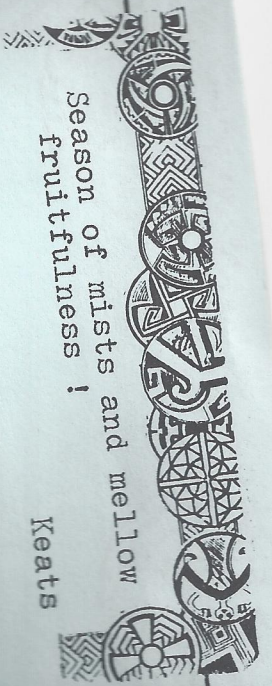




Ruben Gallegos

folk art eggs

Vol. 2 #3.



Season of mists and mellow
fruitfulness!
Keats

When we think of Autumn, we envision fields of amber wheat, rows of bright orange pumpkins and "Indian corn" hanging on the door. For us Americans, Fall, is uniquely ours, from Christopher Columbus, who "found" us on Oct. 12, to the gobblers' apparitions of Halloween and the epidemic of what is of Thanksgiving. But the very first Americans - trully ours, is the very first Americans - the Indians.

Unfortunately, from the very beginning of their "finding", Indian rights, culture & history have been and trod upon. It's aside, plowed under and meager efforts are only been recently that remedy the situation, being undertaken to remedy that much it & being undertaken to remedy that much it & But the damage has been done & materials & not all of the original source forever. So as we their creators are gone forever. So as we try to piece together the history of Indian culture, we find more holes than to inter-

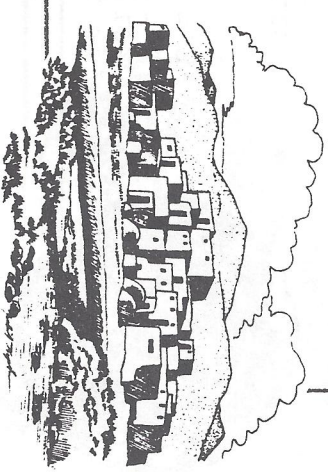
Likewise, we must be careful not to interweave the very different cultural strands of the Plains Indians. For although of the Eastern Nation Indians, each its individual has similar traits, each its individual each has similar traits, each its individual each in nature, custom & folklore. With so many obstacles, to overcome, it may at first glance appear that the Indian culture has nothing to do with eggs and egg art. But with some gentle and beautiful researches, I have found several beautiful examples to do more designs, three, will encourage you to do more designs, three, your own repertoire of basic designs, three, pecially those with only one, two or three color combinations. For these reflect the basics in most human cultures - Life & Love.

It is with great pleasure that I am able to present to you the exceptional artistic work of Ruben Gallegos. Most of us know the joys of a dual heritage - a combination of old world European with our new world American. But Ruben does us one better - his is a unique tri-cultural heritage which beautifully influences his interpretation of what he sees in art. His mother's people are Taos pueblo Indian, and his father's are Spanish. While he himself was born in Santa Cruz, one of the oldest settlements in New Mexico (settled in 1695 by Conquistador Don Juan de Onate). And it is this multi-faceted cultural heritage which enables him to transcend each separate part while combining them all to produce a trully unique style of egg art.

Like many creative people, Ruben's artistic talents were developed early & usually took precedence over the more mundane tasks. But also like many before him, just knowing what you want to do, usually takes a long & round about way of getting there! So although he had studied art & got a job teaching art, he found very little time to create art for himself.

So in an avant garde American tradition he left teaching to become a "house husband" - staying home to take care of his two boys, Christopher & John Paul, while his wonderful wife, Jean Ann continued to pursue her own professional career in teaching. This left Ruben with a new found freedom to explore new ideas & new methods for expressing them.

Originally, he painted on canvases, but as he prepared for a Christmas show, he decided to create some ornaments on eggshells - and he's been doing it ever since!



Ruben draws his images from his own heritage & his southwestern surroundings. Some of his eggs are simply dyed with onion skin and painted over with geometric designs in black. They look like those beautiful woven Indian baskets or painted earthen ware from the area. Others, like the one featured on the cover depict miniature masterpieces of the Indian or Spanish world, from exciting dancers to regal Conquistadors. But it is the colorful and detailed work on each egg which makes it so special. Look at the central figure, each feather, each bead is represented by a single separate stroke & not just merely blended together.

