

CENTER FOR RUSSIAN, E EUROPEAN
& EURASIAN STUDIES AT UT AUSTIN

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The Imperial Eggs

The celebrated series of 50 Imperial Easter eggs was created for the Russian Imperial family from 1885 to 1916 when the company was run by Peter Carl Fabergé (top, left). These creations are inextricably linked to the glory and tragic fate of the last Romanov family (top, right). They were the ultimate achievement of the renowned Russian jewellery house. Ten eggs were produced from 1885 to 1893, during the reign of Emperor Alexander III; 40 more were created during the rule of his dutiful son, Nicholas II, two each year, one for his mother, the dowager, the second for his wife.

The Hen Egg, 1885

Inspired by an 18th century original, the Hen Egg has an opaque white enamelled outer 'shell', opening with a twist to reveal a first surprise - a matt yellow gold yolk. This in turn contains an enamelled chased gold hen that once held a replica of the Imperial Crown with a precious ruby pendant egg within. The drop by itself cost more than half of the egg's total price (both lost, being only known from an old photograph).



Renaissance Egg, 1894

Presented by Emperor Alexander III to his wife, Maria Feodorovna, this Renaissance style object was inspired by an oval agate casket by Le Roy in the Dresden Grünes Gewölbe (Green Vaults), the museum founded by Augustus the Strong in 1723. Cleverly transformed by Fabergé into an egg shape, it is made of cloudy agate, its cover applied with opaque white enamel gold trellis-work with a quatrefoil of diamonds and a ruby centre at each intersection. A red enamel band divides the two egg-halves. The top bears the date 1894 set in rose diamonds.

Rosebud Egg, 1895

This egg, applied with diamond-set Cupid's arrows symbolizing Love, was the first of the series presented by Emperor Nicholas II to his wife, Empress Alexandra Feodorovna, a few months after their marriage. It is crafted from multi-coloured gold, decorated with bands of rose-cut diamonds and is covered with translucent red guilloché enamel. The rosebud surprise is of opaque yellow and green enamel. At its apex the egg has a miniature portrait of the young Emperor under a table-cut diamond, and at its base the date 1894. Further surprises contained within, a diamond-set crown and a ruby drop, are only known from an old photograph.



Coronation Egg, 1897

Fabergé's most iconic egg was presented by Emperor Nicholas II to his wife, Empress Alexandra Feodorovna on their Coronation Day. Its outer shell is made of multi-coloured gold, embellished with translucent yellow guilloché enamel and black enamel double-headed eagles set with diamonds, a design recalling the heavy Cloth of Gold robe she wore at the ceremony. The jewelled monogram of the empress appears at the egg's apex under a portrait diamond, with the date at the base. The egg opens to reveal a surprise in the form of a diamond-set enamelled gold miniature replica of the original 18th century carriage by Buckendahl which once contained an emerald drop, later



replaced by a yellow briolette diamond (both lost). The 3 11/16 in. (9.4cm) coach took craftsman, Georg Stein 13 months to complete.



Lilies of the Valley Egg, 1898

This pink guilloché enamel Art Nouveau egg, presented by Emperor Nicholas II to Empress Alexandra Feodorovna, is virtually smothered with pearl- and diamond-set lilies of the valley sprays, her favourite flower, and is designed in her most-liked style. It stands on four cabriolet feet entwined with diamond-set foliage. The surprise, three miniatures of their eldest daughters, Olga and Tatiana, surmounted by a diamond- and ruby-set Imperial Crown, appears when one of the pearls is twisted.

The Duchess of Marlborough Egg, 1902

This clock-egg, among the finest among the 10-12 "non-Imperial" eggs, was acquired from Fabergé by Consuelo Vanderbilt, Duchess of Marlborough, at the occasion of her visit to Russia in 1902. Based on Fabergé's 'Blue Serpent Clock Egg' made for the Dowager Empress in 1895, it is now owned by Prince Albert of Monaco, and was in its time only such item commissioned by an American. Made of multi-coloured gold, rose-cut diamonds, pearls and translucent pink and white guilloché enamel, the clock has a revolving dial, with a diamond-set serpent indicating time.



