

What is an Altered Book?

An altered book is an art form whereby an existing book is transformed in some way to create a new, unique work of art. Using materials and techniques from both the art and craft worlds, elements are combined to produce a thought-provoking, three-dimensional creation.

Why have Altered Books become so engaging?

1. They are a great recycled material – discarded books from libraries, donated books or inexpensively purchased books (like church sales).
2. There are no rules! You can utilize any or all sorts of art and craft materials to embellish the book or transform the book in any creative way you can imagine.
3. These are adaptable to all age groups, abilities and interests.

Try to go beyond the craft and scrap-booking mainstream versions of altering books, which include stamps, stickers, collaged images, etc. Try to ensure that your theme or title is linked with the original book you chose. Emphasize a theme and treat the physical object to be transformed into a three-dimensional or sculptural work of art.

“How to” go about Altering a Book!

1. Choose a book that will be RIGHT for you! You may not know your purpose or theme before you begin. Peruse a few of them and be willing to keep a few aside for your short list while you decide. You will need to consider age, condition, size, hard cover vs. soft cover, pages, exterior vs. interior colour, feel, title, cover images and interior images among other things. Sometimes your book will “choose you!” if you are open to this.
2. Develop the theme for the book. Three basic options include using the title as a jumping-off point, use the type of book to suggest your theme, or do neither and just use the book as a blank canvas and choose a theme of your own. Once you have settled on your theme, plan the design of your book with a few thumbnail sketches or the like.
3. Prepare the book. Depending on your plan for the book, prepare the pages and cover for working on by sanding, painting, gluing, tearing out pages, cutting windows/doors/niches/etc...the sky is the limit!
4. Create your pages or form. Begin embellishing. Leave the cover to the end, so you can work more easily on the pages. The pages can be folded in a variety of different ways only limited by your imagination: double-folds, alternate folds, trimming the pages, etc.
5. Fine tune the work and check for continuity of details – UNITY!
6. Give the work a title. In some cases, you might leave the original title of the book as the title of your work. You may also use a portion of the title, such as, “The Green Ships of Greenough Bay”, may become, “Green Ships”.
7. Write a brief artists statement (250 words) and type this carefully, checking your grammar, spelling and punctuation since your written work also reflects you, as an artist. You may even want to change the shape of your statement to reflect a visual aspect of the sculpture. For instance, if you have made the shape of a car, your statement may be similar in shape to this.