

# ALTERED BOOKS

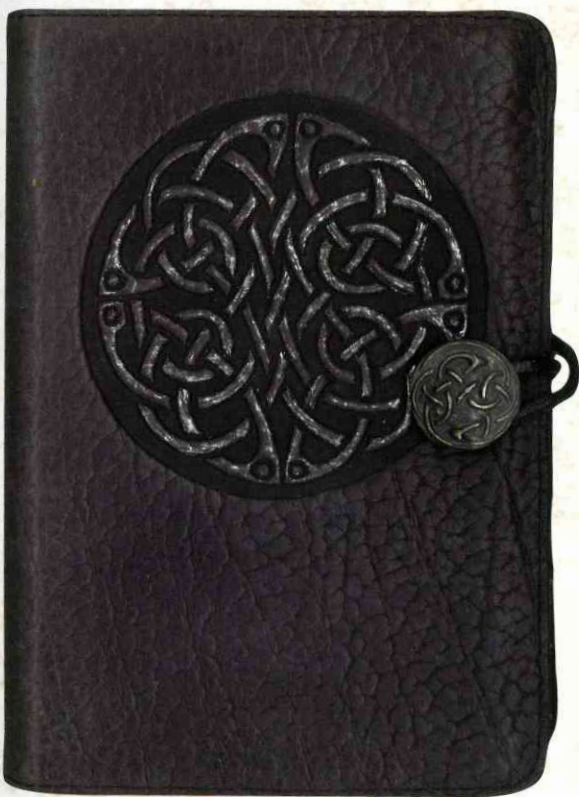
At the opposite end of the spectrum from the blank book is a book that has already been completed—a turn-of-the-century romance novel, a family recipe book, a book you read as a child, a bank book or ledger, an autograph book, a diary, a passport or a photograph album. Whatever your choice, it should be a book you are willing to transform or adapt for another purpose. Altering an existing book gives you



a ready-made starting point since the book you choose will suggest the content and approach.

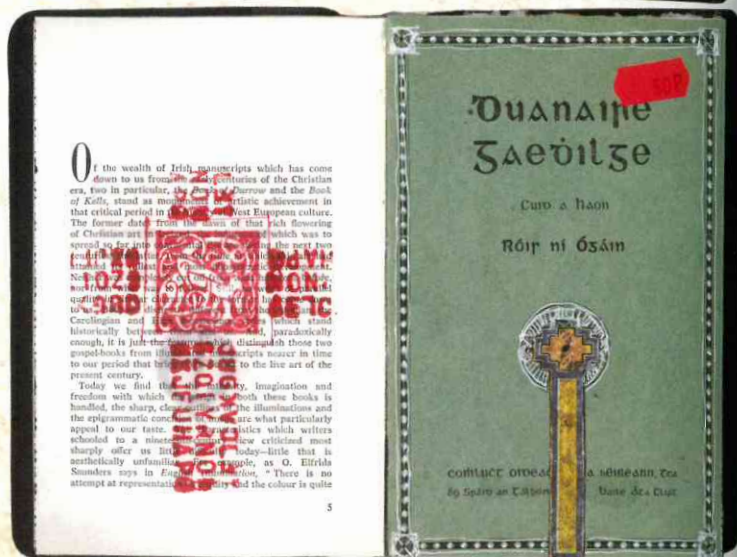
Most books I buy come from secondhand bookstores, library book sales or yard sales, and they are very cheap since I'm never sure what I'll do with them. For years, I have had tattered copies of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*