Bay-Tree Egg, 1911

The egg, presented by Emperor Nicholas II to his mother, Dowager Empress Maria Feodorovna, is inspired by a French 18th century singing bird automaton. According to the Fabergé invoice, the bay tree comprises "325 nephrite leaves, 110 opalescent white enamel flowers, 25 diamonds, 20 rubies, 53 pearls, 219 rose-cut diamonds and one large rose-cut diamond". When the clockwork automation is wound up and set in motion, a feathered bird appears, flaps its wings, turns its head, opens its beak and sings.



Nobel Ice Egg, 1914

This platinum and translucent white enamel egg is engraved with underglaze frost crystals. Its surprise is a lozenge-shaped diamond-set platinum and rock crystal watch similarly decorated. This egg was commissioned by Dr. Emanuel Nobel, nephew of Alfred Nobel, of Nobel prize fame. Emanuel Nobel, one of the leading figures of the oil industry at the time, was amongst Fabergé's most notable clients.



Order of St George Egg, 1916

The Order of St George Egg was presented by Emperor Nicholas II to his mother, the Dowager Empress. After the onset of The Great War, precious materials were rare: this, one of Fabergé's two last completed eggs, is of silver and mat opalescent white enamel with no further embellishments. It is set with miniature portraits of Nicholas II and of his son, Alexei, concealed beneath the Badge of the Order of St. George and a silver medal of the Order respectively. This much coveted order, only awarded for great bravery on the Front, was bestowed upon the Emperor on October 25, 1916. It is the only egg that left Russia during the Revolution, accompanying the Dowager Empress into exile.



Information and pictures courtesy Faberge.com

The Missing Imperial Egg

In 2012 a scrap dealer in America went online to research the gold egg which had languished in his kitchen for years. He had purchased the egg about a decade before for \$13,302 based on its weight and estimated value of the diamonds and sapphires featured in the decoration intending to sell it on to a buyer who would melt it down but prospective buyers thought he had over-estimated the price and turned him down. The scrap dealer Googled 'egg' and 'Vacheron Constantin,' a name etched on the timepiece inside and the result was a 2011 Telegraph article. He recognised his egg in the picture. As evidence of its journey, the egg has several scratches on it where the metal was tested for its gold content by prospective buyers ... the new buyer thought they enhanced the piece because they are part of its history."

—Wikipedia



Third Imperial Easter Egg, made by Faberge for the Russian royal family and estimated to be worth 20 million pounds (\$33 million).

Matryoshka Dolls

Russian nesting dolls (Matryoskha) are some of the most recognizable Russian artifacts. Traditionally, the outer layer is a woman, dressed in a sarafan, a long and shapeless traditional Russian peasant jumper dress. The figures inside may be of any gender; the smallest, innermost doll is typically a baby turned from a single piece of wood. The dolls often follow a theme; the themes may vary, from fairy tale characters to Soviet leaders.

Russian Leader* Nesting Dolls (largest to smallest)

Vladimir Putin

President of Russia 2000-2008 and 2012-present

Boris Yeltsin

President of Russia 1991-1999

Mikhail Gorbachev

President of the Soviet Union 1990-1991

General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union 1985 -1991

Leonid Brezhnev

General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union 1964-1982

Vladimir Lenin

First and founding head of government of Soviet Russia from 1917 to 1924 and of the Soviet Union from 1922 to 1924

*Joseph Stalin and Nikita Khrushchev are notably absent.



Khokhloma Folk Painting

Khokhloma is the name of a Russian wood painting handicraft style and national ornament, known for its curved and vivid mostly flower, berry and leaf patterns. Often Firebird, the figure from the Russian fairytale, is also depicted.

A combination of red, black, and gold are typical colors for Khokhloma. When painted on wood, in most cases red, black, green, yellow and orange are used over a gold background. The effect it has when applied to wooden tableware or furniture, making it look heavier and metallic.

The style is named for the village of Khokhloma in Koverninsky District, Nizhny Novgorod Oblast, Volga region, where it first appeared in the second half of the 17th century.

