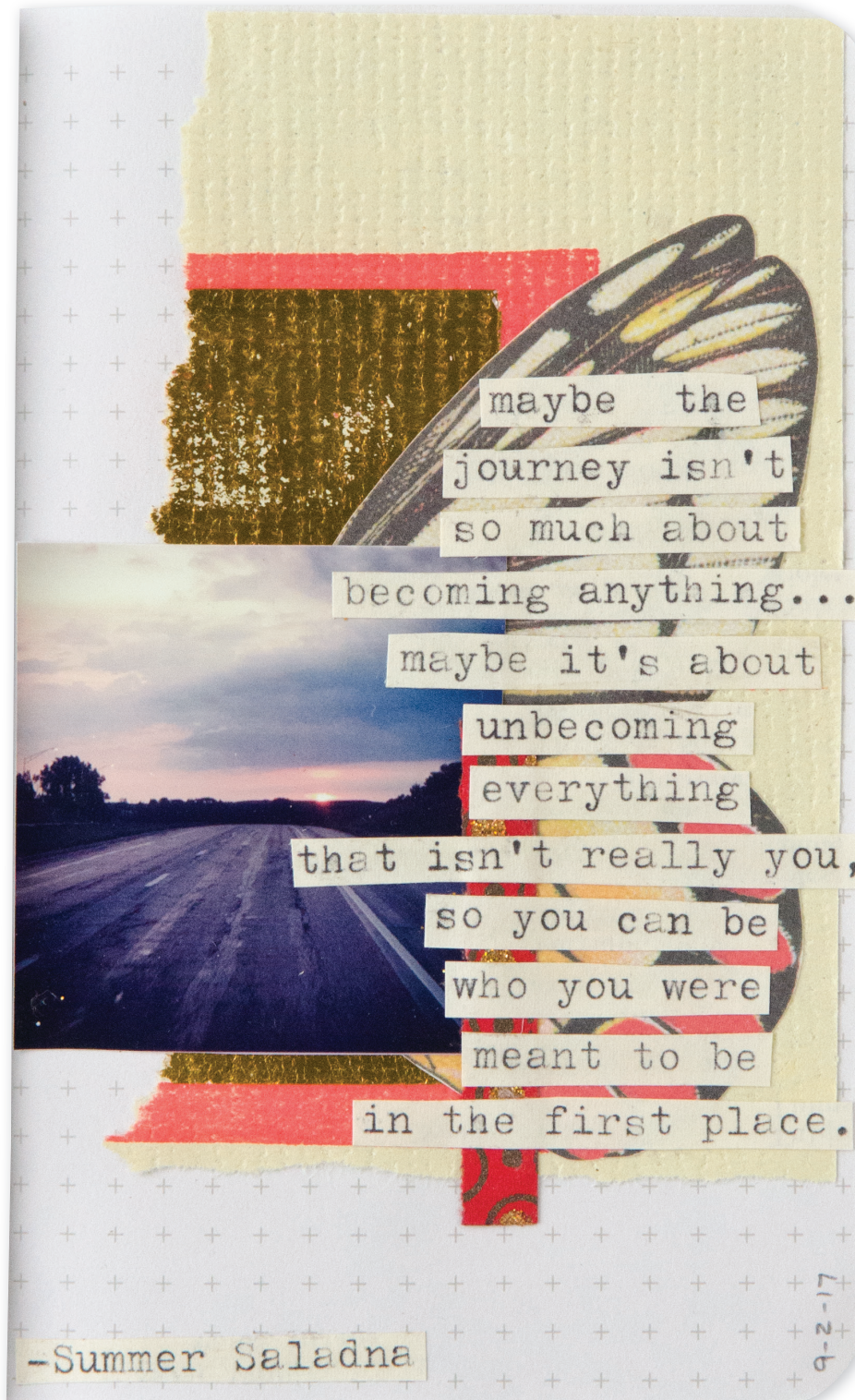


# A Study IN SIMPLICITY

BY DIANNE FAGO







I'm not sure why, but 2017 was my most creatively dry year — ever. I felt overwhelmed with keeping up with what I was doing, which was combined with a strong desire and need to break free from my usual creative style. I eventually became so distraught with not knowing what to do that I ended up completely shutting down and stopped creating all together. By late August, I knew something had to be done and done altogether differently. I follow a lot of artists who share their journals on Instagram and YouTube, and I was drawn to the sense of simplicity and minimalism in their pages, as well as something that was totally foreign to me: white space. Their pages had only one image on them with a handful of words — one image with blank space surrounding it! Could I even do this? And if I tried, would I like what I created? The idea of simple pages while incorporating areas of uncovered space started to sound like the perfect way to freshen up my style and get me back on a creative path. »





### TINY BUT MIGHTY

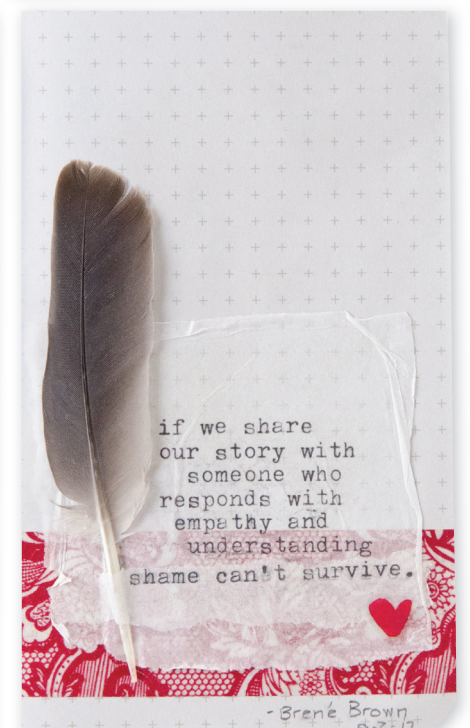
For some reason I also knew I needed to change the size of journal I was working in, and the thought of using a smaller journal appealed to me. I have to admit, I have a slight addiction to collecting — well, treasuring — Field Notes Journals, and I have quite a stack of them sitting unused on my bookshelf. They have been adding up over the past couple of years and it was way past time to put them to good use. I also liked that the pages were dot-grid paper because it helped me with the fear of a blank page. As I started working in my journal more and more, I began to love the look and feel the dot-grid paper added to each finished page.

