

## **Original pottery by artists of Mata Ortiz, Mexico will be on view April 6-24 in Grove Gallery at UCSD**

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ORIGINAL POTTERY BY ARTISTS OF MATA ORTIZ, MEXICO WILL BE ON VIEW APRIL 6-24 IN GROVE GALLERY AT UCSD

The Pottery of Mata Ortiz, an exhibition of approximately 100 original pieces of pottery by artists from the Mexican village of Mata Ortiz, will be on view April 6 through April 24 in Grove Gallery at the University of California, San Diego. A reception will be held April 9 from 5 to 7 p.m. Admission to the exhibition and the reception are free and open to the public.

San Diego-based collector Ron Schneider selected the pottery to be shown. Schneider owns Puerta Vallarta's Galeria de Ollas (gallery of pots), devoted exclusively to Mata Ortiz pottery, also referred to as Casas Grandes pottery. Most pieces in the UCSD exhibit will be for sale. Sizes will range from two inches to 18 inches high and prices from \$18 to \$3,000.

Schneider, who describes his feelings when viewing the decorative pottery of Mata Ortiz as those "of exhilaration and peace," will lecture and give a slide presentation at 7 p.m. April 9. He will discuss the origins of the pottery in the ancient civilization at Paquime, the reinvention of the tradition by Juan Quezada, the development of the pottery-making tradition in the village of Mata Ortiz, and the various maturing artists who are adding to the growing pool of creativity.

Schneider also will explain how the pottery is made, various attributes of the works such as the thin walled construction, and how to evaluate pieces. He will discuss the sociological impact pottery is having on the small Mexican village.

Mata Ortiz is situated 5,900 feet up in a high desert valley at the edge of the Sierra Madre in Northern Mexico's Chihuahua state. It is about 150 miles from Douglas, Ariz., and an hour from the nearest paved road. Conveniences are minimal. There are no precise figures, but the population is estimated at 2,000 or 3,000 and the number of potters between 300 and 400.

The genesis of this rebirth of premier pottery in the Mata Ortiz area of Mexico began in the 1950s when 12-year-old native Juan Quezada started exploring and studying the ancient pot shards scattered about the high plains. Through years of experimentation and trial and error, Quezada taught himself to make pots inspired by these shards which had been created by pre-Columbian cultures. He succeeded in making his first pot in January of 1971, and began selling a few pots across the border. Spencer MacCallum, an anthropologist, came across three of Quezada's unsigned pots in a swap shop in New Mexico. MacCallum sought out the maker of the pots, found Quezada, sponsored him, and promoted his works. Meanwhile Quezada passed on his skills to family members and friends who in turn taught others in the village.

Today Quezada has pottery exhibited from galleries in Tokyo to the American Craft Museum in New York City. In 1995 an exhibit of the pottery of Mata Ortiz was presented at the University of New Mexico Art Museum

accompanied by an illustrated catalog. In the catalog, pre-Columbian art expert Flora S. Clancy wrote: "There is something powerful in these works, something quickly felt and sensed, but difficult to express."

San Diego physician Dick O'Connor, who owns one of the largest private collections of Mata Ortiz pottery, says: "When I first saw a Mata Ortiz pot, I experienced a physical reaction. I could feel it. A tightening in the chest. It's happened again and again."

Alison DaRosa, San Diego Union-Tribune travel editor who visited Juan Quezada and came face to face with the village of Mata Ortiz and the pottery of its creators, wrote: "It's not easy to write about what happened as I stood there looking at that pot, because I didn't understand it then and am not sure I do now. All I know is that I still can't think about that pot without feeling the same lump in my throat that I tried to fight that afternoon. I couldn't hold back tears then, and still can't. It touched my soul."

The Pottery of Mata Ortiz will be on view in UCSD's Grove Gallery from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesdays through Fridays, and 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturdays April 6-24. Grove Gallery is located in the UCSD Crafts Center Complex on the Revelle College campus off Eucalyptus Grove Lane. Gallery directions and parking information are available at the Gilman Drive information center at the entrance to the campus. For exhibit information call 534-2021.

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