**CANDELARIO MEDRANO**

Over sixty years ago, an uneducated fashioner of hand-made clay sewer pipe in Santa Cruz de las Huertas, a suburb of Tonala just outside of Guadalajara, became widely renown in the art community north of the border when New York and Los Angeles acclaimed his rustically surreal ceramic churches, Noah's arks, merry-go-rounds, jet planes and boldly imaginative animals.

In the late 1960s, Medrano gradually quit making sewer pipe to devote full-time to create imaginative ceramics. Museums, ranging from Tlaquepaque's Museo de la Ceramica (a branch of the National Museum of Popular Arts and Crafts) to New York's MOMA, began exhibiting his work.

Collectors, ceramicists, artists in unrelated fields, art critics, architects and historians, anthropologists and intellectuals from throughout the world came to purchase his individualistic work from the hands of the "Maestro" himself. Nelson Rockefeller, Vice President of the United States of America under Gerald Ford in 1974, amassed a large collection of Candelario’s work which is prominently displayed in the Latin American wing of the San Antonio Museum of Art in San Antonio, Texas. The Museo de Arte Popular in Mexico City has pieces of Candelario’s work on permanent display as do many other museums throughout the world.

|  |
| --- |
| **SERAPIO MEDRANO**On the outskirts of Tonala, Jalisco, in a small community known as Santa Cruz de las Huertas, there are a handful of families whose "fingerprints" have been inherited from generations past. Their unique style of giving life to fantastic creations of the imagination is known as Barro Betus. Serapio Medrano Hernandez, son of renowned ceramics sculptor Candelario, is among those inheritors. His art alludes to a bright sense of amusement with life, with outlandish creations carrying the unmistakable imprint of the artist. Serapio grew up playing with clay, transforming the pliable material into colorful creatures. But it wasn't until his father, Candelario Medrano, passed away in 1986 that he really dedicated his life to Barro Betus. The name Betus comes from the word Abedul, Spanish for birch tree. Birch oil extract is heated and rubbed onto the ceramic figures, giving the pieces a sheen similar to varnish. The clay used for this particular work is a mixture of white and black marl from the towns of El Rosario and La Junta, municipalities of Tonala, Jalisco. Like his father, Serapio’s art has also travelled the world over. "During the 1970s," Serapio recalls, "this little block would fill up with gringos wanting to buy my father's work. Many came from the United States to buy in quantity. Before he died, he left the studio and his numerous customers to me." "At times there is a lot of work," he continues. "Especially around Christmas time, when we do a lot of nativity scenes, but still, nothing like when my father was here." Serapio's father, Candelario Medrano, who was born in Santa Cruz de las Huertas, married Yolanda Acero Lopez, descendent of ceramics artist Julian Acero. By the age of 19, he had six children with Yolanda. Serapio and his brother, Benito, learned to work Barro Betus from their father. Although Benito has since passed away, his children still carry on the family tradition. Serapio's work has caught the attention of collectors and organizations in Mexico and abroad. In 2001, he won the "Las Manos de Mexico" award in Mexico City and an honorable mention in Guadalajara for his work in Barro Betus.  |

The Merrills met Serapio Medrano at the Premio Nacional de Ceramica in Tlaquepaque in 2019. “We had finished making purchases after the contest, taken them to our car in the parking garage across the street and headed back inside through the patio entrance when this older gentleman walked over to us and started talking to Ron, who didn’t speak Spanish. I stepped in and translated and asked his name and when he replied, “I am Serapio Medrano,” we were both genuinely surprised and excited as I didn’t realize he was still alive and working. He told us he had two pieces entered in the contest and we asked him to show us. We followed him inside and when we saw his work, of which he was very proud, we knew we wanted a piece.”

**JUAN JOSE RAMOS MEDRANO**

Juan Jose Ramos Medrano lives in Santa Cruz de Las Huertas and is the Grandson of Candelario. He signs all his work J.J.R.M. and has sold at the Feria Maestros in Chapala several years. He produces a wide variety of works, from small figures to elaborate constructions with dozens of small figures attached to a central figure. His work is sought after and collected.

The clay Juan Jose uses is from the beds near his home. After preparing the clay with water, he kneads the pliable medium into devils, lions, roosters, churches, etc. After being painted, the colorful creations are covered with betus and air-dried for several days. It is then fired at a very low temperature compared to the heat levels used for other types of ceramic.

The Merrills have collected Juan Jose’s work and attended a pastorela in which he performs annually as one of the leading characters.

**ANTONIO JESUS DIAZ MEDRANO**

Jesus is the great grandnephew of Candelario and great nephew of Serapio. His father is Roberto Diaz, from whom he learned his craft of barro brunido and from his mother, Maria Refugio Medrano Lemus. Jesus is the fifth generation of clay artisans on his mother’s side and the third generation on his father’s side of the family. He is a young man and a fine artisan of *brunido* ceramics who has participated in many competitions in Mexico and has had exhibitions in Mexico and in Colombia, South America. He is proud to be a member of the Tonala Centro Cultural Herencia Milenaria. Jesus can be found on Facebook and contacted through Facebook messenger.

The Merrills met Jesus when he was selling his work at the weekly Wednesday market in Ajijic, sometime between 2016 & 2018. He recognized them from previous encounters and called to them as they walked by - and thus began a lasting friendship.