



Straw Appliqué

folkart eggs



FOLKART EGGS

Surprise ! It's me. The Egg Lady is back.... same lady, different egg or rather different newsletter ! Like the butterfly which began its life very humbly as a tiny caterpillar before it grew & developed its full potential, so too has PYSANKY : People, Places and Pampushky .

What began as a small letter of news concerned only with pysanky, has blossomed into a wider more instructional format involving all forms of folk egg art - complete with a full color photograph of the featured egg in each issue.

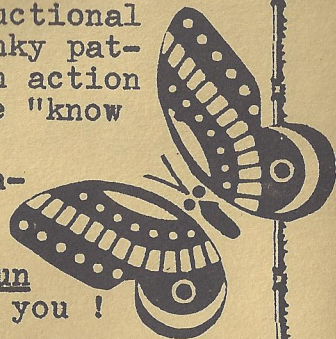
Even the name has changed to more fully reflect the full spectrum of folk art egg decorating - quite simply :

Folkart Eggs

The word pysanky too narrowly defined these tiny treasures into a very limited ethnic section. It left little room for the French embroidered, the Polish Wydmuszki or the Slovak straw appliqued eggs. All of which are also firmly planted in ancient folk art traditions.

In future issues these newly rediscovered techniques will be featured interspersed with more instructional information on specific pysanky patterns. The accent will be on action - the "how to" along with the "know how" of doing egg art.

FOLKART EGGS is a more universal term for these art forms. After all - folk art is merely "folks" creating fun for other "folks - like me & you !



Myque's Egg Tree
34 Farmbrook Dr.
Old Bridge, NJ 08857

Dear Julia,

In a rush to make post - Yvonne arrives tomorrow early & then off we go to the Invitational in N.C. before we get ready for Sally's..... a hectic schedule & I wanted to thank you for both the check & subscription to Folkart Eggs .

This year I am doing an entire series on folk eggs from Slovakia & so have sent you all to date. The Christmas issue will feature those from the Moravian section & are adaptable for Christmas ornaments ! A complete set will be difficult to obtain by then, for my supplies are limited & thought you'd might enjoy reading the whole lot through rather than reordering later & perhaps be disappointed.

I hope you enjoy Folkart Eggs - there is so very little information available - mostly only on pysanky - when there is quite a bit more. Thanks again. See you soon - both seminar & of course, evening soiree !

joyfully,

myque

STRAW APPLIQUE

The origin of these straw covered eggs is shrouded in centuries of myths and legends. It is the fourth oldest known method of folk art eggery, (the others being vegetable dyeing imprinting and scratching).

Since straw was a symbol of the all essential grains of life - wheat, corn, barley and rice - it represented Life itself to primitive man. Straw crosses, dollies & appliqué all had magical significance. It was a sign of fertility for women, virility for men and a bountiful harvest for the earth.

The designs were highly symbolic and had hidden meanings, many of which have long been forgotten. The problem arose from the fact that the pattern depicted only used parts of the whole to represent the entire concept and these were so stylized in form that they had almost no resemblance to the real thing.

For instance, elongated diamonds may have represented anything from a goose footprint to the sun's rays to the Trinity. All are equally important and depending upon the content of the other patterns used, will tell the correct story.

Like the colors and patterns of pysanky, these eggs can also be read like secret messages. Although they are more closely associated with the pin heads than the kistka method (see "Baby Eggs" in Fall '84 issue of the Pysanky newsletter).

Many diverse cultures do appliquéd eggs using various materials, but the best known today come from Czechoslovakia. At one time this folk art was wide spread throughout the entire country. But like many old ways it has disappeared in many parts. Most of the eggs are now made only in the west and south.

Some even being made on a commercial basis for export to the West. I found several in a Hallmark Card chain store !

