



Arizona Gourds

August updates from the desert southwest...



[August09.pdf](#)

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Welcome to the August issue of the Arizona Gourds newsletter!

August is here, and it's time for me to begin packing and getting ready for a fun 3 week adventure at the Grand Canyon. I am honored to have been selected as an **Artist-in-Residence at the North Rim of the Grand Canyon**. During my stay I will give a once-a-week hour long presentation to park visitors, and I will present the park with a finished piece of art when I leave. The rest of the time I am totally on my own and am allowed to use the time to work, play, or just generally enjoy the creative atmosphere of this beautiful region. I hope to be inspired and to really immerse myself into some new gourd projects. My husband Ev will be coming along as well and we are both looking forward to the gorgeous scenery and 3 weeks in cooler weather!

Because of this exciting adventure, I will not be shipping orders from August 13th to September 6th.

Orders placed during that time will be held and sent out (in the order they were received) just as soon as I return.



There will **NOT** be a monthly newsletter for September. *If possible*, I will post updates on the Arizona Gourds Facebook and Twitter pages. Click on the icons above to become a fan of Arizona Gourds on these sites. (Last month I had some special offers just for my followers/fans on these sites.)

***It is doubtful that I will have consistent access to email while I am at the Grand Canyon. If you have me on your mailing list, please refrain from sending me large files or non-business emails during this time.**

Update: Gourd Classes

My [September Florida Gourd Retreat classes](#) are fast approaching. You can see them and register through the Florida Gourd Society class information pages. This gourd retreat will be held at the Deerhaven Retreat Center in Paisely, FL - [click here](#) for retreat general information.

Classes are now posted for the 2009 Lone Star Gourd Festival in Fredericksburg, Texas from October 16-18, 2009. Check the [Texas Gourd Society Events page](#) for class descriptions and registration information. (PDF links towards the bottom of the page.)

***Note: I'm trying to visit some new locations, so this is probably the last time I'll be teaching at these two events for a few years. If you are interested in my classes at these events, please plan on attending them this year.**

SegwayClips



An out of the ordinary adventure: While visiting family in Minnesota last month, I went on a Segway tour in St. Paul. The tour was great, and riding around on the Segway was a ton of fun! You look a bit like a geek, but it was so much fun that it was worth it! Here's a short video of me tooling around.

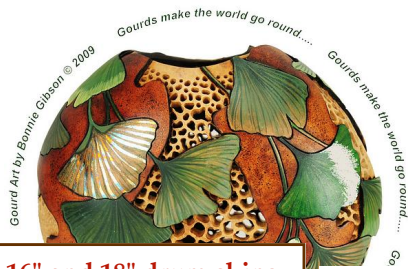
*Join my class updates list if you want to receive advance notice of classes. Get the news first and have the best opportunity to select your classes!



[Join The Class updates List](#)

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

Last month I added a web poll to see which gourd most people would want to see on a t-shirt. The votes are in, and the results were surprisingly close. The two shirts designs receiving the most interest were the Ginko Gourd and the Dragonfly Spirals designs.



I have added both of those to my cafe press store. I modified the Gingko Gourd design so it has a circular text design around the gourd that reads "Gourds make the world go round..." You can see all of the products on this page:

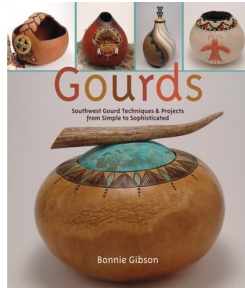
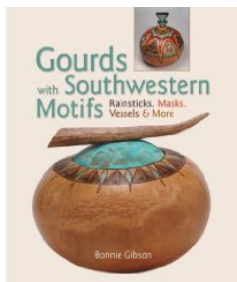
<http://www.cafepress.com/ArizonaGourds>

16" and 18" drum skins are ON SALE this month!

In addition, I've also added a small amount of **nylon drum lacing** and **drum rings** that were left over from a class to the [musical supplies page](#).



I just got some of these fun bone beads that are carved with sun faces. They are available at a special price until I leave for the Grand Canyon or while they last. You'll find them in the [Bone Beads and Embellishments page](#).



Lark Publishing has just released copies of my book in a paperback edition. The hardcover edition is now out of print. **Please note that despite the differences in cover and title, the book contents have NOT changed.**

I don't want anyone to be fooled into thinking it is a new book.

I still have copies of the [hardcover edition](#) available. All books ordered directly from me will be hardcover editions and will be autographed (and personalized if desired.) In addition, I always include an extra **FREE** project packet with every book.