The handicraft owes its origin to the Old Believers, who, fleeing from persecutions of officials, took refuge in local woods. Even earlier, however, local villagers had experience in making tableware from soft woods. Among the schismatics there were icon-painters, who taught local craftsmen the special technique of painting wood in a golden color without the use of genuine real gold.

Articles carved out of wood (mostly tableware) were usually primed with clay mortar, raw linseed oil, and tin powder (nowadays aluminum is used). A floral pattern was then painted on top of this coating with a brush. After that, the articles were coated with linseed oil (nowadays, synthetic oil) and hardened in a kiln at high temperatures. There are two principal wood painting techniques used in the Khokhloma, such as the so-called "superficial technique" (red and black colors over the goldish one) and the "background technique" (a goldish silhouette-like design over the colored background).

—Wikipedia

Pysanky Eggs

Egg decoration in Ukraine is widespread and practiced by many; in the premodern era, pysankarstvo was practiced universally outside of big cities (which often had non-Ukrainian populations). The pysanka itself, a wax-resist type egg, is one of Ukraine's national symbols, and known throughout the world.

Ukrainian pysanka legends

The Hutsuls—ethnic Ukrainians who live in the Carpathian Mountain highlands in western Ukraine—believe that the fate of the world depends upon the pysanka. As long as the egg writing custom continues, the world will exist. If, for any reason, this custom is abandoned, evil—in the shape of a horrible serpent who is forever chained to a cliff—will overrun the world. Each year the serpent sends out his minions to see how many pysanky have been written. If the number is low the serpent's chains are loosened and he is free to wander the earth causing havoc and destruction. If, on the other hand, the number of pysanky has increased, the chains are tightened and good triumphs over evil for yet another year.



Newer legends blended folklore and Christian beliefs and firmly attached the egg to the Easter celebration.

Ukrainian superstitions and folk beliefs

Many superstitions were attached to Ukrainian pysanky. Pysanky were thought to protect households from evil spirits, catastrophe, lightning and fires. Pysanky with spiral motifs were the most powerful, as the demons and other unholy creatures would be trapped within the spirals forever.

There were superstitions regarding the colors and designs on Ukrainian pysanky. One old Ukrainian myth centered on the wisdom of giving older people gifts of pysanky with darker colors and/or rich designs, for their life has already been filled. Similarly, it is appropriate to give young people pysanky with white as the predominant color because their life is still a blank page. Girls would often give pysanky to young men they fancied, that included heart motifs. It was said, though, that a girl should never give her boyfriend a pysanka that has no design on the top and bottom of the egg, as this might signify that the boyfriend would soon lose his hair.

—Wikipedia



Dracula



The novel *Dracula* was partially inspired by a Wallachian ruler called Vlad the Impaler. Wallachia is now called Romania.

The name Dracul was given to Vlad's father, Vlad II, by his fellow knights who belonged to a Christian crusading order known as the Order of the Dragon. Dracul translates to "dragon" in Romanian.

Bram Stoker wrote the novel *Dracula*, in 1897. Historians have speculated that Stoker's conversations with the historian Hermann Bamburger may have helped provide him with information on Vlad's nature.

When disease or bad luck struck a town, folks looked for a reason. Without modern knowledge of diseases or science, they often turned to "evil spirits" to explain away their misfortune. Vampires, angry witches, and the Devil were common, misguided explanations.

Bran Castle is a national monument in Transylvania, Romania. Commonly known outside Transylvania as Dracula's Castle, it is marketed as the home of the title character in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. There is no evidence that Stoker knew anything about this castle, which has only tangential associations with Vlad the Impaler.

—Wikipedia



photo by Dobre Cezar

ACTIVITY: Writing Prompts from Bram Stoker's *Dracula*

Use the sentences from the coffin to begin your own short story.

"Just before I was leaving, the old lady came up to my room and said, in a very hysterical way..."

"When I got to the doorway at the top of the stairs, I found it closed."

"His spiders are now becoming as great a nuisance as his flies, and today I told him that he must get rid of them."

"Rough weather last three days, and all hands busy with sails—no time to be frightened."

"The funeral of the poor sea captain today was most touching."

