

ENCHANTING BOOK NOOKS

Miniature Worlds and Settings
to Craft and Decorate



Raphaële Vidaling

RIZZOLI
UNIVERSE

BOXES

DIMENSIONS

This is the starting point for creating a miniature world: the frame that will fit between your books. First, choose the spot on your bookshelf where you want to display your book nook. The surprise effect will be more magical if it does not stick out too much from the other books. In terms of width, choose something between 3 and 9 inches (8 and 23 cm). In terms of height, it could be between the size of a small paperback and a large hardcover, anywhere from 4¼ to 12 inches (11 to 30 cm). The depth determines how immersive the scene can be, ideally between 4 and 10 inches (10 and 25 cm).

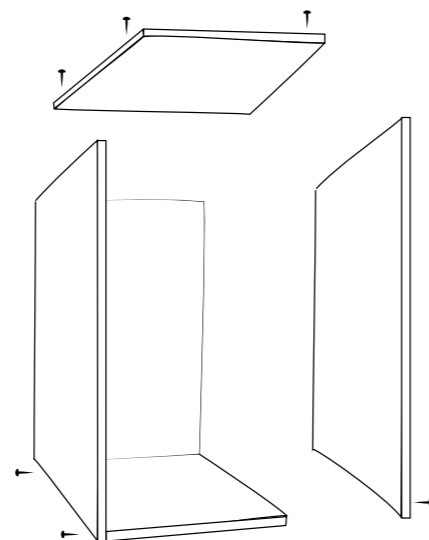
MATERIALS

A sturdy cardboard box is a great place to start. You can reinforce and enhance it by adding a decorative front frame (see pages 60, 66, 94, and 124). Consider covering the outside with textured wallpaper samples or scrapbook paper that looks like wood or stone.

For a more durable option, wood is an excellent choice: ¼-inch (5-mm) MDF board or plywood is inexpensive, easy to cut, and simple to decorate. Use small nails to hold the pieces together during assembly, then secure them permanently with wood glue.

ASSEMBLY

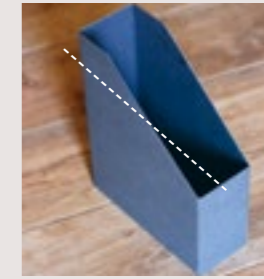
Assemble only the base, one sidewall, and the back panel first. This leaves you more space to arrange the interior. Attach the second wall at the end and save the top panel for last.



A simple cardboard box works perfectly, whether from recycled packaging or hand-made using thick honeycomb cardboard.



Keep an eye out in grocery stores for bulk or display boxes.



File boxes can also work. The top can even be cut to fill in the missing triangle of space.



A small polystyrene crate provides a sleek thickness and allows you to easily pin objects into it.



A wooden box is ideal. Premade options are available, like this bamboo planter.



Wooden or cardboard tissue boxes have an existing opening that can inspire creative designs.



Secondhand metal boxes can be displayed vertically to the side and can be hollowed out or left partly open.



A set of books can be transformed into a hidden, built-in scene. See pages 38, 52, 80, and 158.



Two narrow drawers stacked together create nice depth—remove the bottom of one or create an open-worked divider.



Building a box from a picture frame is always an elegant choice (see pages 70, 80, and 100). Here, a key box was used.



A double-sided box with a central divider can be two book nooks in one! Simply flip it around to change the scene.



The same idea multiplied by four—for example, a four-season book nook that you can rotate.

TOOLS

You can start making book nooks without any special tools other than the basics: a sharp crafting knife, fine scissors (such as nail scissors), a cutting mat to protect your table, a sharp point tool for making holes (a nail or screw can work in a pinch), and tweezers.

PRECISION TWEEZERS

It is nevertheless worth investing in long precision tweezers (8–10 inches/20–25 cm long) or curved tweezers, which make it easier to reach deep into boxes. You can find them in philatelic (stamp collecting) shops or aquarium supply stores.

