



MORAVIAN EGGS

folkart eggs

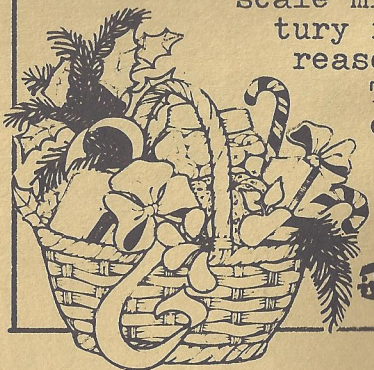


If Thanksgiving is upon us, then Christmas can't be far behind. So in keeping with the season's celebrations we are featuring these Moravian eggs as the fourth & final chapter in the series on Slovak eggs. Although not originally made for Christmas decorations, these eggs have been marketed in recent years in Department stores and Boutiques as unusual tree ornaments. And why not? With their bright colors & frilly ribbons they are perfect symbols of the love & purity of the season!

Except for the two in the center, the eggs featured on the front cover were made in Czechoslovakia & purchased here. While the beautifully onion skinned dyed & scratched carved manger and the star patterned pysanka were made & purchased in Bethlehem Pa.

Although Bethlehem was settled by Moravians, they were members of the Moravian Church, known as Unitas Fratrum or Unity of Brethren and not immigrants from the Moravian region of Czechoslovakia. The city was founded on the concepts of religious freedom in 1741 in the New World - long before the country of modern day Czechoslovakia was organized in Europe and the large scale migrations of the 19th century for political & economic reasons began here in America.

This historical footnote explains the vast disparity between the large numbers of Moravians and the few number of Moravian eggs.

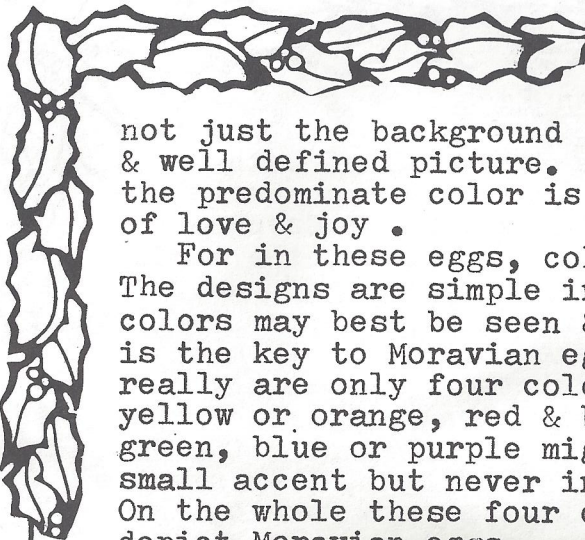


The Moravian Eggs

Although the Moravians of Bethlehem heritage is more German/Protestant and the Moravians of Czechoslovakia is Slavic/Catholic, the magic & symbolism of the Moravian Egg predates both groups by several centuries! There is written reference to eggs from this region from about the 13th century and there is archaeological evidence dating from 320-500 A.D. While not THE oldest examples of decorated eggs, they are the forerunners of what was to develop into our beloved pysanky. And as such are extremely important in making & developing designs upon an eggshell.

They exhibit the most ancient of all designs - geometric patterns, common to all primary cultures & from which all other motifs are derived. They are the simplest of all design elements - linear. "Lines" also include dots, triangles, circles, zigzags... etc. and can be expanded to produce an entire vocabulary/symbolism - cross, star, ladder, rake.... All of these when combined can create an extensive language which can be read and understood like any other.

So the basis of these Moravian Eggs is simple line sectioning & dividing the egg, then filling in with color, which can also divide the egg even further. Stop reading for a minute, go back & really LOOK at the eggs on the cover - especially the use of the pattern given to yellow & white. Yes, the color is the pattern. Color is used in a linear way to fill in the space. Yellow & white are used to BE the design, not to outline or fill in the space. The "fisherman's net" is broad & vivid while the zigzags just sort of meander down the side of the shell. Whereas red & black provide the contrast &



not just the background for the precise & well defined picture. Notice too that the predominate color is red - the color of love & joy .

For in these eggs, color is the thing. The designs are simple in order that the colors may best be seen & enjoyed. This is the key to Moravian eggs - for there really are only four colors used - white yellow or orange, red & black. Sometimes green, blue or purple might appear as a small accent but never in large areas. On the whole these four colors always depict Moravian eggs.