And it is the same for each egg, from the largest ostrich to the smallest finch - all are treated in minute detail. Ruben chooses thin elongated goose eggs to enhance the dimensional aspects of his architectural designs like the adobe churches & pueblos - which tend to give them the illusion of height and "cornering".

The themes on the larger ostrich eggs are reflective of the religious art of the Middle Ages when many of the egg to depict utilized the symbolism of the egg to depict religious doctrine. The sweet tender smiles of his Madonna & Child can warm any heart & the melancholy of Christ carrying the cross can lighten any burdens we may have to bear. But my favorites are those themes of an everyday life, so familiar, but when done with Ruben's special touch little treasures the essence of what life is of a young are. An exquisite example is of a young girl in a plaid shirt & sit

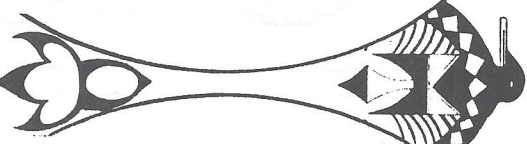
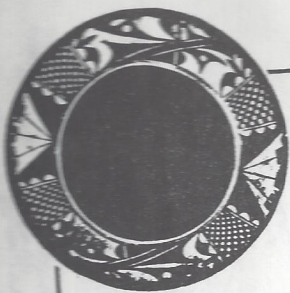
ting in a field with a horse grazing nearby. From the distant clouds to the stones in the yard to the designs on her boots - all reflect the common beauty in the simple things.

Like our familiar pysanky, the theme of the egg is featured on the broadside and instantly attracts attention. But Rubens' choice of borders & belts to frame his pictures is as intricate as any I have seen on pysanky. Once again, basic geometric patterns are used, sometimes with color schemes to match the broadside, sometimes only in black & white.

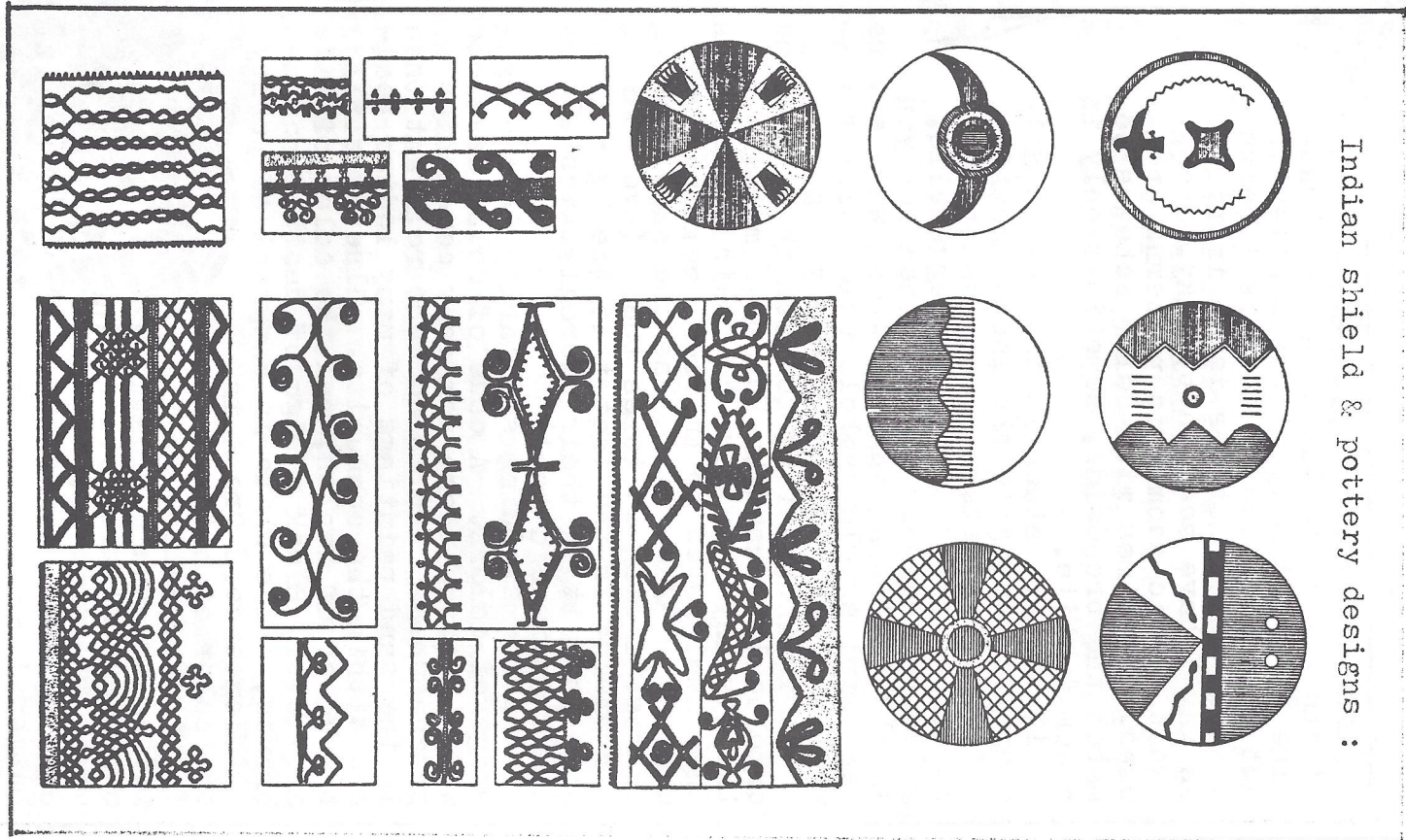
If you are stuck in the design doldrums, investigate the Indian motifs. I found the patterning on baskets & pottery very adaptable for eggshells, and have included some of them for you in the following pages. Along with several beautiful shield symbols which will work well on the ends of a pysanky egg.

