

PRESS RELEASE

Coming to the Maxwell Museum of Anthropology *Coiling Kin: The Life of Pueblo Pottery* (opening June 6, 2026)

Headline

A new exhibit at the Maxwell Museum of Anthropology, *Coiling Kin: The Life of Pueblo Pottery*, presents a comprehensive exploration of the permanent collection through Pueblo artists' perspectives.

Summary

This collaboratively-curated exhibition presents Pueblo perspectives on pottery informed by their guiding beliefs, communities, histories, and the enduring practice of this art. Twenty-three potters from 14 Pueblos selected 70 works from the Maxwell Museum's collection for its first significant display. Contributions from additional Pueblo artists, along with photographs and loan items, facilitate reflections on the deep significance of clay in Pueblo life.

Synopsis

Pueblo peoples' long habitation of the land is marked with the traces of pottery that record their deep histories in the Southwest and their current lives. Through the voices of the co-curators, this exhibition provides a multi-vocal experience of clay – a cherished offering of Mother Earth – from its raw to worked forms by means of their respectful use of it. The exhibit presents the materials and laborious processes entailed in making pottery infused with potters' deep spiritual beliefs and dedication. Highlighting clay as a medium for protection and nurturance, the exhibit reveals pottery as an embodied expression of identity and integrity in and through time – an enduring, distinguished art form that remains part of everyday life.

Developing the exhibition was a three-year project. Curators first visited the Maxwell Museum to review the collection and make preliminary selections, then refined them and discussed their choice in video recordings. Throughout, they interacted with each other and Museum staff in small group and whole team meetings, convening collectively on the UNM campus to develop themes and content. Museum staff and a videographer then recorded them at work in their communities and at markets. A final team meeting at UNM completed the exhibit's organization and content in preparation for its design by Curator of Exhibits Toni Gentili. Frequent communication facilitated a remarkably smooth process and warm, respectful relationships in this expansive effort of relational curation.

Presented in the round and with extensive use of audio-visual materials, the exhibit introduces the curators and explores four primary themes: clay and its broader purpose in Pueblo Life;

kin connections made through pottery in time and across generations within the Southwest; pottery making knowledge and processes; and the contemporary context and future possibilities for pottery. Through this exhibit visitors will experience the embodied language of Pueblo pottery in all its complexity.

Exhibition dates: June 6, 2026 – May 31, 2028

Opening Events

Please join us on Saturday, June 6, 2026, from 2 pm to 4 pm for the opening reception. A panel of curators will discuss their roles in the exhibit, while others will provide small group tours of each of the four exhibit themes. Refreshments will be served.

Contacts

For media inquiries, please contact the Maxwell Museum's Curator of Public Programs Julián Antonio Carrillo (jac123@unm.edu), or Curator of Ethnology and Lead Exhibit Curator, Lea McChesney (lsmcches@unm.edu).

Coiling Kin Co-Curators

Albert Alvidrez, Tigua (Ysleta del Sur Pueblo)
Hubert Candelario, Katishtya (San Felipe Pueblo)
Karen Kahe Charley, Hopi'sinom (Hopi Tribe)
Clarence Cruz, Ohkay Owingeh (San Juan Pueblo)
Jerry Dunbar, Tigua (Ysleta del Sur Pueblo)
Max Early, K'awaika (Laguna Pueblo)
Erik "Than Tsideh" Fender, P'o:whoge Owingeh (San Ildefonso Pueblo)
Mary Dolores Lewis Garcia, Haak'u (Acoma Pueblo)
Marita Hinds, Tay tsu'geh Owingeh (Tesuque Pueblo)
Darlene James, Hopi'sinom (Hopi-Tewa)
Deborah Jojola, Shiwif' Tuei (Isleta Pueblo)
Lorraine Gala Lewis, Hopi'sinom, Thaawi', K'awaika (Hopi, Taos, Laguna pueblos)
Lea McChesney, Maxwell Museum of Anthropology
Elizabeth Medina, Ts'iya (Zia Pueblo)
Marcellus Medina, Ts'iya (Zia Pueblo)
Claudia Mitchell, Haak'u (Acoma Pueblo)
Martina Montoya, Tamaya (Santa Ana Pueblo)
Emmaline Naha, Hopi'sinom (Hopi Tribe)
Melda Navasie, Hopi'sinom (Hopi-Tewa)
Donna Pino, Tamaya (Santa Ana Pueblo)
Ryan Roller, Kha'p'o Owingeh (Santa Clara Pueblo)
Jeff Suina, Ko-tyit (Cochiti Pueblo)
Judy Tafoya, Kha'p'o Owingeh (Santa Clara Pueblo)
Dominique Toya, Walatowa (Jemez Pueblo)M
Maxine Toya, Walatowa (Jemez Pueblo)
Cassandra Tsalate, A:shiwi (Zuni Pueblo)

Images (high resolution images available on request)



Jars with bird designs (left to right): Polychrome Jar, P'o:whogeh Owingeh (San Ildefonso Pueblo) (72.10.51); Polychrome Jar with "Zia bird" design and double rainbow, Tsiya (Zia Pueblo) (79.82.1); Polychrome Seed Jar with bird design, Hopi'sinom (Hopi Tribe) (78.59.15); Polychrome Jar with turkey design, Tsiya (Zia Pueblo) (73.4.1). Photograph by Karen Price.



Four jars with water designs (left to right): Polychrome Jar with Avanyu and cloud designs, Ohkay Owingeh (San Juan Pueblo) (80.51.52); Polychrome Jar ca 1880-1900, Tetsugé Owingeh (Tesuque Pueblo) (80.32.3); Black-on-white bichrome Seed Jar with cloud designs, Ko-tyit (Cochiti Pueblo) (71.21.3); Polychrome Jar with frog, tadpole, dragonfly, and bird designs, A:shiwi (Zuni Pueblo) (76.68.27). Photograph by Karen Price.



Elaborate panel designs on nineteenth century polychrome jars feature a white slip and deer or antelope iconography from Haak'u (Acoma Pueblo) (36.20.3, left), and A:shiwi (Zuni Pueblo) with the Pueblo's distinctive white *kechiba* (kaolin clay) slip and floral designs (61.3.317, right). Photograph by Karen Price.



Three jars showing the “moth wing” design used by Hopi’sinom (Hopi-Tewa) potter Nampeyo (c.1860-1942), illustrated by a photograph in the exhibit. They represent design continuity through four subsequent generations. Left: Small Polychrome Jar by Nampeyo’s youngest child, Fannie Nampeyo (2022.35.21); middle: large Polychrome Jar by James Garcia, fourth-generation Nampeyo family potter (96.34.21); right: Polychrome Seed Jar by potter and exhibit curator Melda Navasie, fourth-generation family potter (2024.23.1). Photograph by Karen Price.



All team meeting on the UNM Campus, November 2023. Seated: Curator Karen Kahe Charley, Hopi; Curator Emmaline Naha, Hopi. Standing: Maxwell Museum Curator of Ethnology Lea McChesney; and Curator Claudia Mitchell, Acoma. Photograph by Carla Sinopoli.



All team meeting on the UNM Campus, June 2024. Photograph by Carla Sinopoli.



Final hybrid all team meeting on the UNM Campus, April 2025. Photograph by Carla Sinopoli