

MAINE PUBLIC

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WABANAKI BASKET MAKER JEREMY FREY TAKES TOP HONORS AT PRESTIGIOUS NATIVE ART SHOW

by Emily Burnham



University Of Maine/Via BDN. Jeremy Frey (right) makes baskets with his brother, Gabriel, at the annual University of Maine Wabanaki art show.

A Wabanaki artist and basket maker received his fourth overall Best in Class prize at last weekend's Santa Fe Indian Market in New Mexico, the largest and most prestigious Indigenous art show in North America.

Jeremy Frey, a Passamaquoddy basket maker, received the honor in the basketry category, for his double wall ash basket, "Malsom" ("Wolf," in Passamaquoddy).

Frey, who previously won Best in Class at the market in 2011, 2015 and 2019, is a nationally acclaimed artist whose work is held in the collections of the Smithsonian and the Museum of Art and Design in New York. He specializes in ash fancy baskets, a traditional form of Wabanaki weaving.

Frey was joined at the market by his wife, Penobscot basket maker Ganessa Frey. Frey's work, along with many other Wabanaki artists' work, is available to purchase through the Home and Away Gallery in Kennebunkport.

Last year's in-person market was canceled due to the pandemic. This year's market was a few days shorter than usual to allow for crowd management, and had fewer artists exhibiting.

Several other Wabanaki artists exhibited at this year's market, including Frey's fellow Passamaquoddy basket makers Frances Soctomah and Geo Neptune. Neptune appeared in the market's annual fashion show as a model, wearing works by acclaimed Native designer Jamie Okuma.

Opening the fashion show was a performance from Firefly, the musical alter ego of Bangor-based Penobscot jewelry designer Jason Brown, who with his wife, Donna Decontie Brown, owns Decontie & Brown, a jewelry and clothing design label.