Stepping Up To The Barre – A Ballet Studio

by Pam North

It's a perfect little room for a beautiful ballerina, but she would be only few inches tall, of course. That's because she would be living in Nora Mazonson's delightful room box that she calls *The Ballerina Studio.*Mazonson had wanted to make a room box for a while, but she hadn't decided on a subject. The opportunity came when her daughter's dance team organized an auction for fund-raising, so she decided that she would create a ballet scene, and then donate it to the school. She wanted an intimate vignette, a space where the ballerina would be at home, relaxing after a show, or warming up with a little barre in front of a mirror. It is the many detailed touches that bring it to life – the frothy costume lying across the chair, and another on a dress form in the corner; the tray of goodies for a well-deserved treat; dance-themed framed pictures on the wall. The effect is authentic and perfectly executed.
Mazonson explained how her creation came about. “My reason for making this piece is that I really wanted to make a room box; I think I like them better than full dollhouses, and the opportunity to support my daughter’s dance team inspired the theme. I like the little details: the cup of tea with a used tea bag, the worn-out ballet shoes, etc. I so enjoyed watching my daughter design and create the costume, and watching her face every time I finished something was priceless! I donated the piece to the dance school auction. It was really hard for me to part with it but fortunately, it went to a family in my daughter's dance class, so at least I know I can visit it! I would say that 95% was handmade; the only purchased pieces are the dress form we used to create the costume, the door, the dishes, and one of the picture frames. It's all my work, with the exception of the paintings, which obviously are famous reproductions. I did follow a couple of tutorials to create the French chaise (Kris Compas at 1inchminisby**kris**.blogspot.com), and the vanity is a tutorial from Lea Fresoni’s book *La Maison Francaise.* My daughter, who was 10 years old at that time, made the beautiful costume. Materials used were wood and foamboard for the structure, and cardboard, fabric, polymer clay, jewelry findings, fabric, and feathers. Many techniques were implemented - woodworking, beading, sculpting with clay, and sewing. No unique processes or unconventional methods were used for creating any of these pieces; it was pretty straightforward. The most challenging part was the roof. I didn't want to leave it open, as I think having a roof/ceiling makes it more intimate, and I didn't want it flat. I also wanted the observer to be able to peek into the space. I studied some similarly structured room boxes by Mara Verdugo and other Japanese artists. It was really hard to build but I'm happy with the result. I had an idea in my mind that was very close to the final piece, but I did keep adding small details that I hadn't thought of at the beginning, such as the rosin box next to the barre, and the box of chocolates that somebody left for her (somebody opened it and stole a bonbon!).” It is that meticulous attention to detail and a touch of whimsy that makes her creation a perfect success.

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