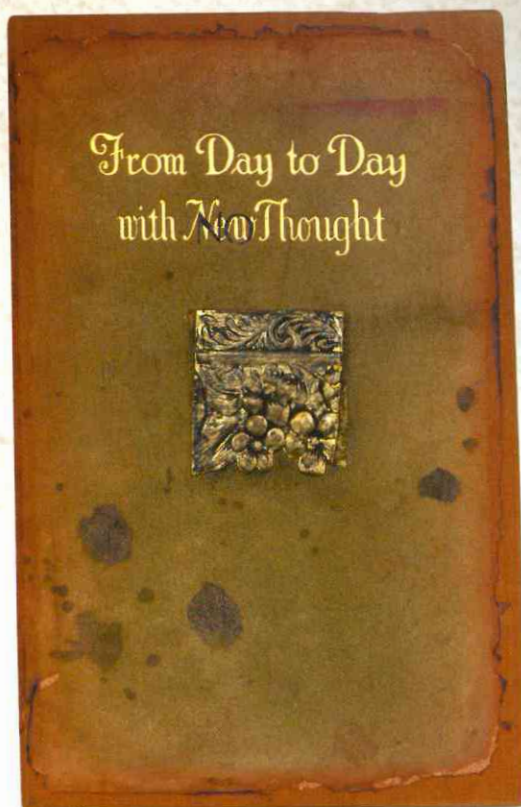
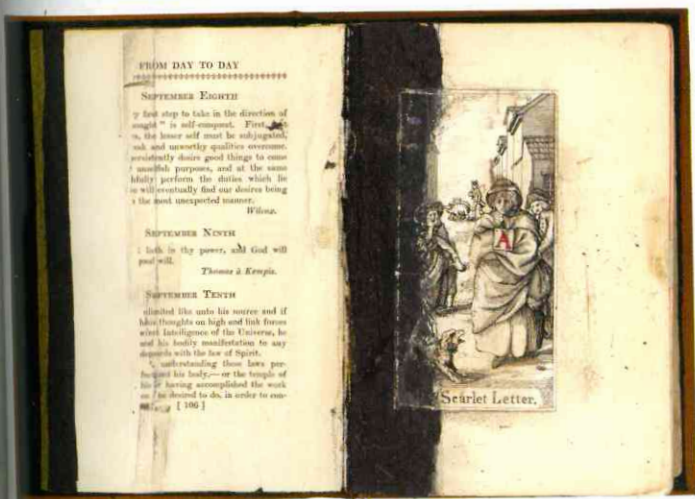
and *Alice in Wonderland* waiting for me to decide how to take them to another level of meaning.



Manuscripts Illuminated, 2002, 52 pages,  
6<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>" x 5" (17cm x 13cm)

Altered book in removable leather paperback cover. Made from a textbook found in Ireland and slipped into a tooled leather cover designed to hold a paperback novel, the pages were collaged as I traveled with images extracted from reproductions of illuminated manuscripts and a box of Celtic rubber stamps.





Day to Day, 2000, 17 pages,  $9\frac{1}{2}$ "  $\times$   $6\frac{3}{4}$ "

(24cm  $\times$  17cm) altered book with mixed media

*Day to Day* began as a badly deteriorated daybook with "new thoughts." It was altered with mixed media and rebound with the original soft leather cover glued to linen-covered board.

## Creative Explorations

- Build a small collection of purchased blank books so that you will always have one to take with you on an impromptu journey or to use to express an idea.
- Consider photograph albums for use as blank books, especially those with high-quality paper inside. They are perfect for collaging since they are designed to accommodate the addition of material at least the thickness of photos.
- For additional interest, incorporate fold-out pages, envelopes to house small items and relatively flat objects of clay, cardboard, metal or natural materials.
- When you take a workshop and make a blank book, choose colors, cover materials or paper that relate to topics you may want to explore. Add it to your collection of possibilities.
- Consider unifying diverse materials with a coat of gel medium or encaustic.
- Look for small items to embed into glued-together pages.



Embedded hand from *Promised Land*, 2001, 32 pages,  $6\frac{3}{4}$ "  $\times$  5" (17cm  $\times$  13cm)

# AN ALTERED BOOK

## Materials

A book that will work with the concept and materials you wish to incorporate into it

