

Faculty Development Grant Report

Submitted by Rebecca Chamlee, Associate Professor
Communication Arts Department
June 12, 2017



Founded in 1852 as the Young Ladies' Seminary in Oakland, California, Mills College boasts a rich history as a leader in women's education.



Instructor Julie Chen



The sample table



The first step is to construct the box components out of millboard.

Funded Project: Attendance at the Mills College Summer Institute of Book and Print Technologies in Oakland, California, to participate in an intensive course in box making for artists' books by highly-regarded book artist and teacher, Julie Chen, June 5 - 9, 2017.

Course Description: Many contemporary book artists have gone well beyond the traditional clam shell box when envisioning enclosures for their artists' books. In many instances the box is more than an elegant container for a book, becoming instead an integral component of content. This workshop will begin with the assembly of a box model set that contains all the components needed to create an endless array of boxes including those with drawers, compartments, recesses, windows, false floors, and magnetic closures. The secrets of perfect fitting and corner covering will also be revealed. Students will then go on to make one or more complex boxes of their own design. Previous box-making experience is required.

Instructor: Julie Chen is an internationally known book artist who has been publishing limited edition artists' books under the Flying Fish Press imprint for 30 years. Her work can be found in numerous collections worldwide including the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. and the Victoria and Albert Museum, London. She is a professor of book art at Mills College. <http://www.flyingfishpress.com/>

The workshop began with Julie introducing herself before giving an overview what she hoped we would accomplish in the next five days. "The Mother of All Boxes" title of the class represented the ultimate piece that contained an array of structures that would provide the background needed to produce unique combinations for our own future work. We would also be given the opportunity to create unique boxes based on the many samples that Julie had created.

I've made many box structures over the years as a practicing book artist. What I hoped to gain from the workshop is better techniques for the many challenges in boxmaking: corners, hinges, drawers, partitions and closures.

Through demonstrations and detailed handouts I learned improved and simplified processes that would vastly improve my own work and the work of my book arts students.



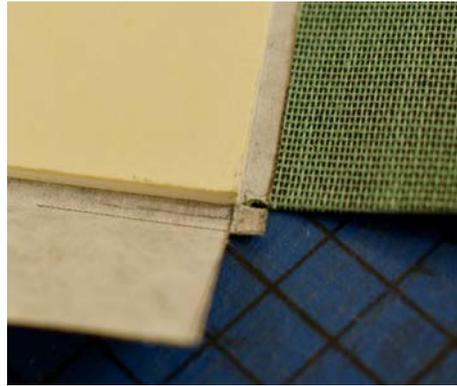
Instructor Julie Chen opens her incredible artist's book, *Chrysalis*, an interpretation of the complex and transformative nature of the process of grief. The piece consists of a sculptural book object housed in a box. The book object is held together by a series of magnets and can be opened by until all the panels lie in a flat plane, revealing an inner book with circular pages.



Julie's method of covering corners in book cloth was modified from she learned from her instructor, Eleanor Ramsey, the "ear" and "miter" system.



The angled snip of the ear-cut. The covering material on the short walls of the tray is adhered first so the ear covers the corner of the board, before the miter cut finishes the corner.



The technique to cover the opening of a three-sided tray involves leaving a small square that glues to the edge of the board to conceal it before laying down the front and top turn-in.



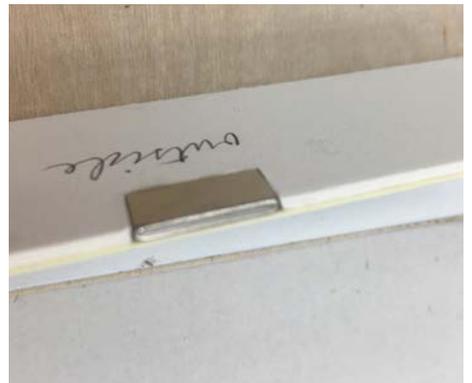
Inside my drawer showing the completed corners, a partition and a shank button pull, before lining.



The drawer inside a slipcase that is nested inside a three-sided tray.



An identical three-sided tray with the beginnings of a cigar box structure.



An embedded magnet that, combined with an opposing piece of steel, forms the closure mechanism of the structure.



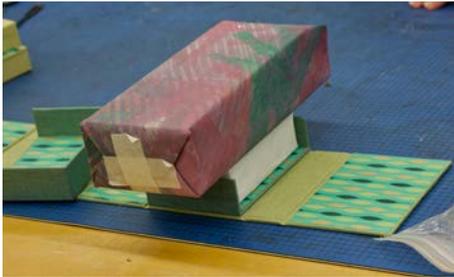
My completed cigar box.



