importance of having these works in public collections in perpetuity can’t be understated.”

On exhibition through August 24 at the Museum of Fine Arts, also a part of the Museum of New Mexico, is *Changing Hands: Art Without Reservation*, a show organized by the Museum of Arts and Design in New York that features the work of a number of Native American artists from the Southwest who will participate in Indian Market. The Museum of Fine Arts will also display the work of winners of SWAIA’s Lifetime Achievement Award.

One of the frustrations in the contemporary Native American art marketplace, and at Indian Market in particular, is that artists typically sell a work as soon as they have found a buyer. This sometimes makes it



opposite: A gunmetal water jar by Lonnie Vigil. clockwise from top left: Jodi Naranjo carries *Gone Fishing*, a contemporary Santa Clara pot she etched with more than five hundred fish and an occasional starfish, whale and worm; artist Teri Greeves holds one of her beaded concha belts with stones; potter Nancy Youngblood at work in her studio; Lonnie Vigil beside one of his burnt-orange pots with black and gold fire clouds.





difficult for collectors and museums to monitor an artist's development over the years. "The problem is that some things sell and are gone in a few hours, so you do have to hop around a bit," says Diana Pardue, curator of collections at the Heard Museum in Phoenix, which sent a contingent of seven people to the market last year. Artists also create work especially for Indian Market, knowing that they will be able to get their full retail price. So museum curators and collectors always attend the Friday evening preview and arrive early on the first day to have the opportunity to see the best work artists are producing before it sells.

Research also pays off if you're contemplating making a major purchase. Prize-winning work, along with the best work of any celebrated artist, sells quickly in the early-morning hours. Decisions on major pieces often have to be made on the spot, as there may be a line of twenty people behind you just hoping you don't buy that necklace or pot. The best way to get an advance glimpse of what will be sold at Indian Market is to attend the preview. All award-winning pieces will be on display at the Sweeney Convention Center, a few blocks away from the plaza, including the Best of

Show. Collectors interested in ribbons (collecting the best works of the show) may simply head straight for the tables displaying the top prizes, write down the booth numbers, and sprint to the plaza to stake out their position for purchasing the works the next day. Typically even before the preview, there will already be people in some booths because of the popularity of certain artists. Last year people camped out at Roxanne Swentzell's booth for more than a day and a half to purchase one of her clay or bronze sculptures.

In recent years, some buyers have hired other people to hold their spot overnight. This is a controversial practice; many individual collectors feel it ruins the spirit of the market. If you are serious about buying the work of a top prizewinner, you'll want to purchase a Turquoise, Silver or Gold Circle membership from SWAIA that gives members access to the sneak preview.

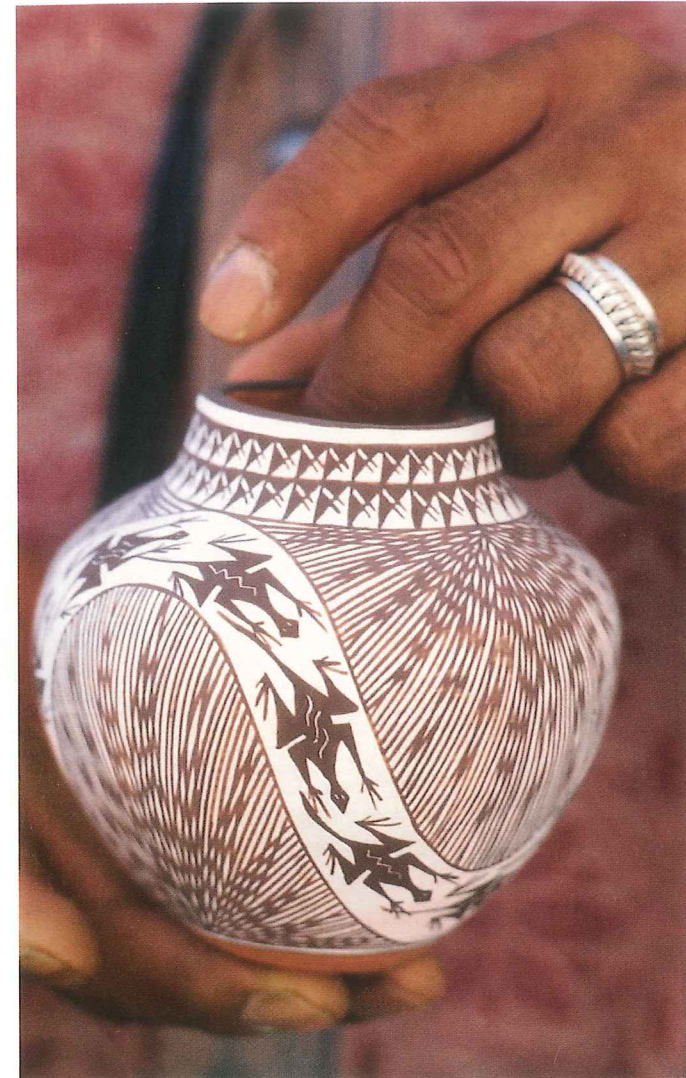
This year, SWAIA has also organized a special reception for artists, Gold Circle members and the press that starts an hour prior to the sneak preview. Collectors will have the opportunity to take a first peek at the award-winning art and meet the artists who won top honors. Silver and Gold Circle members also gain free admission to a reception honoring SWAIA's fellows and Lifetime Achievement Award winners, held this year on August 21 and hosted by Governor Bill Richardson at the governor's mansion.