In Czechoslovakia decorated eggs are referred to as "kraslice", which comes from the root word kraska, meaning color. In time this has come to mean all methods of egg decorating. Although, "pysanky", "scratching" & "kraslice" are often used interchangeably. Like all eastern European countries, there are many types of egg decorating in Czechoslovakia and we shall explore several of them in the next few issues. But for now we will study the straw eggs.

This type of appliqué work is generally done on blown chicken eggs which have been dyed a single color. The traditional colors are : red, black, brown, purple & green. They provide an excellent contrast to the shiny beauty of the straw.

The grains most often used are barley, rye, wheat, oats, rice and sometimes corn husks. Most are available from local craft shops, feed stores, farms, stables, florists, along roadsides and even supermarkets. Loose straw from packing cases or hay bales can also be used if properly cleaned and flattened. If all else fails, ordinary drinking straws or craft straw paper can be substituted to learn the basic methods.

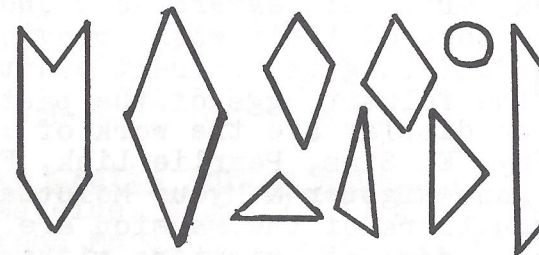
Use sissors to cut the stalks just above each joint & discard the leaf sheaf surrounding each segment. Place these in a pan of hot (not boiling) water to soak for 15-30 minutes until soft and flexible. One or two teaspoons of glycerin may be added to the water to help the stalks become more pliable, if they are old & brittle. But do not over soak- the stalks should not be limp.

Always work the sheaves when damp, not soaking wet. When softened remove each, shake off the excess water and blot dry with a towel. Keep all wrapped in towel till they are to be cut. Being slightly damp will help to prevent shrinkage & curling as you work with them.

Slit each straw lengthwise to open it, flattening it on the inside by pressing firmly with your fingers.

Long thin strips of straw are cut & pasted around the egg to form a border and to divide the egg into sections. Most designs are begun in the center and are worked to the outside. But many patterns are also worked around the middle of the egg and at the two ends, forming an all encompassing design.

Using some of the shapes given below, make a template from paper to use as a guide in cutting basic patterns from the straw. Manicure sissors are fine for the larger straight edged shapes but for the smaller more intricate ones, a sharp knife or scapel is better.



The straw should be soft & flexible when cut and glued. If it becomes dry & brittle, put back into the water to soften. Be sure to keep all shiny sides down and glue on the dull side. This will keep the design uniform and regular throughout the egg's surface. Any white craft glue can be used to secure the straw to the egg shell. Toothpicks, straight pins & drapery hooks are helpful for the positioning of straw shapes onto the shell.

Variations may be achieved by bleaching the straw with $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of household bleach in a gallon of water & left until the color has disappeared. But be careful not to overbleach as the vegetable fibers may disintegrate entirely. Rinse with clear water before starting to cut & glue onto the shell, so that the bleach does not affect either the glue or the dyed shell.

The straw can also be scorched with an iron or colored with dyes for complimentary designs.



Calendar of Events

Hillwood (4155 Linnean Ave. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20008, 202-686-5807). The National Egg Art Guild was invited by the Directors of the Museum to organize a display of egg art. Six eggers were chosen to feature some of their work, ranging from eggs depicting the current events of today to the folkart eggs of the past. The eggs on display are the work of: Barbara Fry, Ed Sims, Pearlie Link, Fumik Brees, Yvonne Righter & Myque Molotzak.

Although tours of the Mansion are booked months in advance, visitors wishing to see the NEAG exhibit and gardens may do so between 11:00 - 4:00 daily, except Sunday and Tuesday. Admission is \$ 2.00, & I do suggest you write or call for details before going. The exhibit will continue till April 8.

