

# ARTS | LIFE

EXPRESSIONS

TUESDAY  
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Stocks D2  
Comics/Puzzles D6.7

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ERIN REID COKER PHOTOS—COKER@POSTSTAR.COM

Whitehall artist Serena Kovalosky discusses her work with gourds at her home in Whitehall on Friday. BELOW: Kovalosky displays a piece of work in progress at her studio. Shown at bottom are various gourd pieces.

# Organic evolutions

Artist turns gourds into modern works of art

**@POSTSTAR.COM:** Hear artist Serena Kovalosky talk about her work in an audio slideshow online after noon today.

By DOUG GRUSE  
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**S**trips of crackled bark, seed pods, dried pomegranates and abandoned bird nests inspire Serena Kovalosky.

The artist uses bits from nature to guide her as she turns dried gourds into intricate, modern works of sculpture.

Cubbyhole shelves in the upstairs studio in Kovalosky's family home in Whitehall hold natural treasures — from pine cones to a fragment of bone — she has collected during hikes through the woods. Kovalosky describes the studio as more of a warehouse — a place to hold her stash of gourds, tools and organic curios.

The real creating happens in her yard.

"I usually like to work outside. That's where I get my inspiration," she said.

Kovalosky's work is featured in the exhibit "Beyond the Branches," which runs through Oct. 29 in the small gallery at Valley Artisans Market in Hubbard Hall in Cambridge. The show also includes drawings by Jennifer Strode.

For Kovalosky, the gourd work is an evolution of a traditional craft form, which she first saw after a friend shared pieces that had been created in Mexico.

"I was so enthralled with the form and what you can do with it," she said.

But rather than using the gourds as a canvas for carved designs, Kovalosky wanted to let the natural beauty of the dried fruit dictate her work.

A layer of mold forms on the outside of the gourds as they dry naturally. When the mold

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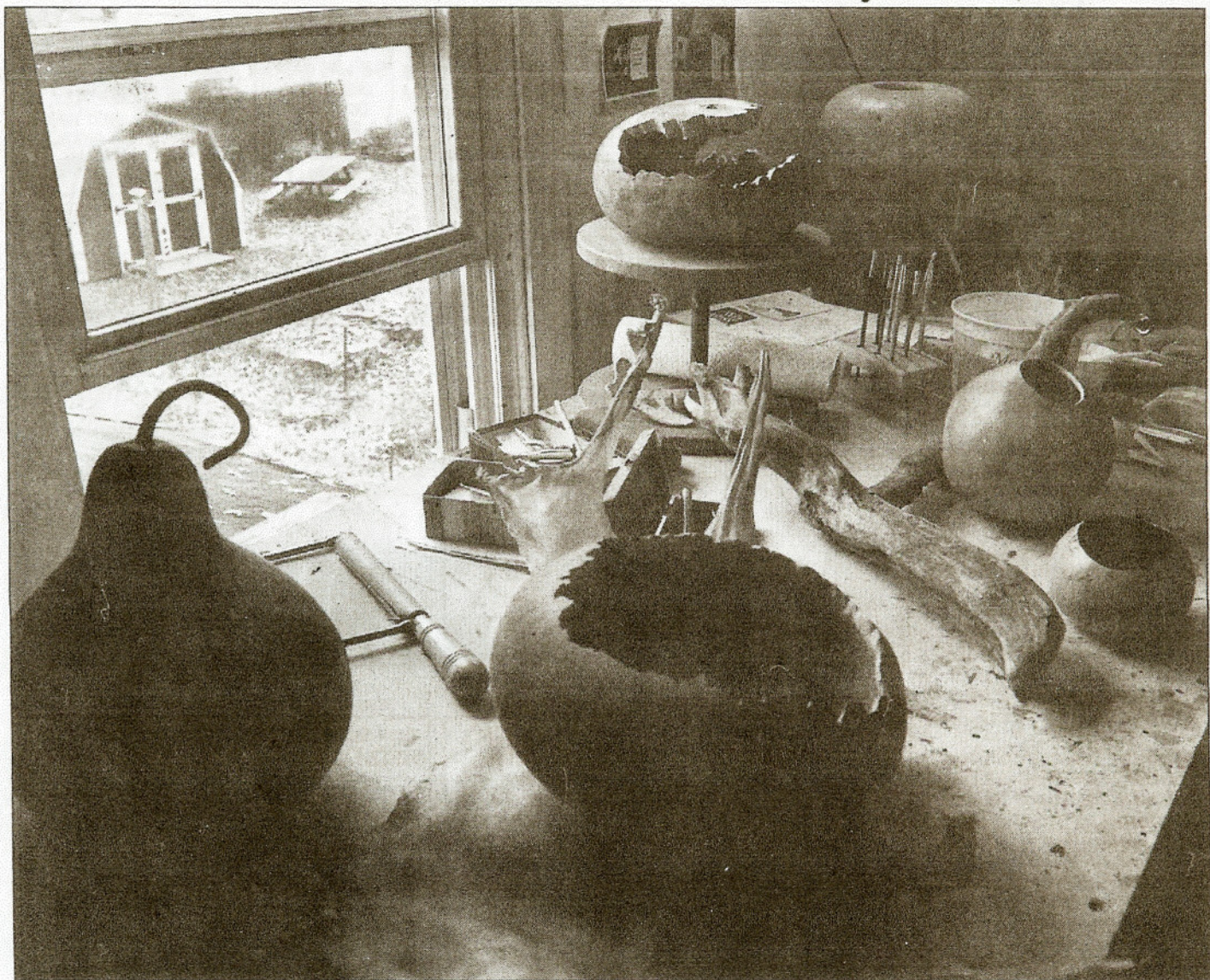
## IF YOU GO

