

High Times

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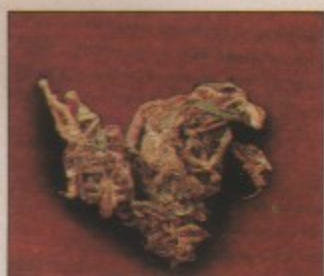
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DEVOTTE VISIONS

Meet the Huichol. The Huichol have been doing this from time out of mind, and here is some of their art.

Time out of mind. In some of these yarn-images you will observe representations of the conquistadores of Coronado, who came among the Huichol 400 years ago and are still sung of in Huichol village myths. In others you will see Watacame, the farmer who survived a series of Job-like



Yarn paintings by Juan Rios and Jose Benitez, photographs by Ivan Spane

plagues and tribulations in the dark times long before even Coronado came, and whose body after death was dismembered, Osiris-like, and rose up severally out of the earth as various medicine and drug plants. In still others you will see jet planes, anthropologists' pith helmets, four-wheel-drive Toyotas, and—hey!—dope-seeking American hippies! Most of all, if you've ever done peyote, in these yarn panels you will see peyote.

First, one coats a slab of plywood with beeswax and heats it gently until the wax is smooth and tacky. Then, sitting cross-legged before the beeswax with heaps of colored yarn in one's lap, one eats a few peyote buttons and waits for the visions to manifest themselves. First they come as a general impression of some all-pervasive color, so the yarn of that color is impressed into the wax as a full background. As this proceeds, various articulations of the vision proper proceed to materialize: People, animals, suns and planets, gods and the movements of matter play out of one's fingers into the warm wax.

Peyote thus becomes a link of consciousness between American peyote-dopers and these Indians of the Sierra Madre Occidental in Mexico. Our history mingles with theirs, our myths with their myths. The magic buttons dissolve a barrier of ignorance and cultural isolation from each other. We become friends. We're brothers and sisters in peyote, in the profound dimensions of common humanity that all persons know who have experienced this unique state of altered consciousness. ■



