



# Jansen Designs

Fine Gourd Art  
Newsletter  
August 2003

[www.jansendesigns.com](http://www.jansendesigns.com)  
(787) 309-7197

**June** was quite a month! Murphy's Law holds true, as Ken and I attended both a week-long Artesan Festival at Plaza las Americas in San Juan, Puerto Rico, and the *Welburn 7th International Gourd Art Festival* in Fallbrook, California.

I was very excited to win two awards in the California Gourd Society competition while at Fallbrook: one in the "Carving and Painting" category, and the other in the "Animal" category. The gourds on display were fabulous -- it was wonderful to admire the creativity evident throughout the show. Our higueras were a novelty, and a hit! Most people had no idea that gourds actually grow on trees.



Our Puerto Rican "calabash," with its extremely hard and relatively thin shell, enables us to carve intricate shapes not normally possible with the more commonly know vine-grown gourds. In San Juan, we exposed people to a new, innovative way to work with higueras.



Commonly made into masks and maracas, higueras as "objects d'art" surprised many. Tired but happy, we returned to La Parguera, where we vowed to fit in a bit of snorkeling before preparing for our next show.

## Ken's Korner: Drying Tips

In order to cut intricate shapes, higueras should be fully dried. Leave the higuera out in the sun until it feels light and you feel the contents shaking around. This may take anywhere from two to six months, depending on the size of the higuera. Turn periodically, and occasionally wipe with a rag wet with bleach water to deter mold growth. You may cut a higuera when it is green; however, Ken recommends straight, simple cuts, for as the higuera dries naturally it has a tendency to twist and crack.



---

## Two-Tone Painted Finishes

I would have to say that 95 percent of my higueras have a base color achieved through the techniques of "faux finishing." First, a solid color is applied in two coats. Next, a second color (mixed with a glazing medium) is applied and manipulated with either a sponge or plastic wrap. An illusion of "depth" is thus created. I prefer the look of a darker glaze over a light basecoat; however, you can try the reverse to achieve a totally different look.

In the beginning, it is safer to choose colors a few shades apart on a painter's color chip. After you feel more confident, experiment with various color combinations. If in doubt, practice first on a piece of cardboard. I highly recommend you look at any number of books on the subject, which offer step-by-step instructions. This process can work on just about anything - a picture frame, a chair, your dining room walls. Look around and have some fun!!

---

Be sure to visit us at our website, <http://www.jansendesigns.com>. We are constantly adding to and improving our site to include new pieces, so if you are unable to reach us for any reason, please try again at a later time. Thank you.

*Andrea & Ken*

