

Saturday, November 29, 2008

Jocelynn Brown: Handmade

Gourd addiction leads to an unusual craft

Whether it's stockpiling yarn, fabric or beads, crafting is known to lead to fun addictions.

Gloria Irla Marlow of Royal Oak admits to suffering from a less common sort -- "a gourd addiction." Seems it all began about three years ago when she and her husband, Paul, took a trip to Niagara Falls where she spotted a gourd basket. "I was just inspired by it," she recalls. "It had carvings actually in the skin of the gourd and some small inlay work."

Marlow, who has served the past year as director of one of the "patches" for the Michigan Gourd Society, currently has around 60 gourds drying in her garage. "They're waiting for me to work on them," she chuckles. "They're all different sizes and varieties -- from tiny egg shapes to giant kettle size, and everything in between." But just where does one find such a varied collection of gourds? "I get them all over. It depends on what I want to do. The farther south, the thicker the shell of the gourd. Sometimes they will be up to a half-inch thick," explains Marlow, who clearly knows her way around a gourd. She uses them to create unique and different forms of art, including necklaces, bowls, candle holders, oil lamps, vases, pitchers, dolls, masks, Christmas ornaments and Santas. She says, "There's no limit as to what you can make" Marlow has won 26 ribbons at annual state shows held across the country by the American Gourd Society. She recently started selling her work with prices ranging from \$25-\$200.

Detroit News staffer Jocelynn Brown is a longtime Metro Detroit crafter who knits, crochets, beads and makes soft-sculpture dolls. You can reach her at jbrown@detnews.com or visit her blog at detnews.com/craftblog.



Gloria Irla Matlow likes making necklaces, bowls, candleholder and other trinkets out of gourds.

(Velvet S. McNeil / The Detroit News)