It is interesting to note that the same crooked line used by European mothers on the pysanky they gave to their children as they immigrated to America, meaning "over water", has the same meaning in most Indian cultures too. (Even more surprising is the fact that the Egyptians also used it in their hieroglyphics almost 3,000 years ago too!)

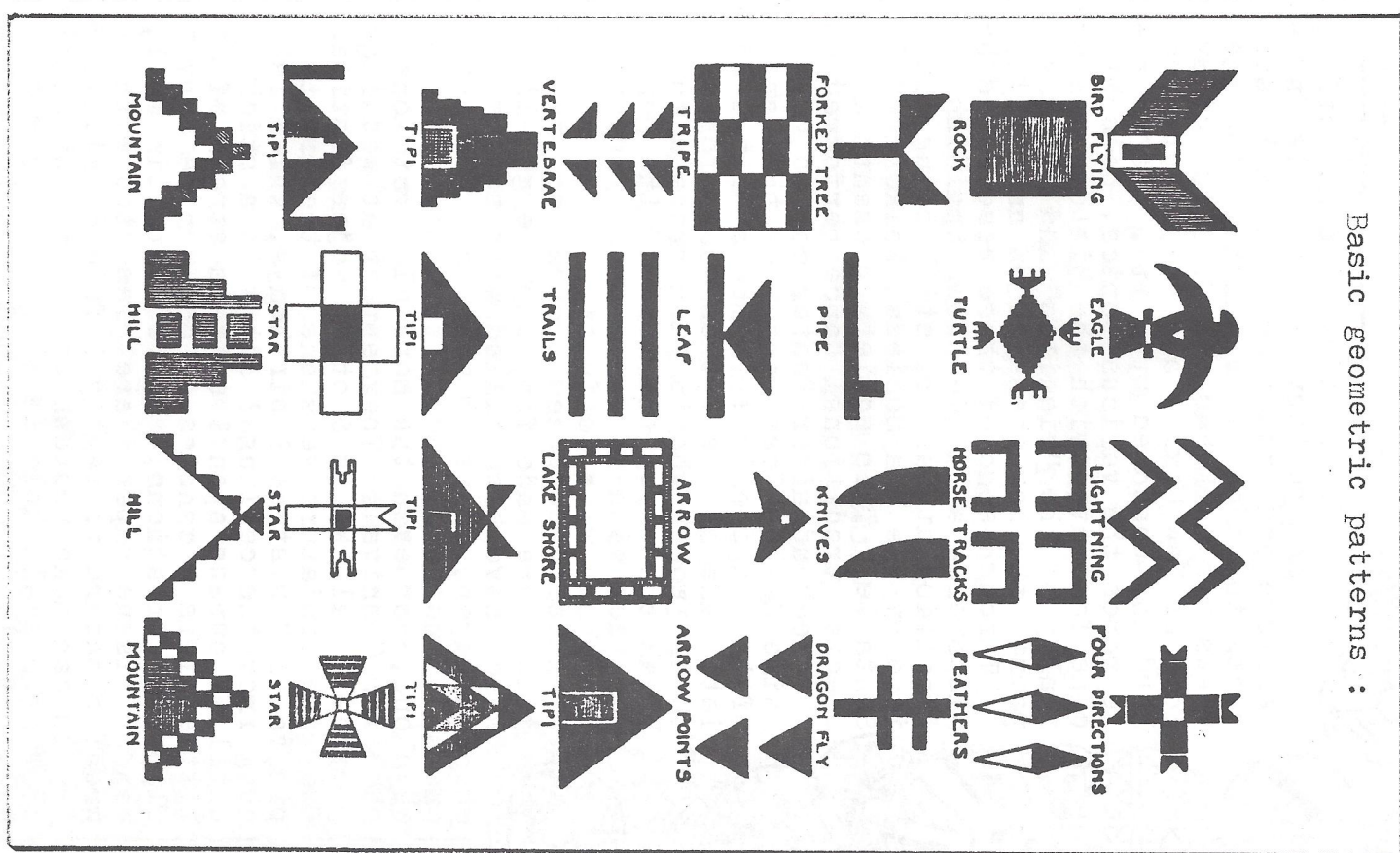
Another striking similarity is the language of colors. A code of color developed which set the theme for many ceremonies & procedures. And is no more relevant than in the sand paintings of many Indian healers within the community. Blue is still the color of health, red the color of life and love. Black a sign of death & remembrance, while white is a symbol of purity & innocence. Green is the color of nature and fertility, yellow reflects the sun & growth, brown symbolizes mother earth & happiness. So once again, we're back to basics!



Indian shield & pottery designs :



Basic geometric patterns :





Ruben paints Indian motifs and pottery to honor his Indian heritage and traditional Hispanic subjects to honor his Spanish roots. He views his work "as a reflection of my love of New Mexico and the beauty the Lord has bestowed upon it". As he researches the various topics, he's become fascinated with the history, especially of the "viejitos" and eagerly paints the new scenario on an egg!

Through some of these researches he discovered a little known Spanish tradition at Easter, still being practiced by the "La Sociedad Folkorica" in Santa Fe. This society presents a special traditional dance performed on the weekend after Easter called "El Baile de los Cascarones" or the dance of the eggshells! Members of the society make and sell these cascaraones - to the women who in turn proceed to break them over the head of the gentlemen they wish to dance with & covering them both with confetti.

