

## EXPLORING OUR MUSEUM AND LIBRARY

The Art of the *Pysanka*

By Lubow Wolynetz, Curator



*Pysanky* by Dr. Danylo Saraczynski,  
Ukrainian Museum and Library of Stamford

For Ukrainians, every holiday, religious and/or secular, is filled with numerous traditions. We inherited them from antiquity, to which we partly or fully adhere to the present, and which require extensive preparatory measures. Foremost, in advance of the onset of the Easter Season, we begin our spiritual and religious preparations. Then, we take steps to ready the additional components of the holiday as required by ancient Ukrainian tradition. Paramount among these traditional elements is the *pysanka* – the Ukrainian Easter Egg.

Although currently a part of the Easter traditions, the *pysanka* actually originated as an important element of pre-

Christian beliefs associated with the cult of the sun. In Ukraine, as in various other regions of the world, the egg was considered a prime source and symbol of life, the sun, and the universe. Ancient man believed that various phenomenon, *e.g.*, such as the resurrection of nature in springtime, the preservation of fertility, the prosperity bringing about good fortune, needed for man's

input—namely certain rituals and magical and protective talismans. It was believed that the egg as a symbol of life and the sun when covered with specific signs and dyed with different colors assumed magical power and became a protective talisman. On these premises, the Ukrainian *pysanka* was created. With the onset of Christianity, many of the ancient traditions were incorporated into the Christian holidays. Thus the *pysanka* became a part of the Easter holiday.

For centuries, Ukrainian women steadfastly adhered to the tradition of making *pysanky* for the Easter

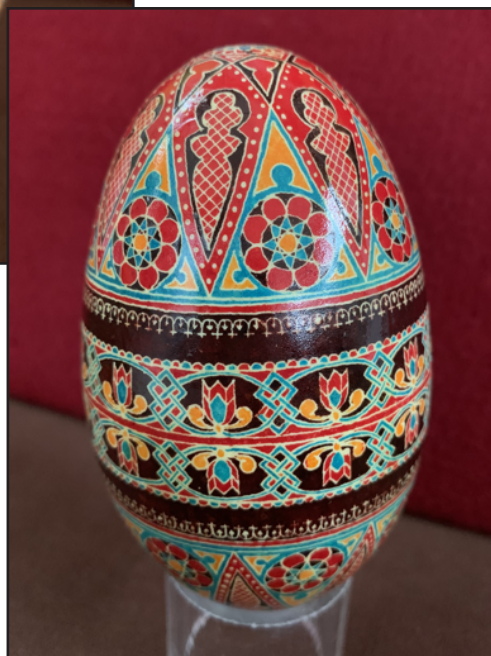
had its own style of combining these elements upon the surface of the egg with ingenious artistic style and admirable aesthetic tastes.

This unique form of art has achieved global interest and popularity and is practiced both within and beyond the Ukrainian community. Ukrainians of the Diaspora should be especially credited for broadening interest in this art in America. Today's artisans in creating their *pysanky* either copy the traditional samples of old, or try their hand at new compositions, but still incorporating the traditional motifs in a novel way and different color schemes.

In our Museum and Library we have a huge collection of traditional *pysanky* from various regions of Ukraine, mostly the work of Tanya Osadca, a *pysanka* scholar. She devoted her entire life to the study of this art and then donated her collection to our Museum. In addition to these, our Museum has been fortunate to be the recipient of a collection of *pysanky*, the work of Dr. Danylo Saraczynski. He produced quite remarkable and original compositions on chicken and goose eggs.

Dr. Saraczynski was born in 1918, in the town of Melnytsia Podilska in the Borshchiv region of Ukraine. He studied medicine in Lviv and in Switzerland. After WWII, he emigrated to America and settled in Bridgeport, CT, where he worked as a longtime surgeon at Bridgeport Hospital. He died in 1994. His lifelong passion was creating *pysanky*

which he himself said “*is an addictive hobby*”. His *pysanky* are distinguished by a high level of mastery. He used the traditional motifs, but arranged them in a variety of innovative compositions. His originality lay in the fact that as a doctor he was able to use special tools for creating his *pysanky* which most people do not have. For



holiday, and passed it on from generation to generation. We inherited from these anonymous artisans this unique art form with thousands upon thousands of aesthetic compositions. These folk artisans, using just a few traditional motifs, *e.g.*, the star-sun motif, triangular forms, the endless linear motifs managed to produce a myriad of compositions. Each region, even each village,

example, he used surgical needles to write on eggs and this produced extremely fine lines. To empty the inside of the egg he used a dental novocaine needle and drew out the contents with a syringe. He also used a magnifying glass for the exceptionally delicate designs. Writing *pysanky* was Dr. Saraczynski's favorite pastime and he created them for his own enjoyment. The collection of Dr. Saraczynski's *pysanky* was eventually donated to our Museum by his wife Maria.

We indeed appreciate the valuable collections of *pysanky* of Tanya Osadca and of Dr. Danylo Saraczynski donated to our Museum and Library for posterity. ❖

**1**  
ВЕРЕСНЯ  
2019 РОКУ

**ЮВІЛЕЙ 50-РІЧЧЯ  
ОСВЯЧЕННЯ СОБОРУ  
СВЯТОЇ СОФІЇ В РИМІ**

**ВСЕНАРОДНЕ  
ПАЛОМНИЦТВО  
під проводом  
ПАТРІАРХА  
СВЯТОСЛАВА  
за участю  
ЄПІСКОПІВ УГКЦ**

E-mail: [associazione.santa.sofia@gmail.com](mailto:associazione.santa.sofia@gmail.com)  
Tel./Fax: +39 06 624 02 03  
Via di Sacca, 47B  
00196 Roma, Italia

**ПАЛОМНИЦТВО СТЕМФОРДСЬКОЇ ЄПАРХІЇ ДО РИМУ  
від 29 серпня до 3 вересня, 2019 р.б.**

September 1, 2019 – Golden Jubilee Celebration of the Consecration of Saint Sophia Cathedral in Rome;  
Worldwide Pilgrimage led by Patriarch Sviatoslav and all the Hierarchs of the Ukrainian Catholic Church.

**Stamford Eparchy Pilgrimage Tour of Rome – Aug. 29 – Sept. 3, 2019**

For more information call either  
Dunwoodie Travel – 914-969-4200, [Alesia@DunwoodieTravel.com](mailto:Alesia@DunwoodieTravel.com)  
Monsignor John Terlecky – 203-962-2296, [jmterlecky@aol.com](mailto:jmterlecky@aol.com)