

JOAN TENENBAUM

Joan Tenenbaum is academically trained as an anthropologist and linguist and holds a Ph.D. from Columbia University but irrevocably changed her life by becoming a jeweler, embracing her heart's desire. It was in Alaska that Joan did field work for her doctoral thesis, documenting the Dena'ina language, and since first setting foot in Alaska she has never truly left her spiritual home.

Joan says this about the years she spent living with Native Peoples in villages in Alaska: "My life was bound up with their culture in a way that was inseparable from the landscape. The rhythms of the seasons affected everything in our lives, from the foods that we ate to the smallest details of how we got our water! Each day was defined by the direction of the wind."

Essentially, Joan's work is about our connection to the earth. Jewelry infused with environmental and cultural content has become her signature as an artist. Her work is grounded not only in her precise craftsmanship honed through decades of continuous study of technique, but also by this deep love of Alaska, its native cultures and its awe-inspiring beauty.

Because her work lies at the intersection between the study of culture and language and traditional goldsmithing Joan Tenenbaum's jewelry tells intricate stories with multiple layers of meaning.

Joan has been making jewelry for nearly six decades and has worked as an independent studio jeweler and teacher for the past 36 years. Her work is in the permanent collection of the Anchorage Museum and has been featured in many books and publications.