A collection of intricately decorated Easter eggs is displayed on a dark, gnarled branch. The eggs feature various patterns, including fan-like designs, floral motifs, and geometric shapes in colors like red, yellow, black, and white. The background is a textured, light-colored surface.

*Decorated Easter Eggs
by Ramute Plioplys*

*From the permanent
collection of the
Balzekas Museum*

***The
Lithuanian
Museum
Review***

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Photo by Audrius Plioplys

Ramute and Her Easter Eggs

Ramute was born in 1953 in Toronto, Canada. At the age of three, she contracted polio. The illness left her legs paralyzed for life. She moved with her family to Chicago in 1964. After graduating from the University of Chicago, she resided in Providence, Rhode Island for a few years. Subsequently, she lived for two years in Lithuania, under communist rule, where she studied Lithuanian linguistics at the University of Vilnius and pursued her interests in traditional folk art and customs. She frequently visited national museums to study examples of ancient Lithuanian folk art. To improve her skills, she sought out living folk artists in remote villages of Lithuania. She not only learned these styles of artistic expression, but she advanced and perfected them.

Polio has never stopped Ramute's life's journey and her active passion for art. She has shown her art works at several personal exhibits at the Balzekas Museum in Chicago, in addition to numerous art fairs in the Chicago area. A permanent display of her decorated eggs can be seen at the Balzekas Museum, 6500 S. Pulaski Rd., Chicago.

Besides her art work, she also had a passion for the Lithuanian language. For many years she taught Lithuanian language at the Lithuanian Pedagogical Institute, in Chicago, and translated several Lithuanian linguistic text books into English. In 2007, she unexpectedly passed away from a heart condition.

Dr. Audrius V. Plioplys

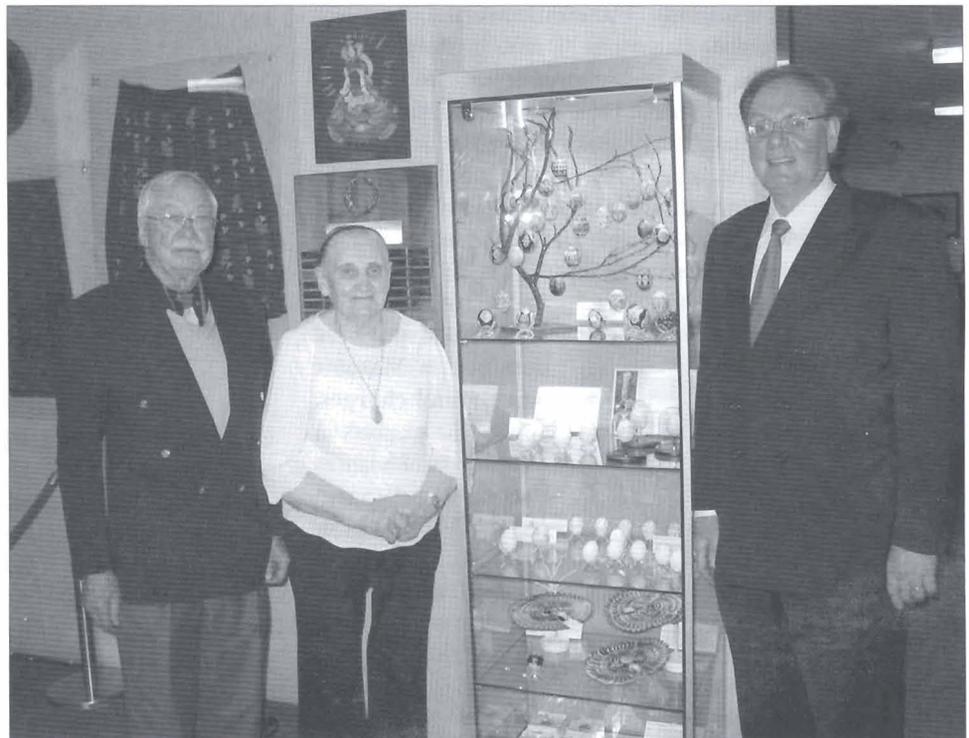
Ramute Plioplyte was a superb folk artist. As she had an avid interest in the stories about Sherlock Holmes, written by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and was very active in the South Downers, a Sherlock Holmes society, she advanced her art of egg decorating beyond the traditional Lithuanian design by creating a series of Sherlock Holmes Eggs. One of Doyle's stories was entitled "The Adventure of the Dancing Men" in which coded messages were written using dancing figures. Each distinct figure corresponded to a letter of the alphabet. In these decorated eggs, Ramute applied both the alphabetic and the encoded "Dancing Men" expressions. Or, is it possible that Ramute encoded a different message in the "Dancing Men"? Some of the "Dancing Men" patterns were issued in limited edition quantities. These decorated eggs were initialed and numbered by Ramute.



