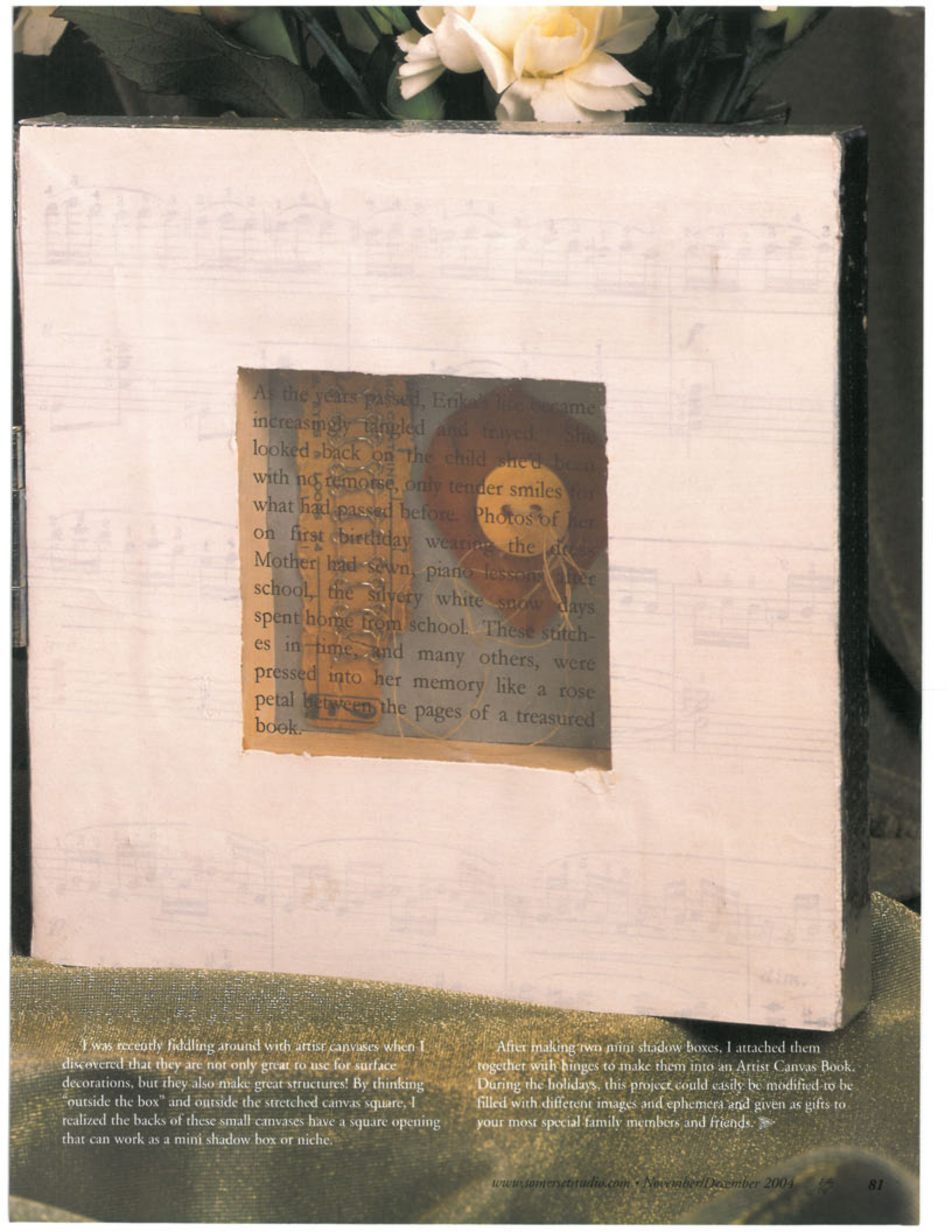




# ARTIST CANVAS BOOK

by Melody M. Nuñez



As the years passed, Erika's life became increasingly tangled and frayed. She looked back on the child she'd been with no remorse, only tender smiles for what had passed before. Photos of her on first birthday wearing the dress Mother had sewn, piano lessons after school, the silvery white snow days spent home from school. These stitches in time, and many others, were pressed into her memory like a rose petal between the pages of a treasured book.

