The month of May is national egg month and what better way to celebrate the egg then with a miniature diorama. Thelma Maureen (Funk) Schmidt enjoyed crafting even though she suffered greatly from crippling arthritis. She made bread dough dolls, and sewed doll clothing. At the Wray Museum we have a collection of 25 fancy egg dioramas. Each charming miniature is planned and hand-built with incredible attention to detail. By using all types of traditional and some not so traditional crafting supplies, she created a variety of scenes inside her eggs including Native Americans, covered wagons, farm homesteads, gardens, and holidays. She won many grand champions and best of show ribbons at the local and Colorado State Fairs. Her collection of eggs was donated by Frances Smith.

**Egger the Art of Egg-Crafting**

The humble eggshell, which in most homes ends up in the garbage can, is the basic working material of a devoted and enthusiastic group of craftspeople. Using a variety of craft techniques, these egg-crafters, egg artists, or eggers, transform ordinary eggshells into charming ornaments. The outside (and sometimes, the inside) of the shell is decorated with tiny jewels or beads, by decoupage techniques, by gilding or etching, and even by embroidering. Although they are most often used purely for decoration, they can also be functional items such as jewelry boxes, fancy
pendants, brooches, toothpick holders and tiny vases. Many egg-crafters use their decorated eggs as tree ornaments, table toppers, or give them as gifts.

From time immemorial in many cultures and religions, including early Christianity, the egg has symbolized fertility, birth, or creation. Egg ornaments are especially popular as Christmas tree decorations or for Easter Sunday. Many of these decorated eggs have miniature dioramas inside of them. The art of miniature figures and landscapes has been around a very long time. In Japan the art of miniature landscapes is called "Bonkei" and it is thought to have first made its appearance in the sixth century. There are several forms of dioramas, there’s something that all of them have in common: the alluring beauty that comes from capturing our world in miniature form. Today well, there is lots of diorama stuff going on! Architects create them, museums create them, and even movie studios and toy companies make them. They come in a tremendous variety including kits where you make them from parts or they can come in completed form. Fantasy subjects, video games, comic book characters and military scenes are among the more popular subjects.

Most egg decorating in the past came under the category of folk art, but in at least one instance it was part of the sophisticated world of royalty. Carl Faberge, court jeweler to the Tsars of Russia during the early 1900’s, is still famous for the gold and jewel-encrusted eggs which he fashioned for the Russian royal family. The first one he made, a gold-and-white enamel egg which opened to reveal a “surprise” in the form of a gold yolk containing a ruby-eyed hen, so delighted the Tsarina that Tsar Alexander III commissioned Faberge to create an egg which he could give his wife Easter thereafter. Faberge-style eggs represent just one of many types of decorated eggs. Similar to these are the whole, uncut jeweled egg and the panorama egg, which has an opening cut in it but without a door. Inside this opening may be anything from a miniature woodland scene to a tiny Nativity setting. Decorated eggs of this type, characterized by jewels, gold braid, and metal findings glued to the shell, are often classified as “boutique” eggs.

**How to Create “Boutique” Eggs**

If the egg is to be jeweled, it is first painted, using either an acrylic, a lacquer, an enamel, or one of the special stains that are sold for this purpose in shops that sell craft supplies. If the egg has been cut open it will also need painting on the inside. If a diorama or scene is to be set up on the inside, then a small amount of plaster is spooned into the bottom of the shell to serve as a base on which tiny ceramic animals, miniature figures or small pieces of greenery can be mounted.

The outside of the egg is decorated by flat-backed tiny jewels, strings of miniature pearls, metallic braids and other ornaments, which are glued to it with a white craft glue or a quick-drying high strength plastic adhesive. The hobbyist should plan carefully to achieve the effect desired, and every effort should be made to work as neatly as possible.

Although Eggery uses real egg shell for crafting, they are very fragile to work with. One of the easiest ways for the beginner to get started is by making a paper mâché egg first. Paper mâché eggs can be made in all sizes and enable the hobbyist to make some quite elegant looking eggs without worrying about breakage.
How to Make Paper Mâché Eggs

Supplies Needed for Making Paper Mache Eggs

Newspapers
White Glue
Bowl
Water
Paint Brushes
Acrylic Paints
X-Acto Knife
Plastic Egg
A Pair of Scissors

STEP 1  Pour a considerable amount of white glue in the bowl.

STEP 2  Pour water in the bowl. The ratio of white glue to water should be 3 parts white glue to 2 parts water.

STEP 3  Stir the mixture until the mixture is blended (no lumps or separation).

STEP 4  Cut small strips of newspaper and put it on the glue mixture. Remember these are eggs so the strips should be small enough that they will create an overlapping formation.

STEP 5  Completely submerge or cover the newspaper strips in the mixture for a better mâché mixture.

STEP 6  Completely cover the plastic eggs with the glued paper strips making sure to leave none of the egg showing. Continue covering until you have achieved the desired thickness.

STEP 7  Let the egg(s) dry for 24-48 hours. The egg(s) will be as hard as a rock when they are completely dry.
STEP 8  With the X-Acto knife (may need an adult to assist in this step) carefully cut the egg(s) where the plastic egg opens.

STEP 9  Carefully remove the plastic egg from the paper mâché egg.

STEP 10  Cut a long strip of newspaper and use this to seal the egg(s) back together. Use the white glue to accomplish this. Smooth out the sides of the new strip, so that the sealer strip will not be obvious. Let this dry for 5 to 6 hours.

STEP 11  Paint the eggs and for a better result coat the egg twice.

STEP 12  You can now paint on various designs to make your egg really creative.

STEP 13  You can now cut your eggs open, paint the inside and use them for your miniature diorama. Look online for inspiration and examples then create a unique one of kind of your own.