

# Beauty From the Earth

## The Polychrome Pottery of Zia Pueblo



# The Art of Pueblo Pottery Dates Back Nearly 2,000 Years

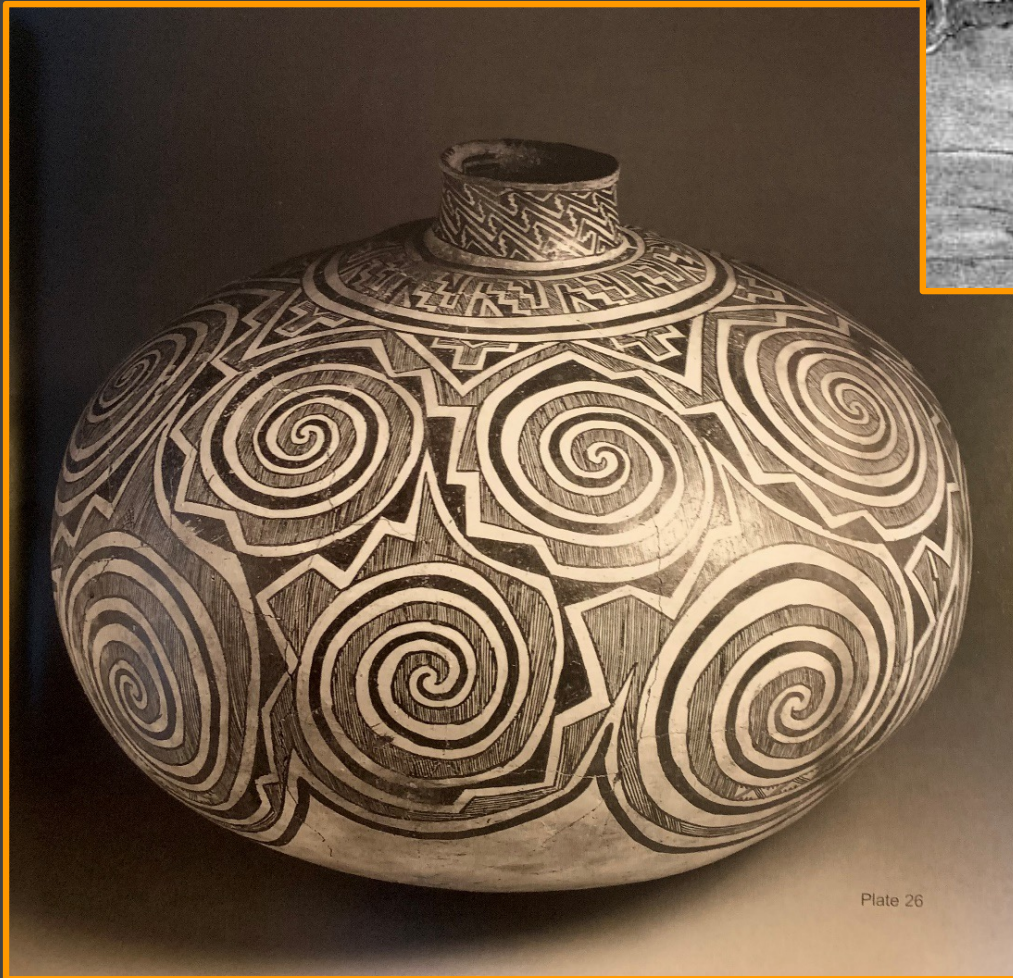
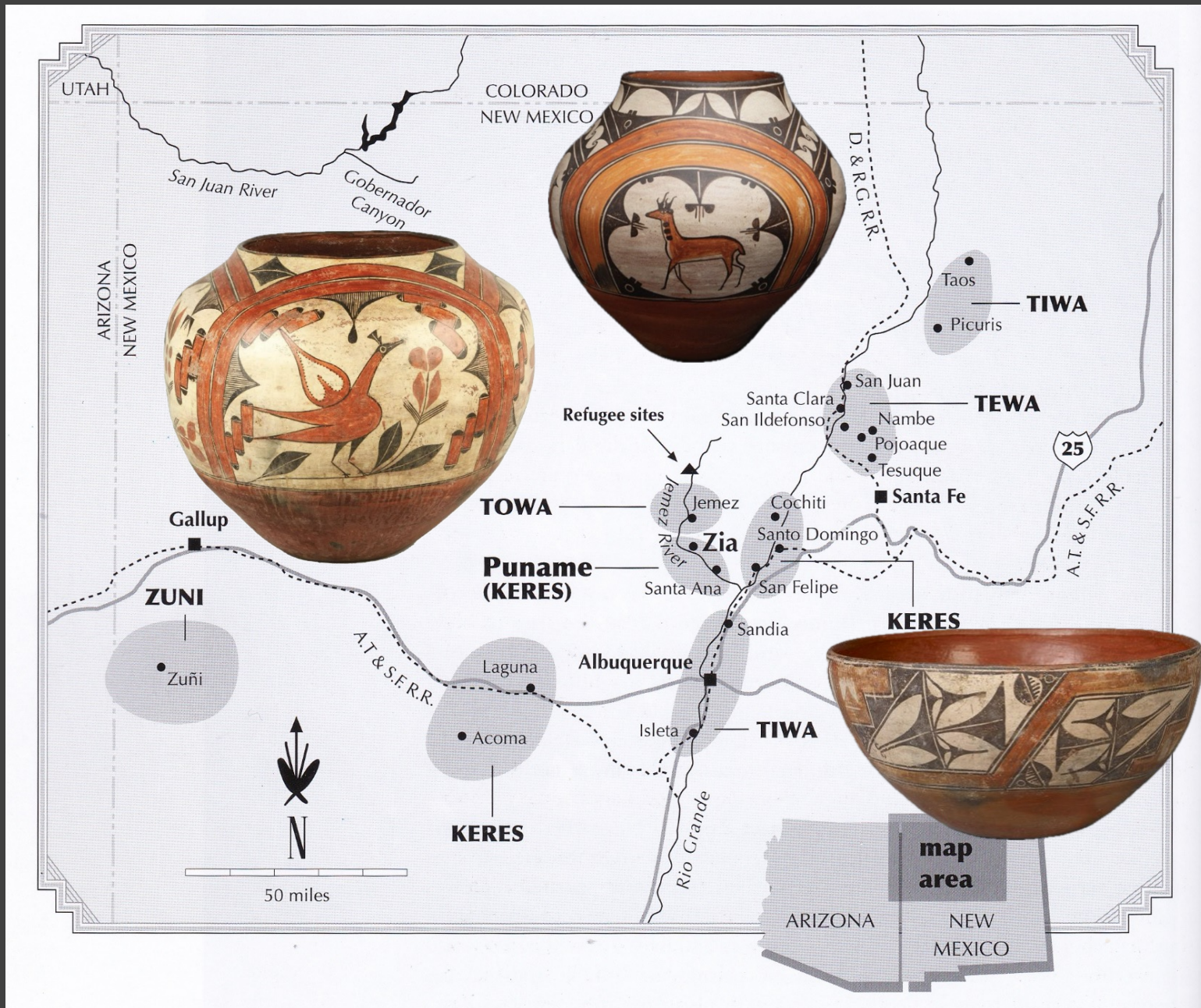


