

Mini-Albums

Acrylic albums 101 - Part 1

The advantages of this transparent material

Acrrylic albums are a fun and versatile medium to play with and a great way to utilize all your paper crafting supplies. Acrylic is a clear non-porous material, and both sides are your design surface. Do not be intimidated by it. It is easy to use once you know the basics.

There are two types of acrylic and they each have unique characteristics. The first is **cast acrylic**. It is firm and strong, made by combining acrylic or plastic materials into a mold and heated. It is often packaged with a protective

brown paper. This acrylic will not scratch, and is crystal clear and some are coated to prevent yellowing in direct sunlight. However, because of its sturdy thickness, you cannot punch holes in it or use common binding machines. Mini-albums and accents are



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precut or molded by the manufacturers. Items made with this type of acrylic are often more expensive than the other type of acrylic.

The second type is **extruded acrylic**. There are a variety of thicknesses within this type. Some are softer material that can be cut and punched. Not every extruded acrylic is soft enough to cut through so be sure to get advice from the manufacturer before you use any tools or machines with acrylic. Hard acrylic could break a cutting machine.

Despite these differences, acrylic itself is non-porous, so the following techniques work for both types. Whatever you choose, be sure to complete a technique on one side at a time. So what can you do with this product?

Inks are an easy way to apply character and charm to your pages. Do not use pigment and dye inks, since they are generally water-based. These are ideal for soaking into paper fibers, but not for non-porous surfaces like acrylic. Some dye inks, like Archival Ink or Memento, are labeled quick-drying or waterproof and can be used on acrylic. That said, solvent and alcohol inks are the best for non-porous surfaces. Solvent inks, like StazOn, resist fading and scratching and are designed for use with stamps. Images stamped using solvent ink will not smear so they do not need to be heat set. Alcohol inks are sold in bottles and are not intended for stamps. Instead, these inks add color while maintaining some of the transparency. This allows you to create your own custom background base with a single color ink or create a funky blend of colors to coordinate with your elements. A solvent-based cleaner is recommended to clean any of



The cover of this album is decorated with a metallic pen, instantly creating depth and interest to the layout beneath it.



This is an example of a solvent-based ink image stamped onto acrylic already colored with alcohol inks.

these inks, but I have found that non-acetone nail polish remover works well also. This is one of the advantages of working with acrylic, you can start over if necessary.

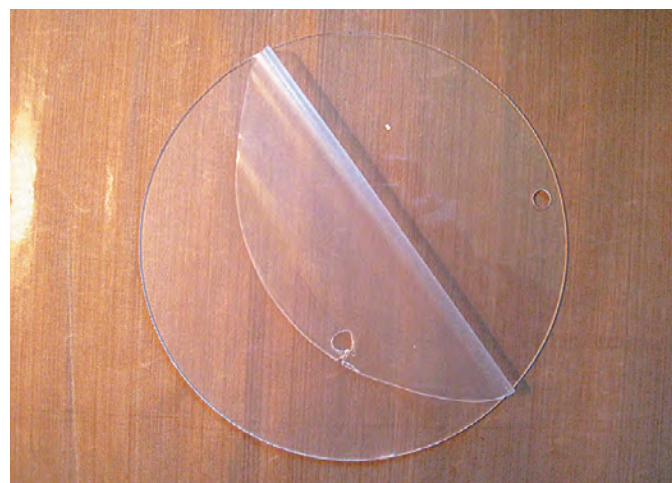
Markers and paint provide another creative element. Acrylic paint markers and metallic leafing pens offer many opportunities but use them in well-ventilated area. Alcohol ink markers, like Copic or Spectrum Noir, have the properties of alcohol ink but give you the ability to make more controlled background blends. To layer or define two colors, use one on each side of the acrylic, remembering to let the first side dry before doing the technique on the reverse.

The easiest way to design layouts is with paper. This is where your delicious double-sided paper gets maximum exposure to create the front and reverse at the same time. It is best to mat photos first before adhering to acrylic. That gives the layout a stronger bond because the adhesive will grab into fibers of the paper.

Think layers. When you add chipboard or other embellishments, they do double duty. For example, using a large flower that hangs off one side of a photo completes the layout on the first side and provides the beginning of a design onto



A five page acrylic album provides depth from background elements and other photos, and allows embellishments to peek through.



Soft acrylic sheets are thin and can be punched, diecut and embossed, but be sure to check with the manufacturer to make sure it can be used with your particular tool.

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verse. Elements can peek through the pages and add depth. Also, try adhering some elements face up on the reverse of any of your pages.

If any of your elements fall off the pages, it is most likely due to the adhesive, not the acrylic. Almost anything can be adhered to acrylic using solvent-based adhesive such as Zip Dry or a 3-in-1 glue. Adhesive is visible on the other side, so even if you use glue dots, you must design with that in mind. However, you do not need to simply adhere paper directly on the

back of each page to cover the adhesive. This is where you become creative with your design elements. The transparency is its charm.

A variety of materials can be used to strategically and discreetly cover adhesive. Consider your stash of Stickers, ribbon, chipboard, rub-ons, acrylic paints, flowers, stickers and bling. You can heat emboss the pages, but be very careful as acrylic can warp or melt. Edging pages with markers subtly tones down the shininess while adding definition.

For a fun project, you can design the back of a large acrylic sheet and use dry erase markers to create a personalized dry-erase board. Acrylic is a versatile and fun medium, so let your imagination run wild. ❁

Editor's note: Stay tuned for Part 2 of "Acrylic Albums" in the Summer, 2013 Michigan Scrapbooker.

Diana Hirsch is a Certified Zentangle Teacher and an award-winning writer. To inquire about classes or writing availability, contact her at diwolf@aol.com or visit her blog at www.wolfhowlings.wordpress.com.