Serena Kovalosky's gourd sculptures are featured in the exhibit "Beyond the Branches," which runs through Oct. 29 in the small gallery at Valley Artisans Market in Hubbard Hall, 25 E. Main St. in Cambridge. The show also includes drawings by Jennifer Strode. For information, go to [www.valleyartisansmarket.com](http://www.valleyartisansmarket.com) or call 677-2765.

Learn more about her work online at [www.kovalosky.com](http://www.kovalosky.com).

COURTESY PHOTOS





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Works of art in progress sit in the studio of artist Serena Kovalosky on Friday. The Whitehall artist uses gourds to create many of her pieces.

# Lines on gourds serve as guides for saw

## ◆ LINES

*Continued from D1*

away, it leaves a mottled pattern on the surface, almost like water stains.

The marks could be scrubbed away, but Kovalosky chooses to let them lead her process.

"I play with the colors that are already there," she said. "Why not work with the natural coloring and organic elements?"

Kovalosky studies the mold patterns closely, like a crime scene investigator looking for scattered evidence. She traces outlines of spots with a pencil.

The lines serve as a guide for her jigsaw.

She carefully cuts out the shapes with the saw. Then she goes back and refines her edges with an X-Acto knife.

"The hardest part is the carving. Once you've taken a piece away, it's gone," she said.

She removes seeds, cleans out the interior with a Brillo pad and seals the inside surface with gesso and acrylic paint.

Through a process of wood-burning and adding layers of gold leaf or gold alloy, Kovalosky transforms the gourds inside and out.

The striations and textures of her found relics are always present in her head.

"I don't consciously copy de-

signs. I feel them," Kovalosky said. "I'll pick up a piece of bark and see the lines. I'll think, 'I can do something with that.' Somehow it gets into my psyche."

The finished sculptures blend elements of nature with modern form.

"They're kind of like pieces you might find walking in the woods," she said.

Kovalosky worked for years in the corporate world before deciding to become a full-time artist.

She honed her creative skills in Montreal, but she said the urban landscape didn't speak to her.

She was drawn to nature. "I found myself just going

into the woods," she said.

The wilds of Washington County lured her back to her hometown.

"I needed to work in a more rural environment. I knew the land here," Kovalosky said.

It's all about balance for the artist, both in life and in her work.

When working on a piece, there's a fine line between masterpiece and overkill. But Kovalosky likes to take risks. "You don't want to hold back," she said.

One wrong decision, however, can ruin a piece.

"As far as I'm concerned, if you're not trashing pieces, you're not creating art," she said. "You're being safe."