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## CARY FESTIVAL TO SHOWCASE HOLIDAY DECORATIONS

*by Mary Ann Rood*

The 49th annual Cary Gourd Festival theme will be gourds as holiday decorations, from January snowmen through Christmas gourds of all kinds. Making a return appearance from our 1952 festival, whose theme was "The Calendar with Gourds", will be Mary and her little luffa lamb starting back to school in a gourd schoolhouse. Hours for the festival will be 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday, September 8, and 1 to 5 p.m. Sunday, September 9, in Jordan Hall, 1000 North Harrison Avenue, Cary, NC. Set-up is Friday and before the show opens on Saturday. A catered banquet will be held in the hall Saturday. Exhibitors and banqueters, please let us know to expect you by dropping a line to me at 4008 Green Level Rd. W., Apex, NC 27502 or call (919) 362-4357.

The Cary Festival is a free show (with free parking) of gourds and gourd crafts. Included are a wide range of contemporary craft, as well as collected craft from around the world (much loaned by Marvin Johnson, from gourds not usually on display in his museum). Crafters will demonstrate how to prepare gourds to work on, burning and cutting techniques, making and siting birdhouses and much more. Slide lectures will give background on the history and botany of gourds. Ray and Millie Konan's shows on Mexican Lacquerwork and Peruvian gourd decoration will be shown. Videos are playing a new role, with Minnie Black's Gourd Band last year's favorite. New in 1990 is the Alpha Chapter's own production of Marvin Johnson talking about his legendary gourd collection at his Angier museum. (Anyone interested in copies at \$15, please write, but remember, this is not a professional production.)

The festival is the oldest continuing gourd celebration in the nation. Cary, gourd capital of the nation, is just west of Raleigh in central North Carolina. North Harrison Avenue is between NC 54 and Interstate 40 (exit 287) by the Reedy Creek section of Unstead State Park.

Two area motels are offering discounted rates for festival goers. Cricket Inn-Cary, 1716 Walnut St., (919) 481-4011, has doubles at \$33.88 and singles for \$29.88 (up to four people in a double, two in a single). Both upstairs and downstairs rooms are available, both smoking and non-smoking. Let the reservations clerk know you are in town for the Festival when you are reserving in order to get discount.

A favorite with some Festival regulars is the refurbished Ramada Inn Raleigh-South, at US 1 South and Hwy 55 in Apex (919) 362-8621. Linda Smith offers both single and double rooms (up to four occupants) for \$38.

The Ramada has its own restaurant, but many eating places are convenient to either motel. A number of other motels are near the Cricket including Best Western-Cary Inn, Days Inn Cary, and the Happy Inn.



Joyce Wiggins of Raleigh burned a feather design on the gourd base of this basket and added feathers and beads to the handle.

*Photo courtesy of Mary Ann Rood*

# THE OXFORD GOURD ENSEMBLE

by Larry Sherman

**BACKGROUND.** As an instructor of educational psychology, I have always been interested in matters of the mind. I would describe my own particular views regarding human behavior as being primarily based on theories associated with the cognitive sciences. I often use my metaphor of the running gourd vine to be exemplary of ideas associated with individual creativity. Recently, many American cognitive theorists have become highly influential, even in the world of the fine arts. They include the developmental psychologists Jerome Bruner (1986), Howard Gardner (1985), and especially the philosopher Nelson Goodman (1976; 1978; 1984). I focus on all of these individuals and their theories in my professional teaching of Educational psychology. In the fine arts, from the mid-twentieth century to the present so-called "post-modern" era, one notable reaction to the economic exploitation of artists by their agents, galleries, dealers has been for artists to focus their artistic creations on ideas rather than actual objects. This is not to say that in the past artists did not use their minds, but rather that their actual creations were more focused on physical objects rather than ideas, as such. One post-modern movement in the fine arts has been described as "conceptual art," and it could be argued that this art form has been strongly influenced by the cognitive scientists mentioned above. Of course, it could also be argued that it was the artists who influenced the cognitive scientist's views.

view. Nevertheless, as a former musician who became an educational psychologist, I could not help but see and strongly appreciate the connection between the conceptual art movement and the cognitive sciences. For further details about my views regarding these connections, one might like to consult the papers from the symposium which I organized for the 5th International Conference on Humour (Sherman, 1985).

During the late 1940s and 1950s the idea or conception of a "happening" became a prominent fine art creation. One interesting result of the "happening" movement was that artists became somewhat interdisciplinary: that is, musicians (composers), theatrical performers (actors), and visual artists (painters, sculptors), began to collaborate with each other in producing their creative events, most of which assumed a great amount of indeterminacy! Nevertheless, the happenings did take place at a specified time and place (i.e., a site-specific performance), and their documentation became a historical record of the event. I suppose later references to these events may be thought of as a continuation of the event, however, I am not quite sure whether or not this was a definite intention of the artists, except in cases where the events were recorded as movies, video tapes, etc. During the late 1970s and continuing into the 1980s a new genre of fine art came to be called "Performance Art" of which Laurie Anderson and others may be considered as representative.