Plate 26

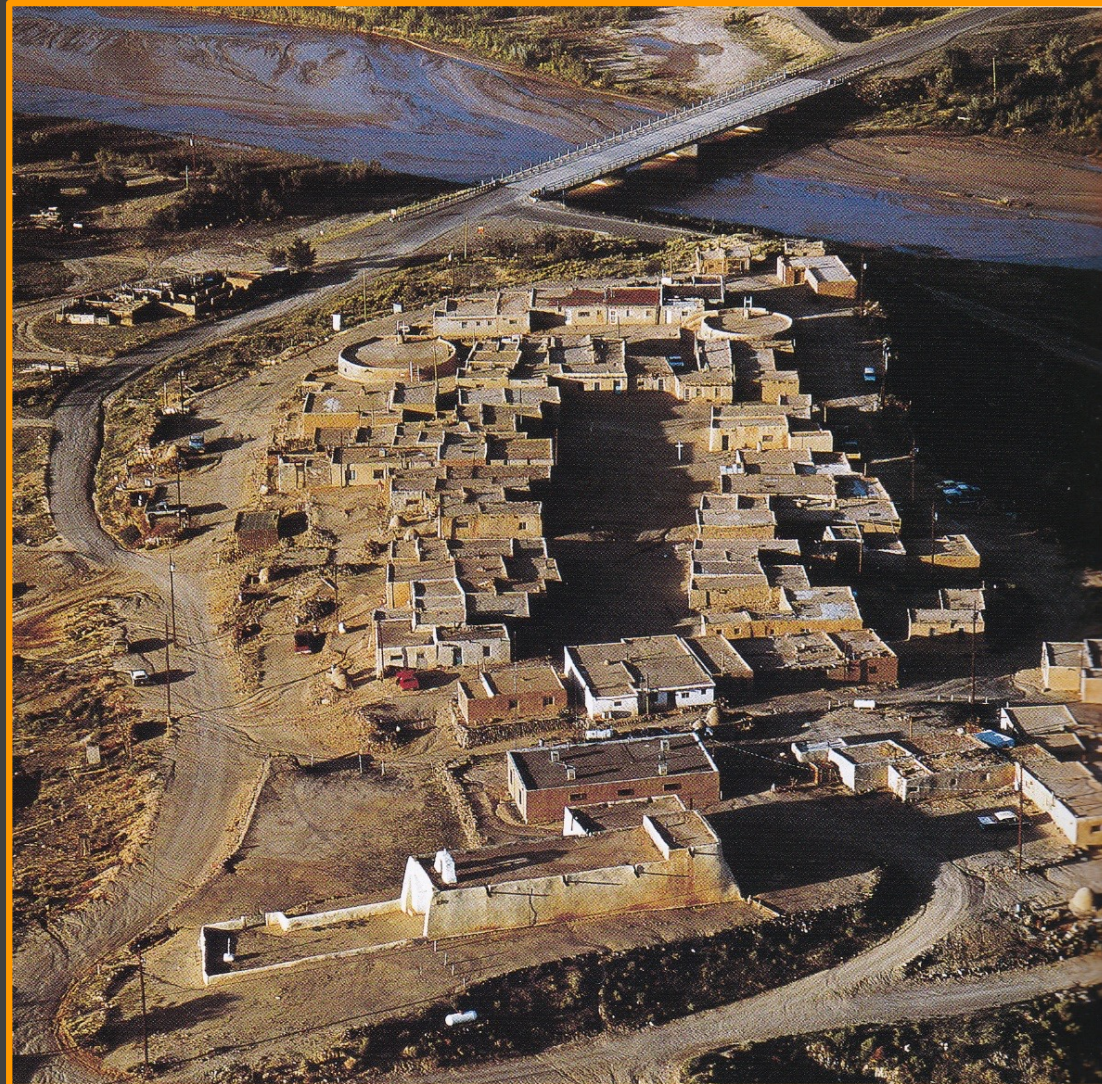


# Zia & The Rio Grande Pueblos



# Tsi-ya (Zia) Pueblo

Zia Pueblo lies about 30 miles northwest of Albuquerque, New Mexico. Founded around 1300 AD, it's pottery-making tradition dates back many centuries.



# Surviving . . . And Thriving



Zia Pueblo Population in 1540: 5,000 – 20,000

Zia Population in 1690: Less than 300



Conflict with the Spanish military and religious authorities resulted in the near destruction of the pueblo and the killing of some 600 Zians in 1688.



By the 1890s, further conflict and disease reduced Zia population to about 100, and many died in influenza and smallpox epidemics in the early 1900s.



