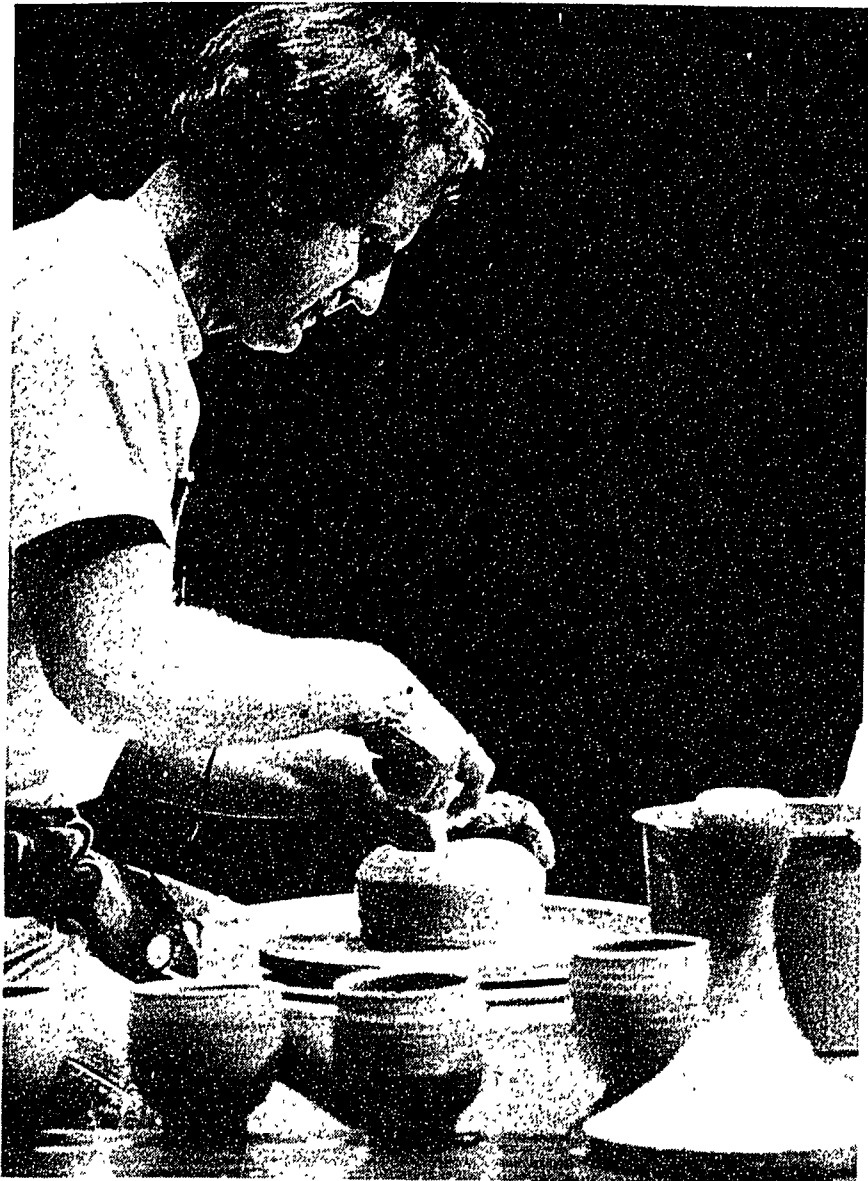


Super Mud '77



Above, David Shaner demonstrates production pottery-throwing. At right, Adam and Santana Martinez use "cowpies" to block the cracks of their simple kiln. They held a special firing of their ceramic pieces on the HUB lawn Saturday.



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Ceramic show features dazzling antique and modern techniques

By LYNNE MARGOLIS
Daily Collegian Staff Writer

Eisenhower Auditorium may be an unlikely setting for the uttering of Indian ceremonial prayers or the construction of 12-foot cacti, but that's exactly what went on during the 11th annual Super Mud conference held here this past weekend.

Approximately 1,700 students, teachers and professionals converged on Happy Valley Thursday for the ceramics invitational. David DonTigny, head of the University's ceramics department, said the turn-out for this year's conference was the largest ever.

first ceramics program), put together an example of his incredible raku work.

But the star attraction of Super Mud '77 was a 97-year-old Tewa Indian named Maria Martinez. Hailed as "one of the greatest living American potters," and "a legend in her own time," by artists and critics alike, Martinez has been practicing her unique artistry for more than three-quarters of a century.

Maria's great-granddaughter, Barbara Gonzales, narrated for the audience Saturday while her mother, Anita, and her grandparents, Adam and Santana, demonstrated the pottery technique that has become a Martinez

prayers are recited during each step. Before the demonstration was started, everyone in Eisenhower was asked to join Maria and her family in an Indian prayer for the success for the pots to be crafted.

Before firing, the pots have a brick-red lustre, but the smoke created during firing is caught under the shale surface. This gives the pots the rich black tone they are noted for.

In a separate demonstration on the HUB lawn, Adam and Santana fired several of their pots.

