

PYSANKY: Ukrainian Easter Eggs

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Have you ever used a white or wax crayon to write your name on an egg and then dipped the egg in dye?



Some people draw pictures and patterns with white crayon before dyeing their eggs



The Ukrainian people use fine tools to “write” onto eggs with wax and use beautiful dyes to make gorgeous eggs.



History and Symbolism

- The Ukrainian people have been decorating eggs for several thousand years. The colors and patterns chosen have taken on special meanings over time. Traditional designs have “meanings” and by considering pattern and color it’s possible to design an egg with very specific meanings.

- Colors:





Ladders
prosperity, or
prayer.



Pine Needles
health,
stamina,
eternal youth.



Crosses
Christ, or the
Four Corners of
the World.



Wheat
wishes for good
health and a
good harvest.



**The Sun and
Stars**
life, fortune,
growth.



**Deer, Horses,
and/or Rams**
wealth and
prosperity.



Fish
Christianity



Curls
defense or
protection.



Roses
love, caring.



Poppies
beloved
Ukrainian art
motif,
symbolizing joy
and beauty.



Triangles
trinities, eg.: air,
fire, & water;
the Father, Son,
& Holy Spirit;
heaven, earth,
& hell.



The Saw
fire, life-giving
heat (also
known as
Wolves' teeth,
symbolizing
loyalty and
wisdom).



Birds
fulfillment of
wishes, and
fertility. The
bird is always
shown at rest,
never flying.



Nets
Christ's
reference to
becoming
"fishers of
people".



Ribbons
everlasting life,
and water.

Materials Needed:

- Raw Eggs at Room Temperature
- A pencil (but not the eraser!!)
- Pure Beeswax
- A stylus – or kistka



Heated By Candle Flame Or Electric

- A selection of dyes (pre-packaged to make 1 pint of dye)

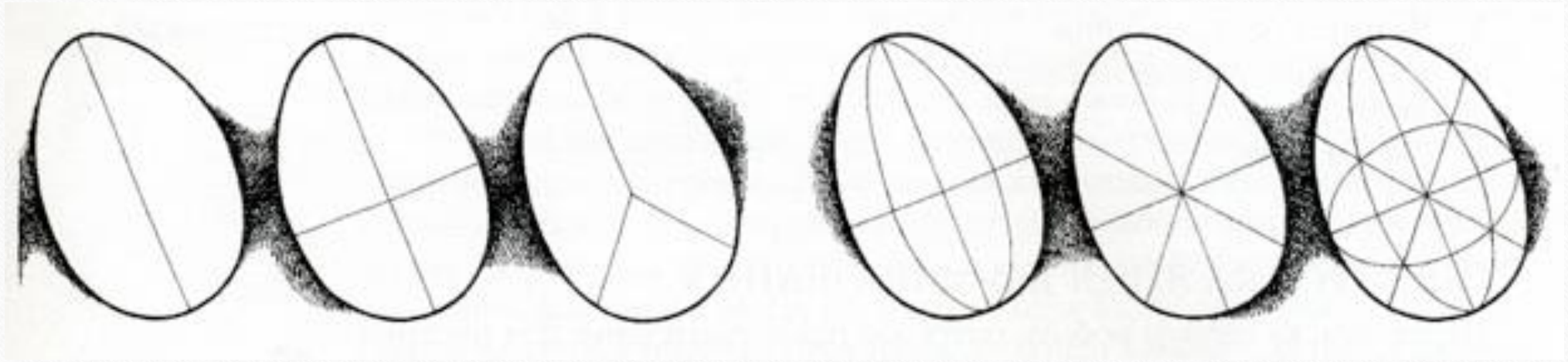


REMEMBER!

- You are going to work with raw eggs and will not drain the egg until completely finished.
- The dyes you will use are not safe to eat, so please do not eat the eggs. This is art, not food.
- Start with eggs at room temperature and leave them out! If you chill the egg once you've begun decorating it will harden the wax which can flake off, and condensation on a cold eggshell will cause the water-soluble dyes to run. Contrary to popular belief, eggs will not spoil for at least a week or two.

Process:

1. Start by sketching a design on your raw egg with pencil (do not use the eraser, it can scratch the shell)
Start with major divisions, using whichever is most appropriate for your final design



Process (cont.):

2. Sketch in the Details



Process (cont.):

3. Using your kistky, write beeswax onto the egg everywhere you want the egg to remain white.

REMEMBER! Once applied, wax cannot be completely removed. Imagine that the kistky and beeswax is a permanent sharpie marker.



Process (cont.):

4. Submerge your waxed egg into yellow dye. Stir gently every few minutes until you like the depth of yellow achieved.
5. Gently remove the egg from the dye and BLOT dry. DO Not Rub! Let egg dry completely before the next step.
6. Using your kistky and beeswax, apply wax everywhere you'd like the egg to remain Yellow.



Process (cont.):

7. Continue dye, blot dry, wax process with any additional colors, working from light colors to dark colors.



Remember:

Don't forget to initial and date your work!



