

Andrea Fisher

Fine Pottery

**Hector Javier
Martinez**

Mata Ortiz and
Casas Grandes



Born in 1984, Hector Javier Martinez sprang onto the Mata Ortiz pottery scene about ten years ago (2008) with his distinctive style of black and tan pots incised with *Day of the Dead* and *Night of the Dead* motifs. Those designs resulted from a comment made to him by Steve Rose (a well-known American pottery dealer). Employed as an auto mechanic and gardener just to make ends meet while he figured out the pottery making business, Javier had asked what Steve thought he needed to do in order to make pottery his permanent vocation. Steve replied, "Time for something different." A few years later Javier won 1st Place in the 2013 Concurso Ceramica Juan Mata Ortiz for one of his *Day of the Dead* pots. Then in 2014 he won the Presidential Award at the Premio Nacional de la Ceramica in Tlaquepaque, Mexico, for a large olla incised with Mexico City views and his *Night of the Dead* theme (the pot pictured above). Since then we have seen his pots with Day of the Dead and Night of the Dead motifs on them with backgrounds from Paris, Santa Fe, Mata Ortiz and New York City.

Javier told us he first learned to make pottery from his mother, but her style was very different from what he found in Mata Ortiz. He had to learn all over again, using local materials and different processes and tools. In the beginning his subjects were religious (the Virgin of Guadalupe, priest images, etc.) and the designs were all painted on his pots. It was 10 years ago that he and Gabriela produced their first black and white sgraffito Day of the Dead/Night of the Dead pots together. The style took off immediately and they haven't looked back since, although they have branched out a bit and now produce bowls and plates, too.

Today, Javier is producing all kinds and sizes of pots with his signature Day of the Dead and Night of the Dead motifs. However, with his success has come competition and knockoffs. That said, the detail of his work sets him well apart and working with Gabriela has introduced some new elements into their *Dia de los Muertos* collection of designs.

Javier and Gabriela have four sons, ages 4 to 13 (and Javier says he wants another). He says his inspiration comes from his culture and music. Gabriela concurred with that saying that when he's working on a large pot, he might as well be living as a character on the pot.