

Care and Handling of Pottery

When handling pueblo or other tribal ceramics you want to have clean hands free of lotions, oils and jewelry if possible...especially rings. Rings may chip or damage the vessel as well as long fingernails will scratch the surface of the bowl. Handle pottery with both hands and lift from the bottom. Do not handle pottery at the rim or lip as this is the weakest point and will compromise or deteriorate the strength of the vessel.

People will often feel the need to tap or flick the pot with their finger to determine if a pot has a high pitch. We don't suggest this because it may chip the slip or create a crack in a very thin-walled ceramic. It is better to verify from a staff member or artist if it was fired outdoors or in a kiln.

If your collection has acquired dust use a soft cloth. Do not use any polishing chemicals or dust brushes as this may affect the porous nature of the pot, leave spots of oil or even scratch and remove slips of pigment.

The pueblo and other tribal pottery that we sell here at the Heard Museum is for aesthetic and collection purposes so it is not advised to place water in these ceramics or use them for cooking.

Should a client inquire about how to keep their pieces from moving while on display do not suggest any sort of sticky material. It will be difficult to remove but may also remove the hallmark or signature of the artist. The best suggestion is to purchase a pottery ring that we have for sale in the shop. However, we have heard of collectors placing a small plastic baggie of sand in the bowl out of view for stability.

If the above noted suggestions are followed a client or yourself will enjoy your pottery collection for many years to come.