



The Inside Story of Your Romanov-Style Egg



A rich history of fine taste and ultimate collectability

Congratulations! You've just joined collectors worldwide in choosing a replica of the object that, in 130 years, no other goldsmith or jeweler has surpassed the extravagant and immensely ornate splendor of the amazing designs created by the House of Romanov's royal jeweler.

Eggs—Timeless Symbol of Rebirth

A late 19th century, Russian Orthodox tradition dictated the exchange of hand-painted, priest-blessed Easter eggs, a sacred symbol of rebirth. Aristocrats often elevated the tradition by exchanging their own bejeweled gifts. Tsar Alexander III combined these traditions when he commissioned a young jeweler to design a 20th anniversary surprise for his wife, Empress Marie Fedorovna. Her gold covered, white enamel "Hen Egg", as it became known, opened to reveal a yellow golden yolk which contained a gold hen with ruby eyes. The hen's hinged tail opened to house a diamond-encrusted replica of the Imperial Crown and a ruby pendant on a chain. The first recipient was every bit as enchanted as those who have opened our replica treasure boxes during the past quarter of a century.



Romanov Family

The young jeweler was bestowed with the title of "Goldsmith by Special Appointment to the Imperial Court" and immediately began producing gift eggs each year except in times of war. In total, he produced at least 52 unique eggs for the imperial family, a tradition continued by the Czar's son, Nicholas II. Reflecting the rise in nationalism across Europe during the second half of the 19th century, each miniature masterpiece commemorated a special national theme, celebration or family triumph. The imperial family gave their jeweler carte blanche with but a single request—that each egg contain a delightful surprise. Anxious to please, he hid a tiny treasure within each ornately hand crafted shell—an elephant with its trunk held high, a silver swan, a miniature jeweled palace, or an encrusted carriage. Each piece was exquisite and treasured.

With the fall of the Russian royal family, the Bolsheviks nationalized the firm and expropriated its assets; some eggs vanished while others ended up in the Kremlin's vaults. Today, the Kremlin owns 10 of the original eggs.

Collected by museums, the world's elite...and you

Experts believe that 43 eggs still survive. They remain some of the most sought-after pieces in the world, eagerly collected over the years by such

varied aficionados as museums, the British royal family, publisher Malcolm Forbes, and Russian oil tycoon Viktor Vekselberg. Today, original eggs can sell upwards of \$35 million dollars each.

The Art & Science of Creating Collectible Enamel Eggs

Are you surprised to learn that these exquisite eggs, prized since the late 19th century, are still created quite similarly to the way they were over 130 years ago when they were conceived for Russia's Imperial family? In fact, they've been created in much of the same manner for 7,000 years, since the earliest dynasties of Egypt employed the lost wax method to create hand-poured works of metal art.

From an initial concept art sketch of each magnificent egg, a clay sculpture prototype, complete with delicate details, is rendered. Any imperfection in the clay matters, so our artists take great pains to make sure this prototype is as close to the finished product as possible.

We Make—and Break—the Molds

Next, latex rubber is painted onto the surface of the clay to make an engraving mold. Every surface is covered and every trapped air bubble removed because the material is carefully formulated to pick up the most minute details. The process is repeated several times before a firmer, outer jacket is formed to create a "mother mold."

Layers of wax, at slightly cooler and cooler temperatures, are poured through a hole in the mother mold. Each layer is rotated to coat the inner surfaces. Next, after removing the outer mold, in a process called wax chasing, small, delicate tools for scraping and a hot tool for filling the imperfections is used. Once the wax replica receives the master artist's approval, it's ready for the foundry.

This wax positive is then dipped into a mixture called slurry, which hardens into a durable, ceramic shell and is placed into a pressure sealed oven, or autoclave.

High temperatures and pressure force the wax to melt out or become "lost," thus the term "lost wax process."

Casting Your Masterpiece

Solid blocks of pewter are heated into liquid metal, poured into molds and cooled before the ceramic shell is cautiously broken off to separate the casting. Your egg is hand polished then plated and polished again, checking for fine quality along the way. Layers of enamel paint are applied and fired for a full tonal experience before magnetic closures, sparkling crystals and other tiny embellishments are individually added. Finally, your magnificent egg is complete and is sent to you for a lifetime of enjoyment. Display it proudly!



Larissa Romanov-Style Enameled Egg FH-1076