



PESHLAKAI VISION

May 13 – October 7, 2018



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Norbert Peshlakai
Photo: Neebinnaukzhik Southall

Norbert Peshlakai (Navajo), the first of ten children born to Ben and Lydia Peshlakai of Crystal, New Mexico, entered this world on May 6, 1953. In Lydia, a well known weaver in the Crystal style, and Ben, a miner, carpenter, and laborer, Norbert saw a strong work ethic, which guides him to this day. As a child he attended boarding schools in Crystal, and later Tohatchi, New Mexico. Weekend trips home were usually when he was able to visit family and practice his then-favorite medium, painting; one of his first paid jobs was to paint windows with a Christmas scene. He went on to attend Jefferson Junior High and Highland High School, both in Albuquerque. At that time Norbert knew he wanted to pursue his love of cross-country running, in which he excelled. Upon graduating in 1972, he decided to attend Haskell Indian Nations University in Lawrence, Kansas.

At Haskell, Norbert ran cross-country until he was sidelined by a knee injury, which forced him to quit the team. He decided to take art classes to fulfill his credit requirements. After meeting with his advisor, he decided to turn to his love of painting, though he inadvertently ended up in a trade class on house painting! His advisor suggested he take a jewelry class. Uninterested in jewelry, Norbert nonetheless took her suggestion; this was his first attempt to try his hand at silversmithing. He did not initially enjoy the class, and when his teacher Clint Leon could see that Norbert was failing, he pulled him aside and gave him specific assignments to bring his grades up. He learned soldering, overlay, inlay, enameling, lost wax, and hammering. He came to enjoy the medium, and soon created pieces on the side to sell for extra money. He took four more jewelry classes, and during a summer at home, he and his brother taught themselves tufa casting.

An arm injury in 1974 caused Norbert not to return to Haskell, but he dedicated himself to jewelry-making and began accumulating basic silversmithing tools. A relative, Billy Tsosie, taught him how to make his own stamps, and thus began Norbert's obsession with intricate stamping and texturing. These highly refined skills epitomize his style: designs are carefully planned and laid out to within a fraction of a millimeter. Designs are rich in detail but restrained, and stamps are struck so that the depth of stamping is perfectly even. Now with more than 300 handmade stamps and dozens of hammers for texturing, Norbert creates imaginative and often humorous pieces with the confidence of a master.

Norbert met his wife-to-be, Linda (née Mullahan), also from Crystal, and they started their own family: Natasha was born in 1981 and Aaron in 1983. Linda and both children picked up hammers, stamps, and silver early on and still create beauty today, all in their own respectable styles. Natasha married Ben Patrick Haley, who is from a family known for their handmade silver beads. Their son Luke, now 12, works with his mom, dad, and grandparents, sharing the family legacy of *peshlakai*, or *beeshligaii*...literally "white metal."

Ken Williams, Jr.
Wheelwright Museum



Silver pin depicting Norbert's mother, c.1999; H 2.75 inches. Collection of the Peshlakai family.

FRONT COVER

Left: Silver bolo with Morenci turquoise, coral, mother of pearl, and leather, 2008; W 2.9 x L 21 inches. Collection of the Heard Museum, Phoenix, Arizona, Gift of Norman L. Sandfield.

Right: Silver seed pot with coral, turquoise, shell, jet, sugilite, and mother of pearl, 1992; W 3 inches. Collection of the Heard Museum, Phoenix, Arizona, Gift of Norman L. Sandfield.

Art photography: Addison Doty



Left: *Woman with Long Hair*, silver sculpture, 1977; L 6 inches. Collection of Louann Van Zelst.

Right: *Woman with Jacla*, silver and wood sculpture, c. 1978–1979; H 5 inches. Private collection.



Left: Silver vessel with horses and horseshoe/figurative lid; H 3.5 inches. Private collection.

Center: Spherical silver vessel with stopper, c. 1980; H 2.5 inches. Private collection.

Right: *One Cent*, silver vessel with anthropomorphic stopper, c. 2005; H 4.5 inches. Collection of Fred and Helen Spielman.



Left: Silver belt buckle with coral, c. 1994; W 2.75 inches. Wheelwright Museum, Gift of Nancy Florsheim.

Right: *The Cube*, silver paperweight with coral, 1988; 2 x 2 x 2 inches. Collection of the Heard Museum, Phoenix, Arizona, Gift of Norman L. Sandfield.



Left: Silver and gold cuff with turquoise, c. 1999; outside diameter 2.5 inches. Collection of the Peshlakai family.

Right: Silver and gold cuff; outside diameter 2.6 inches. Collection of Leslie Beebe and Bruce Nussbaum.



Left: Silver pin with wood, turquoise, and ivory; W 2 inches. Private collection.

Center: Silver pin with ironwood, 1990; W 1.5 inches. Wheelwright Museum, Gift of Ramona Sakiestewa.

Right: Silver cuff with coral and piano key ivory, c. 1993; outside diameter 2.5 inches. Private collection.



Left: Silver bracelet with coral; outside diameter 2.25 inches. Collection of Stephen Schultz.

Top center: Silver cuff with gold, coral, and turquoise, c. 1989; outside diameter 2.5 inches. Collection of the Peshlakai family.

Bottom center: Silver cuff with gold, coral, and sugilite; outside diameter 2.6 inches. Private collection.