As pysanky they are very similar yet very different. The designs are made with very large free flowing guide lines - very thick & wide, full of color. Even the white lines are broad. White is seen as a color itself & is used as such - not merely a method of defining space.

Now, go back to the cover, again. Compare the center right pysanka with the entire circle of Moravian. One is precise, formal, exquisite in its delicate diagrams of beauty. The others are free flowing, moving bursts of colorful action. These variables are representative of the choices in wax resist egg decoration - design vs. color. Not that you can't have both. But rather that there is a choice based upon meaning & content and not only upon the talent & artistic abilities of the egg maker.

These are ideally suited for the beginner, for the patterns are simple & easy to follow and are an excellent method in learning the use of the kistka. But they are also a bit of a challenge to the more experienced too. As most of you know, filling in those wide, empty spaces , totally & without the tiniest of pin hole seepage from the next dye is a real effort. So too is the use of ONLY four colors - it does limit the possibilities !

Moravia is an area rich in designs especially the symbols of the sun & cross and which all begin with the basic sectioning of the egg. On the following page there are some variations in "egg division". These are not "step-by-step" diagrams but rather completed sections of an egg into which you may add further color coordinated schemes.

There are also some guide lines in the use of the four part color scheme on these Moravian eggs. Although any color combination is acceptable in pysanky, there are certain ones which are only applicable to the Moravian region. It is how the colors may be interchanged & in what order. For instance :

WHITE is a color which can be used to create FORMS such as triangles, feathers dots & nets and not merely to OUTLINE or separate the various colors.

YELLOW & ORANGE are the second colors applied & are used to enhance the color RED ONLY and never BLACK ! If you notice on the cover, it is only RED with additional linear elements over it. The BLACK is left clear & open with only a bit of WHITE encroaching upon it. YELLOW is never used over BLACK.

WHITE can be used with YELLOW, RED and BLACK.

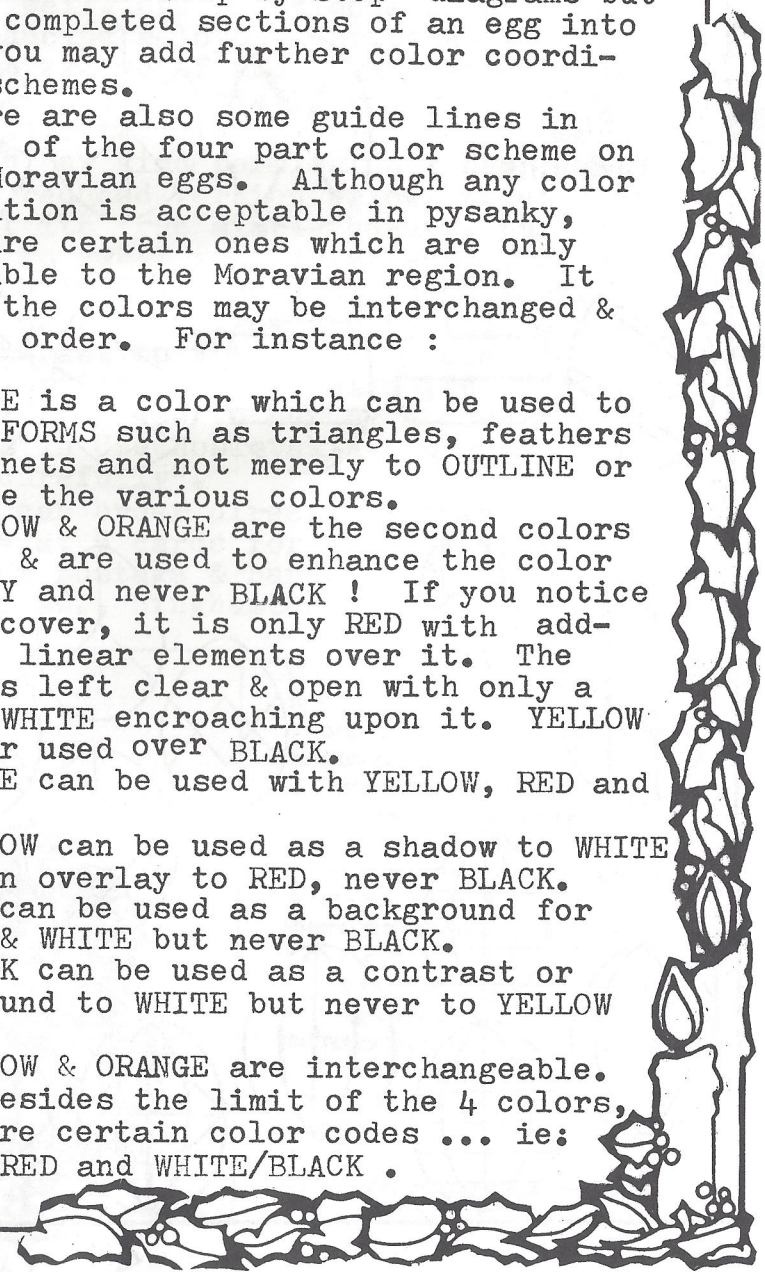
YELLOW can be used as a shadow to WHITE or as an overlay to RED, never BLACK.