Camping out for the entire evening at an artist's booth is not always a prerequisite for purchasing one of the works that wins a top prize, but chances are that you'll have to spend at least a good part of the night there. The overnight tradition began with veteran collectors JoAnn and Robert Balzer, who have been attending the market for thirty years. "We were the first people to stay up all night," says Robert Balzer. "If we wanted the best piece, we had to stay out. We did it the old-fashioned way—we didn't hire anybody." Last year the Balzers arrived at 3:00 A.M., and even though they were second in line at Gail Bird and Yazzie Johnson's booth, they were able to purchase the artists' signature concha belt.

While it would be nice to think that everything is negotiable, the reality is that the work of celebrated artists, regardless of whether they have won awards, typically goes for the asking price. It is not uncommon, however, for there to be some wiggle room, especially if you purchase more than one work. By midafternoon on the second day of the market, artists are often more willing to negotiate price. This is usually when dealers and galleries step in to try to purchase items at wholesale prices. Buyers concerned with authenticity should know that only the artists who are part of the official Indian Market have gone through SWAIA's rigorous screening process to insure that their work has been fashioned using authentic materials and methods.

Some artists also do all of their business for the entire weekend in the early-morning hours of the first day. Some leave as early as 8:30 A.M., because they have sold out. Others may sell out but stay for one or both days to attract future business. Buyers who purchase award-winning works don't always walk away with their purchases, opting instead to allow the artist to display the work throughout the first day.

If you're eager to see all the works that an artist has for market, then set your alarm at high volume to scare yourself out of bed. And don't forget your camera, because you'll have plenty to photograph once the sun rises on the Southwest's best people-watching parade. ➦



opposite: A dagger sheath with beaded details. **this page, clockwise from far left:** An Acoma pot; a cuff bracelet and bolo tie by master jeweler Verma Nequatewa, called Sonwai in Hopi; turquoise cuffs and rings; a coral necklace by Gail Bird and Yazzie Johnson.



### artists to watch

- jewelry** Gail Bird and Yazzie Johnson, Verma Nequatewa
- pottery** Nancy Youngblood, Jodi Naranjo, Robert Tenorio, Lonnie Vigil
- weaving** D.Y. Begay
- beadwork** Teri Greeves, Marcus Amerman, Jamie Okuma
- Hopi kachinas** Philbert Honanie
- glasswork** Tony Jojola
- painting** Benjamin Harjo, Jr.; Raymond Nordwall; Marcus Cadman

### local galleries and dealers

- Andrea Fisher Fine Pottery**, 100 West San Francisco Street; Santa Fe, NM 87501; 505.986.1234; [www.andreafisherpottery.com](http://www.andreafisherpottery.com)
- Blue Rain Gallery**, 117 South Taos Plaza, Taos, NM 87571; 505.751.0066; [www.blueraingallery.com](http://www.blueraingallery.com)
- J. Mark Sublette Medicine Man Gallery**, 200 Canyon Road, Santa Fe, NM 87501; 505.820.7451; [www.medicinemangallery.com](http://www.medicinemangallery.com)
- Morning Star Gallery**, 513 Canyon Road, Santa Fe, NM 87501; 505.982.8187; [www.morningstargallery.com](http://www.morningstargallery.com)

**Packards on the Plaza**, 61 Old Santa Fe Trail, Santa Fe, NM 87501; 505.983.9241

**Price-Dewey Galleries, Ltd.**, 53 Old Santa Fe Trail, Santa Fe, NM 87501; 505.982.8632; [www.deweyltd.com](http://www.deweyltd.com)

**Sherwoods Spirit of America**, 130 Lincoln Avenue, Santa Fe, NM 87501; 505.988.1776; [www.sherwoodsspirit.com](http://www.sherwoodsspirit.com)

### auctions

**The Wheelwright Museum of the American Indian**, August 21-22, 704 Camino Lejo, Santa Fe, NM 87505; 505.982.4636

**Institute of American Indian Arts Museum show and sale**, August 20, 108 Cathedral Place, Santa Fe, NM 87501; 505.983.8900; [www.iaiancad.org](http://www.iaiancad.org)

**Southwest Association of Indian Arts**, August 22-23, Sweeney Convention Center, 201 W. Marcy, Santa Fe, NM 87501; 505.983.5220; [www.swaia.org](http://www.swaia.org)