



Jon Cattapan

## Project: A Personal Diorama By Jon Cattapan

This is a very simply-made project about IDENTITY and the creation of a strange, miniature personal space.

### Create

First, find a container: a case, a cardboard box, a milk crate... almost any open container with four sides and a back will do. A plain old shoebox would be just fine. 'Decorate' all of the internal surfaces of the box in some way. This might be as simple as painting every side a different colour, or you might want to introduce collaged elements. You can add details cut from photographs to create a more visually complex space. For example, covering each side with photographic landscape elements will in effect lead towards a miniaturised environment, or a tiny theatrical set.

### Personalise

Into this space, introduce objects of personal significance—those things that signify an aspect of your personality, your personal history, your cultural background, your desires, etc. Personal items and also meaningful personal photographs are able to suggest identity in quite unexpected ways. You are creating a personal diorama that you will then use to make observational works.

## Activity Summary

**Topic:** Identity diorama

**Suitable for**

- Beginning level
- Intermediate level
- Advanced level

**Suggested media**

- Drawing
- Mixed media
- Painting
- Photography

## Observe

The next part of the project requires you to make observational drawing studies from the three-dimensional environment you have created. These studies can then be further developed into paintings or mixed-media works. The relationship between your created imaginary space and your personal objects will become a critical visual aspect of the studies. Small detailed sections might be useful to investigate. Also consider digitally photographing the diorama at very close range, to create images that might then be further manipulated on the computer—consider cropping images.

## Results

The studies and artworks that you ultimately create may well have surreal shifts in scale and composition—actually, the stranger the better. Feel free to go crazy, and hopefully the end results will also give the viewer a clue or two about who you are and what you are about.

## About Jon Cattapan

### Artist's Work



*The third deadly system*, Jon Cattapan, 1998–2001.  
Oil on linen, 78 x 65 in. (198 x 165 cm). Photo courtesy of Andrew Curtis



*Night Visions (Gleno)*, Jon Cattapan, 2009. Oil on linen,  
185 x 250 cm. Photo courtesy of Andrew Curtis.

### Artist Biography

Born 1956 in Melbourne,  
Australia

Currently lives in Melbourne,  
Australia

Jon Cattapan has lived and worked in major cities around the world: London, New York, Seoul, and others. These experiences have led to his interest in the way humans interact with each other and their surroundings within the space of large, urban environments. Cattapan is best known for his use of color and light. In his atmospheric panoramas of the modern city, skyscrapers, cars, and streets are suggested through dots of light and color. Cattapan's cities are often super-imposed by anonymous figures, alluding to the ambiguity of the alienated individual living within any industrial society.

Cattapan works in traditional media—paint on canvas—but his studies for paintings are created with the help of modern technologies. Cattapan scans photographs and creates digital collages, which become source material for his paintings. He attempts to seduce the modern-day viewer by exploring such current topics as anti-globalization, immigration, post-9/11 society, and, more recently, the politics of refugee situations.