



Transparent Love

by Melody M. Nuñez

I love this photo of my maternal grandparents, Neva and Lloyd Laycook, and have wanted to use this wedding photo as the basis for an art project for a long time. They didn't wear elaborate wedding finery, just a nice dress and suit. However, you can tell from the way they looked at each other that all they needed and wanted was each other. Their wedding was simple, just a trip to the Justice of the Peace, but their marriage endured until my grandfather died in 1968.

Working with transparencies allowed me to create a piece that's simple, yet layered and unique. I used a photo from their special day, incorporated my grandmother's writing from the back of the photo, and made the text into a collage element. Not only did I print the photo and text box on transparency film, but also treated a sheet of transparency film with gesso to create a framing piece that tops the entire composition.

TOOLS & MATERIALS

- Awl
- Glue dots
- Fabric trim
- White gesso
- Masking tape
- Paper trimmer
- Needle & thread
- Vintage buttons
- Metallic rub-ons
- Double-stick tape
- Two artist canvases
- Metallic gold marker
- One sheet decorative 12"x12" paper
- Computer, scanner, & ink-jet printer
- Multipurpose transparency film (three sheets)

TECHNIQUE

Take one artist canvas and lay it canvas surface down. This is the area that will be filled with your collage, and should be referenced when sizing your photo and laying out your design. Cut the stretched canvas fabric off the second canvas, leaving just the wood frame that will resemble a window. Place this frame on top of the first canvas. These two pieces stacked together will allow you to use more layers in your creation.

Next, scan your photo and print onto transparency film and trim. Scan writing or text and also print onto transparency film and trim. Leave blank space in all four corners of the text box, where you'll sew buttons on, later in the process. Trim this piece and edge with a metallic marker.

Cut patterned paper to the size of the back opening of your artist canvas and adhere. Save patterned paper scraps and cut them into strips to form the border along the top of your collage. Attach photo transparency to background paper/base using double-stick tape along the two sides, but not the top and bottom. The painted gesso frame will cover the faint traces of the double-stick tape when the piece is assembled. Choose your patterned paper carefully, as the paper's design will show through the photo. You may want to apply gesso on areas of the paper that faces will appear on.

Attach fabric trim or ribbon along the top and bottom of the photo using narrow double-stick tape. Attach a vintage button along bottom center of the photo. Sew a vintage button onto each corner of text box with coordinating thread. Make the initial holes for this stitching with an awl. Stretch the text box across the center of your collage, using additional thread that's looped under each button and attached to the nearest side with very sticky tape.

Make the canvas bottom with the photo and paper on it and the top frame piece into one by adhering together. Once the two pieces are joined, tape them together by covering the edges with multiple layers of masking tape.

Take a blank piece of transparency film and place it on top of the layout. Make light markings to note how far in the gesso frame should extend, then move to a surface covered with paper towels. Loosely paint gesso onto your transparency sheet, and let dry. This "frame" should come in from the paper border approximately 1/2". Center this gessoed sheet on your wooden frame's top, and adhere. Attach patterned paper strips along the top edges, covering all unfinished edges. ✦

Melody M. Nuñez lives in Irvine, California. To learn more about her work, visit www.melodynunez.com.