



TREASURES IN TINS:

My Artful Memories Challenge

BY JACK RAVI

While many mixed-media artists I know have a deep affection for collecting art supplies, my heart belongs to found objects. They are my true art supplies, gathered and cherished with love. There is a profound joy in this endless hunt and an acceptance that I have already gathered more than I could ever hope to use in a single lifetime. Yet, this abundance also surrounds me with beauty that offers endless inspiration.

Among my treasures, found photos are one of my main obsessions and a favorite element in my art. They allow me to write my own connections with the people, imagine their stories, invent their dreams, and create my own narratives around them.

When Jane Chipp and I wrote “Artful Memories: How to Create Unique Art With Old Photographs,” we wanted to inspire our readers to form their own connections with their photos, and we even encouraged naming the individuals in the photos. To further this vision, we started the Artful Memories Challenge on Instagram, which, unlike conventional challenges offering single-word prompts, offers a seedling of story to inspire visual storytelling. Every year we curate a list of short stories, blending dreamy scenarios with historical contexts, imagining different lands and diverse names, all designed to spark creativity. ►

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The library was Xavier's special place.



Olaf was determined to travel the world in his own unique way.



Miles constantly demanded perfection; it didn't end well.



Farrah revolutionized the industry with her daring fashion designs.



Three years into this challenge, it is clear that this approach to storytelling resonates deeply with the participants because it engages the mind and stirs the heart. For most art challenges, I find it helpful to choose a consistent substrate that feels comfortable and exciting; it offers me a solid structure to play within. This year, my chosen vessels were vintage tins — one of my loves — collected and stacked all over my studio. These tins, once used for pipe tobacco or pills and often repurposed for bolts and screws, are weathered by time and rich with history. They carry marks, tape, handwritten notes, and signs of their journeys. I love to think that stories inspire stories, so starting a piece of art with an old object has an innate element of meaning and depth.

On the bustling streets of New York City, Jamal painted murals that seemed to come alive.



Tova could speak many languages but was struck silent in the presence of her secret love.



The only rule of the Artful Memories Challenge is to use found photos, so I knew each tin had to contain at least one photo but sometimes more. I bound and sealed most photos with encaustic medium, which gives them a silky and precious feel. I then added objects, finds, and words to tell my stories. Interpreting a prompt is a dance: I try to avoid being too literal but also too conceptual. These stories are but fragments. They are relics of the past. They offer a glimpse. They carry the beauty of impermanence. ►



I think the first tin I made this year was for day one, but I generally don't follow the order. I like to start with prompts that excite me or give me an instant idea, going through my collection of photos repeatedly, selecting those perfect for specific stories or more neutral ones that can fit various prompts. I then gather my objects, make notes on a sketchbook, and start working on multiple tins.

Working on a series always brings me into that flow state where every surface in the studio is covered by work in progress, with tins and photos everywhere, drying, soaking, sleeping, or sitting together to see if they speak to each other. It's beauty and creative chaos at its finest.

Hester understood the crows, and they watched over her.



Levi's soulful voice could melt the hardest of hearts.

*... found photos
are one of my
main obsessions ...*

Leif stumbled upon a hidden portal that would change the course of history.



Ivan died happy on Valentine's Day.

