

"Many of the early pieces were made with these elements. Electricity is pretty recent," says Verma, whose compound today is powered by 52 solar panels, "And, then running water came by the mid-1980s. We had a water tank up the hill, but it took so long to get down to the house and studio that we used to call it 'walking water'!"

During the early years of Charles' studio, Eveli Sabatie entered the studio cosmos in 1969. A year earlier, after arriving in San Francisco on a spiritual quest, Eveli found herself at the Hopi reservation upon invitation and felt called to stay, finding work assisting an elderly Hopi woman. Having met Eveli in the laundromat in New Oraibi, Charles quickly became enamored with this exotic woman born in North Africa, raised in Morocco and who held a Ph.D. in languages from the Sorbonne in Paris, France. Soon after, Eveli was invited to experiment with her own jewelry-making in the studio and went on to create a collection of masterful pieces.

"Verma and I both did things in collaboration with Charles, particularly in the beginning, which is really interesting. Charles was the axis, the center around which we rotated," recalls Eveli, who no longer makes jewelry. Instead, she has been "sculpting people's bodies, rather than metal" by teaching yoga for the past 15 years in Tucson, Arizona, as well as introductory Sanskrit. "I didn't speak much English at the time I arrived in America and most people thought I was Indian, probably because I wore two long braids and beaded necklaces from Africa. Every day, I would walk from Oraibi to Hotevilla to Charles' shop. Verma was very young, extremely reserved and very quiet. And then she saw this strange woman in there—me! I'm sure she didn't know what to think. We kind of tiptoed around each other for a while. Pretty soon, we got over that and then we started giggling. We giggled all day. Mostly what I remember about Verma is the giggling we did together.



Clockwise from lower left: Tufa cast 14K gold ring with Nevada Blue turquoise cabochon. 1993. Fabricated sterling silver bracelet, inlay of jade, fossilized ivory, red and white coral, sugilite, turquoise and gold. 1993. Fabricated sterling silver ring, inlay of turquoise, coral, lapis lazuli and gold. 1994. Fabricated 14K gold ring with coral cabochon. 1993. Fabricated sterling silver figure pendant, inlay of lapis lazuli, turquoise, coral and gold. 2001. Private collections. Eveli Sabatie and Bryson, 1969, in the Loloma studio kitchen.





From left: Fabricated and tufa cast 18K gold ring with Chinese turquoise. 2006. Private collection. Mark Bahti and Verma at her studio patio. 2007. Tufa cast sterling silver bracelet with azurite/malachite stones set in gold bezels. 2005. Private collection.

working with a nice wet, cool dough, that when you add spice, you can't taste it. Finally, it got to the point where they just decided to go ahead and make the *piki*. I don't know if their hands were burning, or not, but it became a spice, rather than a side dish that time.

"In the later 1960s, I had graduated from high school and my dad was happy to let someone else do the driving around Arizona. On Fridays, I'd drive up to Hopi and buy whatever he told me to look for there. If there were dances, I'd go. Increasingly, I saw more of Verma. At that point, being a kid myself, I wasn't aware that she was apprenticing with Charles, but that she was there and learning a lot. I appreciate people like Verma who have a vision. They do their work and then it goes out into the market. It starts with her. It starts with her vision. She's not easily shaken or swayed. She adapts, but in the end it's Verma Nequatewa, there's no question. People don't realize the extent to which successful artists have to be self-motivated and self-disciplined.

"I remember something said at a show at the Heard [Museum]. In the course of the evening, I heard someone say, 'Well, I like her work, but it's just too much like Charles.' Twenty minutes later, I heard someone else say, 'Well, I like her work, but it's just not enough like Charles!' I went through the same thing after my father died. I either wasn't enough like him or I was too much like him. I'm sure she's aware of those two perspectives of her work. After Bryson was born, Charles was talking to some people outside the studio and Verma was showing something she was inlaying for Charles and showing the stones he wanted. There were some other stones nearby. She was laughing and said, 'You know how Charles is. If it was up to me, I'd be using those stones.' She pointed to some Angel Skin coral and some stones that were clearly softer like her work is now. It was clear that she was developing her own style.





From left: Tufa cast and fabricated sterling silver bracelet, inner band inlay of coral, fossilized ivory, turquoise, lapis lazuli. 2005. Fabricated sterling silver bracelet, inlay of fossilized ivory, ebony, turquoise, coral, lapis lazuli, sugilite and gold. 2004. Fabricated 14K gold bracelet, inlay of Momo coral, Cerrillos turquoise and gold. 2004. Fabricated sterling silver bracelet, inlay of ebony, turquoise, coral, lapis lazuli and gold. 2003. Private collections.



*I'll work very hard for many days and finally
I look at a finished piece and say,*

'It's here!'

