

## The value of art may be its journey

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Sometimes the real treasure isn't found in the object but in the circumstances surrounding the acquisition.

An Indian potter, whose work I had represented for many years, related the following story when I asked her how she started making pottery.

The grandmother who raised her also was a potter. She took the young girl along to gather clay and other materials used to make the paints and slips. The girl watched her grandmother prepare the materials, form the pots and fire them. When the final polishing was finished, the pots were displayed in a safe place where they wouldn't be broken easily.

But after awhile, the pots would be gone and the girl would wonder where they went. One day when she was about 5 years old, she asked her grandmother about them.

A few days later, her grandmother gave her a bath, brushed her hair and carefully braided it. Then she dressed her in her best dress that she wore for ceremonies and packed the pots in sheepskins in a large basket. Her grandmother put the basket on her head and they began to walk away from the pueblo down a long dirt trail.

After what seemed forever, they came to a wide, cleared road that stretched as far as she could see and they sat down to wait. In the distance there was a cloud of dust growing ever larger and a noise could be heard growing louder and louder. A strange-looking wagon materialized with people who were very pale and sick looking. A man got out and approached her grandmother. The little girl cried out for her grandmother to run, but when she was hushed, the girl hid behind her grandmother's skirts.

The man spoke in words she had never heard before and after a few minutes gave her grandmother some coins and paper, took the pottery, and handed it back to two ladies in the strange wagon.

That was the first time Mary Small from the Jemez pueblo had ever left the village, seen a road, a car, a non-Native-American person or heard English spoken. That was in the late 1930s and Mary grew up to be a mother, grandmother, nurse and a very famous potter who was named artist of the year in 2003.