GLUE

Three types of glue are essential:

- ★ White vinyl glue (wood glue), which is applied with a brush and dries clear
- ★ Hot glue (but you must be very quick, and it leaves annoying strands)
- ★ Precision glue, less known and pictured below, with a fine nozzle and pointed cap. This makes detailed work much easier.



Among these basic tools for creating miniatures, the addition of three specialized tools can make a big difference.

PRECISION KNIFE PEN

The green tool in the photo looks like a pen, but instead of a tip, it has an ultrathin blade, so that you can even cut paper lace.

MICRON PEN

Incredibly fine tip! If you have sharp eyesight, you can write on the head of a pushpin.

HAND DRILL

The tool in the photo between the gimlet and the awl is a hand drill. It uses ultrafine bits and is turned by hand—perfect for making tiny holes!



LIGHTING

Adding lighting to the book nook is a crucial step. The lighting will enhance the magic of the little world lost among the books. It catches the eye, softens the outlines, highlights the details, and colors the atmosphere. One could even say that each scene has two looks: day and night.

To keep it simple, all of the book nooks in this book were made using these three types of lighting options, on their own or a combination:

- A thin string of LED lights with button cell batteries
- A string of LED lights with stick-shaped ends, powered by AAA batteries
- An ultraflat coaster light with button cell batteries

The first option is the most convenient. Very thin and flexible, it is discreet and can fit into all the corners of the display. It comes in different varieties:

- White light (strong and cool), warm light (yellow and cozy), a single color, or multicolored
- With a very flat casing (like the one in the top photo) or with a small but thick casing, the size of a sugar cube
- From 3 to 10 feet (1 to 3 meters) in length

The second option is slightly bulkier but has a more powerful effect.

The 2½-inch (6-cm) diameter coaster light is very practical with its button switch when you want to illuminate a single point. It usually requires piercing a hole in the box.

CREATIVE IDEAS

You can also explore ultraviolet lights, mini flashlight key chains, battery-powered fiber-optic bouquets, light-up earrings, backpack lights, LED dog collar pendant lights, not to mention all the materials available for model making and dollhouses.



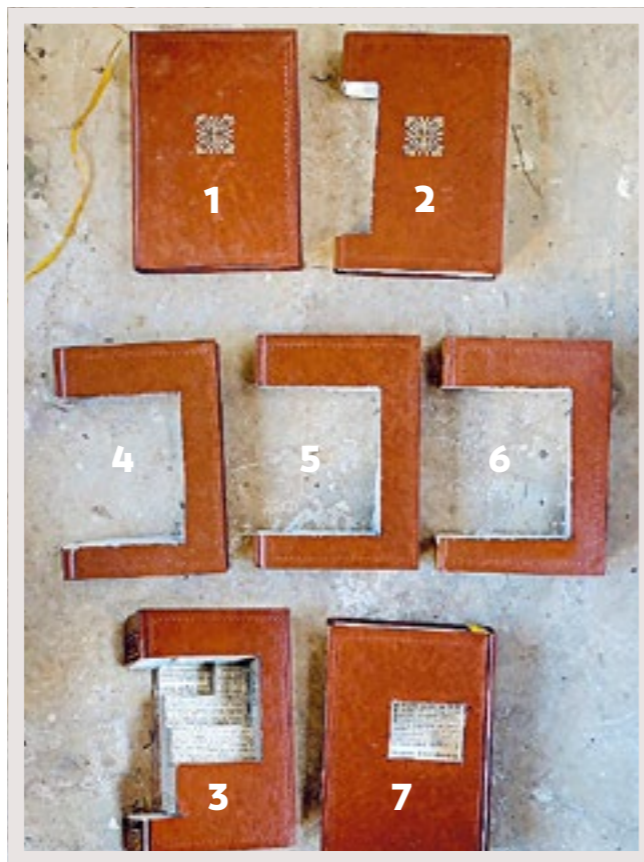
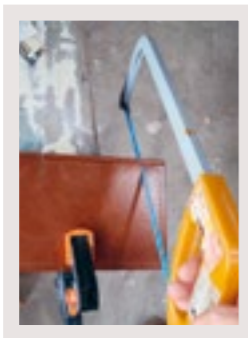
The Hollowed-out Books

A SURPRISE ON THE BOOKSHELF:
HIDDEN INSIDE SOME OLD VOLUMES
FOUND AT THE ANTIQUES
SHOP IS ... AN ANTIQUES SHOP.
THIS PROJECT IS LESS ABOUT
MAKING THAN GATHERING A WHOLE
BUNCH OF MINIATURE TRINKETS.