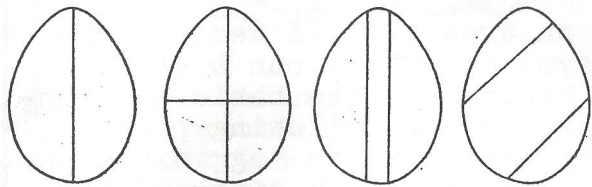
RED can be used as a background for YELLOW & WHITE but never BLACK.

BLACK can be used as a contrast or background to WHITE but never to YELLOW or RED.

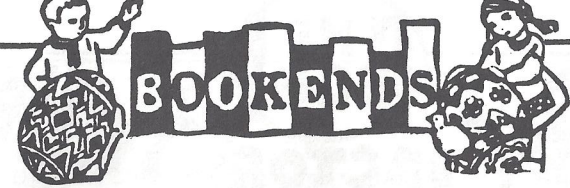
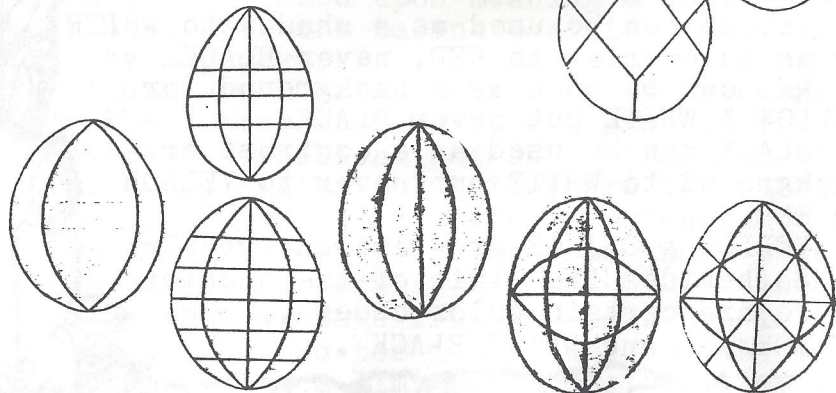
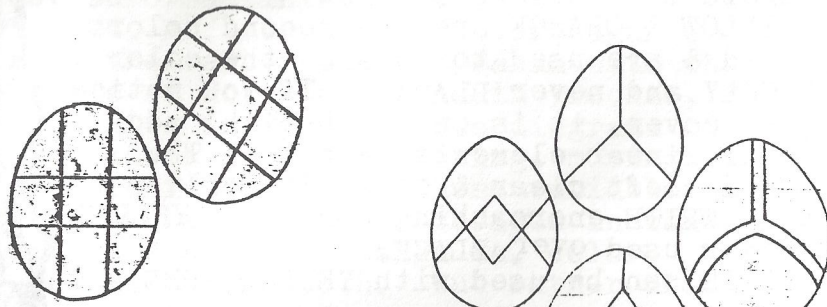
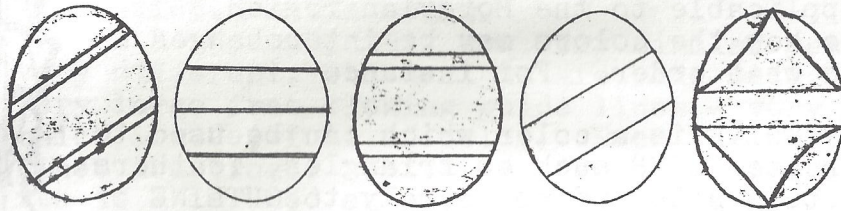
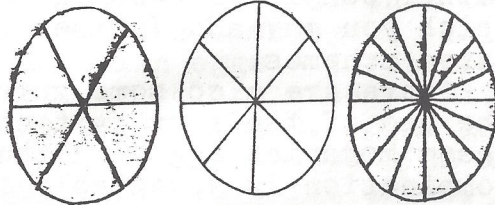
YELLOW & ORANGE are interchangeable.