The kiln consisted of a simple metal grate resting on bricks that had been placed in a bed of sand. Metal plates were put on top of the grate, the pots were stacked on these. Other plates were leaned around the sides to block out the dirt and wind. The kindling, consisting of branches and hay, was positioned underneath the grate before stacking. Once everything was in place, Adam and

Santana used dried manure patties to fill in the cracks. Some kerosene was poured over the kiln and it was ignited.

Smoke filled the air as Adam and Santana poked and prodded between the cracks of dung, but that didn't deter the huge crowd of curious onlookers. Many were popping camera shutters continuously. If there was one striking aspect of the entire Super Mud convention, it was the distracting profusion of amateur photographers snapping away at anything they could focus.

Only an hour after the firing was started, Adam and Santana were taking the finished pots out of the kiln. The result — beautiful, lustrous black pots, were claimed immediately by art fanciers who could afford to add a Martinez pot to their collections. What they came away with, however, was not only an expensive art object, but the result of five proud generations of Indian heritage. And that's priceless.



Robert Winokur, professor of ceramics at the Tyler School of Art, Philadelphia, adds some finishing touches to his unusual creation.

'Clay is a very humbling material. There's so much to know about it that everyone feels the need to share what they know, and that's the Super Mud idea.'

About Super Mud, DonTigny commented, "There's a lot of gathering around and exchanging of ideas and information. It's like having a class with 300 professors, 600 students, plus all the top professionals in the field."

Clay is a very humbling material," he said. "There's so much to know about it that everyone feels the need to share what they know, and that's the Super Mud idea."

trademark and family tradition.

The tiny black pots for which the family has become famous look deceptively simple on display in the HUB. But one must possess knowledge of the family's techniques in order to know exactly how to combine the volcanic ash and humus (topsoil) into a curable clay body, and fashion the material into a Martinez pot. Each pot is constructed entirely by hand, using only

'A legend in her own time,' Martinez has been practicing her unique artistry for more than three-quarters of a century.'

He should know. As "The Father of Super Mud," DonTigny is the man responsible for originating the conference that is now recognized as The main event in the world of ceramics art. Besides the student invitational exhibit currently on display in Zoller Gallery, this year's convention featured demonstrations by five of America's leading ceramic artists.

David Shaner, a production potter from Montana, demonstrated his wheel-throwing technique. David Middlebrook, an avant-garde California ceramics artist, built the towering cactus for his Super Mud demonstration. Robert Winokur, professor of ceramics at Philadelphia's Tyler School of Art, explained how he makes his useful, yet whimsical pots, and Wayne Higby, professor and chairman of ceramics at Alfred University (site of the country's

coils, water, and potato-chip-like shaping tools sliced from gourds.

The beautiful lustre on a finished Martinez pot is created while it is still "greenware" (before firing). The pot is first sandpapered and wiped with a damp cloth and then several layers of shale slip (a thick liquid) are applied.

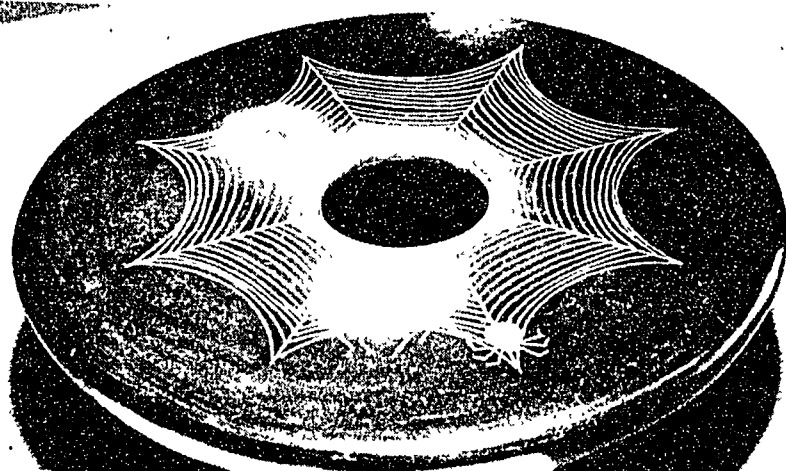
A layer of lard is added as a moisture retainer before the pot is polished. It is this polishing, or burnishing process, which gives each pot a shiny finish. A smooth stone or yucca leaves are used to achieve the effect.

Yucca leaf tips are also used in slip trailing, the process used to make the intricate designs found on Martinez pots. The leaf tips are better than commercial brushes, Barbara said, because they make finer lines.

The pot-building procedure is like a ceremony, Barbara said, because



"The Living Tradition of Maria Martinez" — The 97 year-old Tewa Indian autographs copies of her biography, written by Susan Peterson, in front of the HUB Gallery.



"Spider Web" by Barbara Gonzales is just one example of fine detail in hand-crafted pottery on display at Super Mud.

Photos by
Bob Gumaer
and Phil Norton



A Martinez original may command a high price, but most pieces are sold before they are out of the kiln.