CAMP MEMORIES

by AISLING D'ART

Some of my favorite childhood memories are from Girl Scout summer camp. Heavy canvas tents were our "dwelling places" for those weeks.

You can create a tent-like art piece to display old (or new) summer memories and photos. This project uses some basic crafts supplies and vintage images to create an impressive, one-of-a-kind sculpture. It can also support two mini-scrapbooks or photo albums on the roof.

This project is easy to complete and requires no artistic skill. Read all of the instructions—including my recommended options—before planning your project. Keep it easy and fun!

Materials:

- Craft store birdhouse (the simpler, the better, and they're usually under $5)
- Unbleached cotton canvas to cover it (usually less than ½ yard) Adhesive (I used hi-temp hot glue)
- Iron-on image transfer paper (I used the Office Depot brand for making custom tee-shirts)
- Two vintage or recent photos, large enough to cover front & back of birdhouse
- Perle cotton (I used DMC #5, a dark ivory color)
- Eight wooden spools and four wooden blocks
- Sheet of blank paper for templates
- Green paint (I used Hooker Green from Maimeri Brera acrylic paints) Forest green raffia
- Two small photo albums (These were less than $1 each at Michael's) Foliage-style floral picks
- Fray Check or any clear adhesive to prevent canvas edges from unraveling

Tools:

- Scissors
- Steam iron
- Heavy, large-eye sewing needle
- Pencil & ruler
- Any tool that will cut soft wood

1. Remove the price sticker and any perches from the birdhouse. I used a Dremel-type tool with a cutting blade, but the wood is soft enough that a serrated kitchen knife could probably work. This doesn't have to be tidy, since you'll cover the birdhouse with canvas.

2. With green acrylic paint, completely cover the base of the birdhouse, including all sides, edges, and bottom. Paint the "thread" area of the wooden spools, too. Wait for paint to dry.

3. Cut a piece of canvas large enough to cover the top and exposed sides of the roof. A small amount (1" at most) should extend down each side of the birdhouse.

press each edge so the raw edge won't show when it's glued in place. (Do NOT glue it in place yet.)

7. Select photos and size them to fit the front and back of the birdhouse. Print on iron-on transfer paper. (Be sure to reverse the images, first.) Using the paper templates, trim the transfers to fit the front & back of the birdhouse. Iron on.

8. Glue these four pieces (front, back and two sides) of canvas to the birdhouse. (I used hot glue.) Cover the raw edges of the canvas that extended when you covered the roof. Just tack the canvas in place with the glue. Use a small amount of glue in the center of each side. Be sure to leave the vertical edges free. Keep the raw edges folded under, so they don't show on the finished tent/birdhouse. Let glue dry completely.

Tip: When using hot glue on the back of pieces with iron-on transfer images, handle carefully. The heat of the glue can soften the image slightly. Don't rub it.

4. Iron the canvas so that it's smooth. Then, starting at the crest of the roof, glue the canvas to (and around) the birdhouse roof. You'll need to trim extra thicknesses where folds will conceal the raw edges; otherwise, the folded fabric will bunch too much. You'll also find it easier to make cuts to wrap the canvas around sharp corners and edges. (If the canvas wants to fray or unravel, use a product like Fray Check.)

Tip: If you're using hot glue, apply a little at a time and work quickly. It helps to move the canvas around a little to spread the glue while it's hot. Otherwise, lumps of hot glue can show through the canvas.

5. With a sheet of blank paper—and a ruler, if you like—create paper templates. For most birdhouses, you'll need just two templates: One that's the size of the front (and back) of the birdhouse, and one that's the size of the two shorter sides.

6. Using the templates, cut four pieces of canvas to cover the sides of the birdhouse, with about ¼" extra on each edge. Finger-

9. With the perle cotton and a heavy, large-eye needle, sew the four vertical edges to their facing edges. The thread should show as embellishment, so it looks as if you sewed the tent together. (Actually, everything's held in place with glue.)

10. Glue some forest green raffia around each wooden spool, where thread would go. (I used hot glue.) Since you've already painted that part of each spool green, you don't need to be too careful about this. A rustic look is good.

It's finished!   Display on a coffee table, on top of the TV, as a table centerpiece or in a book-case.

Other options:

- Make several of these tent / bird-houses in a variety of sizes. Display photo albums or mini-scrapbooks on the larger ones.

- Stain (and perhaps distress) the spools and/or wooden cubes to look older.

- Instead of using spools or cubes, cut dried tree branches or twigs as sup-ports for the tent/birdhouse.   You may want to use a wooden base for stability. (An inexpensive crafts store plaque works well.

- Stain or paint it to match the rest of the project. Or, cover it with green moss for a grassy, natural look.)

- Even modern camp photos can achieve a vintage look if you modify them with a computer graphics pro-gram. Desaturate the colors, or tint them slightly brownish.

- If covering the roof seems too dif-ficult, you can stain it or paint it and just use canvas on the four walls of the birdhouse.

11. Glue the spools and wooden cubes together to form four columns to support the tent/birdhouse. (I used hot glue.) Let dry.

12. Trim photo albums or mini-scrapbooks to size. Glue canvas (trimmed to size) to covers, if you like. Then, glue the albums on the tent/birdhouse roof, one on each side.

13. Fill albums (or scrapbooks) with photos or pages.

14. Glue the tent/birdhouse to the columns of spools and blocks. Let dry.

15. Glue foliage-type embellishments in place. They're good as accents, or to cover any areas where the finishing wasn't perfect. Allow to dry.

Aisling D'Art *travels frequently, makes lots of art and has an incredible collection of websites. We suggest you start here:* **www.aisling.net.**