

SHADOW

Box



As an art doll artist, I have been creating one-of-a-kind art dolls for nearly 25 years. Much of my work is on a larger scale, usually measuring 18" (456mm) tall or larger.

In recent years, I was struck with the idea of combining my two favourite things, doll making and miniatures.

My dolls have been featured in many USA doll related publications including *Art Doll Quarterly* and *Contemporary Doll Collector* magazines.

Right from childhood I have been intrigued by little things...dolls and their houses, toys, figurines and the like. I would spend hours playing in this tiny world. Today, even though I make a living teaching workshops on creating larger scale art dolls, my interest in miniature things continues.

Incorporating the doll(s) within a box actually opened up a wide range of possibilities. This idea is not new, but, for me, the challenge was just too good to resist! I found I was able to do interesting things with scale, depth, and perspective. I could manipulate not only the physical space of the piece but almost capture a moment in time. Here, I hope to offer you some design tips and a close-up look at my process for creating my one-of-a-kind shadow boxes.

First, decide on scale

One can always follow the normal scenario, with the doll and its surroundings all in the same

proportional scale. I have done this often and have always been happy with the results.

Things become more interesting, however, when you play with the scale; the doll can be made a larger scale with all its surroundings made to appear smaller. The opposite, of course, will offer a whole new take on the scene; a tiny doll, surrounded by enormous objects, can make her appear vulnerable in her surroundings. For this project, and for practical purposes, I chose to keep the main figures all within the same scale.

Second, consider perspective

Decide on your focal point and look for ways to draw the eye to what lies beyond and outside that point. A doll perched on a three dimensional wall seems to come alive when the wall is painted to appear to be receding into the background of your box. This forces the viewer's eye to look past the focal point. For this project, the tree is the obvious focal point. But the tiny painted bunny walking along the path catches the viewer's eye

and expands the scene beyond the focal point. The trees and farm scenes painted in the corners of the box further extend the scene by unifying all walls. The surrounding sky broadens their little world scene further.

Third and finally, consider depth

This is an opportunity to create magic, to capture the viewer's attention and really draw them in. The background scenes you choose to create coax the viewer into believing that the scene extends well beyond the mere four walls of the box. In other words, blurring the lines of demarcation is key to the success of the piece. For this project, I have placed the Doctor and his young patient in the foreground; this offers a glimpse of the far-reaching hills behind them.

It goes without saying that scale, perspective, and depth are present in all shadow boxes, but by deciding beforehand which aspects to accentuate or downplay, one can transform a simple box into a work of art.

With each box I create, I try mix

up the perspective a bit to keep things interesting. I find it's a fun way to share with the viewer the various whimsical scenarios I've envisioned in my mind's eye!

Materials Required

- 8" x 10"
- Wooden shadow box
- Wood primer
- Wood glue and crackle medium or similar product
- Ivory house paint
- Aleene's tacky glue
- Premier light weight stone clay by LaDoll (www.miniworlddolls.com) (air dry clay)
- Howard citrus shield paste wax (www.howardproducts.com) or similar product
- Assorted craft paints including 2 shades of green, light brown and light blue
- Assorted scrap fabrics
- Paint brushes
- Light brown wax furniture polish



