Make an Altered Box with Mou Saha

Chapter 1 - Altered Box

Overview

(bright music) - Hi, my name is Mou Saha. I'm a mixed media artist and Creativebug contest winner. I'm also an avid art journaler, and I like work on loose sheets to create my pages. You may wonder, how does she keep those loose individual sheets organized? I approach that in three different ways. Either I start with a box and I make my pages fit, or I make my pages first and then create a storage to go with it. In this class, I'll show you how to alter a plain papier-mache book box into something really magical to hold those individual finished pages. I'll transform this box using collages, paint, reverse stencil, splatter, dry brush, gild, and create a booklet for my title. You will see how fun it is to transform a plain paper box using all the same techniques you learned in art journaling. (inspiring music)

Materials

- Let's start by looking at the supplies. I have a paper-mache box here. This one is in the shape of a book. You can use any paper-mache box for this. No matter what kind of a box you choose, make sure that you trim your paper to fit inside the box. Mine are trimmed quarter inch less than the size of the box all the way around. I have drawn a bookplate for you here. You can also draw your own. This is going to be in the class PDF. I have some found papers here, some old book pages, tissue paper, corrugated cardboard. I have a palette, stamps, a permanent ink, some acrylic paints, Gelatos Colors. This is Texture Gems, paper towel, baby wipe, some stencils, paint brushes, a water cup filled with water, a Texture Card for spreading the gesso, you can also use an old credit card, some gesso, blending foam, gel medium, and scissors.

Prepare and collage box

- I'll begin by coating my papier-mache box with gesso. The gesso is gonna prime the porous surface, which means it will accept the paint better. The paints are gonna dry bright as well because not so much of the pigment will sink into the porous surface of the box. Now, because this is a flat area, I can use the texture card. But when I go into the smaller areas, I will switch to a paintbrush because the card will be too big for those areas. I'm using a paintbrush in these areas. Be sure to cover every surface of your box. You will need to cover every bit of your papier-mache box with gesso like I did over here. Before you can move on to the next step, make sure your gesso is completely dry. Next step, I am going to collage some found papers. I have old book pages, security envelopes, some embossed paper. Any kind of found paper will do. I also have some die cut. I think that is gonna look nice over here. And even some scrapbook paper. I like to tear them up in small pieces, play around with the arrangement, and when I like it, I am gonna attach them with gel medium. Now, gel medium is conventionally used to blend and extend paints, but I'm gonna use it for attaching my collage pieces and sealing them in place. (paper rips) I am staying mostly along the edges of my box because I have different plans for the center of the box. I like how this looks. Now I'm gonna attach these pieces with some gel medium. I'm applying the gel medium directly to the book surface. And this is a soft matte gel medium. And I am also going to seal these little elements in place with a top coat of gel medium because I do not want the corners to lift when I paint later. Because these papers are all different thicknesses, I think the gel medium is going to sort

of unify them and help them stand up to more weight layers later. Because these papers are all various different thicknesses, the gel medium helps to unify them and prepare them for subsequent wet layers. The collage layer is really about adding some texture and pattern. You could collage any papers you like. Just let this dry before we move on to the next step.

Adding paint
- Now I'm going to add a layer of colors. I love bright colors, so I have chosen these acrylic paints and I am just gonna brush them on. The only thing that you need to remember for this layer is that to not cover up the patterns that are from the collage layer, we want them to peak through a little bit. I am applying my paint directly, I'm just squirting it out here. And moving the color around with the paintbrush. You can see how the texture from the collage layer is catching that paint. If you don't like how a certain color is looking on your box, you could just wipe it off. The gel medium that you applied in the earlier stage is gonna help you get that color off very easily. I'm gonna open up the box and also do part of the back with this color. You can also use your texture card. There are really no rules to adding color, just do what you like. Your choice of colors and how you apply them. Once the outside of the box is dry, I can open it up and color the inside. For coloring the inside I'm gonna just stick with one color. This is the teal, light teal I have here. And I'm just gonna color all of the inside with the paintbrush. I'm carefully painting the bottom side of the box. After I'm done with this part I am going to color the part where the book pages go with a neutral color. You get some colors on the book surface, just wipe it with a baby wipe. Now I'm going to color the bok edge of the box. For that I have some brown paint here and I want it a little lighter. So I'm gonna mix it with some white acrylic paint and just brush that on. Any time you have a color that's not light enough, just add some white paint to it. If you have ever noticed, book pages are rarely pure white. So it's a good idea to make them look a little brownish, light tan. The box is starting to look really great and we are gonna add the focal point next.

