

# RECESSES AND INSETTING A TITLE

An indicator on the front cover lets the reader know which end is up. My biggest pet peeve is spending extra time opening the book and rotating it until I get to right-side up. I'd rather use that time to experience the book itself. Titles and/or recesses are ways to indicate the book's beginning. If you want to glue a title to the front cover, you may apply PVA to the back of the title strip and glue it down, or you may prepare your cover boards with a slight recess or inset. If you create an inset, the title will lie flush or slightly lower than the boards, which will make it less likely for the title strip to pull up, fall off, or become abraded when pulled out from between other books on a bookshelf.

Recesses add three-dimensional physical depth to artwork. You can make a recess in a book cover in one of two ways. The first way involves using two or more 2-ply boards that you glue together. The second way involves partially cutting into a 4-ply board and peeling off a layer or two. In a recess, you can place a title strip or a thin object. I used a recess to give shadow to the cover of *Distressed* and to protect the reader's fingers from a tied fly for the book *I Hide a Wild Fish Cry*. You can also glue layers on top of the front board before you cover it for a dimensional effect.

## Large or Deep Recess

1. Cut two covers exactly the same size from a 2-ply board with grain going in the same direction.
2. Decide where you want the recess, and measure and mark a window on one cover board only. Using an art knife, cut out the window.
3. Apply glue to the back of the board with the window. It will probably be less awkward if you leave the window board faceup and press the unglued board on

top of it instead of trying to move the glued window board. Align the edges of the two boards, and press them together.

4. Put the laminated boards between two sheets of waxed paper, and leave them under a heavy weight overnight. Use a 4-ply board for the back cover.

**Note:** If you want a thicker cover with a deeper recess, cut more boards with windows and glue them all together.

## Windows

1. Cut out windows in both 2-ply boards.
2. Wrap the boards in paper or cloth, making Xs across the windows and tucking the extra material around the edges to the back sides.
3. Glue a layer of drafting vellum or glassine between the two boards, making the "glass" for the window of your recess.

4. Glue the boards together, sandwiching the vellum.

## Small or Shallow Recess

The second technique involves no glue. I recommend it for small recesses under a couple of inches in width and length.

1. Measure and mark a recess in a 4-ply board.
2. With your art knife next to a metal ruler, cut into the board about halfway.
3. Use the knife to dig in and loosen the edges.
4. With your fingers or a tweezers, pull up the layers of board to make a uniformly flat recess. If you are having trouble pulling up the layers, either you may have not cut deeply enough into the board or you have made your recess too large. It may be easier to peel up the layers in the direction of the grain.

# CLOSURES



*RE: Memory* (a collaboration with Val Simonetti), 1988; photocopy, letterpress, brayer printing; 5¼ x 7 inches (13.3 x 17.8 cm) (photo: Jim Hair)

Some boxes and books require a tie or link so they do not spring open. You can use paper, ribbons, bone closures, buttons, Velcro, or other boxes to secure the book. When choosing a closure, consider using materials that relate to the contents of your book, and think about the experience the reader will have when opening the clasp or ribbon.

The extra time it takes to open a book or box adds suspense and contributes to the feel of the book. Bone closures add dignity to books and boxes; if you use two, point the ends toward each other. Paper clasps and buttons and string can provide a variety of interesting closures. To make your own buttons, use a polymer clay, bake it hard in the oven, then varnish it for a custom look. When you choose a