Eggsibit '85 (Firth Youth Center, Phillipsburg, N.J. 08865). This will be the 15th Anniversary of the show, so it will be even more exciting than ever, with over 100 eggers displaying their eggs. It will be held March 23-24 from 12:00-5:00. Send a S.A.S.E. to Kit Stansbury for a map & details.

Schoharie County Egg Exhibit (Cater's Auction & Flea Market, West Berne, N.Y.) Each year this little township has held

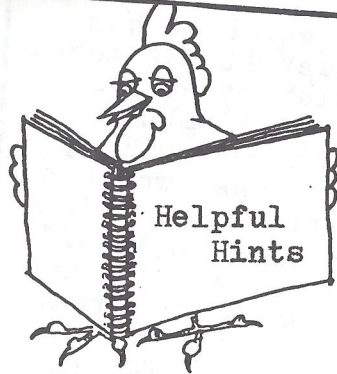
this event in its library, which it has since outgrown. So this year it has moved to a larger facility & better dates for those of us attending the Phillipsburg Show. It will be held March 30-April 7, from 11:00-7:00 each day. Please write to Jean Ahlbach of the Schoharie County Planning Agency (Box 548, Schoharie, N.Y. 12157 or call 518-295-8522) for details, maps and other lovely attractions in the area.

"Folkart Eggs From Around the World", including English Pace, straw applique, Polish wydmuszki, French embroidered, my own work and those from my Collection will be on display at Woodbridge Center, Woodbridge N.J., from March 26 - April 15. Lectures & demonstrations will be held on March 30 & 31 at 1:00 and April 4 & 11 at 7:00. Call (201) 636-4777 for details.

Cottage Crafts Spring Boutique (700 Bowne Rd., Wayside, N.J., (201) 493-8539, will be held from March 30 - April 4, from 11:00 - 4:00 daily.

Pin Head Pysanky Demonstration (Old Bridge Library, Old Bridge, N.J., (201) 679-5622, will be held on March 19th at 7:30. Please bring raw egg, straight pin and a pencil with an eraser.

"Embroidered Chicken Eggs" CRAFTS Magazine, April 1985 will feature two of the egg patterns I designed which require no power tools to create an embroidered effect upon a chicken eggshell. It is just a small little article & picture in the lower left hand corner of the cover but the method is easily adapted to fit pysanky geometric patterns. A future issue of Folkart Eggs will feature these French embroidered eggs but in greater detail & more patterns.



Dyes and Blotchy Colors

Although we have the advantage of beautiful synthetic dyes for our colors we also have the disadvantage of inferior & weak eggshells, to put them on. So the problems you are having with

your colors may not be YOUR fault! It may very well be the shells you are using.

Due to government and automation requirements all eggs must be washed in a powerful disinfectant which unfortunately removes some of the natural oils needed to make the dyes "stick" to the shell. When you rewash them at home, you are adding to the problem. Soap & detergents leave a film which makes the dyes slide off. So don't wash them, even after blowing - rinse them thoroughly in a solution of water & white vinegar. Then let them air dry.

Try to handle them as little as possible, for body oils, hand cremes & sticky fingers will leave invisible traces which will not show until the eggs are placed in the dyes.

Rubbing each egg with white vinegar before you begin to work on it also helps to make the dye adhere to the shell. Sometimes a stronger dye bath is helpful. For instance, use a full packet of dye but $\frac{1}{2}$ the amount of water and twice the amount of vinegar.

As you proceed from one color to another, the shell like a sponge can become completely saturated. And like a wet sponge, cannot absorb water until it is rung out. Since we cannot "ring" out an egg we should let it dry out longer before proceeding to the next color. Placing it under a lamp or next to a pilot light on a stove top will

hasten the drying process. Have three eggs "going" at once - one in the dye, one drying and one being waxed - saves time & keeps up your production.

