



Contemporary Flintknapping

Featuring
Dan Vallo



Dan Vallo, an enrolled member of the Pueblo of Acoma, is an established artist who has worked as a flintknapper, woodworker, and potter for over 35 years. He graduated from Bernalillo High School and attended the University of New Mexico College of Engineering, Albuquerque, New Mexico. Dan currently resides with his wife in Bernalillo, New Mexico, where he is a project manager in the construction industry.

Over the past fifteen years, Dan has developed his flintknapping to a level of artistic mastery. He takes great pride in creating unique artworks that are also functional tools. Utilizing ancient techniques and traditional materials, he has elevated flintknapping into a unique form of contemporary art.

Dan spent much of his childhood living on the reservation in Acoma, New Mexico, and observing the art made by his elders. His grandmother, Helen Vallo, was a skilled traditional potter and his great uncle Clyde Hunt, known as Chief Sunny Skies, was a well-known silversmith. The artwork made by his grandmother and great uncle continue to inspire Dan today. While exploring the reservation as a child, he found many arrowheads, sparking a lifelong passion for creating his own stone tools.

Flintknapping is an ancient art used to create stone tool and weapons. Natural stones such as flint, chert or obsidian are shaped by hand using a harder stone, such as a river rock. Each arrowhead, spearhead, or knife blade begins as a large piece of stone, known as a core. Dan removes small flakes of material from the core by carefully hitting it with a river rock, slowly shaping the piece into the desired form. For his knives, Dan combines his talent for woodworking to make ornate wooden handles and stands for the stone blades he knaps.

Dan began flintknapping by making small arrowheads that replicated those he found as a child. This developed into making larger arrowheads and knives he could use in the field. Hunting with primitive weapons that he makes himself has always been important to Dan. He has continued to improve his technique with each piece, gradually developing his own unique style. Dan also uses antler or bones from animals he has harvested to make the handles and stands for his knives. It is important to him to utilize every part of the animals he harvests; this gives honor and a new life to the spirit of those animals.

This exhibit marks the first solo exhibition of Dan's work and the first time his art has been exhibited in a professional museum setting. The artwork featured in the exhibition may be purchased by contacting Dan Vallo directly at geo.dan13@gmail.com.

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Saved From the Woodpile

Obsidian, juniper, turquoise, and ebony

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April 7 – June 9, 2023



Spring Green

Obsidian, elk antler, palm wood, malachite, and ebony
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Storm Clouds

Obsidian, elk antler, ebony, zebra wood, and Cholla Cactus Wood
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Elk Rut

Obsidian, elk antler, bison horn, palm wood, and cottonwood
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Fall Bounty

Obsidian, elk jawbone, and Acoma pottery
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