SALE: Until August 12th, you'll get a \$5 discount off the cover price!

August Feature: Gourd Carvers / Wood Carvers

Some of you know that I was a wood carver long before I ever picked up a gourd. Like myself, two of the finest gourd carvers I know also started out with wood before working on gourds. While the techniques are the same, the years of experience of carving three dimensional wood objects (and natural ability also!) give these carvers an advantage when they move over into the gourd world.



My very good friend **Phyllis Sickles of Tucson, Arizona** is a fantastic artist and it shows in her intricately detailed gourd carvings. At this point, Phyllis has carved many more gourds than wooden projects, but having the knowledge, experience and woodcarving equipment already on hand made the transition a natural! Phyllis uses a Foredom and a Shofu for her carvings, and paints with acrylics.

Phyllis is a retired art teacher and now enjoys having time to work on her own projects after so many years of helping her students. While she has joined with me a few times to teach an advanced gourd carving class, she prefers to spend her time on her own projects instead of teaching.

Phyllis and I are fortunate to live near each other and we enjoy getting together for carving sessions. It is a real pleasure to bounce ideas back and forth, compare experiences, and pick each other's brains as we work! We are both in agreement that we far prefer carving over painting. Sometimes carved projects will sit for months waiting to be painted because a new carving project is so much more fun. In some ways our gourd art looks similar - but we each have our own interests and design preferences. Phyllis really enjoys all forms of wildlife and nature, and those are her primary subjects. You can see more of her work at www.gourdvisions.com



Above: Gourds by Phyllis Sickles



Woodcarved Buffalo by Phyllis Sickles



Peacock Gourd by Daniel Montano

Daniel Montano of San Diego, California started carving decoys in 1967 at National City (Junior High School) in a class taught by his mentor, Arnie Taylor. At the age of 14 he sold his first decoy for \$400, then began competing at the CA OPEN wildfowl competition as a junior where he became one of the nation's top junior carvers. Daniel started drawing and painting at the age of 5 and has many awards in all mediums. Now he is carving and painting gourds in the advanced level. All of his gourds are wildlife renditions and are hand carved and painted with acrylics and some inks. He uses a Foredom tool for roughing out and an Xacto knife for carving, plus a wood burner for details and an airbrush for painting. You can contact Daniel at gourdartbydaniel@hotmail.com.



Carved Mallard by Daniel Montano



As for myself, I learned to woodcarve from books. I began carving in the early 1980's and carved duck decoys and small wildlife sculptures. I still enjoy woodcarving and occasionally add small bird carvings to my gourds. (You can see one of these below in the "Featured Gourd" section of the newsletter.) Here's a few of my early woodcarvings.



Woodcarved Canvasback Hen, Bobcat and Cardinal Sculptures by Bonnie Gibson

Just for Fun / Carousel Horse Wood Carving Sequence

This month I experienced "gourd burnout", so just for fun I decided to go back to woodcarving a 3 dimensional object. I had carved a couple of small scale carousel horses in the past that were about a foot long, but this new project is about 3 feet in length. (About 1/4 life size) I bought the glued up "blank" at a yard sale - the minimal price I paid for the blank was far less than what I would have had to pay to purchase the raw wood, so I couldn't pass it up! Recently, I visited the old Minnesota State Fair carousel in St. Paul, MN (now at the Como Park Zoo) and it inspired me to come home and finally get to work on this project.



Left: This is one of my early carousel horse carvings. The horse and all his trappings are carved from basswood, the only added items are some rhinestones. The carving was stained to show the wood grain and the trappings were painted with acrylics. This carving is about a foot long, and is a "standing" carousel figure.



Here is a photo of my new project just as I'm getting started; I decided it would be fun to take photos along the way to show the progress. I used an angle grinder with a 4" structured tooth carbide wheel to do the initial rough shaping.



When carving a 3 dimensional project like this one, all the basic shaping is done first and details are added later. It's a continual process of removing material a bit at a time and refining the overall shape as you work. Most beginning carvers are hesitant to remove enough material. Note that the legs now have their basic shape and I've started rounding the body and tail. This will be a "flying" horse - the figure will be mounted on a pole and the legs won't touch the ground.



This partially carved leg gives you an idea of the size of the horse. The horse is large and heavy and difficult to maneuver, so removing some of the parts and rough carving them first makes things easier.

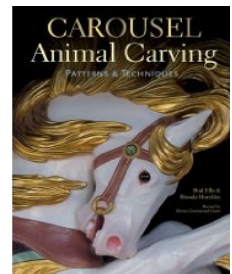


Starting to rough in the shape of the head, mane and decorative elements. (Compare this to the rough blank in the first picture. By the time I got to this stage I had already created a sack full of sawdust!) There is still a long way to go at this point.