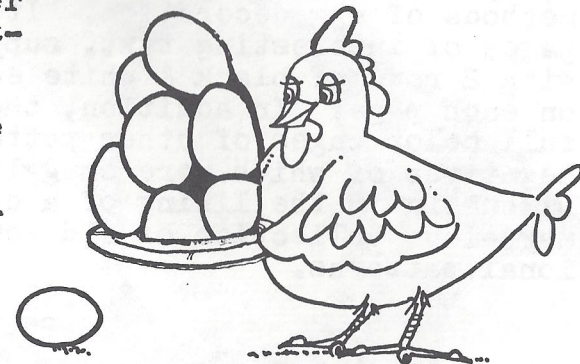
One problem which may not have an easy solution is those "rings" or bands around the shell. These are caused by the conveyor belts used to carry the eggs from one part of the hen house to the other. The constant rolling can actually wear away a small section of the shell, which when placed in the dye appears to be a blotch.

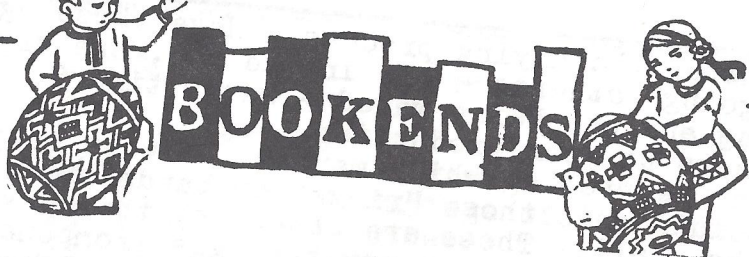
These rings usually appear in the lighter colors, yellow or orange first, and may affect some designs if they are large. Try to minimize the damage by using the circles as guidelines for borders or change the overall pattern to incorporate them into the original design.

If they have not disappeared by the dye green or blue, the eggs may have to "sit" in the bath for 8-12 hours, to completely cover them.

Alternatives may be to use eggs from a local farmer or smaller market. Although the eggs are still washed, the "rolling" time is not as great & therefore the rings are not etched into the shells.

Use smaller chicken eggs, medium or the pullets. The shells have a smaller surface area & are not "stretched" like the Ex-large or Jumbos. Brown chicken eggs are also stronger & adds a little subtle shade difference to the dyes. Duck eggshells appear as if made from porcelain & are usually free from rings.





PYSANKA : Icon of the Universe by Tka-
chuk, Kishchuk & Nicholaichuk.

This is an excellent & well written lit-
tle booklet for the beginner and the ad-
vanced egg artist. It is an interesting
and indepth study into the origin of the
"old" pysanka designs. I especially like
the maps of eastern Europe, onto which
the eggs of the region have been placed -
so that the reader can see the differences
in color and design. Man made political
boundaries have changed throughout the
recent decades - but not the patterns of
pysanky ! The booklet has full color pic-
tures of the pysanka and the directions
for making one - a real "must" for any
egger or book collector.

\$ 7.00
1.60 postage

Lithuanian Easter Eggs by Tamosaitis.

This is a treasure book for anyone in-
terested in pin head or scratch carving
methods of egg decoration. It has 80
pages of interesting text, supplemented
with 2 rows of black & white egg designs
on each page. In addition, there are 135
full color pages of other patterns, the
negatives of which were smuggled out of
Lithuania in the lining of a coat ! A
marvelous collection of old world tradit-
ional patterns.

\$29.95
3.25 postage

REMEMBER

March 21

"Magic Moments in the Life of an Egg"
or
How to Make an Egg Stand Up

A little story about :
an egg,
the earth,
the sun,
the zodiac,

And how they affect
the internal
gravity of
the egg,
allowing it
to stand
unsupported
4 times a year.

\$ 4.00 ppd.



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

Sample copies are \$ 3.00

Introductory Subscription
\$ 12.00

Mail To :

Myque's Egg Tree
34 Farmbrook Drive
Old Bridge, N.J. 08857