"She was alarmed, but not nearly so much as I expected to find her."



Bone Music

In the Soviet Union after the second world war, a lot of music was banned. Almost everything Western was forbidden because the USA and Britain in particular had become seen as the enemy and their culture was held to be harmful. But a lot of Russian music was also forbidden. Anything made by emigres was off limits because by definition, any Russian who had wilfully left the country or who stayed away by choice was now considered a traitor - whatever their repertoire and even if they had previously been approved of. Some of these people had been huge stars before the war. And what is perhaps more difficult to comprehend, is that a lot of domestic music made by Soviet citizens was also forbidden, or at the very least deemed 'unofficial'. Why?

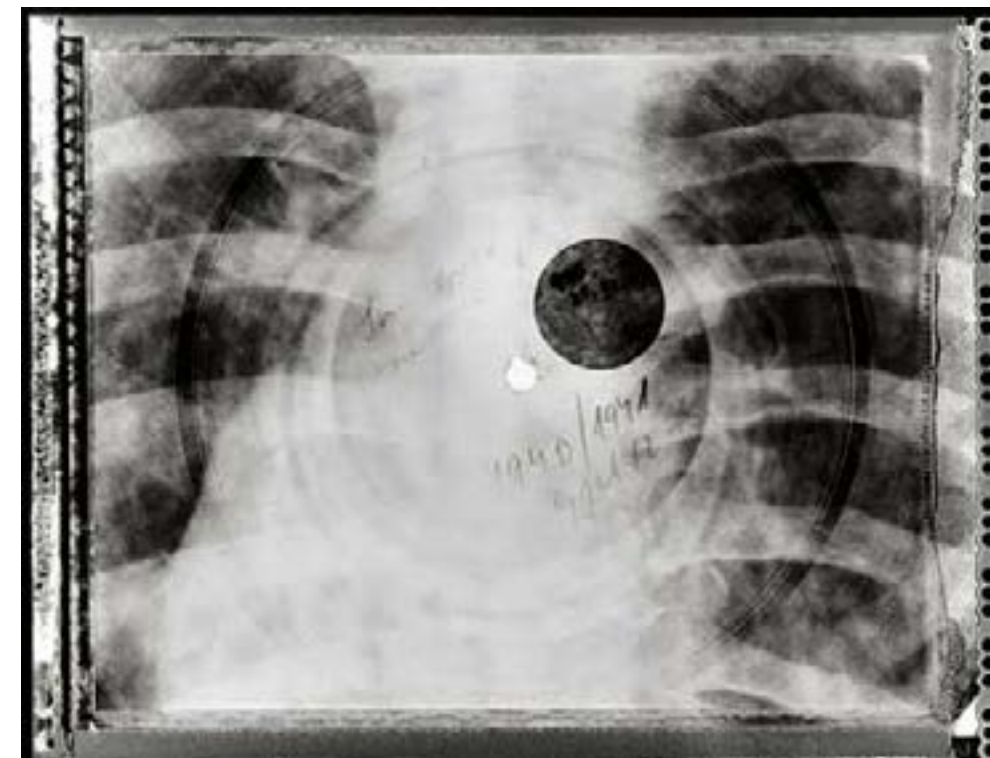
From 1932 and especially during the Stalinist era, all Soviet art, literature, poetry, film and music was controlled. The ideologues of the Soviet Union believed passionately in culture but also that all art had to be in the service of Socialist Realism and support communist ideals. And therefore it must be subject to an official censor. Self expression was out. Many Russian popular tunes, especially those from the folk tradition called 'criminal' songs, whilst not really anti-Soviet in themselves, were deemed to be 'low culture' and would not pass these conditions. Many of them were songs that had become popular in the gulags. Like a Jacques Brel track, they might be songs about violence or jealousy or about the rough and tumble of love and lust and life in the camps. A Russian friend said to me recently: "Remember, at that time, every family had at least one member in the gulag..". And even certain rhythms such as the foxtrot were banned on the basis that they might lead to wild, licentious behaviour, late night gatherings and general frivolity.