So besides the limit of the 4 colors, there are certain color codes ... ie: YELLOW/RED and WHITE/BLACK .





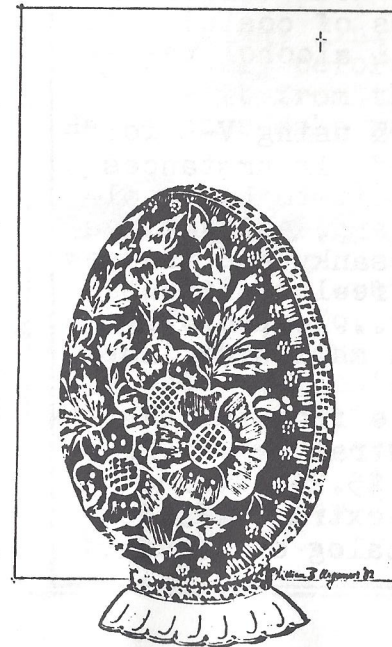
Egg Divisions



You all remember the beautiful egg sketches in the spring issue done by Lillian Urganus, well, she's out done herself again by producing a lovely Christmas card with a folkart egg motif and a very apropos verse for all, but especially eggers involved in the folkarts.

With her kind permission I have included a much reduced version below, which doesn't reflect its true simple beauty, but may be enough to "whet your whistle". The card is really a tri-fold on heavy bond paper & has just a dash of yellow around the base to add contrast to the striking black & white of the pattern. The design itself is from a real egg given to her by a cousin while she was in Czechoslovakia & brought home "very carefully".

You can order directly from Lillian Urganus at 5 cards for \$7.00 which also includes postage & handling to : Box 52 Peckham Rd., Binghamton, N.Y. 13903.



TO LAUGH - IS TO RISK APPEARING THE FOOL.
 TO WEEP - IS TO RISK APPEARING SENTIMENTAL.
 TO REACH OUT TO ANOTHER - IS TO RISK INVOLVEMENT.
 TO EXPOSE FEELINGS - IS TO RISK
 SHOWING YOUR TRUE SELF
 TO PLACE YOUR IDEAS BEFORE A CROWD -
 IS TO BE CALLED NAIVE.
 TO LOVE - IS TO RISK NOT BEING LOVED IN RETURN.
 TO LIVE - IS TO RISK DYING -
 TO HOPE - IS TO RISK DISPAIR, TO TRY AT ALL
 IS TO RISK FAILURE.
 BUT RISKS MUST BE TAKEN BECAUSE THE GREATEST
 HAZARD IN LIFE IS TO RISK NOTHING -
 THE PERSON WHO RISKS NOTHING, DOES NOTHING;
 IS NOTHING AND BECOMES NOTHING -
 TO RISK - IS TO ENJOY!

MAY YOUR CHRISTMAS BE RICH IN REMEMBRANCE
 AND WARMED BY LOVE -



Like some of the eggs I have from my Baba, these imported Moravian eggs will eventually begin to fade. Mainly because they've not been coated with a preservative to protect their modern brilliant dyes. Up to now most pysanky people have had to use some sort of floor varnish or urethane because the chemicals inherent within the aniline dyes and the beeswax used on pysanky have reacted with most other finishes to totally spoil their beauty.

But now we have help - a new product called Master's V-L (varnish-lacquer) works wonders for our little beauties! This is an exceptionally fine finish, easy to apply with either a soft brush or a sponge applicator. Master's V-L has a high gloss & durable finish, with the look & feel of a true varnish. It dries in about 30 minutes & can be re-coated in about an hour (depending upon the weather & thickness of coats). It is non-yellowing and water & alcohol resistant.

I've been test-teaching & using V-L for over a year, in all sorts of circumstances & egg projects & have found it to be excellent for a trully smooth, hard, shiny glaze on my eggs both the pysanky and the new vegetable dyed ones. So I feel confident in recommending it to you..... especially now that I also found you a mail order supplier!