Photo by Audrius Plioplys

Ramute's Easter Egg collection, which included Easter Egg Tree, decorated eggs, etched and colored eggs, Sherlock Holmes eggs, birds, and drilled eggs, can be seen on permanent display at the Balzekas Museum of Lithuanian Culture. The collection was generously donated by Ramute's brother, Dr. Audrius Plioplys.

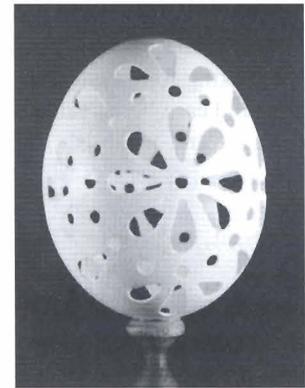
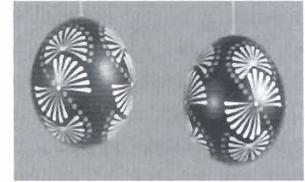
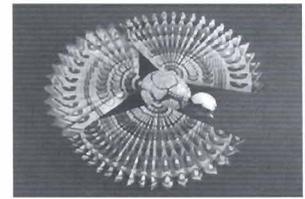
Pictured from left: Stanley Balzekas, Jr., Vincenta Plioplys, and Dr. Audrius Plioplys.



The egg has always been a main food staple for man and in ancient times it also acquired a deeper mystical significance. It was naturally regarded as the source of life and, therefore, came to be associated with many traditional Lithuanian folkloric customs. In earlier times in Lithuania, eggs were decorated and exchanged not only at Easter, but also on the feast of St. George and during Whitsuntide (Sekmines). The egg was believed to be a charm which offered protection against evil spirits, spells, accidents, sickness, death and other misfortunes. When eggs were colored and decorated, they were imbued with additional power and meaning. For example, the color red was believed to protect man from evil spirits. The patterns used to embellish the eggs symbolized the sun, moon, stars, love, devotion and more. Since decorated eggs were systematically collected in Lithuania for the first time only in the 19th century, the true meaning of the various patterns can now only be conjectured. However, these early collections reflect patterns which had been passed down from generation to generation and have very ancient roots. It is these patterns which serve as the basis for the designs that I have created.

In Lithuanian folklore, the bird has always played a very important role. By soaring in the heavens, it was seen as a mediator between the gods and man. By laying eggs, it was seen as the giver of life. Its ability to migrate and then return made the peasants view it as an intelligent creature not bound by earthly territorial boundaries and, in more recent time, it naturally came to symbolize freedom. All of this, and more, imbued the bird with a mythical significance which then found form in many aspects of Lithuanian folk art. One such expression is the hanging bird whose body is a decorated egg.

The Easter tree was traditional in certain regions of Lithuania. Branches of budding trees were collected in the springtime and then adorned with decorated hanging eggs. The eggs represented a heavenly divinity, while the budding branches symbolized an earthy one.



Photos by Audrius Plioplys

"With the availability of modern technology, I have found a new expression for the traditional wax patterns of Lithuanian decorated eggs by drilling the "tear drops" and "dots" into the delicate egg shells."
Ramute Plioplys

The Balzekas Museum of Lithuanian Culture invites you to view the marvelous and unique Easter Egg Collection by Ramute Plioplys. Teachers from Lithuanian Saturday schools from Chicago and its suburbs bring their students to the Museum to learn about Lithuanian culture and traditions. Pictured here are two students from the Maironis Lithuanian School of Lemont, Illinois, admiring the difficult technique of egg decorating by drilling delicate egg shells.