1 | Position the frame on the edges of the group of books and mark the contours. Try to choose a frame that occupies the exact width of five spines. You will use the jigsaw to cut the books. The simplest method is to form a curve, then remove the rounded angle with two saw cuts.

2 | Cut three books in this way (they will be in positions 4, 5, and 6 in the final assembly). The height of the hole is the short side of the frame. The depth is the desired size of the store. Cut book #2 less deeply: it will represent the shop entrance. Book #3 is first cut the same way as #2, then the cover and pages are cut with the craft knife to form a sort of stairway for shelves. The last book is hollowed with the craft knife to create an alcove in its back cover. It will close the space on the right side.



The Display Shelves



3 | Cut the bookmark ribbon from one of the books (or, if none is available, use a thin ribbon). For a tailor's hack, hold the ribbon over boiling water so that the steam smooths it out. Glue it around the alcove of book #7 to form a frame. You can even make a shelf from the cover board scraps.



4 | Cut a section of the leftover scraps from book #2 (the hollow form in the photo comes from a hole made by a drill), open it in a fan shape, and cover it with a shelf. This will be the corner counter, which can be filled with objects.



5 | Make two small benches from cover scraps glued together. One will serve as a support at the back (in the photo, it is under the guitar), and the other as a display stand. Glue the miniature items to be sold onto them.



6 | Modify book #3 by gluing pages to the back to unify the cut pages and adding horizontal shelves from the leftover cover board. Fill it with small, glued-down objects, including mini books made from the scraps.



Lighting



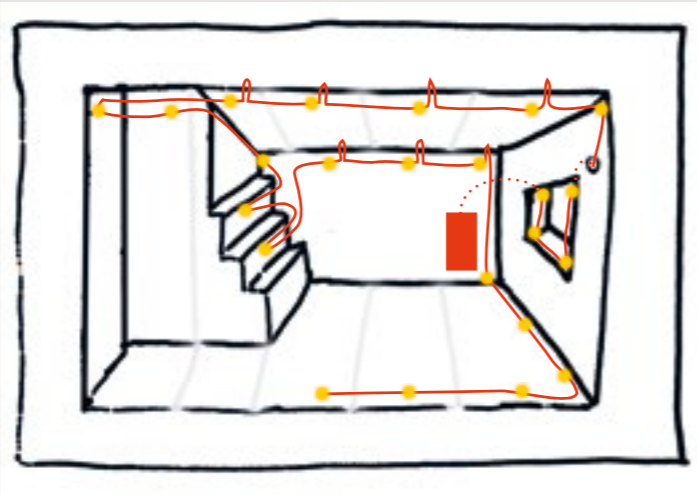
7 | Cut a space in the back of book #7 where the light string's power pack will be hidden.



8 | Insert the light string into the pages of book #7 and glue it so that 4 LED bulbs illuminate the alcove. Then drill a hole into the book, including the back cover, so that the end of the light string appears at the top right of the alcove. You can run it along the ceiling to the display case at the top right corner.

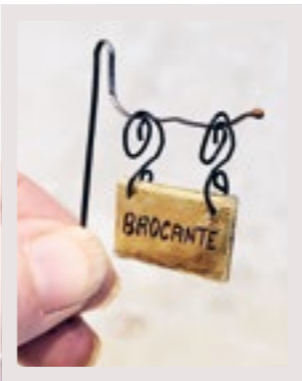


9 | Glue the objects inside the alcove, then glue all the volumes together. Clamp or press them together with heavy items to dry.



