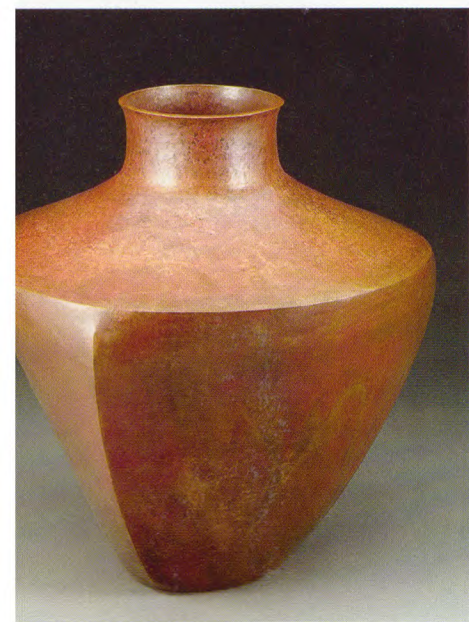
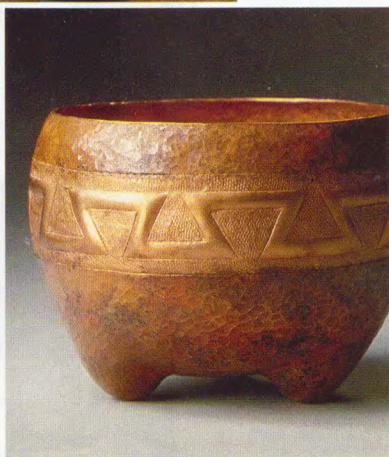


cobre artisans



The Mexican artisans' copper work consists mainly of traditional, even ancient, designs. A few made for export to the U.S. are interpretations of Arts & Crafts motifs. Shown here: a gourd vase, Aztec bowl, A&C pitcher, Revere bowls, and a three-sided vase. ABOVE RIGHT: A Purepecha craftsman at the fire.

FABRICATION OF COPPER (*cobre* in Spanish) by the Purepecha people of central Mexico predates Arts & Crafts metalwork by centuries. But serious interest in hammered copper made by indigenous people of Mexico dates to the recent revival. In 1994, Susan Hebert started Cobre Hand-Hammered Copper. "I'd been traveling since the early 1970s, mostly to states with strong Indian populations—Michoacan, Oaxaca, and Chiapas—in appreciation of folk art. When I saw the Purepecha copperwork, I was sure people in the U.S. would love it," she explains. (Cobre is a member of the Fair Trade Federation.)

The craftsmen don't consciously serve the Arts & Crafts market. Some of the indigenous forms happen to dovetail with A&C motifs, whether by coincidence or prior crossing of ideas. "Over the years, some pieces were made specifically for me," Hebert says, "based on an original or a piece of vintage pottery." Each is signed.

The area's copper mines have been closed for a long time. Today the smiths melt salvaged copper to rework it. Copper is heated over a fire, then hammered. The method produces a matte finish that's deep reddish brown and it does not need polishing. ■

COBRE HAND-HAMMERED COPPER, Portland, Oregon: (503) 248-1111, ecobre.com

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