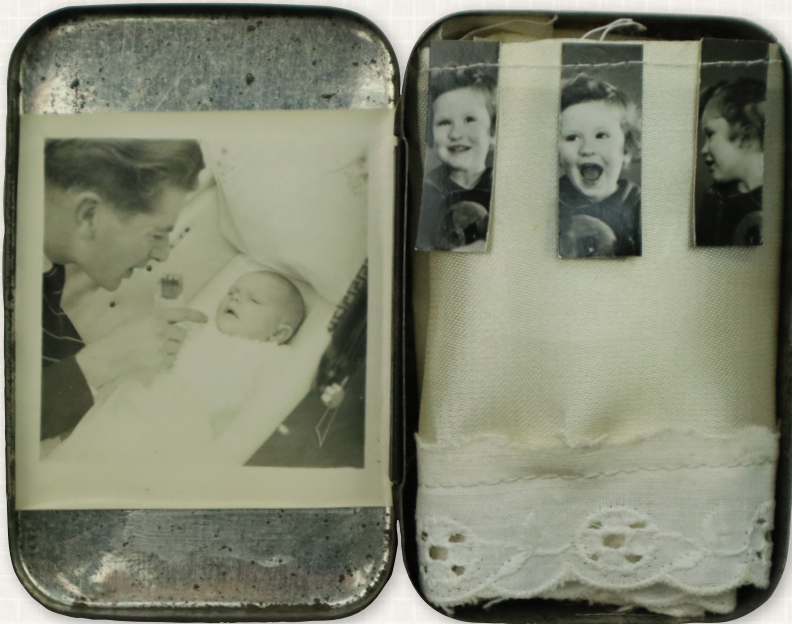


Some of my favorite elements incorporated inside the tins this year were a found bird skull that I covered in words, a house entirely made out of blue shards, a fabric scroll held by a limpet, a vial of petals arranged by rainbow color, a wishbone carefully stitched to canvas, chocolate molds cradling photos, a spinning carved jade bead, mica sheets, tiny frames, vintage jewelry, embroidery threads, and more found objects. ►



Juniper cultivated a garden of magical plants to heal physical and emotional wounds.

Pavel struggled to balance his passion for music with his responsibilities as a father.



*... starting a piece
of art with an old
object has an innate
element of meaning
and depth.*



Ingrid the painter searched for inspiration in the beauty and solitude of the northern wilderness.



Each tin, tenderly crafted, feels precious and thoughtful, fitting comfortably in the palm of a hand, offering a tactile experience similar to reading a miniature artist's book.

This eclectic and eccentric gathering of characters celebrates all of the poets, musicians, storytellers, collectors of beauty, artisans, dreamers, seekers, and misfits.

The next Artful Memories Challenge is in April 2025 and prompts are published on Instagram and on artfulmemoriesbook.com/challenge, where you can also find the prompts from previous challenges.

Jack Ravi is a found photos artist and mixed-media storyteller. He is the author of the book "Artful Memories: How to Create Unique Art With Old Photographs." Jack lives, dreams, and teaches in Scotland, UK. You can see more of his work on Instagram (@jackravi) and you can find his classes at jackravi.com/classes.



Vintage DITTY BOXES

BY PATTY WOOTTON



A ditty box is a receptacle for odds and ends, especially used by fishermen and sailors. The small wooden boxes housed personal items, such as needles and thread, a comb, soap, razors, utensils, and keepsakes like pictures and letters. I was inspired to create my own version while watching an episode of “Antiques Roadshow” in which an appraiser evaluated a small vintage box that he referred to as a “ditty box.” Intrigued by this new term, I immediately started developing ideas for small boxes of my own that would evoke the feeling of an earlier era. The ideas flooded in, but I eventually decided to create a sewing box, an artist’s box, a writer’s box, and a medicinal box. ►

trilled against a storm

I accepted yours
to a few moments
which you say, then
to apply to you
to read the one
of the original
to the original
and all the more
and what you
amplified the
to the
the owner shall be
that of the
the owner to the
and the



*Intrigued by this new term,
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boxes of my own that would
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I used mint boxes for the miniature containers, distressing them with multiple techniques and adding my own artwork inside and out. Because I love to explore and hunt for interesting old items, gathering the objects that would go inside the boxes was a pleasure. Finding items that were both small enough to fit inside the boxes and that went with the themes took a lot of time but presented a fascinating challenge. I had a few items in my collection already, but I haunted antique stores to track down most of the other objects. I also liked the idea of reusing some of my previous art pieces and incorporated prints of them throughout. The boxes turned out to be one of my most absorbing and intricate projects. ►

SUPPLIES

- * Antique bottle
- * Black tea
- * Chalk: black (PanPastel)
- * Chinese brush
- * Chinese ink stick
- * Coffee
- * Conté crayons
- * Dried flowers & herbs
- * Dye: black (Rit)
- * Gel medium: (Golden)
- * Glue: #2 (Tite Bond)
- * Ink: amber
- * Inkpads: Vintage Photo (Ranger - Distress)
- * Matches
- * Miniature journal
- * Mint tin
- * Modeling paste: (Liquitex)
- * Paper: assorted
- * Photo prints
- * Rhinestones: (Jolee's)
- * Rubber stamp
- * Sandpaper: fine-grit
- * Stencil
- * Super glue: (Gorilla)
- * Tags
- * Vintage lace
- * Vintage pen
- * Vintage pencil
- * Vintage sewing supplies
- * Vintage silk
- * Wax: antiquing (Vintage Paint); gilding (Le Franc & Bourgeois)



...what a small thing
...but in a moment of time
...thousand million against a storm

I received yours
of this of all a few moments
...in a look of our story, then
...the house to apply to your
...the confusion of the garden
...the confusion of the garden
...which I had the honor to
...and which is now by
...the great for the
...it and the other shall be
...the great effect
...at the house to the
...with perfect pleasure

These would make great
gifts for artist friends!



