

Mother Goose & Jester JACK-IN-THE-BOXES

by Jill Crvich

The inspiration for my Jack-in-the-Boxes goes back to childhood. My maternal grandmother, Victoria, loved dolls and toys and my sister and I would visit her often. We would bring our well-loved and well-worn baby dolls and Barbie's to Grandma's house and she would give them a beauty "make over"...wash and style their hair and sew them new dresses. She did this with such amazing care and talent. I still have my Tiny Tears doll which was my favorite, and clothes that my grandmother sewed for her.

In my grandmother's collection of children's toys, there was an old Jack-in-the-Box from the 1960s. It was something I played with cautiously. The fact that I never quite knew when the clown would spring from his box, intrigued, yet startled me. I believe my appreciation of antique dolls and toys came from these early childhood experiences.

The first little faces I sculpted back in 1990 were out of Celluclay, a textured papier mâché clay. After using this medium for a few years, I became frustrated with shrinkage that occurred after my sculpted face dried. While reading a doll magazine, I came across the name Susan Oroyan, and decided to give her a call since we lived in the same city. She was so helpful and friendly and, after explaining the problem I was having with Celluclay, she recommended Creative Paperclay. This was a huge deal to me! Not only was I talking with a famous doll maker and author of many wonderful doll books, but I discovered this amazing new clay.

Technique

Creative Paperclay is the medium I used to sculpt the Jester and Mother Goose characters. Sculpting faces is quite a magical process for me. As I start pinching and prodding the ball of clay, a little face begins to appear before me. The connection between eye, hand, and clay takes over and it's almost as if the emerging face tells me where it wants to go. After finishing these two characters, I decided to offer them as limited editions to my Figments Studio collection of handmade vintage journals and accessories. A friend of mine helped me create molds and casts and I carefully hand painted each piece.

Next, the painted little heads are attached to a heavy coiled copper wire (wrapped around a large dowel rod and highlighted with a bit of aqua paint to add a patina look) and glued into a block of wood. The hands are attached to the ends of a lighter weight length of wire (similar to coat hanger gauge) and attached to the coiled copper wire, creating the arms. Next, I wrap the arm wire with a bit of batting to add some fullness, securing it with hot glue. I also hot glue some wool roving on their heads and style their hair. →

Tools & Materials

- Acrylic paint: (Ceramcoat)
- Adhesives: hot glue gun, epoxy
- Assorted wired ribbons, trims & beads
- Batting
- Casts: hand-painted of my original sculpted heads, hands and box
- Creative Paperclay
- Dowel rod: large and small for coiling wire
- Sealer: (Ceramcoat)
- Wire cutters
- Wire: heavy gauge coiled copper, coat hanger gauge, thin jewelry wire
- Wood block: for coiled copper wire base
- Wool roving





Pulling out all my boxes of ribbons, trimmings, and beads is the next step and is so much fun. I start with a particular wired ribbon that I want to feature and begin playing with different complimentary combinations of color and texture. Once I decide on the color scheme, I'm ready to start putting the finishing touches on my Jack-in-the-Box characters, each with its own unique costume.

All the added ribbons and embellishments are hot glued into place. I begin with a length of sheer organza ribbon that I wrap and glue along the length of both arms, covering the batting. A length of wide, wired ribbon is folded, accordion-style, and glued into place to create the fluted, bottom collar. The same process is done with the smaller top collar. Next, I glue bits of ribbon, trim, and cording around the neck and wrists, adding layers of color and texture.

The Jester's hat is also made with my handy little glue gun. Three small pieces of wired ribbon are cut and folded in half and a length of jewelry wire is placed in the fold of each and twisted tightly and the ribbon edges are glued together. A little bead is threaded onto the thin wires and

coiled around a small, round stick creating little springs, keeping the bead in place. The three ribbon pieces are glued into place on the Jester's head and a hatband is added. I carefully bend the arms into place and adjust the Jester's hat and collar.

The Mother Goose Jack-in-the-Box is assembled the same way, but rather than a hat, I add a pair of little spectacles to her bird-like nose. I cut a length of gold jewelry wire and form her glasses by wrapping the wire carefully around a small dowel rod ... the perfect diameter for the lenses of her spectacles.

The block of wood that serves as the base for the coiled copper wire of the finished character is securely glued into the box with epoxy. The box itself is a hand-painted cast, made to look like old, gilded leather. This painting technique gives the finished Jack-in-the-Box a vintage look which complements my handcrafted journals and accessories in my Figments Studio collection. ❖

Jill Crvich is an artist who lives in Issaquah, Washington. Her unique Jack-in-the-Boxes and vintage journals can be viewed on her Web site at figmentsstudio.com.