

Tito Chávez: Crafting Jewelry Since 1969

When Tito Chávez first became interested in jewelry making back in 1969, silver was ninety cents an ounce; now it's \$20 an ounce. This demonstrates just one way life has changed over the years for a man who clearly defines his two roles as a craftsman and the other as artist. "An artist conceives and develops the idea; the craftsman's skill brings it to reality," he said.

He is also husband to Mary, dad, granddad, teacher, community leader, health care advocate and business owner.

Tito spends about as much time working to improve the appeal of Las Vegas and promoting other people as he does making jewelry and manning his store alongside his wife Mary. He is an active member of the morning Kiwanis Club and the Las Vegas First Independent Business Alliance, and continues to be involved in education as well as teaching jewelry making.

Tito and Mary operated a gallery long before they opened their first store in 1985. A gallery on the Plaza was their goal, but it took about ten years to get there.

Their first selling space, however, was the living room of their more than 145-year-old home on North Gonzales. "We have people come in the gallery all the time and tell us they remember buying their first piece of jewelry from us off the coffee table in our living room," Mary said.

In 1997, the gallery moved into the century-old Hedgcock Building, which Tito and Mary had purchased and spent several years renovating. Formerly the Town of Las Vegas civic building, it still contains jail cells, which tourists love. Visitors can have their mug shots taken wearing striped black and white prison garb and silly grins.



Tito works with gold and silver metals enhanced by fine coral, turquoise and other stones. He is creative and innovative as a craftsman/artist, but he has another skill that is critical to a working artisan; he has the gift of listening to what a customer wants and

converting that into a unique design. He has been commissioned by patrons to create matching jewelry items for pieces such as necklaces or bracelets, or to make someone else's vision into reality. He does jewelry repair but his true passion is creating pieces that will become family heirlooms.

Tito estimates that eighty percent of the gallery's business comes from locals, but he has an international clientele that he hopes will grow. "We do get people from around the world in the gallery, but our online catalog has brought us customers as well." Tito sells online at www.titogallery.com and www.etsy.com/people/titochavez1, where you can find many pieces to choose from.

In addition to his designs, Tito's Gallery is proud to show the work of more than fifty other artisans and craftspeople.