

Susan Hebert Imports evolved from years of travel to Mexico, beginning in the early 1970's. It was during a trip to Central Mexico that Susan met the present-day descendants of the Purepecha Indians. "I was thrilled to see these people, who have been making functional and decorative, hand-hammered copper objects since pre-Columbian times, working in much the same manner as their ancestors.

Susan Hebert Imports



Today the descendants of these Native American smiths work copper in much the same way as did their pre-Columbian forebearers.

Hundreds of years before Europeans arrived on the shores of America, the Purepecha Indians from central Mexico enjoyed an independent and prosperous existence based on a highly developed copper industry.



Hammers and anvils have replaced the rocks they used for pounding the metal, but much has remained the same. They still use open bonfires to heat the copper and some of the coppersmiths even melt the raw copper to form their own ingots".

Susan is in her third year of importing and works with nineteen workshops in a mountainous village in Michoacan. The workshops are small, consisting of between one to nine men who are usually part of a family group. The least experienced begin by helping to collect firewood and over time learn "on the job".

Although the copper craft enjoyed a brief revival in the United States during the Arts and Crafts movement in the early 1900's, it is not a strong trade today because it is very labor intensive and difficult to master. "The coppersmiths I have met in the U.S. are impressed and delighted at the quality of work that these people create".

When Susan first began buying goods, the Purepecha artisans sold primarily to local stores and at the annual Christmas, Easter and Day of the Dead markets. Their market opportunities were seasonal, and off-season living could be quite lean. "They still sell to local markets but they also produce quite a bit for me. In fact, I buy all the production of several families, and they like that".

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