But young hearts were beating. People had a huge pent-up desire to hear their own music: songs which they had heard in the gulag or sung by those who had returned; songs which they had loved in previously, less controlled times; songs by artists who were now persona non grata and even perhaps songs that they had heard played by some local singer at a clandestine concert. And of course, there was a demand for the impossibly exotic seeming Western music, the Rock and Roll or Jazz which might be caught on an overseas radio broadcast the state hadn't been able to jam or heard at a party on gramophone records

smuggled into the country by merchant sailors or diplomats. Such records would be rare and fabulously expensive, costing the equivalent of a month's wages. This combination of huge demand with restricted supply is of course the perfect condition for a market to arise. And true to form, into this market, into this gap between supply and demand stepped the bootleggers.

We had our own bootleg culture in the West once - live recordings of concerts by the big Rock gods made on vinyl or tape in the days before the internet changed everything. But even if illegal, these were relatively easy to make. In the Soviet Union during the period from the late forties to the early sixties, it was not so easy. The bootleggers' first technical problem, that of obtaining a machine to record with was relatively straightforward. Literature existed explaining audio recording techniques (say in case a righteous citizen wanted to copy the speeches of Comrade Stalin) and various recording machines had been brought back from Germany as trophies after the second world war. These could be adapted or copied, but a further problem existed. The State completely controlled the means of manufacturing records. You couldn't just go and buy the vinyl or shellac or lacquer needed in a store somewhere.

But at some point, some enterprising music lover hit on a genius idea. An alternative source of raw materials was available - used X-ray plates obtained from local hospitals. And that is where this story really begins. For many older people in Russia remember seeing and hearing strange vinyl type discs when they were young. The discs had partial images of skeletons on them and were called 'Bones' or 'Ribs' and they contained wonderful music, music that was forbidden. The practice of copying and recording music onto X-rays really got going in St Petersburg, a port where it was be easier to obtain illicit records from abroad. But it spread, first to Moscow and then to most major conurbations throughout the states of the Soviet Union.



x-rayaudio.com



St. Basil's Cathedral

The Cathedral of Vasily the Blessed, commonly known as Saint Basil's Cathedral, is an Orthodox church in Red Square of Moscow, and is one of the most popular cultural symbols of Russia. It was built from 1555 to 1561 on orders from Ivan the Terrible and commemorates the capture of Kazan and Astrakhan.

The original building, known as Trinity Church and later Trinity Cathedral, contained eight chapels arranged around a ninth, central chapel dedicated to the Intercession; a tenth chapel was erected in 1588 over the grave of the venerated local saint Vasily (Basil).

The cathedral has nine domes (each one corresponding to a different church) and is shaped like the flame of a bonfire rising into the sky.

As part of the program of state atheism, the church was confiscated from the Russian Orthodox community as part of the Soviet Union's antireligious campaigns and has operated as a division of the State Historical Museum since 1928. It was completely secularized in 1929, and remains a federal property of the Russian Federation. The church has been part of the Moscow Kremlin and Red Square UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1990. With the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, weekly Orthodox Christian services with prayer to St. Basil have been restored since 1997.

—Wikipedia



Kupala, Slavic Goddess

Kupala was the female personification of the Slavic deity Kupalo, who was the god of peace, magic water and herbs. Alongside this, he was also one aspect of a fertility deity. Like other Slavic deities, Kupala and Kupalo were considered to be divine twins whose effigies would be burnt together to enhance a ritual. As his twin, Kupala was believed to be the goddess of water, fire, herbs and fertility throughout eastern Europe.

Kupala worshippers would bathe in rivers and dew that had been gathered in June in her honour. In both Russia and Ukraine, she was celebrated with a summer ritual where both young men and women would jump over a bonfire. While doing so, they would drag a maiden made of straw behind them. Since fire was believed to have the same purification aspects to it as water, it was believed that the maiden was being cleansed of its evil by members of the village. The next day everyone would bathe the figure in a local river and would then release it downstream. The festival was believed to represent evil being expelled from the village, in the name of Kupala. Similar images were also created in Serbia and other Slavic countries. Here, the image was dressed in a fine gown, decked with floral garlands and hung from a tree. The tree was required to have its upper branches trimmed, so that it formed the image of a green haired woman. Only women were able to perform this ritual and as such, men were forbidden to touch the image.

