The bright colors, distinctive shapes, and the imaginative concepts of the matryoshka nesting doll have delighted children and adults alike for over a century. The dolls are recognized around the world as the quintessential Russian souvenir. When pulled apart, the matryoshka spills out smaller figures; each is smaller until the tiniest one appears as if it were the mother doll’s youngest child.

The Russian Nesting doll was born at the end of the 19th century during a time when Russian artists were shifting their focus from European influence and were instead trying to create works of art that better reflected everyday Russians. This is perhaps why Sergey Malyutin, a folk artist from the Abramtsevo workshop, designed the first doll to resemble typical Russian peasants. It was fabricated by Vasilii Zydochkin from the Children’s Education Workshop in Sergiev Posad and quickly became emblematic of Russian culture when it was exhibited at the Paris World Fair in 1900.

Though the stacking doll is most closely associated with Russia, this collection tells a story of the nesting doll which extends well beyond the well-known Russian dolls of the 20th century. The earliest nesting dolls were crafted both in Russian and Japanese workshops, leading to much debate over where the tradition officially started. Toy makers from Poland, India, China, and the world over were inspired by the success of the Russian dolls and began manufacturing their own versions.
Programs: Museum staff are available for staff/volunteer training, lectures, gallery talks, and other programming. Additional fees, including travel costs. Availability depends on a mutually agreeable schedule.

Bookings: Flexible schedule

Fee: $5,000, not including shipping or insurance. Contact us for details.

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