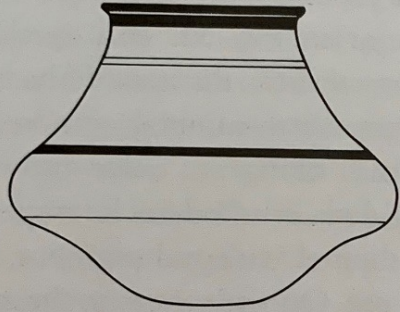
Zia's population rebounded in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century to an estimated 400 in 1960. By 2023, the population had grown to 873.



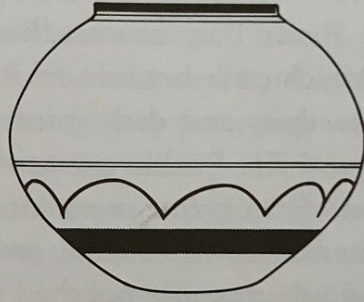
Despite all the turmoil, destruction and population losses, the Zia pottery tradition has survived and thrived.



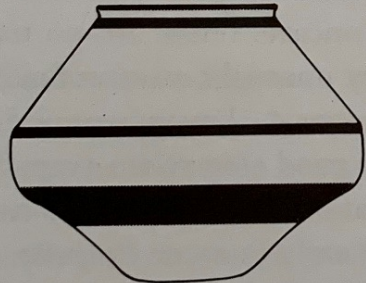
# Evolution of Zia Jar Forms



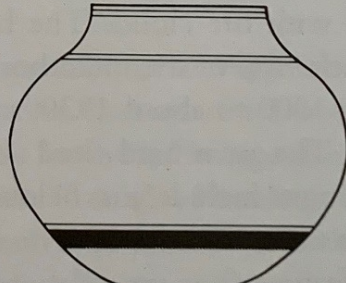
San Diego Polychrome  
Circa 1680  
Jemez River Polychrome  
1680-1700



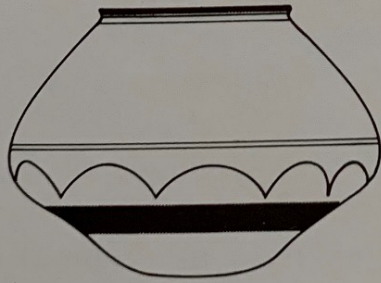
San Pablo Polychrome  
Circa 1780  
Ranchitos Polychrome  
Circa 1800



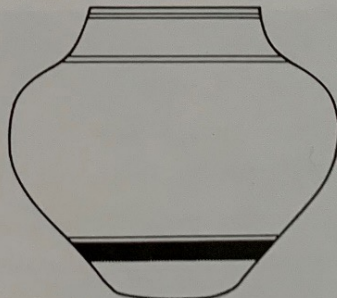
Early Puname Polychrome  
Circa 1700



Trios Polychrome  
Circa 1830



Late Puname Polychrome  
Circa 1740



Zia Polychrome  
Circa 1880



Ca. 1700



Ca. 1790



Ca. 1710



Ca. 1830



Ca. 1750



Ca. 1890

# Puname Polychrome 1700 - 1760

Puname Polychrome evolved from San Diego and Jemez River Polychrome pottery. Puname jars are characterized by upper slopes that are essentially straight, culminated by very short, slightly flared necks. The greatest diameter is located at a relatively low position on jars. The red or black arcs at the bottom of the design field help identify a Zia origin as opposed to a Santa Ana origin.



Puname Polychrome, ca. 1730  
Found in a cave near Gobernador  
Canyon.



Puname Polychrome, ca. 1720  
Found in Gobernador Canyon.

# San Pablo Polychrome 1760 - 1820

In the mid-1700s, Zia pottery underwent dramatic changes in form and design. The straight sides of Puname Polychrome jars eventually became convex, reaching a nearly globular shape in San Pablo Polychrome. Necks became straighter and slightly more pronounced. A whole host of new design motifs emerged as well.