10 | Twist the wires to reduce the space between each pair of LED bulbs by half. Insert each twist between the top pages, following the wiring diagram pictured.

Finishing Touches



11 | To make the sign, cover a piece of cardboard with gold paper from a chocolate wrapper, write the shop name, drill holes into it, thread it with some wire, attach it to a bent hairpin, and slide it into the spine of book #7. For the bell, tie a bell to the bookmark of book #1 (or an added ribbon).

12 | Finalize the arrangement. For example, on the walls, hang medals and mini gold frames sold as nail decor. In a jar, place a worm. At the entrance, hang a key chain with mini keys. For decoration, use colored metal confetti sold as table confetti. On the floor, add vases made of beads and tiny figurines. Once everything is ready, glue on the frame with its glass.





THE VILLAGE BAKERY

MATERIALS

box: made from scraps of engineered wood flooring

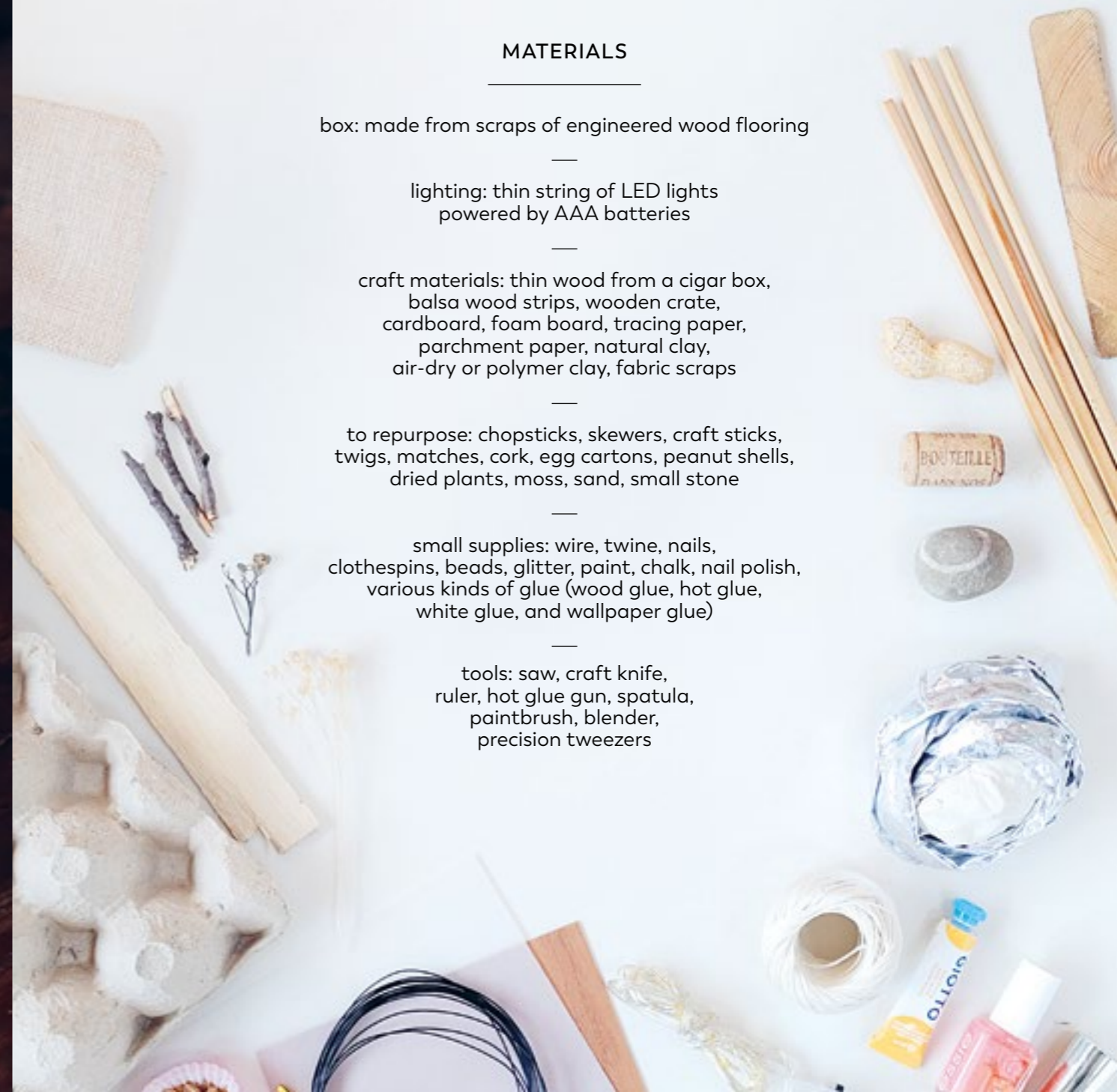
lighting: thin string of LED lights
powered by AAA batteries