In all areas of eastern Europe, Kupala was believed to be the deity of both herbs and ferns. Purple-loosestrife was considered to be her favourite, as its flowers blossomed between June and August. Traditionally it was believed to have the power to banish demons if gathered at dawn on the Summer Solstice. This again ties Kupala to the protection of a village and the banishment of evil. As her sacred plant was believed to have been a fern, several were thought to have granted its possessor to understand the language of the trees.

By 1835, Christianity had been the dominant religion in Europe for over a thousand years, with St John the Baptist taking on many of the traditional aspects of Kupala. St John, also known as Ivan, had a celebrated festival around the time of the summer solstice. During a modern Kupala Day, young people jump over a bonfire in a test of faith and bravery. Other regions such as Ukraine, do so in a belief that it cleanses ill fortune, as is seen in the original festival for the deity Kupala. Girls float wreaths of flowers and candles in the river in order to visualise their relationship prospects for the coming year. Men can attempt to catch one of these wreaths in some areas, in a show of interest in someone. Women also traditionally wear garlands and wreaths on this day in an observance of the Summer Solstice, much like would have been worn in the traditional Kupala festival.

—[Girl Museum](#)

“Siberia” originates from the Siberian Tatar word for “sleeping land” (Sib ir). Siberia is an extensive geographical region, constituting all of North Asia, from the Ural Mountains in the west to the Pacific Ocean in the east. It has been a part of Russia since the latter half of the 16th century, after the Russians conquered lands east of the Ural Mountains. Siberia is vast and sparsely populated, covering an area of over 13.1 million square kilometres, but home to merely one-fifth of Russia’s population. Novosibirsk, Krasnoyarsk and Omsk are the largest cities in the region.[citation needed]



Because Siberia is a geographic and historic region and not a political entity, there is no single precise definition of its territorial borders. Traditionally, Siberia extends eastwards from the Ural Mountains to the Pacific Ocean, and includes most of the drainage basin of the Arctic Ocean. The river Yenisey divides Siberia into two parts, Western and Eastern. Siberia stretches southwards from the Arctic Ocean to the hills of north-central Kazakhstan and to the northern parts of Mongolia and China. The central part of Siberia (West and East Siberian economic regions) was considered the



core part of the region in the Soviet Union. Beyond the core, Siberia’s western part includes some territories of the Ural region, and the far eastern part has been historically called the Russian Far East.

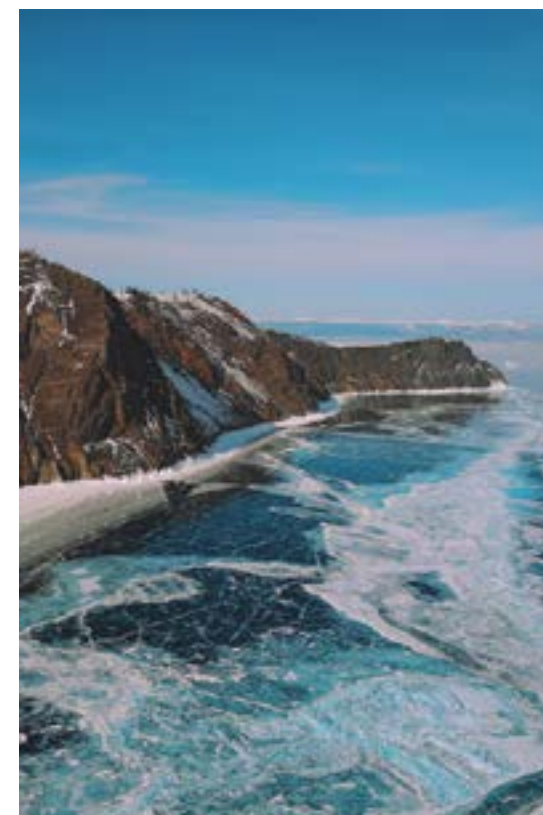
Siberia is known worldwide primarily for its long, harsh winters, with a January average



of $-25\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$ ($-13\text{ }^{\circ}\text{F}$). It is geographically situated in Asia; however, having been colonized and incorporated into Russia, it is culturally and politically a part of Europe. European cultural influences, specifically Russian, predominate throughout the region, due to it having had Russian emigration from Europe since the 16th century, forming the Siberian Russian sub-ethnic group. Over 85% of the region’s population is of European descent.