If you want to read more about carousel art, Painted Ponies is wonderful. (If you just want photos, the postcard book has some great pictures.) The other two books teach you how to carve your own. Both are good. One has more information about various animals while the other has more in-depth carving instructions.

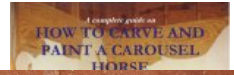
Click on the images for more information about each book.



Here is the head after most of the carving is completed. I still have sanding and cleanup work yet to



do. Traditionally, carousel horses were carved with exaggerated features and poses.



Here is another section that is partially carved. I still have work to do, but you can see the basic shape. I had hoped to carve the head of a mountain lion as part of his "pelt" saddle blanket, but there just wasn't enough wood and it was going to be difficult to add a piece. Now that I've reached this point, I can reattach the legs, add additional details, and then sand the finished carving.



Maybe by the next newsletter I'll have it finished and painted! Then I have to figure out what I'm going to do with it....

Reader's Mailbag

Vicki Plenis from Kentucky sent me photos of a gourd she had created after using some of my tutorials as guides. She wrote with the following question:

I just finished my first gourd using your tutorials as my guide, it is very rough, but I am very proud of it, and I learned a lot from doing it, and I know some things that worked well, and some that didn't! I made this gourd for myself to keep, but not two days after I finished it, I have had a very generous offer from someone wanting to purchase it. I couldn't even think about selling it before I checked with you first. I am very sensitive to copyright issues, and I thought it would be OK for me to borrow from your tutorials since I purchased them to learn. I tried to make the gourd "my own" and not copy a piece of your work exactly as you have done it, but have I overstepped? Did I copy too much from you?

A: This gourd is substantially different from any that I've done, and Vicki did a nice job adding her own touches to make it her own design. I appreciated that she was aware of copyrights and asked about it.



Above and Below: Sand Dollar Gourd by Jim Petty of Idaho



Reader's Mailbag

Hi Bonnie, I wanted to share some pictures of my gourds as many of the embellishments came from you. My gourds are not fancy as I shake quite a bit after an accident, very hard to do fine detail work. I am very new to the joy of working with gourds. It

Reader's Mailbag

has been fun and wonderful therapy. You have been a wonderful inspiration by way of your book and your newsletters. I love going over back issues.

Dean Hines - Colorado

Bonnie, Here are a couple pictures of the gourds I've finished from your classes. Thought you might like to see the final project. I enjoyed your classes and they have inspired me to do more gourds. Didn't think I would be interested, but the carving part spurred my interest. Thanks much. Joan Eerkes - Arizona

Tip of the Month: Recipe for Homemade Huichol Style Wax

This recipe was provided by **Bonnie Adams of Illinois**. She originally got the recipe from "JnDC" in Washington State, who had herself gotten it from someone else. (If you know who originated the recipe, please let me know so I can give them credit!)

Experiment with different techniques for application. The method below is from Bonnie Adams; Huichol Indians place their beads one at a time using a cactus needle or similar tool. They place them with the holes facing up and the beads are set directly onto the surface, they are not recessed. The photos shown here are actual beaded Huichol gourds I bought in Oaxaca, Mexico.

Tacky Wax substitute - follow proportions and directions closely for best results. *Note that beeswax used by the Huichol Indians also contains pitch (tree sap). You can also purchase commercially prepared beeswax mixtures.

**4 parts pure Beeswax
1 part Vaseline or store brand**

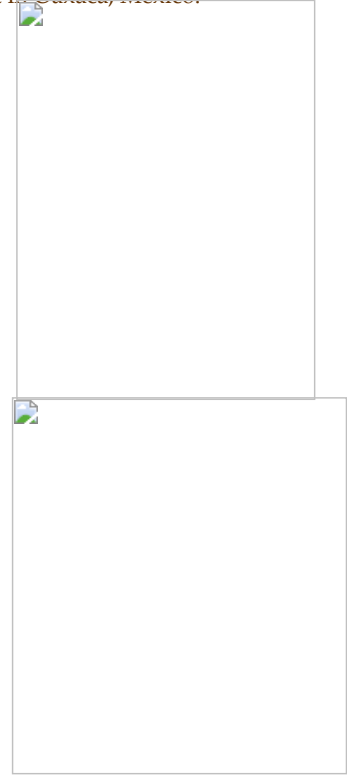
Combine in an old non-stick pan over low heat on the stove until all is melted together and mixed well. Pour into some type of mold and allow it to set up. An old nonstick cupcake pan would work. Or, pour onto parchment paper and spread in a thin layer to set up. When set, roll up the parchment paper and store the wax in a plastic bag.