craft materials: thin wood from a cigar box,
balsa wood strips, wooden crate,
cardboard, foam board, tracing paper,
parchment paper, natural clay,
air-dry or polymer clay, fabric scraps

to repurpose: chopsticks, skewers, craft sticks,
twigs, matches, cork, egg cartons, peanut shells,
dried plants, moss, sand, small stone

small supplies: wire, twine, nails,
clothespins, beads, glitter, paint, chalk, nail polish,
various kinds of glue (wood glue, hot glue,
white glue, and wallpaper glue)

tools: saw, craft knife,
ruler, hot glue gun, spatula,
paintbrush, blender,
precision tweezers



The Frame

TO MAKE BETTER USE OF THE VERTICAL SPACE IN THE BOOK NOOK, IT HAS BEEN DIVIDED INTO TWO SECTIONS: A FACADE ON THE UPPER LEVEL AND A DEEP SPACE ON THE GROUND FLOOR, DESIGNED IN THE STYLE OF TRADITIONAL PROVENÇAL NATIVITY SCENES.



1 | Construct a box from leftover floorboards, approximately 7½ x 12 x 7½ inches (19 x 30 x 19 cm), with an upper level 5½ inches (14 cm) from the top, recessed by 2 inches (5 cm).



2 | Soften some clay with water and spread it over the floor.



3 | Draw tiles using a tool with a rounded point and let dry. Paint the tiles a bluish-gray shade, being careful not to fill the cracks. Sprinkle a bit of fine sand over the top.

4 | Trace a window on the back of a cigar box (or on balsa wood) using a large roll of tape for the curve. Cut it out with a craft knife and glue on a small piece of wood to serve as a window ledge.

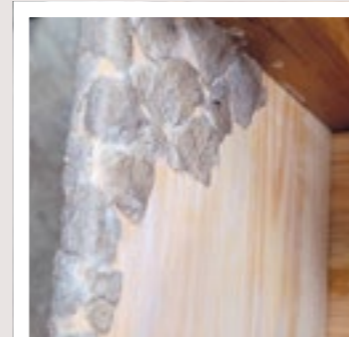


5 | Moisten a strip of cardboard and shape it into a rounded lintel by pressing it over the same tape roll.

6 | Make the balcony from wire and doubled wooden strips above and below. Spray paint it black.



8 | Draw on the facade with pencil and chalk. Position it to be slightly set back from the frame. Fit a small roof of crate wood above the store and paint it.



7 | Attach the window to some tracing or parchment paper. Cut a piece of foam board to fit the upper facade. Create a hole to insert the window with its foam board frame and curved lintel. Attach the balcony with glue, or, as in the photo, by drilling supports to pass through the window ledge and the base.



10 | Tear up an egg carton, soak the pieces in a bowl of water to soften them, and glue them onto the left wall of the ground floor and both sides of the frame.



9 | Cut shutters from the same wood as the window. Draw planks and glue on Z-shaped supports. Stain the shutters blue and attach them to the facade so that they are open but not fully touching the building.



