

Facets of Egg Artistry
Decorated Eggs
by Diamond Innovations

INTRODUCTION TO EGG ARTISTRY

Welcome to the wonderful world of Decorated Eggs or Egg Artistry. As your journey starts you will be fascinated at all the different types of creations produced from the humble eggshell. No longer will you look at the egg as just something for breakfast or used in cooking. An eggshell is the perfect package to display any crafts you have learnt over the years and, once you know the basics of the art, it's easier than you think.

I prefer to think of Egg Artistry as an art (not a craft) because you are beginning from the equivalent of an artist's canvas, not just decorating something someone else has made. Once you know how to cut, hinge and line an egg, the possibilities of egg artistry are limited only by your own imagination. Gift giving will become unique, with each handcrafted treasure becoming an heirloom that can be passed down to future generations.

Quite often you will see something that will trigger your imagination - trips to the newsagent will no longer be just to pick up a card or a magazine! Wrapping paper and cards take on a whole new meaning and it becomes almost impossible to walk past a newsagent or card shop without popping in "just to have a look!"

I have collated all the information gathered over the years, plus some of the techniques sheets I have written and put it all together for the benefit of newbie eggers. Hopefully, more experienced eggers will also find my book, Bright Ideas & Facets of Egg Artistry, useful as well. If you have attended any of my classes, either in person or on the net, you may already have some of the information or techniques included in the book.

The information contained in the book has been collected from a variety of sources, including various teachers, seminars and general discussion on the Egger's Mailing List and lots of trial and error. Where the source of the information is known (whether it is a technique, hint or tip) I have acknowledged the person who kindly shared it. In some cases this information is not known and has just become accepted practice passed down through the years.

As your confidence and knowledge grows, try doing many different types of techniques - don't get bogged down thinking that you can't do this or that because you haven't been shown how to do it yet - practice, practice, practice! Hopefully one day you will be able to share how to do something you have discovered along the way. Remember it's a dull day when you don't learn something.

The most important thing to remember about egg artistry is there is no right or wrong way to do something - some ways are just easier than others. I will show you the way that I do things, which may not be the same way someone else does the same application. By all means try different ways of doing techniques, experiment and decide for yourself which way you prefer to tackle the task, but above all - ENJOY YOURSELF!

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TOOLS & EQUIPMENT

Expensive tools can be daunting when commencing a new hobby so I will endeavour to list some basic inexpensive items you may already have at home. These items (and any thing else which you find handy to work with) are commonly known as Regular Egging Tools (or RETS for short) in egging circles. If you intend to continue egging then there are specially designed tools that make life much easier.

Firstly, you will need a supply of blown eggshells. You can purchase ready blown shells from most dealers or you may choose to blow your own if you have a ready supply of fresh eggs available. Blown eggs, which have been correctly disinfected, can be stored indefinitely. Normal household bleach (such as White King) is quite suitable for this procedure.

Other items may include:

- Fine pencil (Pacer)
- Soft white rubber
- Narrow flexible tape measure (Retractable dressmaker's type is ideal)
- Rubber bands to mark the egg
- Long skewer with a piece of cork or small rubber band twisted around the skewer to hold the egg while painting it.
- An old hand towel or foam block to hold the egg while applying braids etc.
- Small scissors - one for cutting paper & cardboard; another pair for cutting cords & braids.
- Fine pointed tweezers
- Craft knife or scalpel
- Various glues:
 - 5-Minute Araldite for hinges & stands
 - Thick white tacky glue (Aleene's) for cords & braids
 - Aquadhere (or similar) for strengthening the shell
- Small hinges
- Junior hacksaw blade or electric craft drill for cutting the shell.
- Face mask and goggles for protection while cutting the shell
- Your favourite varnish or lacquer
- Paints, watercolour pencils or chalks to colour the shell if desired.
- Various size brushes - Long flats (long bristles cut off straight) are preferable, as they do not tend to leave brush marks like other brushes do.
- Bits & pieces of jewellery (ask your friends for any old earrings or necklaces that they are going to throw out)
- Fine cord, braids & ribbons for decoration.
- Wrapping paper, greeting cards with distinct outlines (look for small prints)

Other useful items include emery boards cut into thin strips for getting into small spaces, a dressmaker's sewing gauge for lining up the egg on the stand and a foam block to hold the egg while you are working on it.

Don't feel you have to have all these items before you can start egging - you can improvise with many different items. Egg artistry can be as cheap or as expensive as you wish to make it. Many attractive decorations can be made without going to the expense of using rhinestones and other expensive trims.

Some of the most attractive designs are very simple – the beauty is in the eye of the beholder and reflects the feelings of the creator.

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TYPES OF EGGS

All types of eggs can be used in this art depending on the type of item you are making. The most common ones are goose and duck eggs as they are readily available, relatively inexpensive and a good size for most projects. For larger items, emu and ostrich eggs are used and on a smaller scale, finch, quail, pigeon, guinea fowl, bantam, turkey and peahen are all suitable.

Although chicken eggs are not widely used due to their brittle nature, they are an excellent medium to practice a new technique on.

