







him on the map as an artist who worked out of the box. When similar jewelry started to be massproduced, Hendren pivoted with a goal to create a style all his own.

From French curves and rosettes to skull designs with rock-n-roll flavor, Hendren's mature work plays with history while pushing forward into new territory. He employs turquoise and silver with occasional punches of gold, jade, sapphire, topaz or whatever suits his vision.

If Ralph Lifshitz could become Ralph Lauren, Hendren could carve out a distinctive brand too, he thought. "We're ranch people so we have brands. And I know the brand means something," says Hendren, who often releases jewelry in themed collections. "I always paid attention to fashion. For one thing, I'm a firm believer that jewelry is sculpture with a context. It's a sculptural thing and you can do a lot of things sculpturally, but if it's not wearable, it doesn't succeed and you can't call it jewelry. I can put a cardboard box on somebody, but it doesn't make it a hat," he laughs.

"I really got a baptism by fire in the Indian art business and I was fortunate because Earl Biss was one of the guys who warned me early on," says Hendren. A painter who ushered in a generation of contemporary Native art, Biss taught him about contracts and copyright and how to avoid pitfalls of the churn-andburn art world.

Gibson Nez, a jeweler Hendren worked for early in his career, also played a role in the young artist's



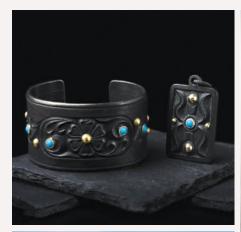


"expensive lessons" as a fledgling jeweler stepping out on his own. These cold realities of the business inspired him to get involved instead of "sitting around griping and complaining."

While on the board of the Indian Arts and Crafts Association, Hendren set up business seminars for Indigenous artists and worked to educate buyers and keep counterfeit art from being sold as Native American. "Took us about five years, but under my tenure as president, we lobbied and got the Indian Arts and Crafts Act changed so that now you're actually getting people prosecuted for selling illegitimate Indian art," says Hendren. "It was hard getting that done in Washington, but it was even harder in New Mexico and Arizona."

There's still a long way to go, but the changes they made to the Indian Arts and Crafts Act have enabled authorities to thwart more counterfeiters selling under false tribal affiliation. As for championing legitimate Native American artists, Hendren does a lot of that, too.

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Clockwise from top left:

Cuff and pendant from Out of Darkness There is Beauty series, sterling silver and 14K gold.

Toothpick Holder, sterling silver, gold, turquoise and sapphires.

Shane Hendren on his horse, his other passion.

He judges jewelry and design competitions and increases visibility for the craft as he lectures and contributes his own work to institutions like London's British Museum.

Still today, the life of an artist is full of ups and downs. "I can count on two hands-and not use all my fingers—the number of Native American jewelers that make 100 percent of their income from their jewelry," says Hendren. Inspired by friend and rawhide braider Nate Wald (Apsáalooke), Hendren looks for opportunities in hardship and necessity. Catching a cow with something made from cowhide? Now that's full circle. "The reason why we're still thriving and surviving is because we've always adapted. We've always adjusted. We've always embraced new technology and whatever because despite everything, we all still like to eat," says Hendren.

Hendren is a recipient of the 2023 Maxwell/ Hanrahan Foundation Awards in Craft and a four-time winner of the Indian Arts and Crafts Association Artist of the Year. «