



Arizona Gourds

December updates from the desert southwest...

Welcome to the December issue of the Arizona Gourds newsletter. Please feel free to write me if you have any suggestions for future newsletters or feedback on this

Update: Gourd Festivals and Classes

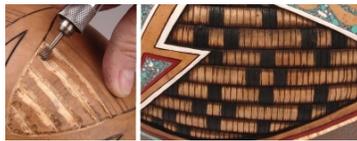
Still a few spaces in my February classes that will be held at my home in Tucson; check the [classes](#) page for availability. A few spaces remain in my faux basketry class at the Wuertz Gourd Festival in Casa Grande, Arizona - February, 2007. Check [their website](#) for class registrations. *If you would like to get notice of classes as soon as they are posted, then please add your name to my classes updates email list. People on this list will get the news first and have the best opportunity to select the dates and classes they prefer.

Upcoming East Coast Classes! Things are still in the planning stages, but I hope to be teaching a few weekend classes at the Gourd Gallery in Sugarloaf, NY, the weekend after Easter, April 14-15. Watch future issues of the newsletter for more details.



[Join The Class updates List](#)

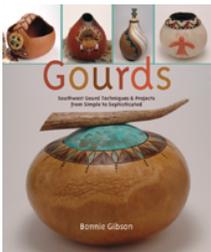
Advanced Carving workshop - In the planning stages; a two day workshop on high relief and advanced carving techniques taught by Bonnie Gibson and Phyllis Sickles. Coming in March. Please send me an email if you want further information on this class when it is available.



Faux Basketry

What's new on the [Arizona Gourds website](#)?

Due to a strong response from last month's newsletter writeup, we ran out of the featured Feathered Cabochons quickly. A new selection is now back in stock along with some new beaded pin designs. Please visit the [Special Effects - Embellishments](#) page for more information.



Book Update: I have the first copy of the book in my hands! A few students in my November classes got a sneak peek at the copy that was flown over from Hong Kong and was sent to me by my editor. I'm anticipating a mid to late December release..... **Last chance** to add your name to the book pre-order email list. [Click here](#) to pre-order your autographed copy. The first 500 **pre-ordered** will be numbered and personalized and will include a **free special mini project** (that is not in the book or on my website). They are going fast, so be sure to add your email to the list if you are interested. If your name is on the list, you will be receiving an email from me as soon as I know the final details about when it will be available and shipping options.

Exercises in Creativity: Creating with a new perspective

In October, we touched on copyright issues and when it might be permissible to copy ideas or use patterns that were developed by others. This month, we'll explore some creativity exercises to help you stretch a bit in your quest for your own "voice".

Ideas can come from many directions. Begin by utilizing your personal interests and local environment as possible sources of inspiration. As your skills and experiences accumulate, ideas will come from a wider variety of sources. Develop the habit of examining ideas and things you see with a different focus.

An artist that lives in the southwest will likely be influenced by the local desert flora and fauna, or native arts of the region, while an artist from the coast might be influenced by sea life, or local history and crafts. However, do not let your local environment limit you in your choice of subjects or style; merely use it as a strength that can be built upon. You can enjoy occasional forays into depicting wildlife and cultures of other exotic locales, in addition to utilizing your strengths by portraying the things that you are most familiar with.

Art is created in many forms, and valuable ideas can be found outside of the gourd world. Diverse hobbies and interests ranging from ceramics and literature, to sports and collecting can all be tapped for inspiration. A quilter might use a color scheme, fabric pattern or quilt block as the basis for a jewelry piece or a painting. An avid reader might interpret the theme of a novel in a piece of music or in a collage. A visit to the local zoo can inspire a sculpture or drawing. Be aware of your surroundings and experiences; soak in color, form and ideas from the world around you.

Some artists keep a notebook handy at all times to sketch or jot down things that catch their eye or trigger an idea. Other artists keep a file of photographs and clippings to thumb through for future inspiration. A visit to the library can offer a wealth of ideas; do not confine your search to a stop at the art section, but look for novel topics for inspiration such as the gardening section or the travel section. Visit a museum or art gallery to see how other artists have interpreted subjects.

Exercises in Creativity

Gourd artists can learn a lot by viewing works from artists that work with a totally different media. Study a sculpture or painting to see how the lines flow or how color combinations interact. Choose an object that inspires you, and examine it closely to determine what aspect of the object is the most appealing. Is it the color choices, the construction, the form, or the technique that is employed? Set the item out of sight, and use your visual memory to sketch out an idea based on the design elements that you found most appealing. Do not re-examine the original item until after your design is complete.