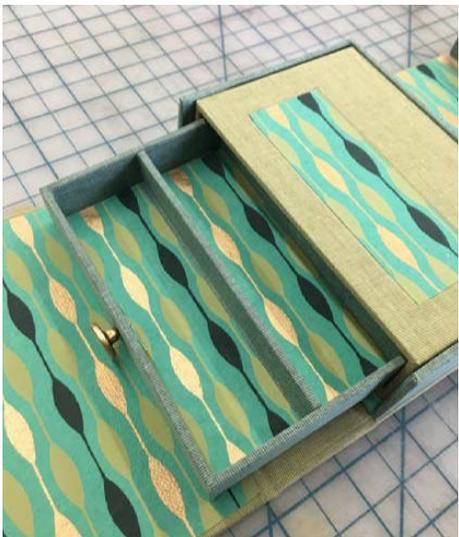
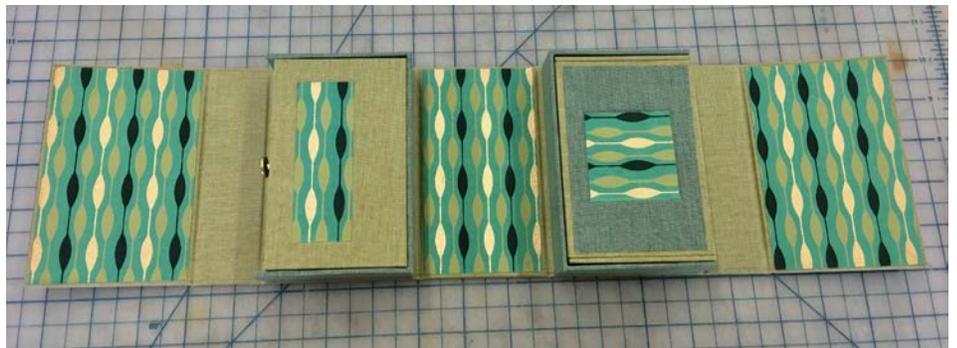
Julie demonstrates gluing down the boards that will form the folding base for the "Mother" box. She used a straight edge and brass spacers to keep the base square with precise hinge gaps.



The spines are lined with bookcloth, pushed into the hinge gaps to form a strong joint.



Once the base is lined the trays that will hold the component parts are attached in position and weighted down with a press form and a covered brick.



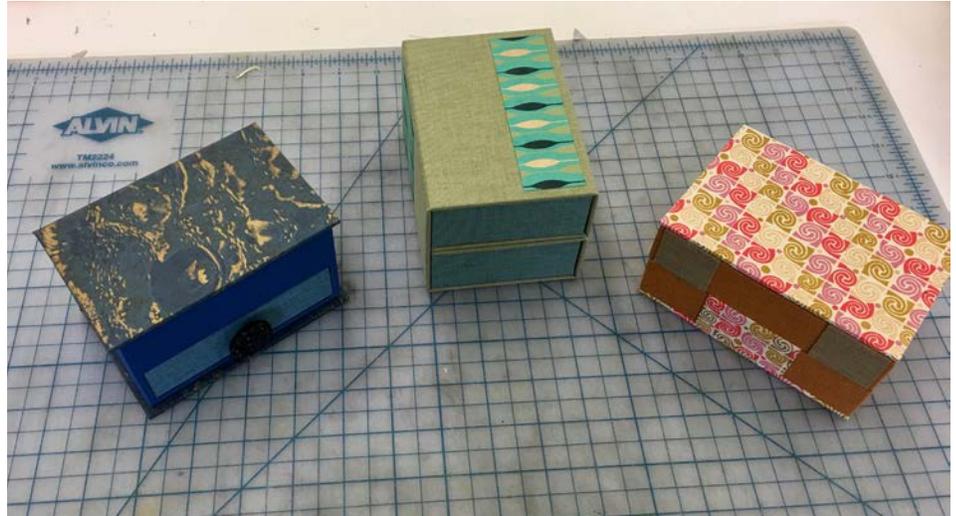
My completed "Mother of all Boxes" box with the partitioned drawer, slipcase and cigar box.



One additional box I made is a Magic Box that opens in two directions, exposing separate storage spaces. Based on the Jacob's Ladder, this structure is playful and intriguing.



Using my printed handmade paper I constructed this double box with a partitioned drawer, a top compartment and a magnetic closure.



I want to thank Otis for awarding me the Faculty Development grant that made it possible to improve my technical and teaching skills in such a generous and supportive learning environment as this unforgettable workshop.

I'm looking forward to sharing all the efficient, ingenious and effective techniques I've learned with the Otis students enrolled in my Book Structures and Book Making Project classes.



The class and all the amazing boxes we made.