



SUPPLIES:
 egg gourd or egg
 emery board or sandpaper
 washi paper
 sharp scissors, pencil, ruler
 decoupage or white glue*
 clear finish, gloss or matte
 brush for glue/finish
 egg drying stand/holder



by Kathy James

Washi means "traditional Japanese paper". It is a strong paper handmade from the bark of the mulberry plant, kozo. It has been silk-screened with many colors, including a final layer of gold ink. Unlike decorated papers in the US, washi is thicker, very flexible, slightly stretchy, and tear resistant. Many of the patterns were once kimono fabric designs. There are only a few Japanese families left who still make it.

Choose an egg gourd or a hen-sized egg that has been blown out and thoroughly dried. Sand off any bumps. Measure from the center top to the center bottom to find the height of your paper, and measure around the widest part of the egg to find the length. Cut a rectangle of washi paper slightly larger than these measurements (an extra 1/8th inch).

On the back side of the paper, use creases or pencil to mark a 1/2-inch center channel (A) the length of the rectangle, aligned with the widest point of your egg. You will not cut inside of this channel.

Now partition your rectangle into segments about 1/2" wide, as shown in B. You can use a ruler or you can fold your rectangle like an accordion fan... into 1/2-inch wide panels. Don't hesitate to make firm crease lines in the paper. Unlike other types of paper, washi is strong, and the folds will disappear when glued.

Using scissors, cut the partition lines, leaving the center channel uncut—like a picket fence. Do both sides, above and below the center channel. Then round the pickets as shown in C. There is a Washi Egg Ruler™ with a built-in picket pattern that can be traced**. Make sure you cut the lines all the way to the center channel lines, although you should not round the ends that far. Try to duplicate the picket shapes in drawing C, slightly rounded but with a point.

Now, apply glue to the channel only and adhere it all the way around (D), aligning it perfectly with the top and bottom of the egg. Press to remove bubbles or wrinkles. Next, begin adhering the pickets on the top half, one at a time, overlapping the previous picket and smoothing wrinkles as you go. Do the bottom half as well (E).

Using the smooth handle of your brush, roll it back and forth over all seams and overlapped edges to flatten and smooth them. Clip away stray ends or add bits of the paper as necessary to make sure all parts of the egg are covered. Allow to dry by resting egg on rack or holder that barely touches it.

Paint or spray with several coats of matte or gloss finish.

Although it tends to be weak and transparent when wet, regular origami paper can be used, but measure carefully since it often comes in sizes too small to go around an egg (6" x 6"). Handle gently to prevent tears.

*An exceptional choice of glue is US ArtQuest's Perfect Paper Adhesive™, matte or gloss, it is both glue and clear finish in one product. Matte is also an excellent clear finish for gourds where you want the protective coating to be truly undetectable.

** Washi Egg Ruler™ is available at www.PrimitiveOriginals.com for \$1.00.

Kathy James is a teacher, artist, and author from Georgia. Contact her at klaymaker@aol.com or 229-420-9982.

