

When the Egg Comes First

Balinese are renowned for their skilled artistry in many fields and artisans are picked from established family trees, one generation after the other. In Bali many villages are home to these specific families and their particular preferred skilled art practice. In the village of Batuan, near Sukawati in Bali you will find a village filled with Balinese Egg Painters. An art form that still hatches new designs, making one believe that perhaps it is the egg that came first!

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PHOTO BY Baous Tri Laksono



Egg painting is a process that takes roughly five days to complete. Firstly an egg needs to be emptied. Duck or Goose eggs are most popular, although ostrich eggs are also painted along with crafted wooden eggs in various shapes and sizes. To empty a duck or goose egg a small insertion needs to be made at the bottom of the egg and an injection is used to draw out the yolk, the eggs then need to be washed and sun or oven dried to ensure no yolk remained inside the egg and that the final product will not have any unwanted odors.

Secondly the egg gets covered in a thin layer of gypsum plaster that then needs to be sanded until smooth with sanding paper. This extra coating onto the eggshell provides both durability as well as a smoother cleaner surface (white background) to paint on. This also covers the little hole made when removing the yolk. After this step is complete the artist will then draw their specific artwork or design onto the egg with a pencil. At this stage the egg is still far from becoming a work of art and can resemble almost something that looks very amateur and easy to do.

Once the design has been completed in pencil the next step certainly separates the amateur from the artist, as it requires a lot of practice and skill: The outlined design gets painted in black acrylic. Painting on a flat surface on a canvas and painting on an rounded egg requires so much more skill and patience. If the egg's design is painted properly in black paint it looks like a completed artwork, sometimes people even prefer their egg without color added.

The design is then filled with color acrylic and sealed in with a treatment to set it and dry, making a shiny surface that is relatively scratch proof. When you purchase your egg, they are safely packed in a shock-proof bamboo container ready to be packed in your suitcase and taken home to display as a small work of art directly from the island of the gods. ¹⁰