TECHNIQUE

Remove the paint from the mint tins using your preferred method. Cut papers to fit the inside and outside of the tins. Select the papers and photos that will adorn the surfaces of the tins, and lay them out to determine the design for each tin. Burn the edges of the photos to create an aged, distressed look. Adhere images to the tops of the tins with gel medium, and smooth out any bubbles.

When the gel medium has dried, apply Distress Ink to the surface. Use fine-grit sandpaper to smooth out any rough edges, and apply brown wax with a soft rag and gently buff. Use gilding wax to enhance the edges of the tin, creating a patina. Accent the photos with gilding wax. Brush black pastel in the corner of the tins and along the edges. Lay out all the items you've collected and assemble them inside the tins.

Patty Wootton is an artist whose home is in the historic town of Folsom, California. She welcomes email at pattywootton@gmail.com.

Dare to SOAR

BY DEBORAH SOUTH MCEVOY



This journal is one of my smaller creations and a bit outside my usual expertise. I was inspired to make it after taking an online soldering class with artist Rita Reade. While I'm relatively new to soldering, I have some experience working with microscope lenses and copper tape.

Wanting to explore further, I decided to experiment with soldering on an old metal mint box I've had for years. I wasn't sure if the metal would take the solder, as some metals are more challenging to work with. Years ago, I had distressed this mint box, rusting the inside and scratching the outside. At the time, I couldn't get the exterior to rust, so I simply used the box to store rusted items.

With this unique little box in hand, I was inspired to create a small journal to fit inside it. The result is a charming combination of experimentation and creativity, blending my new soldering skills with my love of crafting journals. ►





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SUPPLIES

- * Cardboard
- * Clip art: (ArtHouseWhimsy)
- * Drill
- * Eyelets
- * Foil tape: 1/4", copper
- * Hole punch
- * Metal tin
- * Slides
- * Solder
- * Soldering tool
- * Wire: 26-g., copper



TECHNIQUE

To create a soldered tin and journal, start by soldering the top, sides, and bottom of a metal mint tin, testing to ensure the solder adheres to the metal. Once satisfied, solder an angel image between two pieces of microscope glass and attach it to the top of the tin, carefully experimenting with the solder to secure the piece. With determination, the glass piece can be successfully joined. Add decorative details, such as a gold scroll, to complete the design. Be mindful when handling the soldering tool; ensure the tip is securely tightened using the provided key to avoid accidents.



Next, craft the journal covers by cutting two pieces of 26-gauge copper. Solder the front of the front cover and the back of the back cover, leaving the interior sides of the copper exposed. Use the same soldering method to attach another angel encased in glass to the front cover for a cohesive look. For the pages, cut thick cardboard slightly smaller than the covers and collage angel images onto each page. Once finished, punch three evenly spaced holes along the edge of each page, and secure the holes with eyelets for added durability.

Drill corresponding holes in the copper covers to prepare for binding. Choose a binding material, such as copper wire, which matches the aesthetic and takes solder well (unlike galvanized steel wire). Assemble the journal by threading the copper wire through the holes to bind the pages and covers together securely. Finally, place the completed journal inside the tin, ensuring it fits snugly and the lid closes properly. If the glass cracks during the process, embrace it as a unique touch that enhances the vintage feel of the piece. The finished soldered tin and journal blend artistry and function with a timeless, handcrafted charm.

Deborah South McEvoy is a self-taught artist living in Arizona. She wants her viewers to participate in creating their own stories when viewing her art. Her journal pages evolve as she takes more classes and experiments with new items. You can find her work for sale on eBay ([deborahsouth](https://www.ebay.com/str/deborahsouth)).