### UNLOCKING IDEAS

It wasn't long before I started to appreciate the smaller-sized pages because they helped me keep the elements to a minimum. I used things I found laying around on my worktable, including clothing tags, feathers, dried leaves, scraps of vintage paper, used and dried tea bags, deli paper from the bakery, as well bits of fabric and thread. I also started digging around in my stash and uncovered a pile of vellum I have had since my scrapbooking days way back in the late 1990s. Discovering these things inspired me to listen to my muse and try anything and everything that she thought up. What was there to lose? It was more important for me to try a crazy idea than to not create at all and keep an unattempted idea locked up inside my head. These bits of inspiration gave me the ideas to weave strips of vellum, wrap and cover parts of an image with tea bags and deli paper, and to stitch directly onto paper with a needle and embroidery floss to outline an image.







## ADDING MYSELF

For journaling, I focused on using clipped words and parts of sentences from fiction books, as well typing onto tea bags and torn pieces of vellum and deli paper using a manual typewriter because I love the clean look of printed text. I soon realized I had made an unspoken promise to myself to use self-portraits as much as possible, instead of relying on magazine images. This was something I had never really done before. In doing so, my muse reminded me of a technique I had long forgotten about: image transfers using clear packing tape. I quickly started experimenting with images that were printed with an ink-jet printer, a laser printer, and with my Canon Selphy. The transfers made from printed images on paper were light and hazy while the transfers made with images printed with the Canon Selphy were vivid, colorful, and fantastically transparent. »

