

ONE *of* ONE
ZUNI CLUSTER JEWELRY

SOUTH WEST CONNECTION

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Lorraine Waatsa* is the premier Zuni cluster work jeweler. She works with **Luwayne**, her husband of 40 years, crafting signature seminal designs with the highest degree of craftsmanship.



Lorraine Waatsa: pin/pendant Chinese high matrix TQ



Lorraine Waatsa: medium sized coral bracelet



Lorraine Waatsa: classic removable p/p with hand-made cluster necklace {35 pieces of coral on round medallion}

* Many Zuni jewelry (and also fetish carving) couples or family contributors are known to the public by one name, whereas some of the work is done by more than one person.

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Luwayne's family includes some of the most famous Zuni **needlepoint** jewelers, including Bryant Waatsa (father), Hugh Bowekaty (uncle through marriage), Bryant Waatsa, Jr (brother), Evans Waatsa (brother, decd), Lance (Evans' son) and wife Cordelia Waatsa.



Bryant Waatsa, Jr. classic choker sets (with earrings)



Bryant Waatsa, Sr '3-piece' choker set (with earrings)



Bryant Waatsa, Sr. (L) and Shirley Quam (R) needlepoint bracelets - note slight differences in spacing and fine detail

Lorraine's family lineage is even more well-known in the annals of Zuni jewelry for cluster and (earlier) nugget work. Her parents, Alice and Dwayne Quam (signed 'A.Q.', sometimes 'AQ' and later briefly 'D.Q.' after Alice died) were active throughout the second half of the 20th century, starting in the 1950s. One generation back were Alice's parents, Doris and Warren Ondelacy (signed 'D.W. Ondelacy') starting as early as the 1920s. Alice's brother Andy and wife Fanny, (signed 'F. Ondelacy' and 'F.W. Ondelacy' {'W' for 'Weebothee'}) were also cluster jewelers. Other well-known family jewelers are Robert and Bernice Leekya (signed 'RLB') (now in their 80s); he, the son of famed fetish carver, Leekya Deyuse; she, Lorraine's maternal aunt [Alice's sister].

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Lorraine's sibling jewelers are Shirley Quam (signed 'S.Q. '), Diane [and husband Rodney] Lonjose. (signed 'DLR'). They make a very different style of earrings as well as exquisite large stone butterfly and dragonfly pins and pendants}. Another sister was Elvina Quam (signed 'E.Q. '), whose designs resemble her parents' and Shirley's earlier work. Brothers Wayne Quam and Elgin Quam did mostly nugget and some inlay jewelry.



Diane Lonjose: Sleeping Beauty TQ p/p (2.5" across)



Lorraine Waatsa: (L) coral medallion p/p (3"); Lance and Cordelia Waatsa (R) fine needle point p/p (2.75")

Alice Quam is undoubtedly the most highly-collected Zuni jeweler of cluster work and earlier of nugget work. When she died in 2008 collectors scrambled to own her pieces. Prices soared and are still very high. And they remain difficult to find. Although Lorraine and Luwayne are still young (in their late 50s) and active, their pieces are sought-after in the same manner and will continue to be so for decades and beyond.



Robert Leekya: classic bracelet design and old-style SB earrings



Alice Quam: medallion p/p

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Lorraine and Luwayne (signed 'LW') represent the major confluence of 20th century Zuni jewelry heritage in design and artistry. Together they have continued and expanded family designs as well as created new ones - earrings, pins and pendants, necklaces (chokers), rings, bracelets, squashes, concho belts, buckles, barrettes. Their preferred materials are coral and the highest grades of natural turquoise - Sleeping Beauty, Kingman, Morenci, Royston, Red Mountain, Chinese and spider web.



Lorraine Waatsa: SB TQ ring - from her grandmother's designs



Lorraine Waatsa: oval SB TQ pendant 3.5" x 1.6" long {37 stones}



Lorraine Waatsa: SB TQ 1" post earrings



Lorraine Waatsa: (L) Turquoise Mtn large oval (2" x 1/1.25") bracelet {36 stones}; (C & R) medium coral bracelets - notice slight differences



Lorraine Waatsa: coral and TQ link bracelets

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One of the most challenging aspects of their craft is **choosing and matching** 'stones'. This is especially difficult with coral. There are so many shades of coral (from orange to deep red (oxblood)) on a given branch of natural coral plus pits and holes. By knowing in advance exactly how many pieces (of a given size) that she needs to complete any one of her pieces, Lorraine, like her Mother, may spend hours selecting, cutting and matching the stones for a given piece. For example, even a small ring (1.5" x1" wide) can have 16 small (1/8" x 1/4") pieces and one longer piece (3/4" x 1/4") of a **consistent coral** color. The result is a perfectly-matched piece with exquisite luster and high polish. Some large circular pins have as many as 50 small pieces of coral. The time to complete a piece seems endless and it is, especially for the trader waiting to buy an order.



Lorraine Waatsa: four coral rings, longest 1.5"



Lorraine Waatsa: large double coral post earrings. Classic design

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This intense effort results in **higher-priced pieces, but well-worth the cost.** The value is obvious to the collector and discriminating buyer. The prices of their materials are high. High-grade turquoise is currently over \$30/oz and coral is about \$70/oz. And, of course, the price of silver. Only \$4/oz a few years ago, it is now over \$40/oz. Lorraine and Luwayne continue to use the same gauges of silver that they also have. No skimping on quality.



Lorraine Waatsa:
SB TQ 1" post dangle
earrings, styled after her
grandmother.



Lorraine Waatsa: detail of choker
shown on page one



Lorraine Waatsa: coral oval (2.5") buckle
{43 pieces}

Lorraine and Luwayne **sell their jewelry** to a few trusted local trading posts and a few itinerant old-time traders. Their pieces are constantly in high demand and sell quickly. They are heirloom pieces.

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Beware of copies!! Some traders (esp the unethical ones - mostly based in Gallup) have had Navajo and other Native American 'piece workers' try to imitate the 'Alice Quam' designs. Regardless of the copying and manufacturing or importing of 'fakes', these unscrupulous traders have never been able to approach the high standards of Lorraine and her family. Examine pieces carefully and trust in the person you buy from.



Lorraine Waatsa: coral heart-shaped pendant and small p/p {16 small and one 1.5" piece}

These are the
REAL thing!!!



Lorraine Waatsa: SB TQ 1.625" dangle earrings



Dominating both the landscape and conscientious of all in its purview, Dowa Yalanne towers above the Zuni Pueblo. This natural redoubt provided a safe haven in the 16th century where Zunis fled to escape marauding Spanish conquistadors.

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