

## EXPLORING OUR MUSEUM AND LIBRARY

## In Memoriam

By Lubow Wolynetz, Curator



Samples of Pysanky from Kyiv Region, Tanya Osadca.  
Ukrainian Museum and Library in Stamford.

It was with great sadness that we learned of the passing of Tanya Osadca on Sunday, December 29, 2019. She was an authority on traditional Ukrainian folk art, especially the art of *the pysanka*. Her love and interest in Folk Art motivated her to devote most of her lifetime to the study, research, and popularization, of the art of the traditional Ukrainian *pysanka*.

Our Museum and Library has been fortunate to be the recipients of a large part of her life's work. She donated to our Museum a large collection of *pysanky*, displaying authentic traditional designs from various Ukrainian regions arranged in separate frames. It amounted to a total of 400 *pysanky* in 20 frames. In addition to this, we also received from her nearly 500 *pysanky* which she had replicated from the earliest authentic sources, published by the scholars of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. She also deposited in our Library copies of most of her research material which she had managed to unearth in various libraries and museums during her many years of study.

Tanya Osadca, was born in Poland to Ukrainian parents (Andriy and Pavlyna (Elyiw) Klym, originally from the town of Kopychyntsi, Ternopil region. They had worked as teachers in the town of Siedlce, Poland. During the summer months, Tanya, her sister Aka, and her brother would spend time with their grandparents and uncles in Kopychyntsi. It was here, under the guidance of her grandparents and uncles, that Tanya and her siblings learned about Ukrainian folk art, to love and cherish it. They were also introduced to basic folklore and the study of principles of recording, collecting, archiving, and analyzing given material. From her uncle Damian Elyiw (a noted *lyra* (hurdy-gurdy)) player and singer, she learned the methods of collecting and recording folk songs. Her first notebook of these field notes, she kept all her life. She learned

about the art of *the pysanka* from her grandmother and mother, watching them make *pysanky* during Easter time. All the members of the family were musically-talented. Her mother could play a few musical instruments, and they all loved to sing. While living in Poland, in the evenings, they would sing the many Ukrainian folk songs which they collected. Notwithstanding the not-always-friendly attitude of Poles toward Ukrainians, nevertheless their Polish neighbors would often say "Let's walk past the Klym house and listen to their beautiful singing".

World War II forced the Klym family to leave their homeland and emigrate. As a student at the University of Innsbruck, Tanya met her future husband Bohdan, they married, and in 1950 emigrated to the United States. Once they had settled in Troy, Ohio, Tanya studied art at Kent

University, and she and Bohdan started a family; and, as she herself said "I experienced, as a young mother, the atavistic need to make *pysanky* for Easter". Fascination and enchantment by *pysanka* art led her to begin doing serious research about it, not only copying designs but also delving into the deeply symbolic meaning of each motif and the magical messages it conveyed. During the Iron Curtain days, not being able to visit museums and archives in Ukraine, she based her findings on most of the early published sources which she had unearthed in American and European libraries and private collectors. Based on these findings she created over 2000 *pysanky* by copying traditional and authentic designs from the published sources she had found. Beginning from 1960, she began propagating this art by organizing *pysanka* exhibitions at various

museums, libraries, and clubs. She gave lectures at various conferences, e.g., at the American Folklore Society. She even conducted workshops. She also published numerous articles in various publications, and continued with her research for the writing of a fundamental work on this unique art.

When Ukraine proclaimed its independence in 1991, the Ukrainian Museum of Applied Art in Kyiv, invited Tanya to do an exhibit of her *pysanky*. This exhibit was to show how Ukrainians of the Diaspora had preserved this art, the traditions associated with it, and had popularized it among non-Ukrainians. This ancient, highly symbolic unique art, created by the Ukrainian people, was suppressed in Ukraine during the years of Soviet occupation. Those authorities forcefully applied various methods of destruction and persecution of anyone adhering to it. Tanya's exhibit was shown in 23 Ukrainian cities from Kyiv to Odesa, from Lviv to Poltava. In each city the exhibit was greeted with great interest and sincere gratitude to Ukrainians of the Diaspora who had preserved this art and anew had reintroduced it to the Ukrainian people in Ukraine. In the visitors' comments of these exhibits we read "Thank you for bringing to Ukraine a part of Ukraine" ..., "Thank you for preserving the art of the *pysanka*" ..., "What an unexpected surprise... which shows that the art of the *pysanka* spread its roots all over the world, thanks to people like you". Since then, a huge revival and rebirth of *the pysanka* art in Ukraine has ensued. On the tenth anniversary of the Independence of Ukraine, President Kuchma awarded Tanya a medal of Honored Master of Ukrainian Folk Art.

The work of Tanya Osadca in the preservation, research, and popularization of *pysanka* art is of immense importance, which we have gratefully acknowledged with this "In Memoriam". ♦



Tanya Osadca at a Pysanka conference in Ivano-Frankivsk, Ukraine, in 1991, Photograph,  
Ukrainian Museum and Library in Stamford.



Samples of Pysanky from Poltava Region, Tanya Osadca.  
Ukrainian Museum and Library in Stamford.



Samples of Pysanky from Chernihiv Region, Tanya Osadca.  
Ukrainian Museum and Library in Stamford.