

Jesse Monongye, Diné (Navajo) and Hopi, (b. 1952)

- Artist-in-Residence at the Heard Museum (1986-1987)
- Awards won include Best in Class at the Santa Fe Indian Market (1979, 1992) and First Place at Gallup Intertribal Ceremonial (1979, 1992)

Jesse Monongye was born in Phoenix, Arizona. His mother was Navajo, and his father, adopted by David Monongya, was raised Hopi. Jesse's father enlisted in the army in 1953, leaving his mother with four children. In 1955, Jesse, his two brothers, and sister were found in an abandoned building near the Grand Canyon. Their mother was never seen again, and the children were taken back to their grandfather, David. After living on the Hopi reservation for about a year, they were relocated to be raised by their Diné grandparents. Their upbringing gave them a firm spiritual background, which Monongye relies on to this day. In 1972 he served in the Marines and went to Vietnam. After returning home, Monongye eventually found his father, and discovered that he was a successful silversmith. After having a vivid dream, in which his mother told him he would be a world famous artist, Monongye followed in his father's footsteps, and now works as a respected and successful inlay jeweler. Inspired by the landscapes he grew up with, Monongye creates bracelets, necklaces, earrings, bolo ties, and pendants inlaid with coral, turquoise, lapis, ivory, and Acoma jet, among others. Because his inlay technique appears flawless, his works often give the appearance of paintings. Monongye's designs range from basic to very complex. He is best known for his bear shapes with inlays of the night sky. The bear symbolizes strength and power, and has a special meaning to Monongye, as it relates to a story told to him by his grandfather. Monongye currently lives and works in Scottsdale, Arizona.