

Robert Grey Kaylor

Being independent comes easy for Robert Grey Kaylor. He grew up in a small Midwestern town and has been on his own since age sixteen. Unaware of the role art would play in his life, Robert lived in his first creation, an old Rambler station wagon with the Zig-Zag man painted on the doors. Before graduating from high school, Robert loaded his belongings into his car and headed west. He ended up in Flagstaff, Arizona, where he landed a job in a sawmill.

One Saturday afternoon at a market, Robert discovered a Navajo man selling silver and turquoise jewelry. He had never really thought much about jewelry, but watching the craftsman work struck a deep resonance within him. Within weeks Robert had assembled some tools and set up a very crude jewelry shop in his apartment. A few days later, he made his first ring and he wore it with pride. Returning to the market a month later, Robert asked the Navajo to show him how to make jewelry and to Robert's surprise the man offered to teach him in the evenings. Robert developed a small client base and started to take classes in jewelry at Northern Arizona University.

When the bottom fell out of the silver and turquoise market, Robert once again packed his belongings and hit the road - this time winding up in Boise, Idaho. He began as a goldsmith's apprentice, and then graduated to doing repairs for local jewelry stores. He eventually opened his own small store, specializing in custom design. These days, Robert can be found in a large, elegant jewelry gallery, which he runs with his wife Barbara. Although they also represent dozens of contemporary designers, Robert's work is the centerpiece of the establishment.

With as many twists and turns as his career has provided, one thing has become clear to Robert. "A long time ago, I realized that it was essential to stay open to change," he says. "Standing in one place for too long means stagnation." Ever the student of new ideas, Robert has taken advantage of the national jewelry workshop scene. In one workshop, Robert was introduced to the Bonny Doon Hydraulic press. In another, he learned the in's and out's of fold forming. "I have integrated both of these techniques into my work, he says. "One is mechanical and the other is all hands on. Together, they have expanded the envelope of my work into directions I could have never imagined only a few years ago." As committed to fostering change in others as in himself, Robert says, "As an artist, I accept the responsibility for always bringing fresh ideas into the world."