

RUSSIAN NESTING DOLLS
by Linda Martin



'Once upon a time there were four sisters. The three eldest each had a goose. The youngest had a golden egg. Find the golden egg to discover the hidden secret...'

Materials

Doll number one: Rhea egg
Goose egg

Doll number two: Double-yolk goose egg
Small goose egg

Doll number three: Goose egg
Pea hen egg

Doll number four: Duck egg
Guinea fowl egg

The Golden Egg: Guinea fowl egg

The Hidden Secret: Cockatiel egg

Large oval wooden base
Gold panne velvet
Small piece of gold lamé fabric (Mat.6)
Thick card
Russian braid
Quail stand (SD.77)
Quail stand (SD.66)
Petal porcelain (FT.8)
Gold marker pen
Ceramic sealer
Matt black paint (PT.22)
Matt white paint (PT.1)
Matt flesh paint (PT.3)
Matt red paint (PT.18)
Matt yellow paint (PT.7)
Matt green paint (PT.19)
Gold metallic paint (PT.30)
Polyfilla
Glues

Equipment

Egg Marker
Drill

This collection of eggs was my first attempt at a novelty design and I was amazed when it was awarded a first place in that category at a national convention. It took a long time to complete and afterwards I vowed that I would not attempt another novelty for some time! The inscription on the previous page is written around the edge of the wooden base in gold lettering and adds to the excitement as each doll is, in turn, opened. The selection of eggs must be carried out carefully and each doll must be completed before the next one is attempted so that the sizing is accurate, starting with the largest doll.

Each doll is completed in exactly the same way. The largest doll body is made from a rhea egg with an enlarged and slightly cracked blow hole, rendering it otherwise useless.

Sand down the surface of the shell lightly to provide a good surface to accept the paint finish.

Mark cutting lines for the top and bottom of the body, then mark around the centre point between these lines to mark the point where the two halves of the doll will join.

Cut away the two ends and discard.

The head is now chosen with extreme care. It must have a diameter at the widest part which is fractionally larger than the neck opening on the body section. The blunt end of the egg is used for the head in each case. Find an egg which provides a well-proportioned head, avoiding the 'pea-on-a-drum' look! Mark and cut the egg for the head, then epoxy it to the body section.

Using Polyfilla, disguise the join between the two eggs. When dry, smooth and sand the filler. Effort taken at this time will create a seam-free finish.

Draw on the details of the doll in pencil remembering that each doll must have the same proportions.

After each doll shape has been marked up, it can be cut in half, so that the next doll can be assembled.

As the dolls become smaller, the main problem is that the head in the smaller dolls has to fit comfortably inside that of the next size up. This requires careful sorting and sizing of the eggs.

each doll is painted with at least two coats of matt paint. The outlining which defines the design should be carried out using a thin and even line of black paint. Use the best brush which you can afford and you should find the job easier. It is important that the top and bottom halves of the dolls match exactly. Seal with ceramic sealer.

In order to prevent the dolls from being damaged when nesting, the insides of each doll must be cushioned by lining with a gold panne velvet. The body section is lined flush to the shell, cutting panels of fabric to cover one-sixth of the egg (like the segments of an orange) and using a non-bleed glue to stick the panels in place. The head section has a gathered tubular lining which also fits flush to the shell allowing room for the head of the next doll down to fit in.

**Cut a circle of card to fit into the bottom of the doll (from the inside). Cover both sides of the card with panne and glue in place, hiding the raw edges with russian braid.
lain**

Joining the two halves of each doll posed a real problem. Various rims made from Fimo broke or shrank while being made and eventually I turned to using Petal Porcelain. This product is used to stiffen lace and silk flowers to provide substantial trims and decorations. I saw no reason why it should not be used to strengthen a strip of fabric to provide a stiff rim to link the two halves together. Carefully measure the inside of the cut edge of the shell and cut a strip of panne velvet slightly longer than this measurement and approximately 2.5cm wide. Soak the fabric in Petal Porcelain and squeeze out the surplus liquid, leaving the fabric to dry in a straight length overnight. The colour of the fabric will come back after it has dried out and it should be possible to cut it to size and curl it to fit inside the shell, overlapping the cut edge to interlock with the top half of the egg. The ends of the fabric strip must be butted up to each other at the join and not overlapped as this will create unsightly bulk.

After making all four dolls, the guinea fowl egg is marked and then cut in half for the 'golden egg'. Paint the egg with two or three coats of gold metallic paint. Line the inside of the two halves with a gathered lining of gold lamé, set flush with the sides of the shell. Soak a strip of gold lamé in Petal Porcelain to make a stiffened rim to join the two halves of the shell together. Glue the bottom half of the shell onto the small stand.

And now for the surprise... Glue the cockatiel egg onto the small upright stand. The egg is now painted to match the oval wooden base on which the collection stands. Both can be painted together. Firstly brush on two coats of matt black paint. Practise the next stage on paper before trying it out on the egg or base. The technique used is based on Petrikivka painting (a Ukrainian folk-art technique, similar to that used on canal ware) and is carried out by double-loading the brush with two different colours of paint. Dip one half of a dry brush in red paint, turn the brush and dip the other half into yellow paint. Stroke the brush onto the paper so that the two colours lay alongside each other in a petal shape. As the brush is drawn away from the paper the two colours will blend together in the centre of the stroke to form an orange band edged with yellow on one side and red on the other. Practise making the petal shapes, keeping plenty of paint on the brush until you are happy with your performance. Then paint the border around the wooden base, leaving room for the gold lettering. The cockatiel egg can be painted in the same way using a very fine brush, but the same technique. Glue the egg to the stand and then both inside the golden egg to secure.

Seal the wooden base with ceramic sealer (spray-on is easier to use) *before* writing the lettering around the edge in fine gold marker pen. If you seal after the lettering has been applied, the gold will just spread out over the base and disappear. How do I know this?..... Guess!!!!