



# SHADOW BOXING WITH COURTNEY CERRUTI

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Shadow boxes are a beautiful way to create a three-dimensional collage, displaying favorite memories or thematically capturing a moment in time.

## Suggested Materials

You can compose your shadow box with almost anything. Use dried natural botanicals, paper ephemera, small 3D objects and more. Here are some of my favorite materials to use:

- Deep frame, container or box with or without glass
- Paper for background like magazine pages - vintage paper - photos etc
- 3D ephemera which can be natural objects (branches, feathers, stones) or small toy animals, blocks etc.
- Various tapes - washi tape is good for adding quick bits of color or pattern. You also use artist tapes and masking tapes for framing out your box or to create visual elements.
- Double sided sticky dots
- Tacky glue and craft glue stick
- Acrylic paint and paint brush
- Copies of family photos or vintage found photos
- Stamps and ink pads
- China marker
- Scissors
- Baby wipes

**Determining a theme for your shadowbox can help you get started gathering your materials and creating your shadow box.**

**Theme:** theme can be anything...thoughts and images of a lived experience, a favorite person, place or object, or even a funny story. Creating a scene within a box gives a lot of room for interpretation and play, but a bit of intention will help make your box cohesive and even more

successful. Think of a favorite place or time, a memory, a treasured object or favorite animal. Deciding a theme doesn't have to be tricky, your theme could even be the decision to play, let loose and experiment with ideas and technique, in which case your book's theme might be "Exploration".

If you're having a hard time choosing a theme, consider the following:

Sit down and write whatever that comes to mind. Start with anything, a color, an object, what you ate for lunch etc., and don't stop...keep writing. This stream of consciousness writing can sometimes trigger a series of ideas or images worth exploring.

Choose an inspirational bit of writing, a quote or image and use that as the springboard for your theme.

Draw for classic themes such as those found in fairy tales and mythology. Reinterpret a classic tale using new imagery or symbology..

### **Inspiration**

Many artists have used boxes, containers and confined spaces to create their art.

**Joseph Cornell** used Victorian "strong boxes" and window frames to create his miniature tableau. He often wrote fanciful stories to accompany each piece. Cornell used everyday objects in his shadow boxes, but transformed them with dozens of layers of paint, or broke them into pieces before adding them to his work.

## **Composing your Shadow Box**

A good shadow box will have multiple layers to create a sense of depth. You are creating a miniature world inside this box, and you want it to be well composed.

There are a few simple techniques one can use to create depth and a strong composition. They are as follows:

**Use layers. Create a foreground, middle ground and background.** Your foreground can be the glass itself, the outer frame or it can be the first visible layer inside the box. Use the backing of the box as your background. This can be the setting of a scene or simply a texture, pattern or color, like the wallpaper of your mini world.

**Use varying sized objects,** images and ephemera. These can be in proportional scale to one another, or they can be purposefully "random."

**Add a bit of sparkle.** A bit of glitter goes a long way. Use mirror pieces, shiny metals, glitter, metallic foil and more!

**Tell a story.** Create a story for your viewer to interpret. This can be like a snapshot, where you set a scene in mid action. You can also use text or quotes to help guide your viewer through your miniature world.

## Resources

Courtney's Shadow Box Class on Creativebug. Get two free months by using this link:  
<http://cbug.tv/twofreexCC>

Book - Joseph Cornell: Master of Dreams by Diane Waldman

Book - Crafting Personal Shrines: Using Photos, Mementos & Treasures to Create Artful Displays by Carol Owen

## Boxes and frames -

The boxes for this workshop are provided by **Walnut Hollow** - Check out their site for many more options <https://www.walnuthollow.com/>

**Ikea and Joann** often carry ready-made shadow box frames. Those can be good when there is a big sale or you have a coupon you want to use.

Consider **recycling** old tins, shoeboxes, wooden drawers or crates etc for frames as well.

## Ephemera -

**Nature!** Collect dried pods, leaves, branches etc on your next walk

**Etsy** - You can find all kinds of fun miniature and vintage things for shadow boxes on etsy.

**Thrifty finds**- Keep an eye out for small treasures at thrift stores and estate sales. Those random keys in the back of a kitchen drawer, a broken tea cup, all that can be used in a shadowbox.

The techniques taught in the is class, and the accompanying handout are for personal artistic development only. No part can be reproduced or used to teach other workshops without Courtney's permission.



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