Transitional San Pablo-Trios  
Polychrome water jar ca.  
1820



San Pablo Polychrome water jar  
ca. 1770

# Trios Polychrome 1820 - 1860



Trios Polychrome ca. 1850

Early Trios jars retain the slight bulbous shape of San Pablo Polychrome, and the position of maximum diameter gradually rises. As at the other Keres villages, rims are painted black instead of red starting around 1800. Trios design layouts are completely different from the San Pablo style. Emphasis is placed on a main design band, as well as a separate design band around the neck. Zia bird motifs, as we know them today, developed in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century.



Trios Polychrome ca. 1850s

# Zia Polychrome 1860 – Present

Zia Polychrome is a pottery type that evolved from Trios Polychrome about 1860 and is still being made today. The essential features of Zia Polychrome involve changes in form and design from the previous Trios Polychrome (and even earlier Zia pottery types).



Zia Polychrome ca. 1875



Zia Polychrome ca. 1870s

# Zia Polychrome 1860 - Present

Design styles in Zia Polychrome progressed from relatively formal, geometric motifs (with subtle symbolic meaning) to greater freedom and variety, often with naturalistic figures and more obvious literal meaning.



Zia Polychrome ca. 1875

Jar forms changed from being more rounded near the base to having more sharply rising sides, and from having a relatively low position of maximum diameter to having the greatest width at a somewhat higher shoulder.



Zia Polychrome ca. 1900

# Split Rectangles & Reflected Arcs

Design elements known as "split rectangles" and "reflected arcs" apparently arose around 1880 then fell out of use in the 1900-1910 time period.



Zia Polychrome ca. 1890



Zia Polychrome ca. 1890s

# Zia Polychrome Water Jar In the Museum's Collections

This beautiful, small Zia jar is remarkable for its form and painted decoration. With its smaller size, it may have been used by a child or adolescent to carry water or other substances. It has a four-color polychrome painted decoration consisting of black, white, red and yellow pigments.



The painted decoration also features a band of pendant arcs just below the rim and split triangular "caps" on each of the four sides of the split rectangles. Lines extending from the upper caps join and blossom into leaf-like elements. The red inner linings of the reflected arcs contain narrow diamonds with red circles (berries?). A traditional red band separates the slipped/painted area from the unslipped, polished bare paste on the bottom quarter of the pot.

