

Inchies by Scrapdolly

The latest craze for miniature works of art

As scrapbookers we are all used to creating squares of art, but now let's scale them down a little; to one twelfth of their normal size in fact.

What are Inchies?

There's a wonderful new art form sweeping the scrapbooking world at the moment; the world of inchies. These are tiny little pieces of art, no bigger than one inch square.

When I first heard of them I was intrigued because they sounded such fun to create. I had a look at some of the sites featuring these small masterpieces and I was staggered. Staggered because that is exactly what they were, miniature masterpieces. I noted that they were often themed and included text as well as art. They were often very dimensional. A Google search will bring you up many examples from some wonderful artists. I was fascinated and so when I saw an inchies swap advertised on one of my favourite forums, I plunged right in.

At this point I hadn't actually seen a proper inchie. I hadn't actually seen a 1" square in fact. I had been a miniaturist before discovering scrapping and the standard doll's house size is 1/12th scale. That was all this was, working in 1/12th scale. Then I cut my first 1" square, just to see what it was like you understand. And it was tiny. I wasn't sure how 1" could be so much smaller than I imagined it to be, but it was. So like all scary ideas, I put it off. I honestly think if it had not been for the fact I was committed to a swap I would never have ventured into making my first inchie. I would have shelved the idea and never re-visited. Now I am so glad I had signed up as I bit the bullet and discovered a whole new addiction. Be warned, once you get over the fear it is an addictive new trend you are going to be hooked on. But do make sure you cut a 1" square from a scrap of card first so that you can see how small it is.

Creating the blank canvas

It is often much easier to work on the backgrounds first and then, when you have created your 1" squares you can enjoy decorating them.

Both the vintage set and the cat set use the same technique for the background. You need photographic paper – which is thick and glossy and gives an excellent surface, and alcohol inks. The photo paper takes the ink well and it is simple to create a lovely jewel tone glassy effect. Try using a whole range of colours, blending them into each other to make a smooth transition. Once the whole sheet is covered stick it onto a sheet of card so that the finished inchies have more substance. It is then a simple matter to cut the background into 1" strips and then cut each strip into 1" squares. Keep them all in a small ziplock bag or similar until you are ready to start creating each one. There are so many different techniques you could use for the backgrounds. You could stamp images and then cut the inches out. You could cut the inchies first and then decorate the backgrounds individually. You could use patterned papers or fabrics as the backgrounds. The possibilities are endless.

Images and text

For the vintage inchies I used images downloaded from the internet and also old family photographs and small scanned images. For the cat inchies I used photographs of my own cats. Import the pictures into a photo program and then reduced the size right down. Most of the images are about ½ " square or, in some cases, rectangular. Print them on high quality photo paper and then produce any text you want to use. The letters and words can be printed on very thin card and then, once printed, need to be cut out and inked. The pieces

are tiny to ink and so you may feel more comfortable holding them with a set of tweezers. You don't have to print your own text. I have seen inchies made with words cut from old books, with stickers, with magazine images. Again, the possibilities are endless and it is a wonderful chance to exercise your creativity.

Creating your works of art

Once the text and photos are printed and the backgrounds are made it is just a question of assembling them. You may want a range of glues for assembling them. Herma or similar works well on the pictures but if the text strips are very small you may need something like a zig glue pen. You may also want to ink the edges of all of the inchies before sticking the pictures and text on, using metallic ink pads.

What to do with your inchies

Now the question is – what to do with them when you have made them. I guess you could mount them on a sheet of card and just admire them. You could put them in a frame – they would make a lovely piece to display. I quite like the idea of making playing piece inchies as tokens to use in board games. If you protected them with glossy accents or similar they would stand up to being used and would make even the most mundane games very special.

You could, of course, use them on a traditional layout as in the example here of the page with the cat inchies. As I had produced an alphabet I used that as the starting off piece for the page and then used the inchies both as the focus and as embellishments on the page. The title came first – it usually does with my pages, and then that became the springboard for the page. I spaced the inchies around the page, making sure the design was balanced and then cut the letters out of white card. I inked the card so that the colours toned in with the colours on the inchies. The heart – replacing the 'v' and the a, b, c, were then clear embossed to make them shine and each had a small crystal stuck on. It is a very simple page as the whole purpose of it was to showcase the inchies around the edges. Anything more complex would have detracted from that. Remember, your set of inchies may be much smaller. You don't have to make sets of 26 – these just happened to be alphabet sets. Again, there are endless possibilities. Maybe a set for a child, one for each year with a picture from that year, maybe a set featuring family members or maybe just random inchies that are purely decorative and have no pictures at all.

Novel uses for inchies

I also used created more cat inchies to use on these tiny little wooden blocks I discovered at a local store. Having made building block picture sets before, I thought it would be such fun to make tiny little versions. If you are going to attempt this yourself then don't mount the background on card – it needs to be much thinner than that so that you get clean edges. Also I would advise buying spare wooden blocks as they are not always cut evenly. As I have three cats it made sense to use one block for each cat, using a mix of photographs, text and computer journaling on each of the blocks. Going back to the earlier example of making game playing pieces using inchies, you could make a personalise dice set as well.

Inchies, tiny works of art 1/12th scale that you are bound to find addictive. Cut yourself some 1" squares and have a go at scrapbooking in miniature.

Supplies

Basic Grey Sweetpea Rosewater
HP Photographic paper
White card

Tim Holtz alcohol inks and applicator
Assorted fonts downloaded from the internet
Small crystals
Set of 1" wooden blocks
Chalk ink pads