Collage, painting, drawing and writing materials of your choice

Decorative materials for the cover, if desired

Glue or adhesive as needed

Scissors

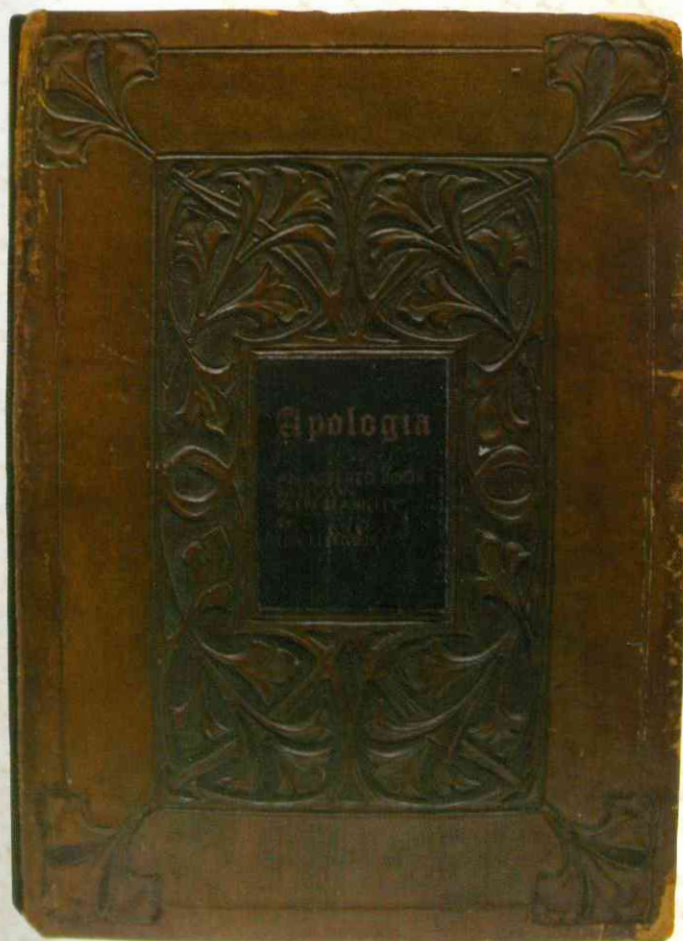
Folder

Title to add to cover, if desired

Optional: scanner, computer, imaging software, printer

For this example, I've chosen to alter *Respectability* by Elbert Hubbard, who began Roycroft Press in 1895 to make beautiful books. Roycroft grew into a utopian craft community with 500 craftsmen making paper, printing, binding books and producing other items of the arts-and-crafts movement. This leather-bound book, letterpress-printed on handmade paper, was found in a used bookstore. The spine had deteriorated and was coming apart.

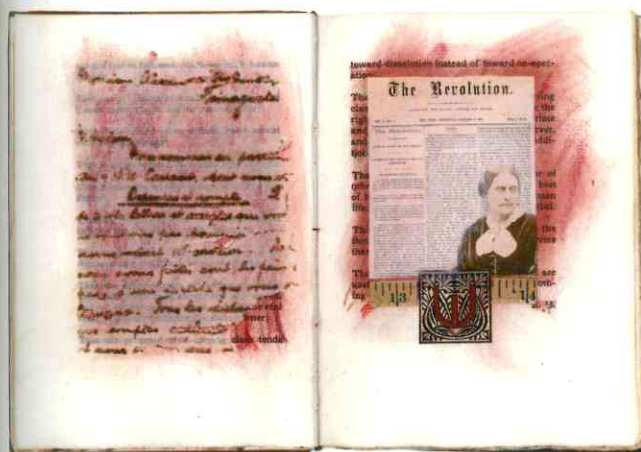
Because the book dealt largely with the place of women at that time, I decided to alter it in such a way as to only retain the references to women. The first page had an "Apologia," which Maureen Cummins suggested should become the title of this altered book.



*Apologia*, 2007, 74 pages, 8" x 5 3/4" (20cm x 15cm) altered book with mixed media based on *Respectability*, leather cover



1. Consider how you can change your book and still relate to its character. Because this book was made around the turn of the century, I decided to incorporate images related to the National Woman Suffrage Association, begun by Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, as well as images from Godey's Lady's Book. I chose to work in rust, brown, beige and black with collage materials, pastels, colored pencils and oil crayons. A tape measure became a recurring icon.



2. Begin to work through the pages, placing your images so that there is both repetition and variation. I decided to leave only the passages related to women readable, and covered over or colored out all the other text. If there were facing pages that had no reference to women, I pasted them together. Where women weren't mentioned for multiple pages, I tore them out to make space for the additional thickness of the added collage materials. The

illuminated capitals were cut from the discarded pages and used as decorative elements. I tried to make the book coherent and flowing from page to page.

If you paste together pages, consider doing something to indicate to the reader that this is deliberate and the pages are not meant to be unstuck. A tab around the edge, a clip or, in this case, a wrapped cord will get the message across.



3. If you'd like, change the title on your altered book. I measured the inset on the cover where the leather title had been debossed and, in Photoshop, made a small title plate to cover it. Since I couldn't find an appropriate font, I

scanned the word "Apologia" from the frontpiece and colored it deep rust against a black-brown background. I colored the edge of the print with a black marker and pasted it down with gel medium.

