



Bead Society

of Great Britain

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A beaded car? What next?

Diane Fitzgerald

Recently, the Smithsonian Museum of the American Indian in Washington DC showcased just such a thing – a beaded car!

The exhibit, 'Vochol: Huichol Art on Wheels' was unveiled on March 20 2012 to an admiring and amazed crowd. The vehicle exterior was transformed with more than 2 million glass seed beads in bright psychedelic colors and patterns while the interior, including the seats, steering wheel and dashboard, was decorated with nearly 35 pounds of fabric, paint, yarn and resin.



The Vochol Car: A Beaded "Bug"

Diane Fitzgerald



The Vochol is the work of eight artisans from two Huichol families who devoted more than 9000 hours to decorating a 1990 Volkswagen Beetle car with their distinctive artwork.

At the conclusion of the exhibit on May 10 2012 it will tour internationally before being auctioned with proceeds donated to the Association of Friends of the Museum of Popular Art in Mexico.

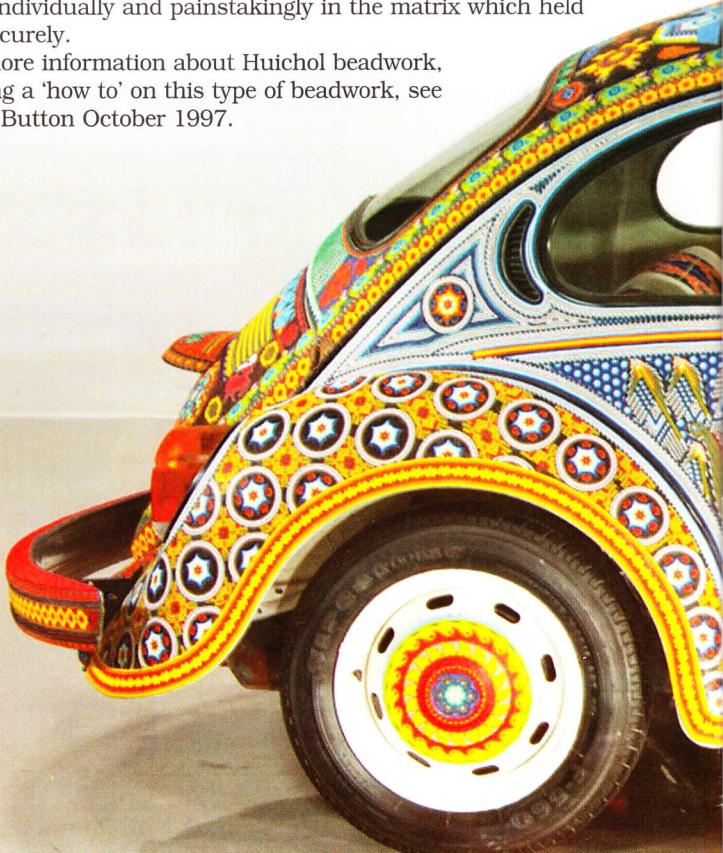
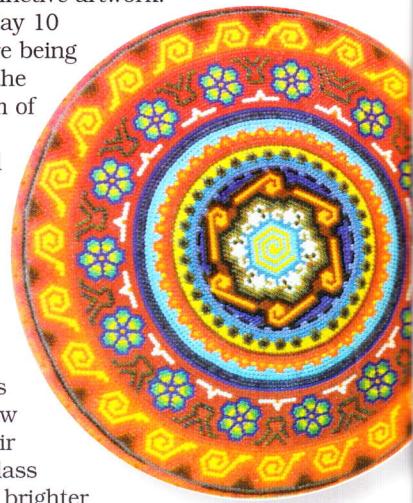
For hundreds of years, the Huichol people of north central Mexico have worked with beads made of bone, clay, stone, coral, turquoise, pyrite, jade and natural seeds creating traditional patterns used to represent and communicate with the gods.

With the importation of glass beads from Europe, the Huichol found a new medium in which they continued their work but in more elaborate forms. Glass seed beads enabled them to use new brighter colors in their palette and the convenience of glass beads decreased the time necessary for a project. Over time, their patterns evolved from the religious to the commercial and have enabled the Huichol to become known worldwide for their masks of the sun and moon, jaguar heads and several animal forms such as snakes and lizards as well as gourd vessels lined with beads and other items including representations of an eclipse.

The name Vochol derives from 'Vocho' (a slang term for the German VW Beetle in Mexico) and Huichol, the name used to denote the Wixaritari, a group of some 26,000 people living in the mountainous western Sierra Madre.

Originally, a mixture of beeswax and pine resin was used to coat the surface to be embellished. Beads loaded on a pine needle were placed individually and painstakingly in the matrix which held them securely.

For more information about Huichol beadwork, including a 'how to' on this type of beadwork, see Bead & Button October 1997.



Photos: Alejandro Piedra Buena, courtesy of the Museo de Arte Popular ©2010