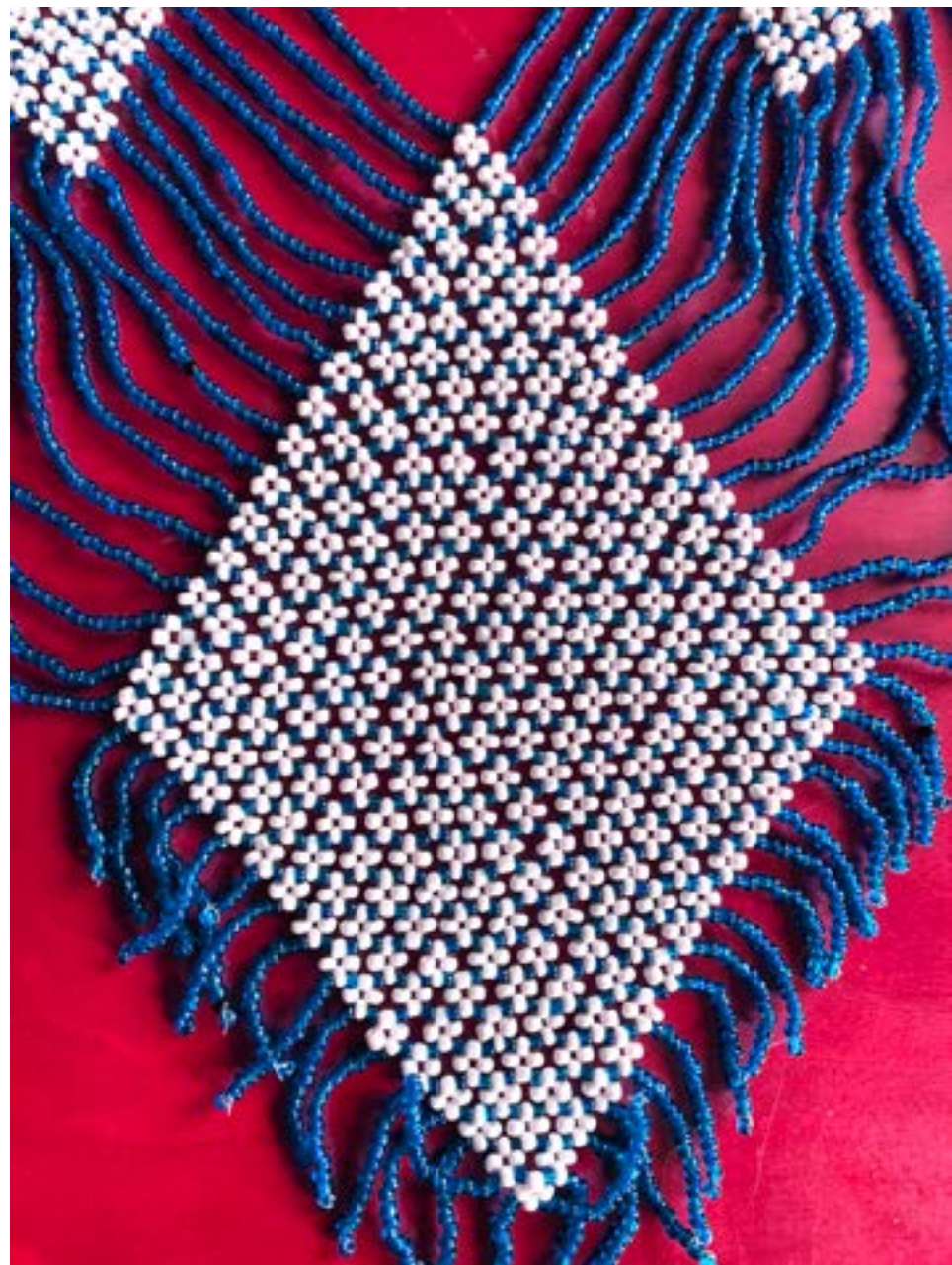


Siberia



Mir Diamond Mine

Beadwork from our region (and, indeed, many regions) have a long history. Beads are classically used simply for adornment—the intricacy of the work meant to show off talent and/or wealth.