I was recently fiddling around with artist canvases when I discovered that they are not only great to use for surface decorations, but they also make great structures! By thinking "outside the box" and outside the stretched canvas square, I realized the backs of these small canvases have a square opening that can work as a mini shadow box or niche.

After making two mini shadow boxes, I attached them together with hinges to make them into an Artist Canvas Book. During the holidays, this project could easily be modified to be filled with different images and ephemera and given as gifts to your most special family members and friends. ❧



## TOOLS & MATERIALS

- Gesso
- Scissors
- Ephemera
- Mica tiles
- Paintbrush
- Tissue paper
- Cotton balls
- Silver gel pen
- Tracing wheel
- Sharp craft knife
- Metallic rub-ons
- Ink pads (Fresco)
- Sheet music
- Silver hinge & screws
- Silver tape (3/4" width)
- Brown chipboard stencils
- 3M Universal Transparency Film
- Art canvas (two 6" x 6" pre-stretched and pre-gessoed)
- Adhesives (glue stick, glue dots, gel medium, double-stick tape)

## TECHNIQUE

Begin by preparing the fronts of the canvases, which will become the front and back covers of the book. Cover the front and side edges of each canvas with a glue stick or gel medium, and cover with a piece of white tissue paper that was previously crumpled then smoothed flat. NOTE: The tissue doesn't have to be perfectly smooth — a slightly "loose" application will provide more visual interest when inked. Trim off any excess.

When dry, rub the front and sides with an inkpad (Sistine Sky by Fresco). Rub lightly to start, and build the color up to a desired level, keeping in mind that you'll apply a layer of white gesso to soften the color. Add light accents with two contrasting ink pads here and there.

Next, rub a layer of white gesso onto the front of each canvas with a cotton ball. Take care not to completely cover the original color — just a light coat to mute it down a tad. Do not put gesso on the sides, as they'll later be covered with metal tape. When dry, place the canvases canvas-face down. Rub a layer of white gesso on the inside "frame" of the niche — the area that will be your mini shadow box.

Prepare the inside page liners that will cover the exposed wood and stapled canvas by brushing slightly watered down gesso over vintage sheet music. Brush on additional layers of gesso until the notes are faintly seen, allowing the paper to dry in between applications. Save a piece of this gessoed music for the book's cover collage.

Once dry, trace the canvas onto the prepared music sheets and cut down to size. Use a sharp craft knife and cut a hole in the centers of the sheets, along the inner edges of the wood. Set aside.

Compose mini collages in the two niches using collage elements of your choice, and adhesives that work best for the elements.

Type up a story or other text on the computer — fitting it within a text box slightly smaller than your niche/wood opening. Print this text out onto 3M Universal Transparency Film, using the side that's appropriate for your printer. Trim the film, leaving at

least a 1" border around the text. Center the text over the niche, and attach to the wood with strong double-stick tape or glue dots. Use double-stick tape to cover both windows with pieces of mica that are at least 1" larger than the opening on each side. Glue down the prepared inside liner music pages using gel medium, making sure all the exposed wood and canvas are covered.

Join the two canvases together with a silver hinge. Attach the screws to the openings of the hinge with a screwdriver, centering the hinge along the "spine" of the book.

Cover all sides of the canvas with 3/4" silver tape. NOTE: Silver tape comes in varying widths to accommodate varying canvas widths. When you come to the side with the hinge on it,

carefully cut off enough of the tape so that the hinge plates are covered but the moving parts of the hinge

remain exposed. Burnish the metal tape with a bone folder. Run a tracing wheel (used in sewing) along the metal taped sides to create indentations and to give them texture.

Finally, create a collage on the cover of the book. Tear an irregular square of gessoed sheet music; apply silver metallic rub-ons to the edges. Glue down with gel medium. Punch out letters from alphabet stencils. Treat the brown chipboard stencils with white gesso and the Fresco ink colors you used earlier, dabbing the colors lightly and randomly from your fingertips. Trace the edges of the letters with a silver gel pen, then glue down. Use glue dots to attach antique buttons. ❀

*Photographer, writer, and mixed-media artist Melody M. Nuñez resides in Orange, California. View more of her work by visiting [www.melodynunez.com](http://www.melodynunez.com).*

