

## Artist's Inspirations

Italy and the Arizona desert influence Scottsdale ceramic artist Jim Sudal

Photos and story by Lexie Runge

Every morning Jim Sudal drives to what he considers his second home — his art studio in Scottsdale's downtown arts district. Every day he lives his dream through expressing himself in his art.

Sudal said he was born an artist, not created. From his studies in Florence, Italy, to his senior year pottery class at the University of Arizona, he surrounded himself with art and experimented with different techniques.

"Being around the artwork in Florence was almost overwhelming. I knew at that point that this was what I wanted to do," he said.

The ceramic designs he creates incorporate the styles of ceramics, stained glass and watercolors that he has learned and fashioned himself. "I have infused all of these techniques to make my work one-of-a-kind," Sudal said.

As a gay artist, Sudal said he has not encountered any negativity and has never let anyone hold him back. "My clientele has always respected me for my talent," he said.



After moving to San Francisco, Sudal worked in the corporate world, but it wasn't long before he returned to the desert.

While working in publicity and marketing at the Desert Botanical Gardens in Phoenix, Sudal found himself falling in love with the desert landscape. He began creating pieces for the garden's gift shop. When the garden showcased Sudal's work in an exhibit, his art career was launched.

Elaine McGinn, former director of exhibits at Desert Botani-

Sudal has supported the community through donations to non-profit organizations, some LGBT, some not. He is a member of the Sister Cities Commission Program of Arizona, whose sister city is Catania, Sicily.

Sudal has family in Italy, studied Italian, and is inspired by the art and culture. "Sometimes I play Italian radio in the studio while I work. In the distant future, I would love to escape and move to Italy," Sudal said.

Born and raised in Connecticut, Sudal moved to Tucson to study international business at the University of Arizona. He received his master's degree from Thunderbird American Graduate School of International Management in Glendale.

cal Garden, said Sudal's work is unique. "In the world of ceramics a Jim Sudal piece is a distinct and innovative art form and visitors won't see anything like it in another gallery," she said.

Sudal handcrafts his designs which mirror the beauty of the Arizona desert. He uses garden-inspired colors to display images of prickly pears, agaves and blooming aloes. Sudal infuses his pieces with the Italian and Mediterranean characteristics that inspired him during his stay in Florence.

The artwork is labor intensive, each piece taking from one to six months. His designs range from \$65 to \$650 for home décor, gifts, terracotta and stoneware relief tiles. Pots,



benches and sculpted wall murals sell for thousands of dollars. Sudal recently created a three-dimensional, ceramic agave rosette wall piece that was seven feet in diameter.

Sudal's business was born through word of mouth. Sudal said his work attracts a variety of customers — collectors, followers and tourists.

"The art district here attracts a lot of art enthusiasts," Sudal said. "Sometimes I will have visitors who adore Arizona as much as I do, and we will sit and chat for awhile."

Jim Sudal Ceramic Design is at 7037 E. First Ave., Scottsdale. For more information, call 480-947-2254 or visit [www.jimsudalpottery.com](http://www.jimsudalpottery.com).

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