Our travels end with this olla, or storage vessel, from Zia Pueblo. Made from the earth itself, this pot holds the memories of generations of Zia artists. It remembers a skilled potter who followed her cultural traditions. It tells the story of people connected to the land, of their need for rain, and gratitude for corn through double arching rainbows, road runners, mountains, clouds, and corn painted in black and terracotta on a cream background.

We hope that on this trip through the Southwest you found your own memorable experiences. The artwork speaks of the past and the present, and of a unique blend of cultural traditions. But, most of all, it invites us to join the open circle of people connected to this place—the Southwest.

Please come back real soon.

For thousands of years before the Spanish arrived, Native American cultures worked together to create the strong visual art forms that define the Southwest today. The Diné, or Navajo, learned to weave in cotton from the Pueblo peoples. When the Spanish brought sheep to the area, Diné weavers adapted these techniques to wool and became the experts whose work was prized especially by Plains Indian chiefs. In this Chief’s blanket, Diné weavers added blocks of red to the traditional design of alternating dark and light horizontal bands.

Miguel Gandert explores the blending of cultures. In El Comanche David, Talpa, he takes us into the midst of a New Year’s Day ritual in northern New Mexico. The Hispanic dancer wears a Comanche costume of buckskin, moccasins and feathered headdress and sings songs from Pueblo, Plains, Navajo and Comanche traditions. The dance celebrates both the Comanche peace treaty of 1786, and the blend of Spanish and Indian cultures that is unique to the Southwest. What blend of cultures are you?

The art works may appear to have little in common—they come from different cultures, span thirteen centuries, were made from different materials, and for different reasons. Yet, each speaks of one place—the Southwest. This Tour Guide invites you to linger, and discover wher
First stop—the Grand Canyon. Jonson came here from his new home in Santa Fe to find inspiration. He wrote about the canyon's grandeur in a letter to his wife Vera. “It is immensely gorgeous—full of detail and color. No one that I know of or anything I’ve seen expresses it at all. It is the strongest thing I have seen in nature—and it is inspiring.” One canvas alone could not capture Jonson’s awe of the canyon. So, he painted three. What else did he do to express his experience of the Grand Canyon? Visit these paintings, and reflect on them. Then write a note to a friend about your trip to the Grand Canyon Trilogy.

Raymond Jonson, Grand Canyon Trilogy, Second Movement, c. 1927. Oil on canvas.

While we’re in Arizona, let’s drive over to Hopi. Dan Namingha’s Hopi Horizon #7 invites us to see through the eyes of someone deeply connected to the Southwest. Since childhood, he “studied that magnificent mesa and... drank up its every detail, mood, color, and shape and stored it away...” Namingha talks about the desert after a summer rain: “...the mesa and the surrounding landscape became intensely colorful, especially when the rain clouds broke up and the late afternoon sun would shoot a brilliant beam of light across the horizon.” How does he recreate that experience in this painting? Think about the special place in your life. Describe its “every detail, mood, color, and shape” below, and then paint it at home.

Patrick Nagatani believes that the land has a memory. In Contaminated Radioactive Sediment, Mortandad Canyon, Nagatani captures the beauty of the land, but adds something more. It is a photograph, so it’s “real,” right? Well, not entirely. Nagatani shot the photograph, and then he painted the sky, the yellow, and the snowflakes. Why? Did you know that Los Alamos scientists developed the bombs that the U.S. dropped on Japan? Talk with a friend about what this artwork says about the land, and its memories.

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Follow the blue highway and go through the underpass to Albuquerque in Clinton Adams’ Highway 66. Do you see the sign? The city has changed since 1946, when Adams first stopped here on his trip to California from New York. He painted Highway 66 to capture his memories—four flat tires, gas stations, traffic lights, signs, and vivid colors. What does this painting say about the culture of the automobile in the Southwest?

While we’re in New Mexico, let’s discover what other cultures there are. Long before Clinton Adams drove through the Southwest, horses and wagons brought Spanish settlers here. They imported sheep, watermelon, adobe brick, metal tools, the wheel, and new cultural traditions. Artists like santeros painted images of saints on pine or carved figures from wood.

Horacio Valdez became a santero after a career as a carpenter. He carved Dona Sebastian, the Death Angel, riding a cart and armed with bow and arrow, and hatchet as a reminder of death. What cultural traditions does your family celebrate?