Adding Dimension
- Since this is a book box, I want it to look like a book. For that, I have a bookplate drawn out here. You can draw your own, of course, and you can download this one from the class PDF. And I have one that I have already cut out. You just have to cut inside and outside and it needs to look just like frame. And I am going to attach that at about the center of my book box with gel medium. The bookplate may look like a coloring page and you may want to color it before you attach it, but I like to just cut it out as is, black and white, and then add the colors when it's on the box itself. Right now I am adding gel medium to the back of it. You can also apply gel medium to your box and put that down. Either way, it works. I'm gonna center it roughly and press down. Because this is just a printer paper, which is very lightweight, I'm gonna seal it with a topcoat of gel medium just so it can stand up to my next layer of colors. Because this is a clear gel medium, it's gonna dry clear and you're not gonna see any of this. So you can be generous with it. As you can se, I'm applying the gel medium actually in front of the whole box because otherwise it creates a little difference in the sheen of the box. Once the box is completely dry, you can go in and add colors. For that, I'm gonna use some Gelatos. Gelato are water-soluble pigment sticks that come in this twistable Chap Stick-like tubes and you can blend them dry or wet. I'm just gonna rub it on. And as you can see, I'm not following the regular colors of a flower and leaf here. You could do that or you could do what I am doing because I do not like that stark black and white contrasting against that color. So I'm going to keep rubbing my Gelatos here. I'm not only coloring the bookplate itself, I'm also coloring around it

because it will help me with the next step. You can see how the colors catch on that texture that I have from the collage layer. And now I am gonna use a blending foam to blend those colors. And it's dry. I'm going to blend this dry. I'm using a blending foam. You could definitely use your own fingers. Let me show you how it works when I do it with the finger. Now that this is done, I'm gonna go onto my next step. I'm gonna place a stencil over here and do something what we usually don't do. Usually we add more colors or texture over a stencil, but today I'm gonna do just the opposite. I'm gonna take a baby wipe and wipe through my stencil. I'm gonna move this up a little, match up the design, and keep going. And if at any point I feel I do not have the colors that I need, I can just go back in, add some more color and repeat. Having that top coat of gel medium definitely helps to move the colors around a bit easier. And I'm going to continue coloring the rest of the box with Gelatos down the spine and on the back and reverse stenciling. (lighthearted music) Our book now needs a title. I'm gonna add mine with some stamps and permanent ink. You could use alphabet stickers or hand write them. I don't worry too much about my letters all lining up in one straight line, but if you like that look, use a ruler. I'm gonna add a touch of gold to my book. If you can see, I have these ribbed edges on my spine. I am going to squeeze out some texture gel here. For this you could use any gold paint really. And just put little dots on it and then just go on with our finger. I'm going to add a little more. If your book box doesn't come with these raised ribs, you could always do this step by drawing lines with a ruler and a pencil and then just fill it in with some gold paint. It will get a pretty similar look. And I might just add a little more on the front too, just touches here and there. Using those embossed pieces really come in handy with this step when the gold catches on those raised edges. You don't want to overdo it. So I'm gonna stop right about here.

Creating a focal point and finishing
- This is the step where my box is going to really start to look like a book. What I'm gonna do is dry brush some acrylic paint. It's a little darker shade than the one that we did earlier. And I'm just going to drag that paint across so it starts to look a little like book pages. I'm using a pretty rough brush. I think we all have a few of those when we forgot to wash them after using, and the paint dried on them. So don't throw those brushes away. They are very handy for things like this. And I am using no water, and just dragging across. (brush scraping) It is better to use less color than to use a lot of color and not being able to remove the color. So better to use less and add slowly. (brush tapping) Let's not forget about the inside of the book. A real quick way of adding interest to the inside of the book would be to splatter paints. For that I have squeezed out some acrylic paints in my palette. I'm going to dilute it slightly with water and tap on the brush handle. We do not want to splatter the same color, a lot of the same color, in one spot because we are going to use other colors. You will notice that I'm pulling the same colors that I used on the outside of the box for the inside. That just keeps things consistent. I'm moving into my second color. And you can see how quickly that surface is filling up. And you get to decide how much paint you want to splatter in your book, or how blank you want to leave it. But I kinda like to get to all the corners. And I think we have got plenty of splatters over here. This is the finished box. What a difference from the plain box that we started with. All I did was add some collage layers, some colors, and look at it now. And a box this size, it's gonna fit 20 plus pages inside. And here's another one that I did. The same basic steps but a different color palette, more monochromatic. I filled in the flowers a little more in detail and the inside also is splattered. You can also make your storage to fit your finished pages, like I did this envelope here. It's a super-simple fabric envelope that I sewed out of fabric that I dyed. I sewed a couple of buttons on and I can just close it like this and here's one more container. There's no reason

why the containers that hold your your individual pages cannot be just as beautiful. Keep playing with the same techniques to transform any plain box, any plain container, or make your own.