BLOWING AN EGG

Although many suppliers have blown eggshells available for sale you may want to blow your own. This is a simple (but maybe not so pleasant) procedure.

You will need:

- Supply of clean eggs
- Small drill or bur
- Skewer (or opened out paper clip)
- Ice cream container
- Bleach (e.g. White King)
- Small bucket

Procedure:

1. Half fill the bucket with cold water and add approximately 3/4 cup of bleach.
2. Drill a small hole in the pointy end of the egg and a larger hole in the fat end.
3. Use a skewer to pierce the yolk of the egg. **This is very important** because, if it is left whole, the yolk can form a plug in the blowhole and the egg could explode.
4. Use an egg blower if you have one or alternately, a very thin stream of water or even a bike pump to force air in through the smaller hole in the top of the egg.
5. As the air or water enters the egg the contents will be forced out through the larger hole in the shell.
6. Once all the contents have been expelled place the blown egg into the bucket of bleach water to disinfect and clean the inside of the shell.
7. Place a finger and thumb over each hole and gently shake the egg to rinse the inside of the shell.
8. Drain thoroughly, place with the large hole down and allow to dry thoroughly.

DANGERS OF EGG DUST

When you are cutting eggshells it is important to always wear a suitable dust mask and eye protection. The dust from the shells is very fine and has been known to cause serious health problems including eye irritations, breathing difficulties and in extreme cases, even death. Wherever possible it is advisable to cut your eggs inside a cutting box with a dust extractor or vacuum cleaner fitted to remove as much of the dust as possible.

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BASIC MARKING

HINTS

Be aware of possible unseen cracks in the shell. Test the shells by tapping with your knuckle – it should make a “solid” sound, while a hidden crack will sound hollow. Keep in mind your finished egg will only be as good as the accuracy of your marking. It is better to take a little longer to mark the egg than to rush into it and end up with a sloppy result. Don't rely on the end holes being in the centre - they rarely are! Get used to "eyeing" your egg to detect any crooked lines.

Lengthwise lines drawn around the egg form a starting point for you to mark other designs that are straight & even. A girth line drawn around the egg at the fattest part helps place hinges for double doors at the same height, allowing the doors to open evenly.

To draw an unusual door or opening on an upright design, start with a basic oval and then vary it as required.

WITH AN EGG MARKER

If you are serious about egging and intend to continue with this fascinating art, the egg marker is probably the most useful tool (along with the cutting tool) you will use. The marker allows you to mark the egg into any number of even segments, position girth lines around the shell, as well as marking ovals where desired. There are various good markers on the market and are well worth the investment.

WITHOUT A MARKER

Freehand

Develop the ability to do some freehand marking - this is very useful in areas where you can't use other methods but doesn't mean that you have to do the whole design freehand. Practice frequently and if it doesn't look right, rub it out and start again.

Rubber Bands

A wide rubber band can be stretched around the egg and used as a ruler to mark lines on the egg. If you make a crooked line don't be in a hurry to rub it out - mark in the new line first using the original line as a guide. Once you are happy with the new markings, rub out the crooked one.

Paper Strips

Paper strips can be very handy for marking an egg into an equal number of segments and also for marking scallops for a cradle or a bell. They can also be used as a ruler for marking a straight line on an egg.

Templates

Plastic oval and circle templates are very useful for marking openings on eggs and making circles for floors. Plasticard, which is obtainable from model railway shops, can be used to make your own templates for a variety of designs.

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CUTTING EQUIPMENT

TYPES OF CUTTING TOOLS

A number of cutting tools are available to suit whatever type of egging you plan on doing and the amount of money you have available. Probably one of the best-known cutters is the Dremel, which is on the slower end of the cutting speeds. Available in both fixed and variable speeds, the maximum is around 30,000 rpm. With this tool you can tackle basic cutting, filigree and even lattice if you work slowly and carefully.

A relatively new cutter that has revolutionised cutting for egg artists is the Roto Flex (now known as the Turbiflex.) This very simple tool consists of a length of rubber tubing and a plastic turbine that attaches to your vacuum cleaner. A very lightweight alternative to the Dremel, the Roto Flex is much cheaper, with a speed of approximately 120,000 rpm making it an ideal tool for the egg artist. This additional speed makes more intricate designs possible with the added advantage of the vacuum cleaner sucking away the majority of the egg dust.

At the top end of the cutting tools are a number of different brands of air tools that run on an air compressor and have a cutting speed of around 400,000 rpm, making any type of cutting or carving child's play. The main disadvantages of the air tool are the high cost and the noise of the compressor

IN CONCLUSION

Now you have a better idea of the wonderful possibilities of this art form I hope you pursue all the avenues available to help you along the way. As well as my books on the subject we also have a range of instruction and step-by-step tutorials and videos to help you in the comfort of your own home.

There are also a large number of suppliers of egg art equipment, jewellery findings and other wonderful decorations for your egg art designs on the Internet, making your choice of supplies for your new art much easier than in past years.

If you would like further information contact me by email at diamonds@chariot.net.au.

Happy egging

Maureen Williams

Author of:
Bright Ideas & Facets of Egg Artistry – Books 1 & 2
'Tis An Egg – Book One