



Victor Babu (Albanian-American, b. 1936 - d. 2019)

Untitled, 1990

Porcelain, black slip/glaze, resisted sprayed glazes

Collection Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art, 93.04

This large, wheel-thrown charger has the appearance of black lacquer ware, belying Babu's interest in Chinese and Japanese art. The alluring deep blackness of the glaze surface and the simple eloquence of the plate's form are typical of Babu's exceptional craftsmanship. Until the mid-1980s he did not decorate his pots, but focused on elegant articulation of volumetric forms. Since an exhibition at the Morgan Gallery, Kansas City, Missouri, in 1983, Babu has decorated his work with flowers, butterflies, frogs and snakes in flat stencil-like patterns. Hanging on a wall, his plates serve as a picture plane, or support, for flattened images with an illusion of space. Here, two rattlesnakes, one slithering on top of the other, just fit within the plate's surface before it curves gently upward. The intricate, dry patterns of the snake's skins play against the serpentine outlines of their bodies in a technically masterful and beautiful design. Babu has said, "As a visual artist, I must trust my eye. I can only hope that my personal understanding of material, craft, form, and decoration, combine to reveal what the eye remembers of beauty."

Victor Babu received both his BFA and MFA from the New York State College of Ceramics, Alfred University, Alfred, New York. He began his teaching career in the ceramics department at the University of Texas, Austin. He left Texas in 1968 at the invitation of his Alfred graduate student mentor Ken Ferguson to join the faculty of the Kansas City Art Institute. Together, and with George Timock's help beginning in 1973, they built the ceramics program at KCAI into one of the top undergraduate programs in the United States. Babu retired from KCAI in 2001.



Alberto Bautista Gomez (Mexican, d. 2007)

Jaguar, c. 1970-1980

Clay

Collection Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art, 2013.12

Alberto Bautista Gómez grew up in the small pueblo of Amatenango del Valle in the Mexican state of Chiapas. The artist, who was taught by his grandmother, was a rare male voice in a village that remains largely matrilineal when it comes to pottery. He began his career making functional pots, but eventually he learned to make figurative sculptures. In Amatenango del Valle, clay is dug from a local hillside, then brought into the village, where it is mixed to a working consistency through the addition of water and sand, which adds strength in the firing. After the figures have been constructed, they are burnished smooth with a stone and fired in an open bonfire, then painted. Eventually, Bautista Gómez began specializing in jaguar sculptures, which are highly symbolic for his Tzeltal (Mayan) ancestors. In Mayan culture, the jaguar is seen as the ruler of the Underworld because of its nighttime hunting prowess. Bautista Gómez's jaguar, with its powerful musculature, is captured with a turned head, as if looking at its prey. Over time, the jaguar has become one of the signature forms of Amatenango del Valle and has taken its place alongside the traditional pots and sculptures that have made the pueblo home to one of the most distinguished ceramic traditions in all of Mexico.

Alberto Bautista Gómez learned to make pots from his grandmother.



Leonel López Sáenz (Mexican)

Sgraffito pot, 2006

Clay

Collection Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art, 2006.37

Leonel López lives in the Mexican pottery town of Mata Ortiz in Barrio López, a neighborhood named after his family. López is a Mata Ortiz artist who does not make his own pots; he acquires unfired pottery from other Mata Ortiz potters, then sands, polishes, and carves them with scratched (*sgraffito*) designs. His wife Elena Rodríguez de López taught him how to paint pottery in 1992 during a drought when the field work was slow, and he has since become an accomplished artist in his own right and is regarded as one of the most successful potters of Mata Ortiz.

For this pot, he covered the white jar with black slip, then cut the surface away, leaving white clay as background for the black images. While some of his work incorporates animals in regular patterns, he populates this jar with a menagerie of squirrels, wild boars, bats, buzzards, owls, coyotes, foxes, rats, and a goat. It's a narrative of predators, scavengers, and ominous omens in a setting of dead trees and rocky outcrops. He decorates some vessels with repeated animal motifs, and others are "story *ollas*" like this one.



Teri Greeves (American Indian, Kiowa, b.1970)

Spider Woman/ Emerging Woman, 2015

Czech cut beads, stamped sterling silver, seed pearls, faceted jade, faceted garnet, rose quartz, Swarovski crystals and heeled shoes

Collection Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art, 2015.47

Gift of H Tony and Marti Oppenheimer Foundation

Growing up in her mother's trading post on the Wind River Reservation in Wyoming, Teri Greeves absorbed a deep knowledge of American Indian art forms, and she started creating beaded moccasins when she was a child. Her father was an Italian American sculptor and her grandmother taught her beadwork. Blending geometric Kiowa beadwork with the Shoshone pictorial style, Greeves developed her own visual language. She stitches beaded imagery to embellish everyday objects from the non-Native world, including high tops and high heeled sneaker shoes, with cultural content. The pregnant woman here is paired with a caterpillar and two butterflies, suggesting growth stages and development, as the butterfly emerges from the cocoon through metamorphosis. The older woman wearing a shawl is paired with the spider against a lightning bolt – the Spider Woman taught humans how to weave. Greeves stated: "though my medium may be considered 'craft' or 'traditional,' my stories are from the same source as the voice running through that first Kiowa beadworker's needles. It is the voice of my grandmothers. To all the Kiowa women who labored over their families most beautiful and prized objects, who gave us such an awe inspiring canon of expression to be born from, I thank them."

Greeves graduated from the University of California in Santa Cruz, earning a BA in American Studies in 1995. From 1990-1993 she attended Cabrillo Community College in Aptos, California, and in 1988 she studied at St. John's College in Santa Fe, NM.