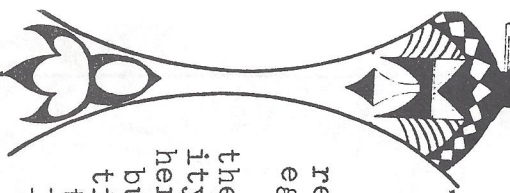
These cascaraones whether colored or gilded are made from empty eggshells, which have been filled with scraps of colored paper, ashes or even cologne. The custom is not confined to this special dance alone, nor even the more elaborate ones made for Carnival. They appear at weddings, parties of all kinds & other major festivals. They are miniature versions of the great pinatas of Christmas & birthdays, which is hung from the ceiling & hit with a stick until it bursts open & emits a stream of little gifts & candies. Some can be very elaborate creations, covered with tin foil, wax or tissue paper & are presented with great pleasure to family & friends alike. You can make your own cascaraones by simply cutting a small hole in the top of a raw egg, removing the egg liquid, washing & then

decorating with paints or felt tipped pens. Allow to dry, fill the inside with some confetti, candy or little presents. I like to make a little paper top, either glue a piece of tissue paper over the hole or make a tiny "hat" to sit inside the hole. Anything will do, just to keep the small treasures from popping out before their great debut over someone's head! It can be a little messy if done in the house, but it sure is a special treat for an outdoor party. It's great fun, especially if the children make their own special cascaraones. These cascaraones are but one more old folk custom which is being lost to the effects of the modern world. So if we can enlist the aid of our children with fond memories of their own "good ole' days" perhaps some of them will survive into the next generation.