**THE CONCEPT.** The "Oxford Gourd Ensemble" was conceived about four years ago as an integration of the notions of "Happenings," "Conceptual Art" and "Performance Art." In many respects it is more an idea or concept than an actual physical object (musical instruments) or performance. It started by printing up a set of business cards on the backs of approximately 500 old IBM computer cards. In as much as I make a great variety of gourd crafted objects, not all of which are musical instruments, I simply wanted to include a unique business card with the creations which I sell. The idea of an "ensemble" has been defined as "...a unit or group of complementary parts that contribute to a single effect..." It is also used to describe a group of musicians, dancers, performers, a set of furniture, a costume or a coordinated outfit, etc. It occurred to me that if an audience suddenly became part of a performance, it too might be considered a part of the ensemble. Thus, I began to play around (think/conceive) of the **Oxford Gourd Ensemble** as something far more grand than a limited set of objects or people. The idea began to "run" like a gourd vine. Most art forms eventually become popularized. In this sense I consider my own work, **The Oxford Gourd Ensemble**, a popularized conceptual art piece.

Many people from all over the United States, and even some as far away as Israel, came in contact with the cards as they were dispersed. Some folks even began requesting site-specific performances, which I attempted to honor. While we have not done any weddings or bar mitzvahs as of this date, there have been approximately half-a-dozen site specific performances, including the 1984 Annual Gourd Peoples Breakfast in the Derrick Motel, Mt. Gilead, Ohio at



Another viewpoint regarding the relationship between the cognitive sciences and conceptual art suggests that the disciplines are merely parallel developments, both of which are reflecting a prevailing or dominant contemporary world

the Ohio Gourd Fair (October 1984). My association with the Ohio Gourd Society brought me into contact with Minnie Black, who sat in on this memorable site-specific performance. It was primarily through Minnie, who passed one of my cards on to Bart Hopkin, that I came in contact with the editor of **Experimental Musical Instruments**. Another memorable site-specific performance took place at Carl Garnett's farm in Oxford, Ohio, on a Sunday afternoon in July 1985. Carl, a retired elementary school principal, and his son, Don, had requested a performance for some friends who were making their first visit from Australia. The Oxford Gourd Ensemble was introduced by Carl to his Australian friends as a "traditional South Western Ohio music group." Now, I do not know how or where a "tradition" begins, but it must start somewhere, and later communication with the Australians left the distinct impression that they were truly thankful for the opportunity to have experienced some of the "...local native customs!"...and so the vine runs.

## THE NATURAL HORNS

by Bart Hopkin

*Editor's Note: This article will conclude the introduction to gourd musical instruments by Mr. Hopkin. Mr. Hopkin has been helpful in solving many gourd musical problems for which we are thankful.*

### NATURAL HORNS.

Many gourd varieties take long narrow forms. One of the best for wind instruments is the extra long handled gourd (seeds for these can be found in the ads of *THE GOURD*, the official publication of the American Gourd Society, Box 274, Mt. Gilead, Ohio 43338).

These gourds have a very long and narrow neck - up to three feet or more - ending in a rather small bulb. After being dried and cleaned, they form a naturally cylindrical or mildly conical tube, somewhat like the bore on a trumpet. If you cut off the bulb at the right point, the tube will terminate in a flare, similar to the trumpet's bell. Cutting off the other end just short of where the stem was creates an appropriately sized hole for a mouthpiece. If you then insert a trumpet mouthpiece, the gourd will indeed play like a bugle or natural horn, creating two or three or more discreet pitches (depending on how tightly you buzz your lips, and whether you happen to have a good brass embouchere). But before you shove the mouthpiece in too hard and split the gourd, it is a good idea to reinforce the opening with a ring of metal, such as a  $\frac{3}{4}$ " length of  $\frac{3}{8}$ " piece of copper tubing, around the outside.

Now I hasten to say that the tone is not the greatest. That is because the interior of the gourd does not make a good reflective surface for soundwaves. You can help the situation, first, by cleaning the interior as well as possible. If the long neck is not straight, this can be done by using a flexible cable, spring steel rod or a plumbers snake. Secondly, the surface can be polished by any means the maker can devise. One suggestion is to use a handful of steel shot poured into the tube, block the openings at each end

and shake vigorously. Thirdly, the interior surface can be varnished or coated with polyurethane. After cleaning the interior by one of the aforementioned methods, blow the residue from the tube, plug one end and fill with varnish or polyurethane and allow to set for at least an hour to allow for good penetration into the gourd interior. The varnish or polyurethane can be recovered by straining through a nylon stocking or similar material. Allow tube to dry well so the material you used is truly dried and cured - at least 48 hours.

I leave the outside decor of the instrument to the craftsman. Many gourd people have a preferred style that they can bring to the project. Also, to add to the interest and beauty of the instrument, gourds can be trained to grow in unusual shapes.

These descriptions have been pretty sketchy, degree of success will depend in part on the maker's creativity. The project requires the application of common sense and a vivid imagination - both of which are prevalent in gourd crafters.

In the meantime, anyone interested in unusual musical instruments might enjoy my bi-monthly newsletter, *Experimental Musical Instruments*. For more information write **Bart Hopkin, P.O. Box 784, Nicasio, CA 94946**



## WANTED: Help For Purple Martins

The *Purple Martin Conservation Association* is a non-profit organization working to increase the population of Purple Martins in North America. To encourage more people to put up housing for martins, the organization is offering **free** martin gourd seeds, a "How to" booklet, a products catalog, and a set of blueprints to anyone seriously willing to help these human-dependent birds. To receive this **free** material, including some seeds for growing martin nesting gourds, send a self-addressed, legal-size envelope with 50¢ postage to the address below. The PMCA would also like to hear from people who already have housing up for Purple Martins, regardless of their success attracting them. **Purple Martin Conservation Association, Department Z, Edinboro University of Pennsylvania, Edinboro, PA 16444**