# AN ALTERED BOOK SCULPTURE

## Materials

A book that will work with the concept and materials you wish to incorporate into it

Collage, painting, drawing and writing materials of your choice

Item to embed

Ruler

Gel medium

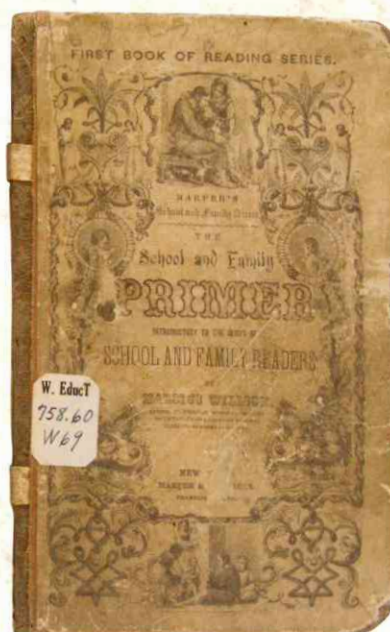
Heavy-bodied clear adhesive, like E-6000 or Goop, if needed

Snap-blade or craft knife

90° triangle

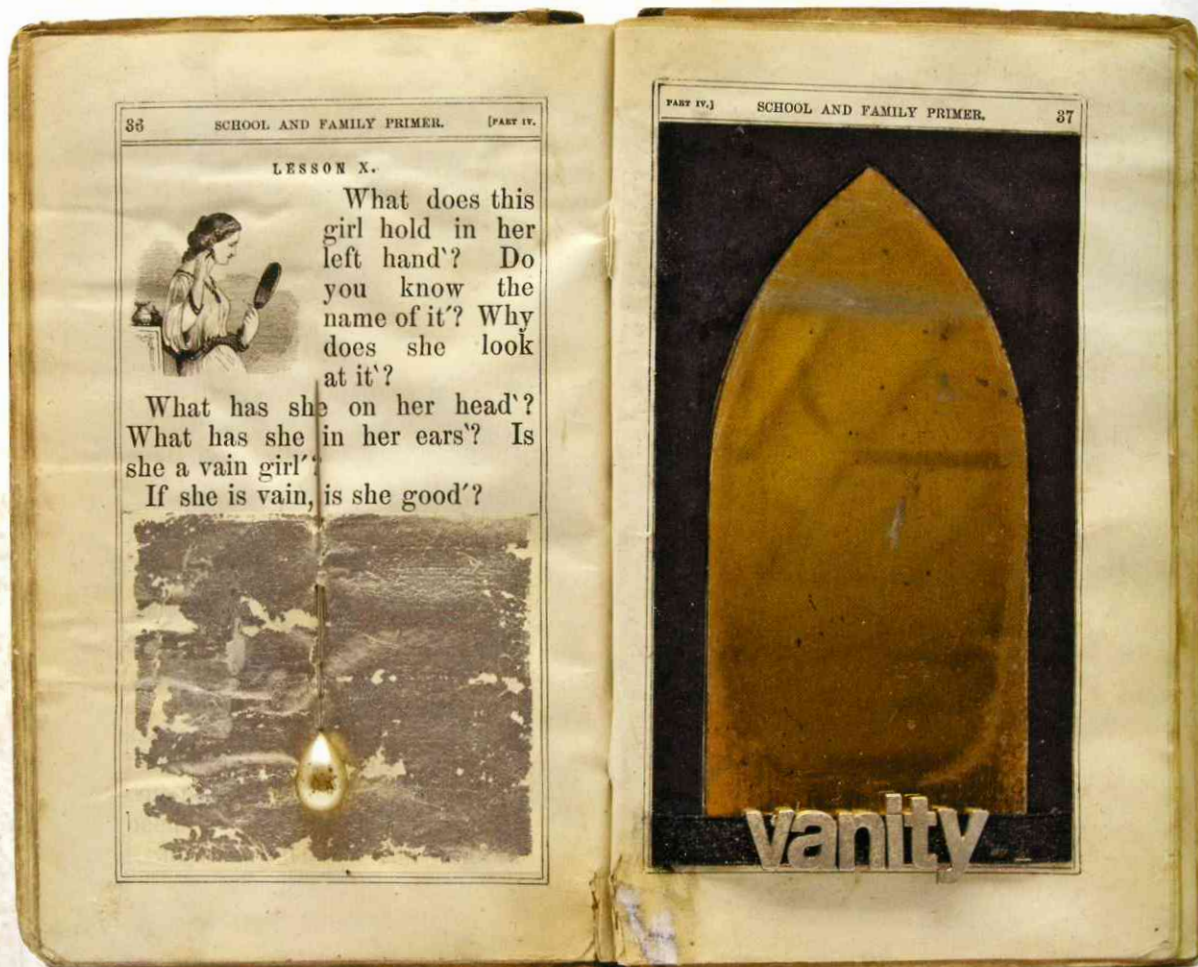
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Weight