Master's V-L is available from the Ukrainian Gift Shop, 2422 Central Ave. N.E., Minneapolis, Mn. 55418, at \$5.25 a tin & \$1.60 postage. Include an extra \$1.25 for their lovely full color catalog of goodies!

If you do decide to try Master's V-L, here are a few suggestions you may find useful:

Do not shake or stir the can; use a soft bristle brush & never dip it in more than half way. Brush the V-L in one direction only (usually from top to bottom) & use about 3 coats.

Make sure each coat dries thoroughly before applying the next coat. Just because the TOP FEELS DRY, doesn't mean it is dry all the way through, especially UNDERNEATH, close to the shell.

Remember we are dealing with POROUS eggshells & they can present special problems - whether they are blown or full! If they are blown, then the air inside might keep the finish sticky for a longer time. If the eggs are full, the finish may prevent the liquid inside from drying properly & will cause one of those messy explosions.

So do be careful & allow adequate drying time. Be sure the shell and the dyes are completely dry (overnight at least) before applying any finish. And let each coat dry totally before putting on the next.

Take it from the "Voice of Experience"! Haste does make waste..... and a big MESS.



Many of you wrote, inquiring about obtaining wheat for straw applique work on eggs. I have found a good source for not only wheat but oats & wheatweaving books as well. Joyce is not only a wonderful wheatweaver but grows and harvests her own wheat as well. If you want further information contact her directly with a SASE: WHEATCRAFT INC., P.O. Box 853, Russel, KS 67665.





Bethlehem.

Now, let me tell you about "...the little town of Bethlehem." The song was written about the original one but it is

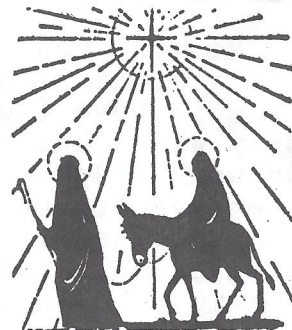
equally true of the Christmas City in Pennsylvania. Since very few of us can ever hope to visit the Middle East, our own special Bethlehem in the New World will bring joy to your heart and peace to your spirit.

We went in search of Moravian Eggs and found a treasure trove of delight. And at Christmas time its even better ! Beginning with the Lighting Ceremony on Dec. 1, the entire city is literally filled with the joys of the season. I've only listed a few of the activities but for further information, please contact the Visitors Center at 459 Old York Road, Bethlehem, Pa. 18017 or call (215) 868-1513. Go & enjoy yourself !

The "towns' people" are picture perfect from the clerks at the Sun Inn Gift Shop to the waitress at Orr's - all were kind, patient & helpful in our search for information about the Moravian Eggs. Be sure to stop in at the Moravian Book Shop for further researches into Moravian heritage & culture. A "special" MUST see is the Goundie House Shop (501 Main St.) for some beautiful colonial items - but also more important a good selection of Folk Art Eggs ! Yes ! We did find some. And I shall be doing an entire featured article on them next year - you'll love them !

Till then, may you really find the joys of Bethlehem in your own heart, enjoy it and

MERRY CHRISTMAS TO ALL !



Calendar of Events

- December 1 - Annual Craft Boutique, Imperial Music Center, 48 Appleby Ave., South River N.J. (201)-254-9701.
 - Christmas City Lighting Ceremony, Bethlehem, Pa. (215)-868-1513.
 - December 7 - Children's Victorian Christmas Party - Reservations (215)-691-5300, Bethlehem, Pa.
 - December 15 - Christmas Putz Tour in Bethlehem, (215) 691-1600.
 - December 21 - Live Bethlehem Christmas Pageant - (215) 868-1513.
 - Winter Solstice for the EGG - last time this year it will stand unsupported !
 - March 8-9 - Pisanki Demonstration at the Santee Library, 9225 Carlton Hills Blvd. Ca., 11:00-3:00.
 - 8-9 - California Egg Show, SASE details from Jane Atwater, 1234 Plaza del Monte, Santa Barbara Ca. 93101.
 - March 15-16 - EGGSIBIT '86 - SASE details to Kit Stansbury, 71 Bennett St., Phillipsburg, N.J. 08865.
- CHRISTMAS VILLIJA/WILIA :
- St. Matthias Church, 2800 Shady Run Road, Youngstown, Ohio, December 8, 1985.
 - Polonaise Inn, contact Charles Nietubiez, Box 40, Parlin, N. J. 08872 for details in Jan.



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