CHRISTMAS GREETINGS
by Linda Martin

The concept of a greetings egg is not new and can take many forms. This is perhaps one of the simplest ideas and can be made as elaborately or as simply as you like. The idea is that a ribbon unfurls from inside the egg, secured around a brass rod which is turned by finials on the ends of the rod. You could make this for any occasion and it is now possible to buy ribbons with messages already stamped for almost every eventuality.

Materials
Goose egg
Tall casket stand (SD35)
White plastic oval base (BA.5)
Brass rod (Mech.6)
2- Large domed filigrees (Fil.24)
4-Gold finials (Fil.118)
White/gold picot braid (BR.1)
5 - Sonie Ames Poinsettia prints (SA.14)
Topaz Pinhead Crystals (CR.1)
Peridot Pinhead Crystals (CR.1)
Emerald 'Merry Christmas' ribbon
Silk flowers (optional)
Matte White Paint (PT.1)
Duncan's White Mist paint (PT.24)
Liquitex Satin Varnish (FT.4)
Glues

Equipment
Egg Marker
Drill
Paper toile tool

Select a goose egg suitable for a casket design. Sand lightly.

Place the egg in the marker and pinpoint the positions for each end of the egg (i.e. centre the blow holes). Set the scribe approximately 0.25 cm *below* the half-way line and mark a small line in the middle area of the egg. Without altering the height of the pencil or the position of the egg in the marker, turn the marker upside down and mark a second line running parallel to the first. This will create the 'letterbox'. Now find the centre of the egg and make a small mark over the letterbox area. Position the opening centrally over this point, allowing a very small gap either side of the ribbon for ease of movement. (Fig.1)
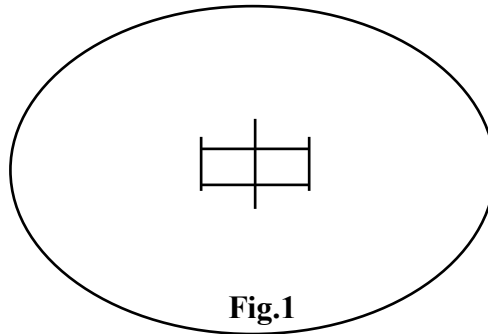
Fig.1

Cut out the slot and if necessary, re-drill the blow holes.

Paint the egg with two coats of matte white paint, then pearlise with two or three coats of Duncan's White Mist. (See notes on painting). Paint the base to match.

Cut out the base print for the raised paper design. Glue onto the egg to surround the opening. Continue to raise the print, cutting out *one* element of the design at a time and modelling it (if you don't work in this way, you'll end up with a handful of confetti!) Look carefully at the print and decide which part is furthest away from you (usually a leaf shape). From the first print, cut this leaf, but extend the cut into whatever is overlapping it, so that the leaf shape is re-created in its entirety. Use a paper toile tool to model the leaf in the palm of your hand, rolling the tool around the edges of the shape to make it curl. Don't worry about the creasing - this will virtually disappear with the varnishing process. Pack the back of the sculpted paper with Designer Tacky and glue it into position over the base print. Continue to raise each individual leaf and petal shape, using the extra prints as necessary. When the raising is complete, strengthen with several coats of Liquitex Satin varnish. Use the illustrations in Fig.2 to help decide the cutting order of whichever print you decide to use.
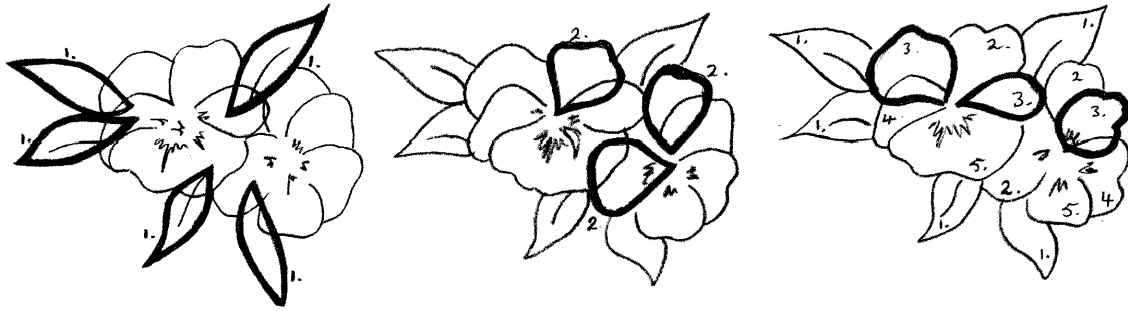
Fig.2

Edge the 'letterbox' with picot braid.

Epoxy the two domed filigrees centrally over the ends of the egg.

Open up the neck of the finials sufficiently to take the brass rod. Epoxy one finial on to the end of the rod. Insert into the egg in order to measure the correct length required once the second finial has been attached. There should be minimal clearance to allow for the turning of the finials against the filigree end covers. Cut the brass rod to size. Do not glue on the second finial. Cut a smaller length of rod which will be used on the free end of the ribbon. Again the length is determined by the width of the ribbon, plus the amount of rod required to insert into the finials.

Firmly glue a loop in the end of the ribbon which will remain inside the egg. The loop should be big enough to allow the rod to pass through, plus a little extra to allow for manoeuvring. The next procedure is a little fiddly. Place epoxy inside the ribbon loop. Thread the rod through one end of the egg and the ribbon through the slot. Now hook the rod through the loop in the ribbon and quickly slide the other end of the rod through the second blow-hole. Slide the ribbon so that it is positioned centrally on the rod, with the attached finial firmly in place against the end filigree. Pull gently on the ribbon to ease it into the glue inside the loop, thus securing it in position against the rod. Take care that any epoxy which has been moved along the rod from the ribbon loop does not set into the exit blow-hole. Once the ribbon has set in place, epoxy the second finial in position.

At this stage, resist the temptation to wind up the ribbon - if it disappears inside the egg completely, you'll have a terrible job getting it out again!

Take the small rod and roll the loose end of the ribbon around it, gluing in place securely. Now epoxy the two finials on either end of the rod. This will prevent the ribbon from disappearing back inside the shell.

Paint the base to match the egg and epoxy the stand to the base.

Epoxy the egg to the stand and any trim to the base of the stand.

Complete the paper toile work by using either gold ballentine, gold beads or pinhead crystals to centre the poinsettias.

Painting tips

Use a firm but fine textured sponge to apply the paint sparingly to the shell with a light dabbing action. Spread the paint thinly and evenly over the shell, turning the sponge to remove any dense areas. Dab at the paint until the little air bubbles disappear. If time is pressing the paint can be dried with a hairdryer.

I prefer to use a mix of paints. I start with a matte non-fire ceramic paint, available in many beautiful shades. Two coats of this paint will usually cover any remaining staining of the shell after sanding. I then sponge on two or three coats of Duncan's White Mist or Golden White to produce a pearlised finish. This has the effect of reducing the matte colour by a fraction of a shade. (This technique is not successful with darker colours).

If using a coloured pearl paint, use a matte white paint to cover any blemishes prior to pearlising. This will reduce the number of coats of pearl paint which you need to apply.