
EGGS aminer

A newsletter dedicated to preserving one of the great traditions of all time - Pysanky

Artist Profile

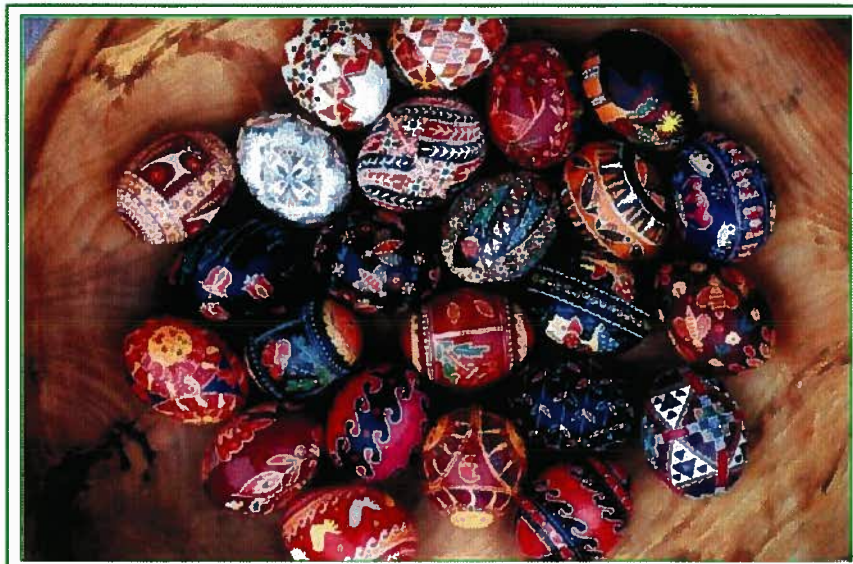
Featuring Joan Brander of Richmond, British Columbia

Even with Easter several months away, Joan Brander, author of Pysanky on Paper: An Activity Book for Children, has everything ready for her annual ritual. It starts right after Christmas. Before her is a lighted candle, a block of beeswax and a kistka. Jars of brilliant dyes stand at one side. In a bowl rest pagan symbols of the life force—freshly laid eggs, white and smooth. In the same way that the people who originated the Pysanka believed in its power, Joan writes symbols on the curved surface of the egg. Her basic design emerges and she bathes the egg in a succession of dyes in the technique akin to batik. Finally she wipes off all the beeswax—and behold! A breathtaking delight.

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photo courtesy Dan Toulgoet



various Pysanky by Joan Brander (photo courtesy Donna Bradley)

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photo courtesy Donna Bradley

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Joan affectionately recalls the time when, as a little girl, she was introduced to the art of Pysanka by her grandmother whom she called “Baba”.

“I will always remember Baba as being plump and jolly. Her belly jiggled when she laughed (which was often). Baba lived in a small house across the street from the school that I attended in the heartland of Canada. Her entire yard embraced nature’s beauty—heavy-scented roses, pale pink poppies, tawny tiger lilies, floral symbol of Saskatchewan, delicate brown-eyed susans blowing in the prairie wind, and, of course, her inviting vegetable garden all tended to so lovingly. I remember jumping on Baba’s bed of feather quilts with my cousins when we visited her. And I remember with

fondness the big wood stove where she baked bread, the scent of melting beeswax, the kitchen table where we worked.”

Joan’s first eggs were created without the special dyes and tools she uses and sells today. Back then she made her dyes by soaking sheets of colored

crepe paper in boiling water. She made her kistka from metal recycled from a large wall calendar. Her first lines of beeswax looked like noodles. She persevered. In time she began giving away her Pysanky as “gifts from the heart” to people who touched her life, a practice she continues to this day. According to Joan “nothing is more rewarding or pleasurable than to create a lasting gift for a friend.”

Having always admired people who operated handicraft businesses, and a father who operated a retail business, starting her own Pysanka enterprise was a logical next step for Joan. She didn’t have to look far to find an ideal name for her new venture: “Baba” because she was Joan’s inspiration and teacher, and “Beeswax” because of its significance to the technique. The momentum began to build

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photo courtesy Donna Bradley