

The background of the page is a vertical watercolor wash in shades of purple and magenta, with some darker, more saturated areas and lighter, more translucent areas, creating a textured, artistic effect.

# Change

A Workshop

by Eric M. Scott

Coauthor of *The Journal Junkies Workshop* and *Journal Fodder 365*

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# Introduction

Nothing is permanent. From each moment to the next, everything changes, evolves, grows, deteriorates, transforms, or dies. Change is obvious and observable with some things as they burst into being and are extinguished in a flash. Other things appear permanent and stagnant only because the rate of change is so incrementally slow that it is nearly imperceptible. But there is always movement and change. Wind and water slowly wear down the mightiest of mountains, blood courses through veins and the earth spins. It is a cycle, a matter of nature. As part of that cycle, we too, change, grow, and evolve.

How have we grown and changed in our lives? Are we living the lives we dreamed of once upon a time? Are we simply enduring life and not enjoying it? How can we bring about the change we desire and live the life we have always dreamed about?

I am a firm believer in the power of the visual journal to change and transform lives. It is that power that I wish to explore in this open-ended, hands-on workshop. You will be guided through a process of discovery as you explore your life in its current state and reflect on those things that you need to change or want to change. Stop waiting for the right time, the right circumstances, or the right situation. Chart the course of your life, and begin living the life you envision.

What do you wish to let go of? What do you dream for your life? How can you begin the movement toward that life?

The activities, exercises and ideas in this workshop are meant to only give a framework for your very personal work, and each individual's responses will be unique, different, and highly personalized. There is no end product in mind - no required number of projects or pages. Although I specifically share the making of a single two-page spread with you, this only how I do things - how I work through a single idea in the journal. You are free to do things your own way.

Working from general to specific, you will focus on those areas that you feel need the most attention and blaze your own trail. You will integrate your own ideas, favorite materials and techniques into your explorations. You will only be guided, prompted, nudged, and encouraged as you find your own path and discover your authentic voice that speaks of the change that is most profound for you.

# Getting Started

Let me make it quite clear from the beginning that it is up to you to choose how to proceed through this workshop. I am only sharing a process, and I don't expect you to copy or mimic me. I am not asking you to reproduce my pages, my questions or my ideas. I only show you how I do it so that you may consider how you do it. Don't worry about doing it right or doing it my way. The only right way is the way that connects to you in the most authentic way, and you may decide something totally different and contrary to what I show and suggest. Great! Do it!

The steps that I go through are just specific to this workshop and these pages. Every time that I encounter the journal, I approach it with different materials, ideas and techniques. I don't have a set procedure that I consistently use on my pages. So, feel free to choose different materials, create an alternative process, and allow your journaling to flow in the direction it needs to. Though I focus on a two page spread feel free to spread your work across several pages or confine it to one.

So trust your gut, and lean into fear as things are about to CHANGE.

## **Materials**

You will need some basic journaling materials as you work through this workshop. So gather some of the following to have on hand. Don't have everything on the list? That's fine. Make do with what you have. Have some things that aren't on the list? Great! Feel free to use them. Just don't bog down your work with too many materials or complex techniques. Need more information about these materials? Check out my book *The Journal Junkies Workshop* that I coauthored with David R. Modler.

You need:

- Your Journal
- Some loose paper - drawing, lined, colored
- Watercolor pencils
- Watercolor paint
- Acrylic paint
- Various waterproof ink pens
- Various drawing and writing materials - colored pencil, markers, pens and pencils
- Glue stick
- Paintbrushes
- Water cup
- Various objects to use with the paint - bubble wrap, sponges, items to stamp, etc
- Stencils
- Fodder and ephemera
- Xylene solvent - Goof Off remover or Chartpak Blender Pen
- Burnisher - a wooden spoon works well

