JAMES FENDENHEIM, TOHONO O'ODHAM ARTIST

Artist Statement, 2015

A unique Native American jeweler from the Tohono O’odham Nation of southern Arizona, James Fendenheim captures the heart and soul of the Sonoran desert and its people through jewelry. He is inspired by his surroundings and the stories told to him by his grandmother, Frances Manuel.

James is a noted silversmith and jeweler. He is a graduate of the prestigious Santa Fe Institute of American Indian Art, in New Mexico. James was born the son of a Tohono O’odham mother and a German father. After completing his studies he returned to the reservation to live. His grandmother Frances Manuel was his artistic mentor and foremost inspiration. She was a master basket weaver who is the subject of the biographical book Desert Indian Woman.

James’ work tells the stories of his tribe, and of the Sonoran Desert. He handcrafts each piece, creating something special for his collectors. His works include jewelry and special decorative items such as bridals and spurs, memorial staffs, silver boxes, crowns and sculpture. His designs often include precious stones and exotic materials.

James sells his works directly at the Santa Fe Indian Market, Heard Museum Guild Indian Fair & Market, Arizona State Museum Southwest Indian Art Fair, and the Smithsonian’s National Museum of the American Indian Holiday Market. These are the highest standard, juried markets and as such demand the best quality and craftsmanship from the artists that participate. You can find James’ work in the Heard Museum and Arizona State Museum gift shops.

Photo by Nancy Smith.