

# Artist Statement

*John Hernandez*

I first considered the artistic possibilities of gourds in 2002. Their unique natural forms are what triggered my enthusiasm. I've always felt drawn to forms, to three-dimensional media, but this was different. There was an immediate connection, an incredibly strong intrinsic connection that was reaffirming and exciting. So many creative ideas began popping into my head. I couldn't wait to begin. I feel very fortunate to have found this medium, as I have spent a long time searching for some form that could retain my artistic passion.

My artistic expression begins by absorbing what is there. I look over the gourds, choosing those to which I sense a strong visual connection. Equally important though, is whether the gourd in question can hold up to the technique that comes to mind for it. The physical condition of the gourd is significant and must be analyzed. Sometimes I have a specific technique in mind and search for the perfect gourd to apply it to. Other times, I let the gourd dictate what will be done.

I am currently experimenting with two elements: color and space. Color is the hardest part of the process. The painting medium I use has a transparent quality. It is for this reason extra care and planning must be done. Initially, I would apply only one hue. Now, I apply several pure hues, either analogous in nature or complimentary and blend them in such a way as to produce a soft impressionistic look. I have always loved that style of painting. So, in one sense, the surface of the gourd becomes my canvas in the art world.

Negative space is observed in the openings of these forms. I carve the openings to reflect the organic nature of the gourds. Fluid, curving linear elements result and are repeated in the sewn pine-needle work around the openings. With the goal of emphasizing this negative space, I have recently carved larger, elongated openings, using the sewn pine-needles work to develop and accentuate the resulting graceful line of movement. It is not my intention to alter the natural character of these gourds. Every technique I employ, every decision I make in terms of design is executed with the goal of enhancing the individual beauty of these natural forms.