

## TERI GREEVES, KIOWA BEADWORK ARTIST

### Artist Statement, 2015

A long time ago, a Kiowa woman brought beadwork to the Kiowa people. She was compelled to express herself and her experience as a Kiowa woman of her day. Perhaps she had begun as a parfleche painter or a tipi builder or a clothing maker. However she arrived there, she was compelled to bead/express herself and at some point, compelled to share her techniques. Today, a Kiowa is not properly dressed if they do not have at least one piece of beadwork on.



My grandmother was a beadworker. She made money doing menial jobs- field worker, dishwasher, cleaning lady but she was always a beadworker...and an *artist*. She not only showed and won awards at the Gallup Ceremonials for several years; she also made the outfits both of her daughters wore as Kiowa and Cheyenne royalty. She too was compelled to bead/express herself and her experience as a Kiowa living during her time for her family, for her tribe, and for the larger community.

I am a beadworker. I've been beading since I was about 8 years old. I am compelled to do it. I have no choice in the matter. I must express myself and my experience as a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Kiowa and I do it, like all those unknown *artists* before me, through beadwork. And 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. Ah-ho.

### **Education:**

1995: BA in American Studies awarded from the University of California, Santa Cruz - Highest Honors, Focus in Native American Studies

1990-1993: Cabrillo Community College in Aptos, California

1988: St. John's College in Santa Fe, NM

### **Honors:**

Her work is included in many museums' permanent collections and has been featured in countless museum exhibits, art markets and gallery shows, often winning awards.

2008: Featured Artist, Painted Pony Project, Heard Museum Indian Fair & Market, Phoenix, AZ

2007: Artist Residency, University of Illinois, Urbana/Champaign  
2003: Dobkin Fellowship Recipient, School of American Research, Santa Fe, NM  
2003: Signature Artist, Heard Museum Indian Fair & Market, Phoenix, AZ

### **DESIGNER PROFILE: TERI GREEVES (KIOWA)**

*From: <http://www.beyondbuckskin.com/2010/05/designer-profile-teri-greeves.html>*

Teri Greeves grew up on the Wind River Reservation in Wyoming and began beading when she was eight years old. Since then, she has developed her own style and has become known for beading on unusual surfaces. Her medium of choice, beadwork, represents Native adaptability to new materials because it references the interaction and cultural exchange with Europeans who first introduced trade beads to Native Americans centuries ago.

Eclectic and vibrantly colored, her fully beaded high-top shoes combine contemporary Native realities with traditional oral historical themes, and modernizes the tradition of beading moccasins. Through her work she hopes to educate by sharing the history and values of her people, and to bring beauty into the world in new ways. Although many of Greeves' pieces are for adornment, essentially, she says, "I bead contemporary Native life."

### **TERI GREEVES' WHIMSICAL BEADED HIGH TOPS**

*From: <http://handeyemagazine.com/content/shoe-story>*

Raised on the Wind River Reservation in Wyoming among the Shoshone and Northern Arapaho, Teri Greeves was taught to bead by friends and relatives who came to her mother's trading post. Her first project was a pair of beaded baby moccasins. She discovered a lifelong love of shoes.

She didn't have to rely just on items at the trading post for inspiration for subsequent projects: her mother's collection of beaded clothing and accessories exposed Greeves to beading not only as art, but also as an aesthetic and cultural language. Memories of her mother's collection include standing in a walk-in closet that housed many pairs of moccasins and numerous hanging medallion necklaces. "As a young girl, I liked to close myself in her closet, turn off the light, let the smell of smoked deer hide permeate the air, and feel those cool beads on my fingertips."

Although Greeves' beadwork is seen as traditional, she offers a caveat about the term—glass beadwork wasn't a traditional art form prior to contact with Europeans. And the items were produced were used as barter items—rather than as art or ritual goods. Previously, Native Americans used paint, quills, and handmade beads. Greeves comments, "By getting caught up in 'traditional'

versus 'contemporary' we miss the point that all art evolves. Beadwork is no different. When new materials are available, when new perspectives are incorporated, our culture, our American culture becomes richer."

Greeves is enriching global visual culture with her particular beaded evolutions: whimsical beaded tennis shoes, which were initially inspired by a pair made by a Lakota woman, whose nation is well-known for its beading skills. The first pair sported a geometric design; the next was pictorial. Greeves realized she could tell stories of contemporary Native American life with beaded illustrations that dealt with history, culture and daily life. "Making beaded tennis shoes is simply a continuance of something started long before me: the idea that personal adornment can be an expression of self, of society, of tribe, and of humanity."

## **BEADWORKING IN TWO WORLDS: 10 FASCINATING PIECES BY TERI GREEVES**

From: *Indian Country Today* 8/19/14 by [Dominique Godreche](http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2014/08/19/beadworking-two-worlds-10-fascinating-pieces-teri-greeves-156469)  
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*Teri Greeves, a Kiowa bead worker originally from the Wind River reservation in Wyoming, remembers being eight years old and asking her mother, for the first time, if she could take some thread and needles at the bead shop of her trading post. "You cannot take them," was Jeri Ah-be-hill's reply. "You can buy them." So eight-year-old Teri started her career as a beadworker. She later attended the University of California in Santa Cruz, and moved to Santa Fe. Greeves' father is Richard Greeves, an Italian-American sculptor.*

*Greeves has applied her expert beadwork to a wide variety of subjects, but her signature pieces are most likely her magnificent tennis shoes and stylish high heel boots. Footwear is a fitting choice, as a constant theme is the journey, walking in two worlds, and the artistic itinerary between past and present. Greeves will be exhibiting and selling her art at the [2014 Santa Fe Indian Market](#)<sup>1</sup>, which starts on Saturday, August 23. You can learn more about her at her official website, [terigreevesbeadwork.com](http://terigreevesbeadwork.com).*

### **How did you move from traditional beadwork to such a contemporary object as a beaded tennis shoe?**

It has been a long trail to where I am now as a bead worker. I started with moccasins and bags, but realized it was limiting. I had a contemporary creative vision, where the story becomes more important than the objects. So I started beading tennis shoes, understanding that I could tell a story by beading *around* objects.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://swaia.org/>

My inspiration comes from a historical, cultural, or religious moment I am wondering about: When my kids were born, I was thinking about what they should know, and started to bead specific stories integrating Kiowa icons or treaty issues, to tell them about our history. This is how I work, and a lot of what I do is also related to women's issues: mothers, women's warrior status. I make sculptures, jewels, paintings -- you can use beadwork on any object! How I can manipulate the medium in those objects is the challenge. And my shoes are often bought as art pieces. I discovered beaded tennis shoes in 1983; they were made by a Lakota lady, and I thought they were the coolest thing I had ever seen!

**Has your father influenced you as an artist?**

My father is an Italian American sculptor who still lives on the reservation. And I still have family in Italy, where I went, to meet my Italian relatives, near Lake Como. But I am Native. I was raised that way; I was 16 when my parents divorced, and, my mother being Native, I grew up on the Shoshone side of the reservation, with Shoshone people. Being half blood, I was an outsider. That is the line you have to walk, in two worlds.

**Do you see any connection between your work and the Italian artistic tradition of beads, glass, mosaics, colors?**

Well, my Italian family has been making mosaics, ceramics, and micro ceramics, for generations, and I work with glass, micro mosaics, beads. So yes, in a way, I continue that tradition.