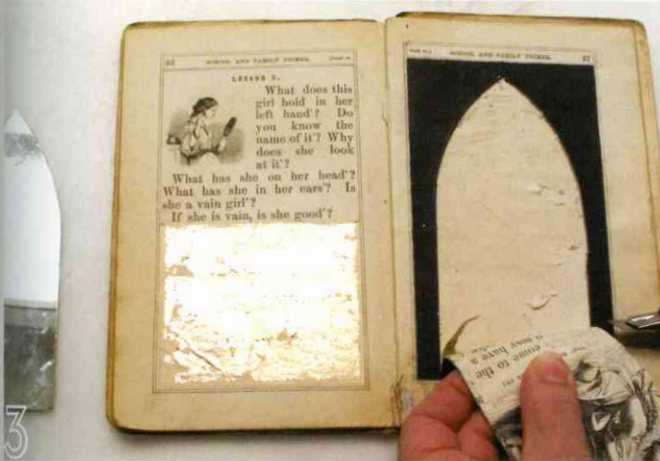
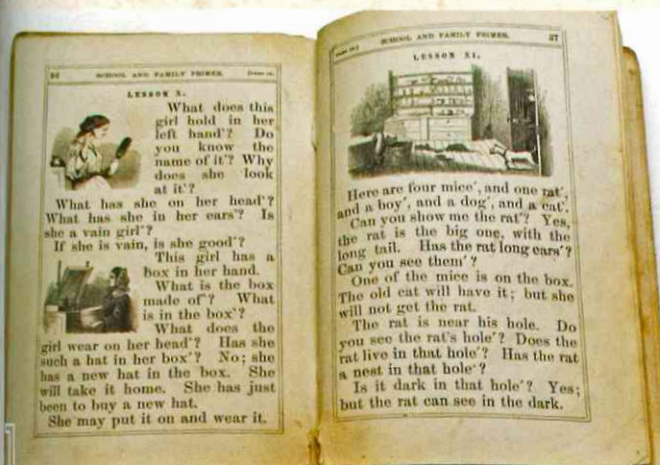


You can turn an altered book into a simple sculptural piece by gluing pages together. In the process, you are creating a thickness that can accommodate an inlaid item in a cutout recess.

The book being altered in this demonstration was "a school and family primer" published in the mid-1800s. It held little interest for me, except for the one double-page spread I decided to use, so it was an ideal candidate with which to make a double-page sculptural form that would remain permanently open.



Vanity, 2007, 7 1/2" x 9 1/2" (19cm x 24cm) altered book sculpture with embedded mirror



1. Choose a double-page spread for a sculptural form. The page I chose shows a picture of a young woman lifting an earring to her ear as she looks into a mirror while the text asks, "Is she a vain girl? If she is vain, is she good?"

2. Coat the inside front cover with gel medium and press the first page against it, smoothing it down evenly and burnishing from the spine to the edges with your folder. Glue each of the pages in succession until you have a solid block with your left-hand chosen page on top. Moving to the inside back cover, repeat the process until the back half of the book is also a block. Dry the book under weight.

3. Select collage, painting or drawing materials to help you take your chosen pages to another level. With gel medium, I've glued a piece of silver joss paper over the unrelated text on the left side and glued a piece of black paper to cover text and image on the right.

If you have an item to embed, measure the height, width, depth and placement for an embedded item. Use a 90° triangle to draw straight angles for a square or rectangular recess, or draw around a shaped item for an irregular recess. Cut the recess by making many shallow cuts

through the pages with a craft knife with a pointed blade if a snap-blade knife is too large.

To embed a thin mirror into this relatively slim book, I cut through to the back cover with a snap-blade knife. An item with more depth would have required a thicker book.

Remove the pages from the center area to create the recess by lifting with the tip of your knife.

4. If you are embedding a relatively flat-bottomed and light item, it can be adhered to the recess with gel medium; otherwise, use a heavy-bodied craft adhesive.

At the last minute, I decided I preferred the gold-toned back of the mirror and embedded it facedown. It wasn't quite symmetrical, so I had to trim out a bit more to make the right side fit and color a bit of exposed paper with black marker.

You can also add other elements to complete the composition. The metal letters that spell "vanity" were slipped over a black ribbon and adhered to the surface of the mirror bottom with double-stick tape. A hatpin with a large pearl was skewered through the pages.

# BOOK+ *Art*

## Handcrafting Artists' Books

Dorothy Simpson Krause