For that is how most myths & legends come down to us - through oral traditions of stories told from father to son, mother to daughter. A few of these have been recorded which reflect a close association with the symbolism of a cosmic egg and the beginnings of man's life on earth.

The most popular tells the story of Wakinyan Tanka, the Great Thunderbird, who lives in a tipi on a sacred mountain in the Black Hills, beside the tallest of all trees. Inside, he guards a nest of dry bones, within which lies a giant egg, from which all the little thunderbirds will hatch. This egg is so large that it can cover the entire state of South Dakota! The story then goes on to tell of a great battle which was fought through a huge flood to save mankind from the evil water monsters who wanted to rid the earth of them.





This story has many versions, depending upon the particular Indian tribe telling it. But it essentially relates the same idea about the great egg.

Another tale is more instructive on the subject of patience and responsibility to duty, called the Neglectful Mother (Ochitti). Mother Crow laid two eggs but after several weeks grew bored sitting on them, so flew off to find something to eat. She was gone a very long time. In the meantime, Mother Hawk saw the lonely eggs & took pity

on them, sat on the nest, hatched them & took care of them until they were strong. Just then, Mother Crow returned & wanted her fledglings & Mother Hawk refused. So the matter was taken to Eagle to settle the issue. After much debate, he returned the little chicks to Mother Hawk, the one who loved them, even when they were in the egg. In other words, from the very beginning, the struggle of life is guarded & protected & can be symbolized in the egg.

The third story is about a ghost witch (Peguod) who is able to escape from Big Water by dropping magical eggs into the river, which multiply so quickly that they prevent his canoe from following her & she is able to get away. The central theme for this tale revolves around the concept of fertility and great abundance - a symbol so easily connected with the egg!

It's such a shame that many of these & other Indian customs were destroyed by the early explorers - maybe many of the difficulties could have been avoided. But perhaps we can now make amends & use our py-sanky eyes to see the beauty that is left and try to re-create that which is lost. With creative people like Ruben Gallegos, working with our little eggs, I'm sure we can find more similarities to

TOGETHER !



NATURAL DYES FOR EGGS



Well, for all of you who have been asking, I finally finished my researches and experiments on natural dyeing. And have produced a new booklet on using natural materials to produce colors on eggshells. It begins with a Basic Recipe, lists the type of equipment & adds some variations, besides the problems & their solutions, and where & what ingredients to choose for the color combinations.

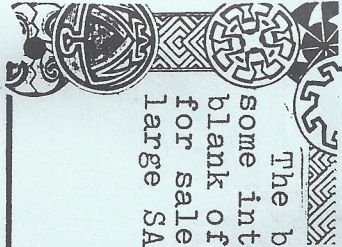

Included also are the FIVE main methods of dyeing, complete with photograph and directions for each technique :

1. Hebrew Chamlin
2. Austrian/Swiss Wrap
3. Pa. Dutch Sassy/English Pace
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Reg. \$6.95 but for FOLKART EGGS readers & the friends - \$5.50, plus \$1.00 postage.


Send to :

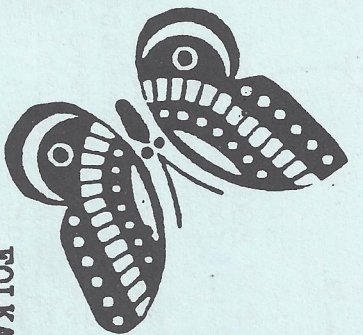
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The beautiful border on the cover and on some interior pages was taken from the order blank of a group of monks creating pysanky for sale ! For further information send a large SASE to :

Monks of New Skete
(PYSANKY)
Cambridge, N.Y. 12816





FOLKART EGGS is a
quarterly publication of
Myque's Egg Tree.

Sample copies are \$ 3.00

Annual Subscription
\$ 12.00

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