## A Rare and Beautiful Zia Jar

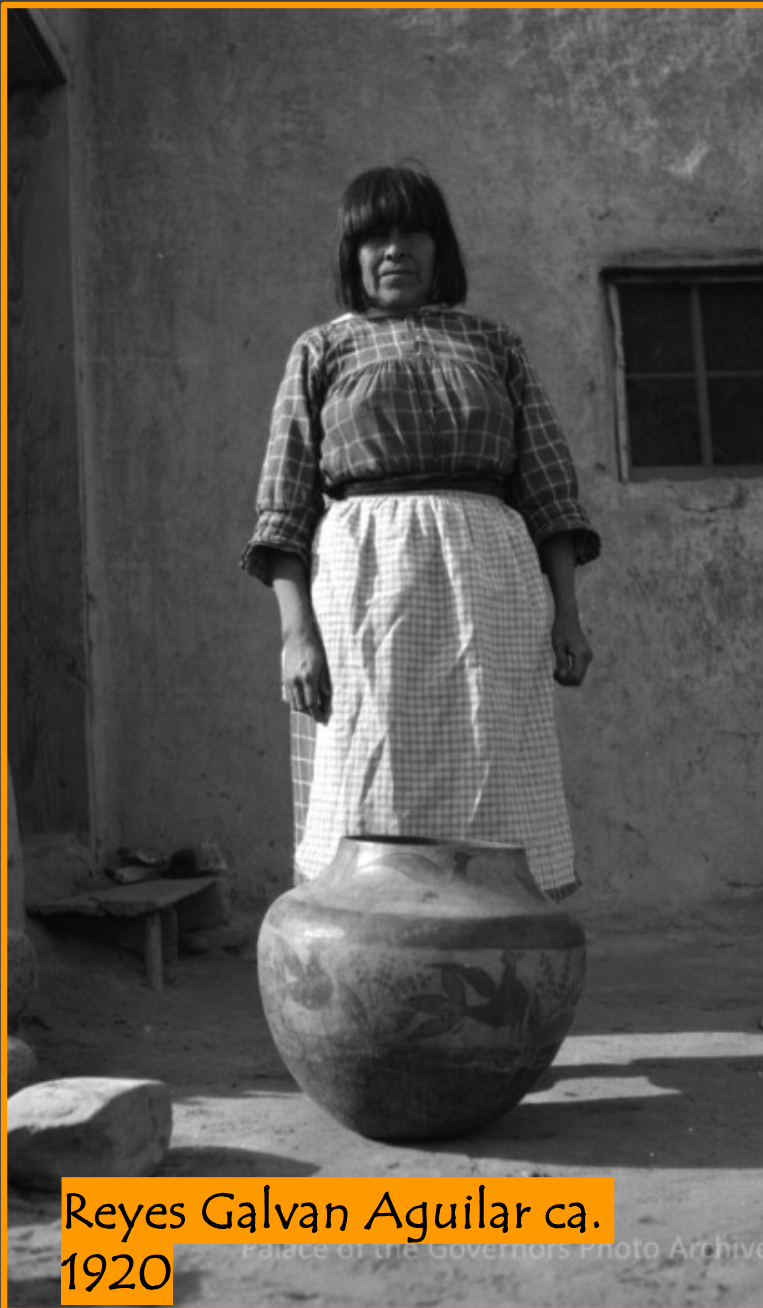
Sculpturally, this pot is well balanced and proportioned, and has a relatively low position of maximum diameter. The fluted rim, a rare feature in Zia pottery, adds a certain elegance, and the patina and wear of this beautifully made jar speak to many years of loving use in the pueblo.



Dating this jar presents somewhat of a dilemma. Painted design features like the "chain" of alternating split rectangles and reflected arcs speak to a date as early as 1880. The low position of maximum diameter, somewhat roughly polished base, and degree of wear and patina also speak to a relatively early date – perhaps 1880s. The fluted rim, on the other hand, could suggest a somewhat later date, say around 1900. A reasonable compromise might be circa 1890.

# Zia's Rich Pottery Tradition – Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century

Many of Zia's greatest potters produced their best work in the early 1900s – artists like Isabel Medina Toribio, Reyes Galvan Aguilar, and the best known of them all, Trinidad Medina.



Reyes Galvan Aguilar ca.  
1920



Four-color polychrome water jar by Reyes Galvan Aguilar, circa 1910–1920.

## A Strong and Thriving Pottery Tradition

The beautiful pottery seen in this program speaks to the long and vibrant pottery-making tradition at Zia Pueblo. Against all odds, master potters have created, and continue to create, magnificent art over the span of hundreds of years.



"Pottery's strength is evidenced by its permanence and presence through time. This permanence means that our stories will live on in these and other vessels."

Ulysses Reid - Zia Pueblo

# Sources

- ✦ The Pottery of Zia Pueblo by Francis H. Harlow & Dwight Lanmon, 2003.
- ✦ Pottery of the Pueblos of New Mexico 1700-1940 by Jonathan Batkin, 1987.
- ✦ Historic Pottery of the Pueblo Indians 1600-1880 by Larry Frank & Francis Harlow, 1990.
- ✦ Two Hundred Years of Historic Pueblo Pottery: The Gallegos Collection by Francis H. Harlow, 1990.
- ✦ "Reyes Galvan: A Master Zia Potter" by Dwight P. Lanmon & Francis H. Harlow. American Indian Art Magazine: August 2003, Volume 28 #4.
- ✦ "Zia Matte-Paint Pottery – A 300-Year History" by Michael J. Hering. American Indian Art Magazine: August 1987, Vol. 12 #4.