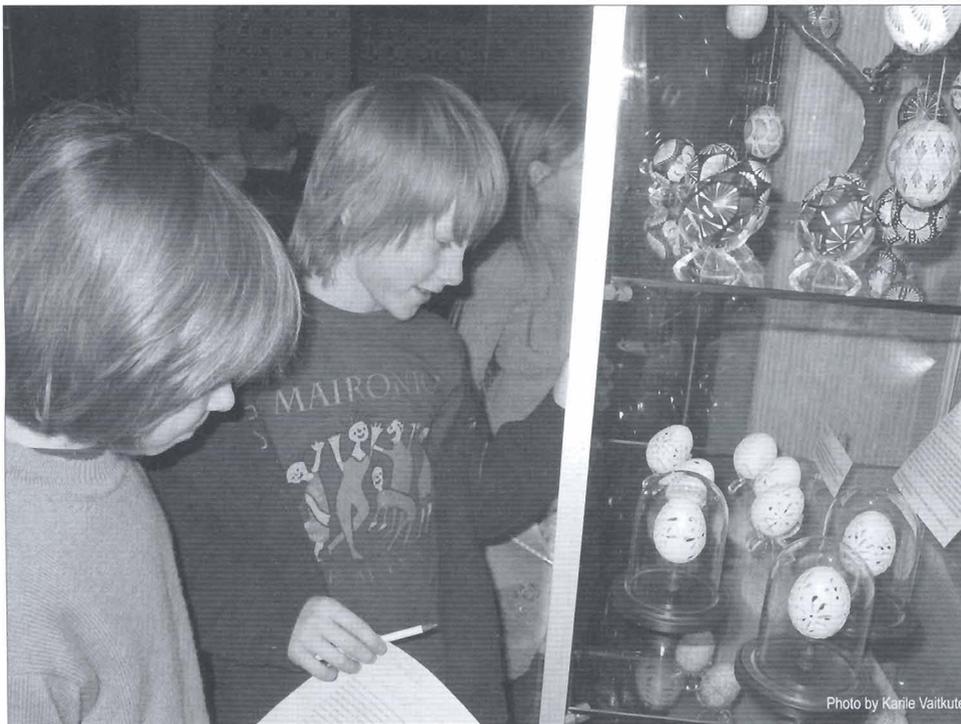


Photo by Karle Vaitkute



The Women's Guild of the Balzekas Museum of Lithuanian Culture

The members of the Women's Guild of the Balzekas Museum of Lithuanian Culture commemorated the 90th Anniversary of Lithuanian Independence on March 2, 2008.

Mrs. Mary Krauchunas and Dr. Audrius Plioplys were key speakers at the event. Dr. Audrius Plioplys spoke of his late sister, Ramute Plioplys' art of Easter egg decorating.

Patriciaca Kamar, Kathleen Guzauskas, and Emma Petraitis served on the Event Committee.



From left: Scottie Zukas (President), Irene Norbut, Emma Petraitis, Kathleen Guzauskas, and Patricia Kamar.



Women's Guild 40th Anniversary Dinner Committee. From left: Irene Norbut, Erika Brooks, Kathleen Guzauskas (C-Chair), Irene Buchinder, Mary Krauchunas, Emma Petraitis, Sophia Zukas (President). Missing Loretta Gestautas (Co-Chair). 40th Anniversary will be celebrated on April 20, 2008.



All photos by Rita Janz

From left: Scottie Zukas (President), Vincenta Plioplys, Mary Krauchunas, and Dr. Audrius Plioplys.



Stanley Balzekas, Jr., Loretta Gestautas, Elmar Blaumais, and Scottie Zukas (president).



From left: Astrida Pauperas, Aldona Olis, Erika Brooks, Irena Norbut, Marija Kapacinskas, Vilhelmina Kilikauskas, Patricia Kamar (Vice-President).



THE WOMEN'S GUILD
OF THE
BALZEKAS MUSEUM OF LITHUANIAN CULTURE

Cordially invites you and your friends to join them in a
COMMEMORATION OF LITHUANIAN'S INDEPENDENCE

Sunday, March 2nd, 2008
Balzekas Museum of Lithuanian Culture
6500 South Pulaski Road
Chicago, IL 60629

1:00 P. M.

Edward Mankus Audio Visual Room
1st Level

Program Commentaries

Mary Krauchunas
Dr. Audrius Plioplys

Followed by gathering in the Museum's Women's guild Room for opening of exhibit of the late Philologist and Folk Artist Ramutė Plioplytė's uniquely decorated Lithuanian Easter Eggs. Dr. Plioplys has provided an impressive showcase collection of his sister's artistic talent.

Refreshments and socializing in the Amber Room on the 2nd Level

Committee

Patricia Kamar
Kathleen Gužauskas
Emma Petraitis





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News

Sherlock Holmes inspired 'Dancing Men' eggs gifted to museum

A stunning set of decorated eggs inspired by Sherlock Holmes and created by a USA expert in folk art has been donated to Portsmouth's City Museum and Records Office.



During her life Ramute Plioplys perfected techniques of Lithuanian decorated eggs (Easter eggs) despite being disabled through contracting polio as a child. A great Sherlock Holmes fan, Ramute was a member of the South Downers in Chicago, one of the many American Sherlock Holmes societies, and an expert in the Lithuanian language and culture.

As part of her artistic work Ramute created a series of Dancing Men eggs based on one of Doyle's stories 'The Adventure of the Dancing Men', in which messages were written using dancing figures and each distinct figure corresponded to a letter of the alphabet.

Ramute died in 2007 and her brother Audrius Plioplys, a renowned neurologist and artist in the USA, got in touch with Portsmouth's City Museum to offer a set of the decorated

eggs for display. The Conan Doyle exhibition ' A Study In Sherlock: Uncovering the Arthur Conan Doyle Collection' is on permanent display at the City Museum.

Katy Ball from the city council's museums service said: "These eggs are very special and were made by a well known artist in the USA as a result of her keen interest in Sherlock Holmes.

"We feel honoured that Ramute's brother Audrius has donated these to our collection and hope that they will generate a lot of interest at the City Museum when they go on display later this year."

Websites with more information

www.portsmouthcitymuseums.co.uk

<http://ramute-pliedys.com>

www.plioplys.com

Date : 20 February 2008