11 | Save a bit of the egg carton for the chimney. Mix together the rest in a blender with enough water to create a pulp. Squeeze out any excess liquid if it seems too watery, then mix with flakes of wallpaper or textured paper. Create a foam board staircase 1½ inches (4 cm) deep to be placed at the back of the bakery. Cover it with the paper pulp and let dry.

The Bakery



12 | Shape the oven in relief using cardboard. Cover it with pieces of egg carton like the walls, then paint it white.



13 | For the oven door, glue small pieces of wood onto a rounded cut piece of cardboard. Smooth the edges with white air-dry clay.



14 | Make a shelf out of cardboard to attach to the right wall. Cover with clay, then paint and glue to the wall.



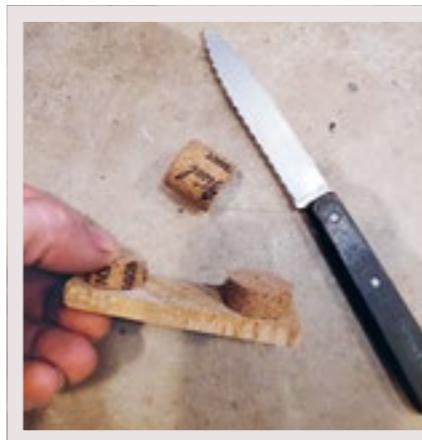
15 | Tie four small bunches of dried plants to a twig with wire, then affix it to the left wall. Glue the staircase in the back of the scene and the oven at an angle in front.



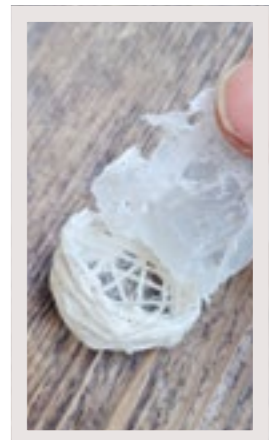
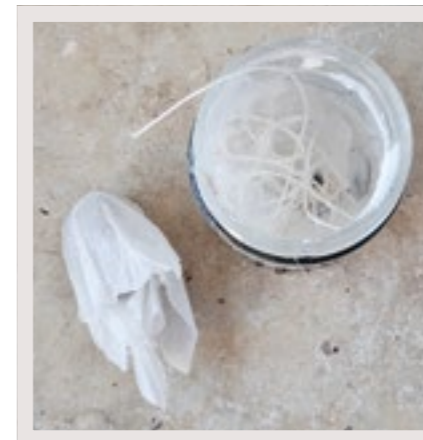
16 | To make the counter, cut four wooden chopsticks for legs and attach two craft stick frames.



17 | Midway up the counter, a balsa wood tray with notched corners rests on small matchstick supports.

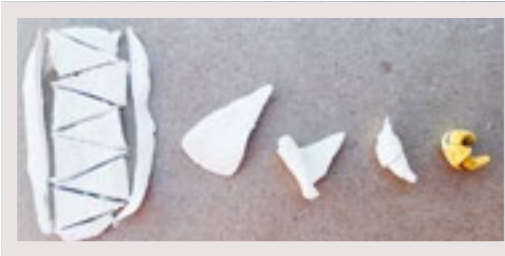


18 | Against the left wall, glue two cork slices under a small piece of wood to display pastries.

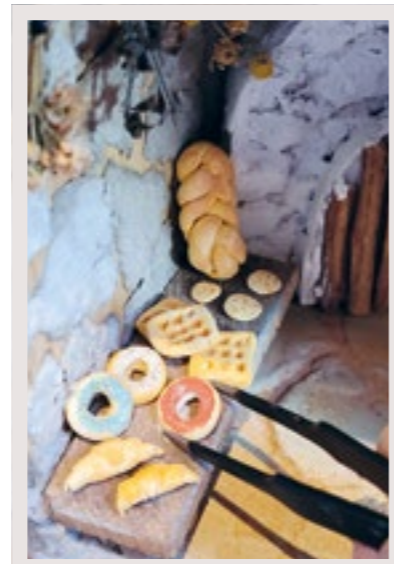


19 | To make the lampshade, coat a small stone with oil and wrap it in oiled parchment paper. Soak 3 yards of kitchen twine in white glue and wrap it around the stone. Let it dry, then cut it into a shell shape and remove the paper.

