

Egg decorator

**THE STORY THAT
NEEDED TO BE TOLD**

by Henry Verden

My wife loves Easter. You might guess it's because of chocolate treats or leg of lamb but in reality it's because of something more insidious. She's addicted to Easter egg decorating kits. She can hardly wait to see what new wonder of color will hit the shelves every year.

It used to be simple. Years ago, the most radical innovations were new color assortments or different designs of watercolor tattoo transfers. Her long road to the dark side started when Pas came out with those clear wax crayons. You know the ones I mean. You would use them to write or draw on the eggs and the dyes wouldn't take in those places. Suddenly, a whole new decorating vista opened up. A person could make any kind of ovoid statement they wanted.

Next came shrink-wrap sleeves, taking the work out of having to come up with your own design. All you had to do was slide it on and





soak the egg in hot water. Science had entered the arena. It was a nice novelty but my wife never really used them. She felt they lacked artistic integrity.

Glitter was the next big thing and my wife was beside herself because there's nothing she likes better than things that sparkle. Stencils also arrived that same year. They were plastic pieces molded to fit around an egg with the stencil cut in. Hold it up against the egg, apply a marker, and watch the colors bleed into a Rorschach blot instead of staying neatly within the bounds set by the stencil. Some sets are better than others.

Swirl pattern kits were the rage for a while. You dripped different oil-based dyes onto the surface of a container of water, dipped an egg with a swirling motion, and made a pattern on the egg that looked very similar to a bad sixties shag carpet. This one bothered me because I once had an apartment with that very same rug. Speckled and tie-dyed eggs came and went about this same time.

I remember clearly when she brought home the first egg-decorating machine. It held the egg like a piece of stock in a wood

lathe. You spun the egg with a hand crank and applied markers using the convenient built-in guide bar. That year we had dozens of eggs with concentric circles and single or multiple spirals. My cranking arm was sore for a week (my wife needed both hands to wield markers). Others came after but I've tried to, and mostly succeeded, in forgetting them.

These, in the final analysis, were just gateway kits. A few years ago my wife finally crossed over to the hard stuff: Ukrainian-decorated eggs. Comparing Ukrainian eggs to any of the other kits is like comparing putting on a Band-Aid™ to brain surgery. The designs are extremely intricate. A special tool is used to apply hot wax to the egg shell. A partial pattern is laid down and then the egg is dyed one color. More of the design is laid down and another color is applied. This happens over and over again until the whole design is complete. All the wax is removed and, lo and behold, you either have an egg with a stained glass-like appearance or a hopeless mess. This process is putzy enough that it can go either way.

I keep my fingers crossed every year that the next big decorating kit will not appear. The possibilities are quickly drying up. I fear that the only two things left to use are lasers and atomic power. Anybody want eggs with a half-life that glow in the dark?