Select a subject matter that inspires you, and do some brainstorming to expand the topic. Perhaps you might select an item such as "leaves". How many different things can be thought of that relate to leaves? Let your mind wander and write down the results. Your list might start with oak leaves and maple leaves, then expand to twigs, bark, bugs, birds, sky, and clouds. Picture leaves in their most simple structural shapes, then examine them from different angles. Draw in black and white or experiment with unusual colors. View leaves as a partial object, focusing on the design that is present in small portions of the whole leaves.

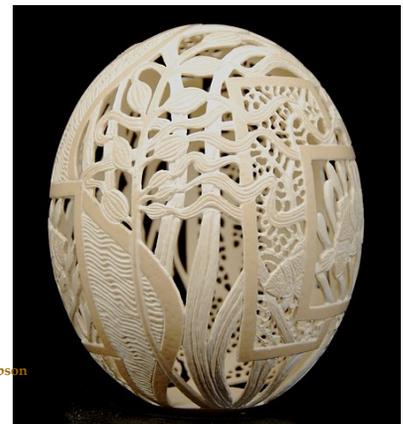
Experiment by portraying the same subject in a variety of techniques. How will the piece look if the design is carved instead of simply painted on the surface? Will adding sculptural elements add dimensional depth? Try a new paint, dye or embellishment. Will the finished piece look more interesting with cut out areas or an unusually shaped rim? Try to visualize as many concepts as possible before deciding how to proceed.

Force your skills to expand by creating designs with limited or unusual colors. How will a design look when completed in a monochromatic scheme, using only one color and rendering contrasts by changing the value or intensity of the color? Instead of painting, use a wood burning tool to add minimal color to a project, using only a series of stippling or small lines to render tones.

These are just a few ideas to start you thinking. Your creativity is just like your muscles - it must be exercised regularly in order to grow, strengthen and develop.



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No, it's not a gourd.....

It's an ostrich egg!

Last December I unveiled an ostrich egg that was carved with my [Turbocarver](#). I thought you might enjoy seeing my second attempt at filigree carving on an eggshell. About once a year, I get the itch to work on a different surface - you can see the similarities between an egg shell and a gourd. The main differences are that the egg shell is much thinner, and shells are usually not painted so you have to design it to work well monochromatically. After the egg was complete, it was placed on a small lighted base which sends a beautiful glow through the shell and creates wonderful light patterns at night.

Tip of the Month: Another reason why I don't use leather dyes.

A true "Top Ten" list from an online gourd friend, Susan Sawatzky

The bad news is that I just spilled half a bottle of black leather dye in my lap.

The good news is:

10. Only one bad word escaped my mouth
9. Fortunately I had a plastic mat on the floor
8. The bottle was only half full
7. I will be able to get rid of a very old pair of jeans
6. Or I could keep the jeans to wear every time I use leather dye
5. I had put the gourd the black was to go on out of the way to test several colors on a piece of scrap
4. The test scrap looks very good
3. It gave me an excuse to go upstairs and make my husband laugh
2. My legs are fat enough so my chair didn't get hit
1. It isn't summer so don't have to wear shorts for a while

I used leather dyes occasionally when I first started working on gourds, but no longer use them. We have very intense sun (and probably 350 days of it per year) in Arizona, so fading was a huge problem. I pulled pieces from galleries that had lost most of their color and redid them with paints so they would be more color fast. **All** inks, dyes, paints and other coloring media will eventually fade with time and prolonged light exposure. That is one of the reasons why museums have special lighting and few windows. The most colorfast are acrylic or oil paints, dyes are the least colorfast and everything else is somewhere in between. When in doubt, make a test scrap and expose the piece to plenty of sun to see how it will react.

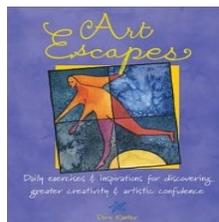
And if you DO use leather dyes... an old coffee mug makes a great dye bottle holder!

**Do you have a tip or tutorial we can feature here? Please [contact me](#).*

Featured Gourd of the Month:

Eagle Spendor

Some people sent me a note and asked for additional views of the eagle gourd that has been displayed on my home page recently. Here are two additional views; the gourd is fully decorated on all sides. You can see the eagle head view on the home page of my website.



[Art Escapes: Daily Exercises and Inspirations](#)

Featured Book of the Month:

Art Escapes: Daily Exercises and Inspirations by Dory Kanter

Lots of new insights into creativity no matter what form of art you enjoy. The book is spiral bound so it will lay open while you experiment with some of the creativity exercises. This book will stimulate you to see things in a new light and help you develop new ways of creating and exploring your art.




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