The Box

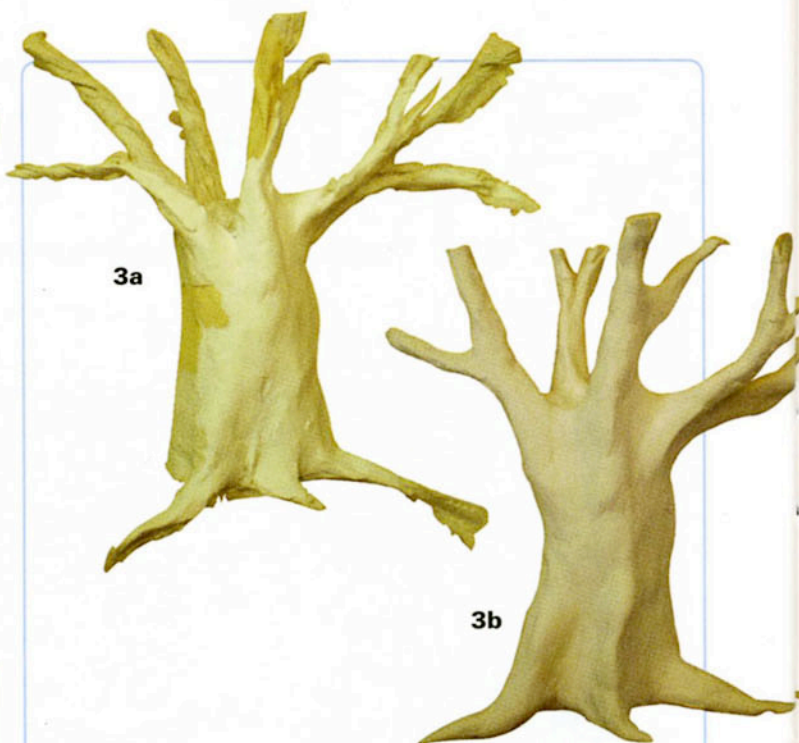


Step 1

Coat the inside of the box with primer, making sure to seal all joints inside the box. A second coat may be necessary if wood is heavily striated.

Photo 2a

Next paint the sky with two coats of light blue letting each coat dry thoroughly. Then begin to lay down your basic landscape theme, in this case, I have chosen sloping hills, applying two coats one in each of the shades of green, highlighting some areas with light brown paint. **Photos 2b, 2c, 2d**



Step 2

Now the fun begins. Next, cut a tree shape out of an empty toilet tissue roll, and glue torn and rolled up tissue for the branches.

Photo 3a Using air-drying clay, begin to layer the tree with the clay. After allowing ample drying time, I add a second layer forming the branches and giving the trunk more detail. **Photo 3b** Allow the tree to dry over night and then using brown paint add the final details.

Photo 3c



Make sure that all the details on your pieces look good from all angles. When closely inspected, you do not want the viewer to be disappointed by unpainted or unfinished areas.

TOP TIP

Step 3

Now you can model your characters for the scene using air drying clay. **Photo 4a** When they are completely dry you can paint them as you wish. **Photo 4b**

When dry glue them in their final positions in the box. **Photo 4c** Touch up the paint where needed and make final adjustments.

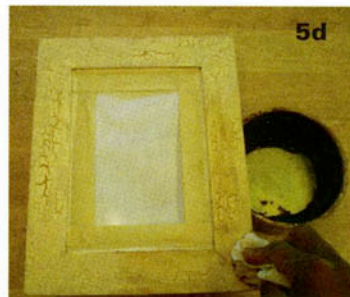
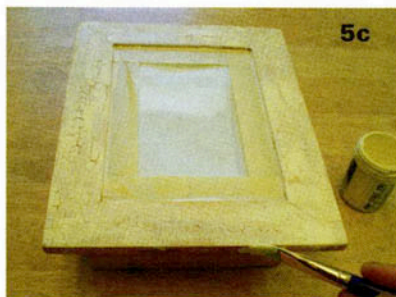
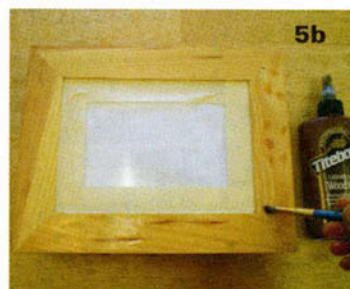


Step 4

Cover the box opening and the glass lid with protective paper. **Photo 5a** Now apply the crackle medium to the entire box.

Photo 5b When dry, apply cream colour paint and watch as the crackle finish takes effect. **Photo 5c**

I allow a minimum of two days drying time before applying the paste wax as a finish coat. This is rubbed lightly on the surface paint as well as into the crack until I get the desired rich, aged patina. **Photo 5d**



6a

As Peter squirmed in his seat, Dr. O'Hare reminded him, once again, the importance of eating one's carrots.

Step 5

Finally, if you wish, add your signature distressed story tag and ribbon, **Photo 6a**, and your shadow box is complete.

Main image



Lillian's work was featured in last month's January issue 199. To order this issue go to

www.dollhousemag.co.uk
or call 01778 392007.

Information

Lillian Alberti lives in New York State where she creates full scale one-of-a-kind (OOAK) art dolls as well as OOAK shadow boxes. She is a member of the AMA (Association of Miniature Artists; non typical format) and as well as other doll related organisations. You can see more of her work on her website:

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