Right: Silver cuff with gold, turquoise, coral, jet, and spiny oyster; outside diameter 2.75 inches. Private collection.



Left: Silver cuff with Cowboy Slim, horses, and horseshoes; outside diameter 2.5 inches. Collection of Carol Franco.

Center: Silver bracelet with Cowboy Slim and rabbit; outside diameter 2.4 inches. Private collection.

Right: Silver bracelet with rutilated quartz; outside diameter 2.5 inches. Private collection.



TOP IMAGE

14 karat gold necklace with piano key ivory, 1979; pendant is 1.5 x 0.9 inches; chain is 18 inches. Collection of Joe and Cindy Tanner, Tanner's Indian Arts.

Seed pots from left to right:

14 karat gold seed pot, 1979; D 1.25 inches. Collection of Joe and Cindy Tanner, Tanner's Indian Arts.

The Butterflies, 18 karat gold seed pot, c. 2002; D 1.5 inches. Collection of the Heard Museum, Phoenix, Arizona, Gift of Norman L. Sandfield.

14 karat gold seed pot with butterflies, c. 2016; D 1.5 inches. Collection of Kari Deal Erlandson.

Tree Pot, 14 karat gold seed pot, c. 1984; D 1.5 inches. Collection of the Heard Museum, Phoenix, Arizona, Gift of Norman L. Sandfield.



Above: *Peyote Dream*, silver seed pot, 1979; 4.75 x 4 inches. Private collection.



Left: Silver quail seed pot with coral, 2002; D 2.75 inches. Wheelwright Museum, Gift of Ruth and Sidney Schultz.

Center: Owl, silver seed pot, c. 1992; D 2.75 inches. Private collection.

Right: Silver deer seed pot with coral, c. 1991; D 2.75 inches. Wheelwright Museum, Gift of Marcia and Alan Docter.



Bottom left: *The Buffalo*, silver seed pot with coral, 1994; D 3.2 inches. Collection of the Heard Museum, Phoenix, Arizona, Gift of Norman L. Sandfield.

Center: Silver seed pot with coral and turquoise; D 3.5 inches. The Eddie Basha Collection, Chandler, Arizona.

Bottom right: *Horse #1*, silver seed pot with coral, 1999; D 3.2 inches. Collection of the Heard Museum, Phoenix, Arizona, Gift of Norman L. Sandfield.



Left: Silver bolo tie, silver tips; ornament: 1.25 x 1.5 inches. Collection of the Peshlakai family.

Center: Silver bolo tie with turquoise, silver tips; ornament: 2.75 x 2.25 inches. Collection of Colina and Raymond Yazzie.

Right: Silver bolo tie with agate and coral, silver tips; ornament: 2.6 x 1.9 inches. Collection of Carole Katz.



Left: Silver necktie, c. 1989; L 14 inches. Private collection.

Right: Silver bolo tie with coral, silver tips, c. 1990s; ornament: 4.25 x 2.3 inches. Collection of Norman L. Sandfield.



Left: *The Curtain*, silver pin and pendant with gold and turquoise, c. 2002; W 2.75 inches. Private collection.

Right: *The Mechanical Bracelet*, silver, gold, and shell, 1990; outside diameter 2.5 inches. Private collection.



Left: *Woof's Catch*, silver and mokume gane pin, 2008; W 2.5 inches. Private collection.

Center: *The Mountain Goat*, silver pin with agate; W 3 inches. Wheelwright Museum, anonymous donor.

Right: *The Yellow Cat*, silver pin with agate; W 2.75 inches. Private collection.



TOP LEFT

Top: Bruce, *Quit Scariung the Birds*, silver belt buckle; W 3 inches. Collection of Leslie Beebe and Bruce Nussbaum.

Bottom: *The Big Catch*, silver belt buckle; W 2.9 inches. Collection of Carole Katz.

TOP RIGHT

Silver letter opener; L 4.75 inches. Wheelwright Museum, Gift of Martha Hopkins Struever, in memory of Theodore (Ted) Van Zelst.

Norbert Peshlakai sketchbook. Collection of the Peshlakai family.

BOTTOM RIGHT

Top: Silver belt buckle, c. 2005; W 3.5 inches. Private collection.

Left: *I'm Tired of Being Treated Like a Piece of Meat!*, silver belt buckle; W 3 inches. Private collection.

Right: Silver belt buckle with coral; W 2.9 inches. Collection of David Katz.





Left: Natasha Peshlakai-Haley, silver bracelet with 14 karat gold, chalcedony, and coral, c. 2010; outside diameter 2.6 inches. Private collection.

Right: Natasha Peshlakai-Haley, *The Maze*, silver cuff with turquoise and coral, 2010; outside diameter 2.25 inches. Private collection.



Top: Natasha Peshlakai-Haley, silver squid pin; 4 x 2 inches. Private collection.

Left: Linda Peshlakai, silver seated lady pin; 3 x 1.25 inches. Private collection.

Right: Aaron Peshlakai, silver plate with hogan, c. 2000–2005; D 2.7 inches. Private collection.



Left to right: Norbert Peshlakai, Linda Peshlakai, Ben Haley, Natasha Peshlakai-Haley, Aaron Peshlakai, and Luke Haley. **Photo:** Neebinnaukzhik Southall.

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