Process (cont.):

8. To remove the wax, carefully hold the egg to the side of a candle's flame. Let the heat melt a small section of wax, then quickly wipe with a soft tissue. Continue heating and wiping small sections until all of the wax is removed.



The last residue of wax can be removed by wiping the egg with a small amount of lighter fluid on a soft tissue.

Warning! Extinguish candle flames when working with lighter fluid!

Process (cont.):

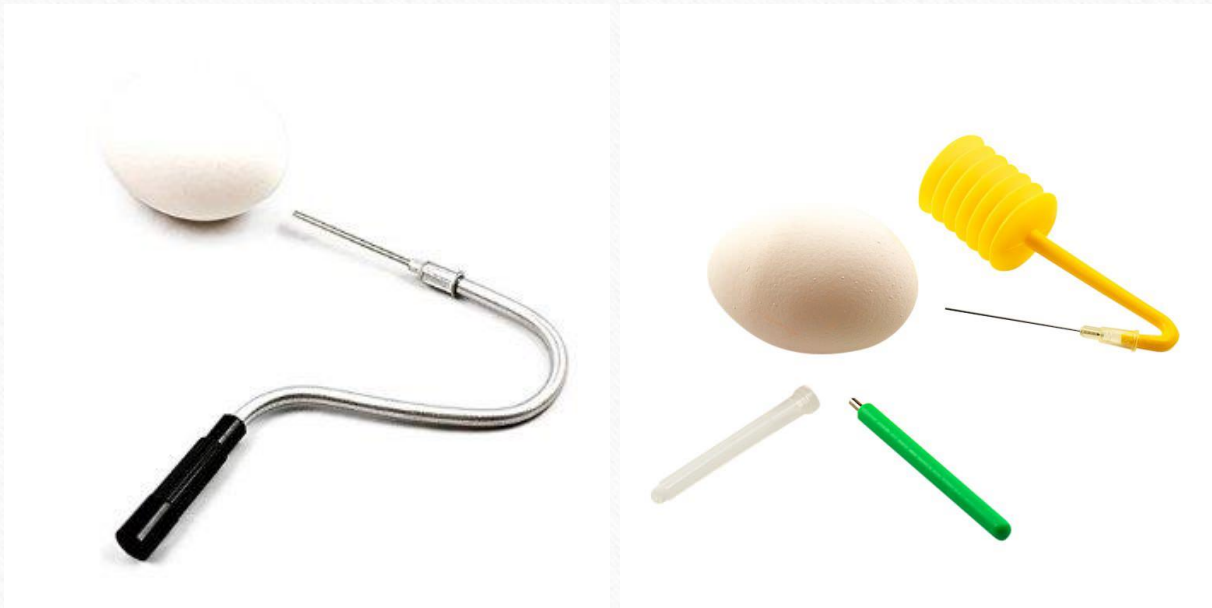
9. The dyes are water-soluble, so you need to seal the eggshell before drilling a small hole and draining the egg. Use an oil-based varnish or polyurethane, but apply some to a “test egg” first to ensure that the sealant will not make the dyes run and ruin your pattern.



- One method is to put a drop or two of varnish in your gloved hand then roll the egg around to completely cover.
- Do not use too much varnish or it may streak and drip. Set to try thoroughly on a pin-board (commercially available, or you can make your own)
- It takes longer, but multiple thin coats of varnish are recommended. Let dry thoroughly between each coat.

Process (cont.):

10. Finally, its time to remove the raw egg from inside the shell. The dyes are not safe to eat, so please do not attempt to eat the egg! Drill a small hole in one end of the egg. You can use a small drill-bit, a Dremel bit, or you can carefully poke multiple holes close together with a sharp pin. You only need one hole if you can inject air into the shell to force the egg out of the single opening.



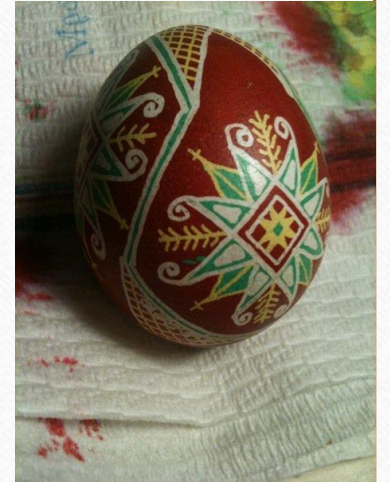
You can also use a turkey baster with a needle-tip to carefully blow air into the shell.

If you have none of these tools, add a second hole on the opposite side of the shell and blow manually.

The Finished Product



The Full Process



Even Beginners Can Make Beautiful Eggs



Even Beginners Can Make Beautiful Eggs



It's also fun to start with a brown egg, draw a pattern in wax, then dip into a mild acid bath.

Covered in wax after an acid bath:



The reveal:



References:

- <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pysanka> - Background and Info
- <http://www.ukrainiangiftshop.com/> - Ukrainian Gift Shop – My source for supplies
- <http://www.archangelsbooks.com/> - Archangels Books – St. Louis shop with egg supplies
- <http://www.archreactor.org> - Arch Reactor – St Louis Maker Space