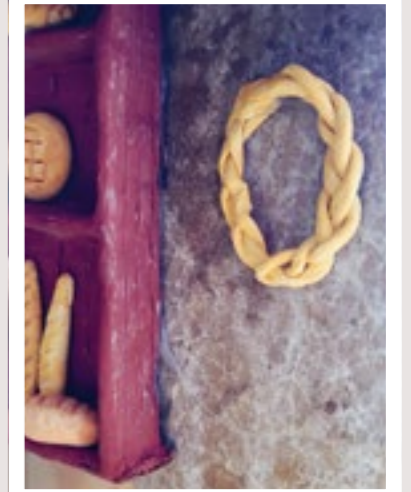
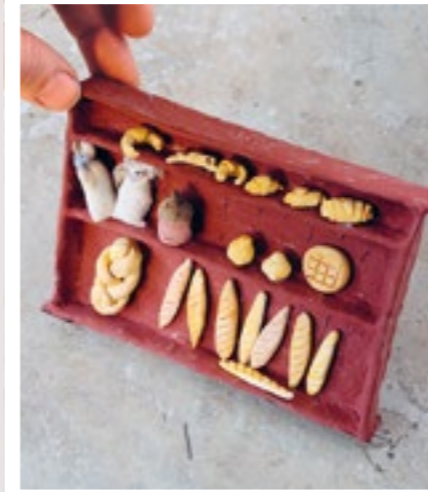
The Miniature Food



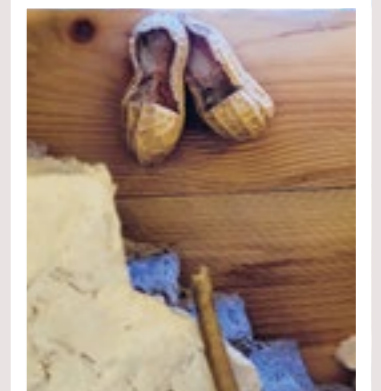
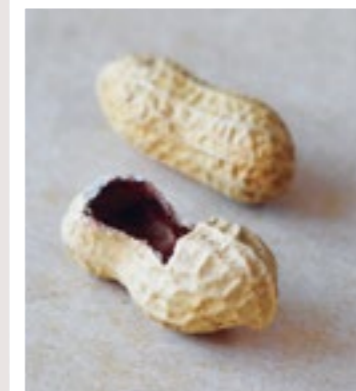
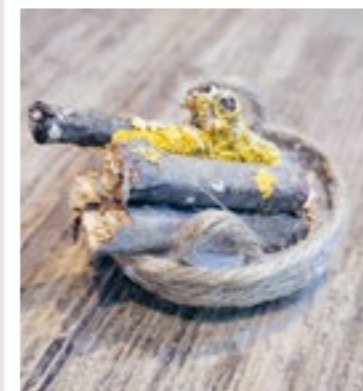
20 | Create various types of bread, cakes, and pastries using white air-dry clay. Paint them and arrange them throughout the bakery. For colored glazes, use nail polish and glitter as sugar.



Finishing Touches



21 | Distribute the pastries among the various displays. Attach the shelf to the right wall. To cover the front of the right wall, rub chalk onto crumpled kraft paper and glue it to the wall, then hang a braided bread wreath over it. The counter is placed in front.



22 | Among the accessories, you can make: a firewood basket from twine glued onto a slice of a Christmas ball ornament, fabric flour sacks, a twig broom, and miller's clogs from peanut shells to hang on the wall. The LED light string's battery pack is hidden upstairs; the lights run along the top of the right wall and under the front roof, reach the center of the room in the lampshade, and end behind the upper window.