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Nesting Dolls – Discover the Fun and Popularity of This Form of Folk Art [by Nicole Brown](#)

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Vasily Zvyozdochkin carved them from the designs of a folk painter by the name of Sergey Malyutin. They were first shown at the Paris World Exhibition and surprisingly, the newly created toy earned a third place finish.

This of course put nesting dolls or Matryoshka dolls in the spotlight. Many artists became inspired to start making these dolls in many regions throughout Russia.

What exactly are nesting dolls?

They are simply many dolls of decreasing size that are carved and decorated from a block of wood. They are made to fit inside one another from largest to smallest. These figures are cylindrical with a round top at the head and then tapering at the bottom of each figure. There are no legs or arms, except for those that might be painted on the figure itself.

Traditionally, the largest one is a female or matryoshka, which a literally means “little matron”. All of the others can be either a male or female with the last one usually being a child. In recent years, themes have gone away from that tradition.

Interestingly, the inspiration behind these toys originated from Japan. Zvyozdochkin and Malyutin were deeply inspired by the Honshu doll, which took on a similar form and portrayed old Buddhist monks.

Many people really love them because of the many themes that are created. Not only are they great Russian toys, many people collect and search for all the many different themes that are created.

For example, the traditional doll is usually a peasant girl in a dress. However, several artists in this day and age have created many different styles and themes for different occasions. Some of the more common themes are religious, Easter, Christmas, floral, caricatures of famous politicians as well as animal collections.

Also, there are even figures themed after athletes, musicians, astronauts, and movie stars. As you can see, it can be quite fun to find and collect all of these different types of nesting dolls.

These toys have remained very popular, but since the nineties, not as many have been made. This of course makes them even more sought out after and if you're a collector, they can become more valuable overtime.

The real reason for such popularity are the detailed art work painted on each and every one of them. During the early years, more detail was given to the figure's faces more than the clothes. In recent years, artists have gone into much more detail in regards to the whole figurine. Regardless, it's been the detailed expressions that have won the hearts of children and adults, making these very popular toys and keepsakes.

Folk art has always been a very important style in the past and present Russian culture. This type of art is a major part of that tradition even to this day.

In conclusion, nesting dolls are both fun for the kids as well as adults. The fascination of many figures placed into each other in combination with the beautiful artistry and craftsmanship, still make them a popular toy for all.

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