For use, trim thin slabs of the block and lay the 'tacky wax' into the carved beading areas of your gourd. The carved areas should be about 2mm deep. Press the wax into the areas smoothly.

Start pressing your beads into the 'tacky wax' one by one. I prefer to stand my beads on end so that the holes don't show. To do this I string as many beads as needed for the strip I'm working, on a beading needle, lay it over the strip I want to bead, press the beads into the wax, and remove the needle. I end up with a straight row of nicely placed beads and it's less frustrating for me that placing one bead at a time.

If any of your beads are 'dulled' by the process (this happens with some colors, especially the transparent glass beads), after you finish beading the entire gourd, use a lighter to lightly flame only the dulled beads. While the coating is loose, dab with a soft cotton cloth to remove as much of the wax coating as possible. Then 'paint' the dulled beads with a light coat of Stained Glass paint, Clear Florescent. Voila! The dulled beads have regained their iridescent quality.

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

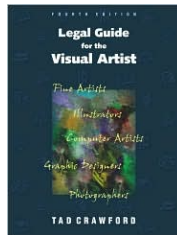


Huichol Beaded Gourds

Featured Gourd of the Month:

Streamside Hummer

This gourd has an added basswood carving of a hummingbird. The gourd is decorated with carved sand ripples that are accented with patina paints, filigree carving and added turquoise cabochons.



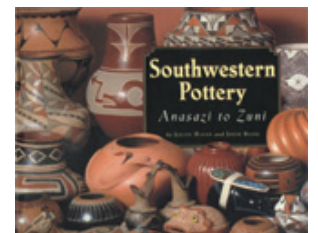
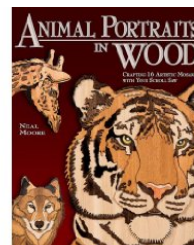
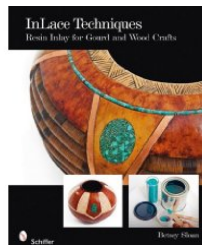
[Legal Guide for the Visual Artist](#)

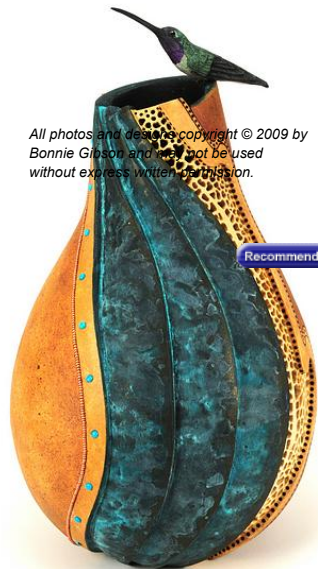


[Arte Huichol \(Bilingual\)](#)



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envelope icon. If you are receiving duplicate mailings, or want to unsubscribe from the newsletter list, please send me an [email](#).

Note: It is important that you add bonniegibson@qwest.net to your "safe senders" list, as many emails bounce each month due to spam blockers.

If your email address changes, just sign up again with your new address - no need to email me the change, as I purge non-working addresses monthly.

Arizona Gourds HOME

[Inlace Techniques](#)

[Animal Portraits in Wood](#)

[Southwestern Pottery from Anazazi to Zuni](#)

Just Released!

I've been asked many times about copyright laws, and since I am not an attorney it's better to go to an expert for advice. The **Legal Guide for the Visual Artist** has received many good reviews and it deals specifically with visual artists.

Arte Huichol is a Mexican publication in Spanish but it is listed as a bilingual edition. There aren't too many books on this subject, but if you are mainly interested in photographs, you may be interested in the **"Beads of Beauty"** notecards. (If you buy them, you'll have to send me a note on one of them!)

Betsy Sloane's new book on **Inlace Techniques** has finally been released, and includes a tutorial I provided as well as plenty of photos of my work in the gallery area. This book is clear in its presentation of the material and worthwhile to own if you want to try resin inlay.

Animal Portraits in Wood is a scroll saw book, but it has tons of nice wildlife patterns and offers some interesting possibilities for saw work on gourds.

And finally, **Southwestern Pottery from Anazazi to Zuni** is a book I often recommend. It has great photos of pottery from all of the southwestern tribes and you'll get lots of design ideas from these pottery pieces.

**Please visit the book page links shown at right to view collections of related titles. Each topic includes a variety of suggested books about each subject.*

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