Czech Beadwork



Palekh

The term palekh comes from the most famous of the three villages (Kholui, Mstera, and Palekh) in which Palekh painting originated. Ivan Golikov, a Palekh icon painter, derived the inspiration for this style from lacquered boxes he saw at the Kustar Museum in 1921. Golikov and others applied egg tempera, rather than oil, to papier-mâché boxes and, employing techniques used in icon painting, created objects that resembled traditional folk art. — [encyclopedia.com](https://www.encyclopedia.com)



Gzhel Porcelain

The village of Gzhel has long been famous for its clays. Extensive mining of various types of clay carried out here from the middle of the 17th century. In 1663, Tsar Alexey Mikhailovich (Alexis of Russia) issued a decree to make Gzhel "exclusive supplier of Apothecary and alchemical vessels for the Apothecary's order in Moscow. They had to comply with increased quality requirements. This was the beginning of ceramic production in Russia."

In the 1830s, the Gzhel potters developed a faience, or white earthenware, of a quality that rivaled the creamware being produced in England at the time. They followed the development of faience with the acquisition of porcelain. Porcelain is fired to a similar temperature as stoneware, but unlike stoneware it becomes a translucent white and as such is highly desirable.

The making of porcelain had been a secret heavily guarded by China with only finished products being exported. When Russia was able to produce their own porcelain, it undercut the high cost of imports from China or Western European producers. Although there have been several periods of disruption in pottery production at Gzhel, quality pottery is once again being produced in both the recognizable blue on white design as well as the more colorful Maiolica ware.

—[wikipedia](#)



The Center for Russian, East European and Eurasian Studies at UT Austin offers educational and research opportunities focused on the languages, cultures, histories, and politics of the region. We are actively engaged in K-16 outreach, as well as the coordination of campus and community events.

The U.S. Department of Education designated The University of Texas as a National Resource Center for Russian and East European Studies in 1988. CREEES was awarded funds for Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) Fellowships from 1988–2010, 2014–2018, 2018–2022, and 2022–2026. As a National

Resource Center funded by a Title VI grant from the US Department of Education, CREEES sponsors major conferences, workshops, faculty interest groups, and scholarly symposia. CREEES also provides Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) fellowships to students pursuing graduate and undergraduate degrees relating to Russia, Eastern Europe and Eurasia in any department or school of the university. CREEES awards FLAS fellowships to graduate and undergraduate students developing language skills in the languages of our region (such as Russian, Bosnian-Croatian-Serbian (BCS), Czech and Polish, as well as occasional opportunities to learn Uzbek, Tajik, Kazakh and Ukrainian). (See Graduate Funding or Undergraduate Funding.)

CREEES has a firm commitment to developing campus resources and courses that will give students the training they need to participate in an international arena in which Russia, Eastern Europe and Eurasia play a key role. By highlighting an interdisciplinary course of study and by offering a degree plan that is not limited by traditional disciplinary boundaries, CREEES can respond to political and private sector demands for integrated studies that include both academic study and professional training.

The Center for Russian, East European and Eurasian Studies (formerly Post-Soviet and East European Studies) was established in 1984 at The University of Texas at Austin and now includes over 80 faculty members from over 20 different departments and administrative units across campus. CREEES is committed to reaching out to the campus community, as well as the broader region, to provide access to speakers from Russia, Eastern Europe and Eurasia, and activities that will promote interest in the region. As part of the largest university in the state of Texas, CREEES has a special responsibility to support continued international development and to educate students that can play a fundamental role in an international community in which Russia, Eastern Europe and Eurasia are critical players.

About UT's Center for RUSSIAN, EAST EUROPEAN, AND EURASIAN STUDIES