

Francisco Javier Sanchez Rios |
Mexico | Metal Jewelry

The heart of a Mexican family bound in filigree



One day while visiting the artisan development school in Fresnillo, Zacatecas, Francisco Javier Sanchez Rios and his wife, María del Refugio Blanco López, decided to enroll in a jewelry-making workshop. In 1546 one of the world's richest veins of silver were discovered in Zacatecas and since then the area has been noted for the jewelry crafted by its traditional artisans. Francisco and María learned the basics of silversmithing: alloys, melting, laminating, welding and designing, and decided to open a family workshop, Jewelry in Silver Sanchez Blanco. Their jewelry is worn as regular, everyday pieces as well as for special occasions, and, as they say, just to "show off" a little.

Working with their two daughters and two sons, the family studio is noted for its intricate filigree and innovative designs, many "based on the wild flora of our state and old style with a touch of our style," they say. Each family member is assigned one part of the job such as foundry, laminate, filigree, welding, or polishing. The tools used in

the creation of the jewelry include tweezers, blowtorches, files, and scissors, used to heat and shape the silver. The silver itself is 0.999 pure silver from Zacatecas, alloyed with copper to make it harder. The result is 0.925 silver which does not bend or tear like pure silver, which is very soft.

Jewelry in Silver Sanchez Blanco has many regular customers who return time and time again to collect new designs but Francisco, María, and their children can't keep up with the demand. They are teaching interested students from Zacatecas the craft for free, hoping to add workers to their studio and help this revered form of traditional artwork to continue thriving in Fresnillo and beyond.

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF THE ARTIST