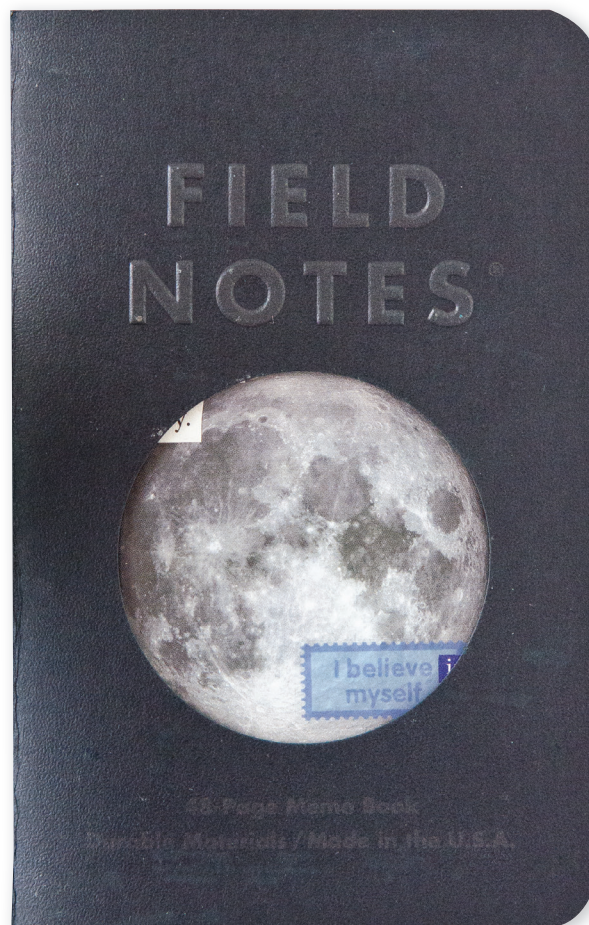


## OVERCOMING FEARS

The biggest thing I learned while working in this journal — besides gaining a newfound love of white space — was how much art journaling helps me, especially when I am feeling down or experiencing anxiety and stress over something. I was able to face and work through one of my biggest fears: the dentist. Not long after starting this journal, I had extensive dental work, and many of the pages I created during that time are of me exploring and tackling that fear. I discovered a lot of my fear was caused by shame, but I told myself that it's OK to have bad days. I took joy in the simple days and I declared myself a magnificent "fear slayer." I also learned my muse is alive and well. I think she was cluttered down with my trying to use too many elements on a page, and she just needed a little simplicity in her life, too.







## TIPS

- Incorporating photos of yourself in your journals can add a whole new sense of self-identity to your pages. Using a photo collage app on your phone can help you resize your photos to petite images that work great in smaller journals. I usually put six photos into a 4" x 6" grid to produce six 2-inch square photos. You can save this image and print it at a local store or on your own home printer.
- I love to use pretty antique dishes to hold my tools, collected ephemera, and book text clippings. Besides being a beautiful display on my worktable, it inspires me to touch what's inside, which can rekindle my desire to create something with what I find.
- Recycling found items into my mixed-media creations has always been one of my favorite things to do. Start saving pretty clothing tags, deli paper from the bakery, patterned tape from packaging, fliers from museums and special events you visit, and postage stamps, and keep them in a pretty container on your worktable. They are fun ways to add a bit of interest to your pages, and you're helping the environment as well!
- If you're wanting to change things up with your journaling style, be sure to check your stash of unused journals and supplies first. There is no need to go out and buy yet another journal when you might already have the perfect one waiting for you. Committing to use a blank journal from your collection might be the one thing to help you try something new and start exploring a style different than your own.

*Dianne Fago is a stay-at-home wife, a mom to five amazing children, and a grandma to three beautiful grandchildren in Omaha, Nebraska. On a whim she started sharing art videos on YouTube five years ago and now has almost 400 process videos creating collaged and mixed-media art journal pages, artist trading cards, as well as many more projects. To watch her videos and to see more of her artwork, follow her on Youtube (PackerDi) and Instagram (@honestheartstudio\_packerdi).*