- Hobby knife
- Cutting mat
- Packing tape

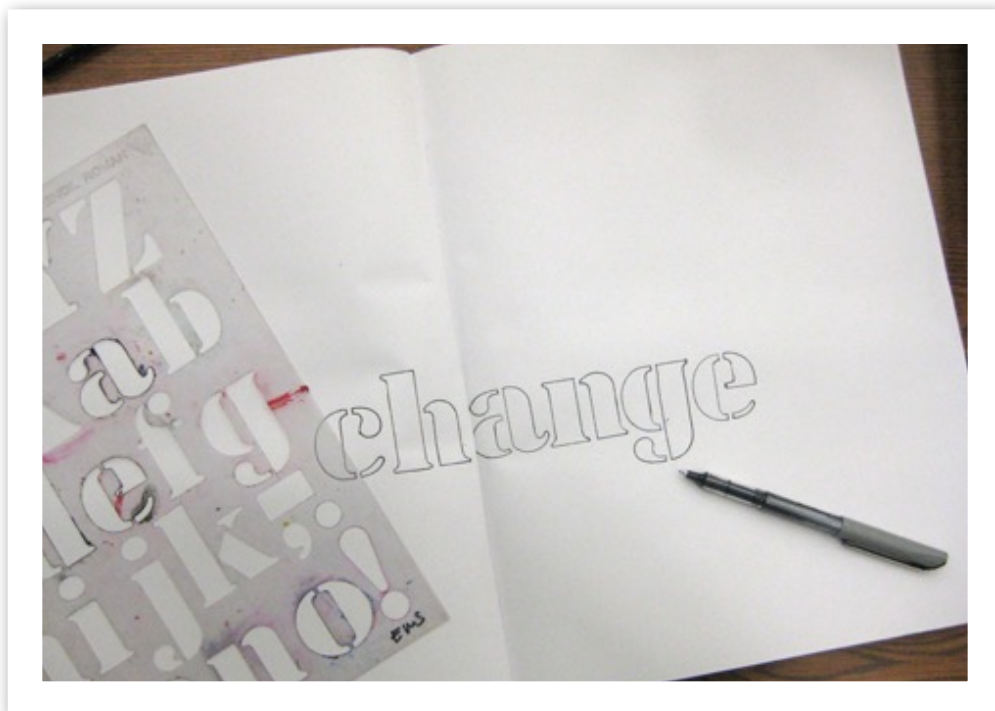
### **Workspace**

It's important to have an area to work. If you're fortunate to have a studio or a craft room, great! If you don't, great! By limiting the number of materials, you can work nearly anywhere - maybe the kitchen table, the coffee table or a booth at the local coffee shop. Consider making a kit of journal materials, supplies, and fodder that can be taken out anytime. Find a corner, a table, a spot where you can work consistently. When you claim a space, you can more easily get into the habit of working in the journal. Instead of searching each time for a space to work, you can go directly to that space, and get to work immediately. If you can leave your materials and journal out in that space, even better. An open journal with readied materials is an invitation to work.

# Beginning a Page

Beginning a page is often a struggle. Anxiety can creep in as we approach a new page. We worry that we aren't artists, that we'll mess up, that we won't have anything to say, or that we won't live up to what others can do. Over the years, I have accepted this uncertainty and unease as part of the process. I've learned to ease into my pages and to accept the results because it isn't about the results at all. It's about the **process**. It isn't about being an artist. It's about being human and having something to say and some issues to work through. It isn't about not having ideas. It's about having too many ideas and how to narrow the focus. It isn't about comparing ourselves to others. It's about putting our heart and soul into the journal. Just like life, the journal isn't a competition. Do this for yourself and no one else. If you are holding onto having a pretty page, let it go, suspend your judgement and dive in.

1. As I begin my own journey, I want to allow the idea of change to sink in a bit, so my thoughts can form and gel a bit before I commit them to the page. I don't jump into any deep reflection yet, and I allow the ideas to build up as my work progresses. I simply begin by stenciling the word "change" so that it straddles two pages (I like two-page spreads). I use a flexible plastic stencil and a black waterproof pen. The stencils are very thin, and I can store them in my fodder pocket in the back of my journal. I have a large journal that easily accommodates the stencils. The pen is a uniball Vision Needle, and is one of my favorites. They come in a multitude of waterproof/fade-proof colors.



You may want to begin a two-page spread as well, or you may want to confine it all to a single page. You may want to draw in the word or write it big. If you're timid about starting a page, you may want to begin on a separate piece of drawing paper to glue in later. If you're not confident with your drawing ability, you could print out the word large from your computer using any font you wish and glue it anywhere on the page. You may want to collage in the letters ransom note style by cutting large individual letters from magazines and newspapers. In some way get the word on the page. You don't need to have a plan, and you don't need to know what the page will look like when you're done. Don't lie the word "change," use your own word, but get something down.

**2.** Another way to allow the ideas to percolate is to jump into some basic art techniques. Getting some color down before I get too far along, allows me to set the tone for the page. Sometimes my color choices are very deliberate and sometimes they are completely random and spontaneous. What colors do you think about when you hear the word "change"? Watercolor and watercolor pencil are two easy materials to use, and they are great in the layering process. Because they are transparent, they don't cover up what's underneath allowing collaged items, colors and drawings to show through. It's important to use a good waterproof pen. Some bleeding and smudging may occur, but that's part of the process.

I use an Apple Green Derwent Inktense pencil to create the rectangle around the word "change". I keep a sharp edge near the word and blend out the color away from the word by adding more water to my brush.



**3.** For no particular reason other than I want to, I use some large bubble wrap to stamp some green watercolor shapes down the left side of the spread. Some inexpensive, semi-moist paint in a pan like Yarka, Prang, or Crayola works great. I leave the bubble wrap on the page to allow the paint to dry quite a bit. I even close my journal to put slight, but constant pressure on the bubble wrap, and set it aside for about twenty minutes. This ensures the texture in the bubbles. After I remove the bubble wrap, I have a good basis for my page, but I don't know exactly where it's going to go.



Try adding color to your page with watercolor. If you want to experiment a little try bubble wrap (like I have), sponging, or some other watercolor technique. For more basic watercolor techniques, checkout these [video tutorials](#).

# Questions and Choosing a Direction

As I work on a page or spread, I rarely, if ever, work exclusively on that particular page/ spread. I am constantly jumping around in my journal, adding bits and pieces here and there, experimenting with techniques and generating ideas for other pages and spreads.

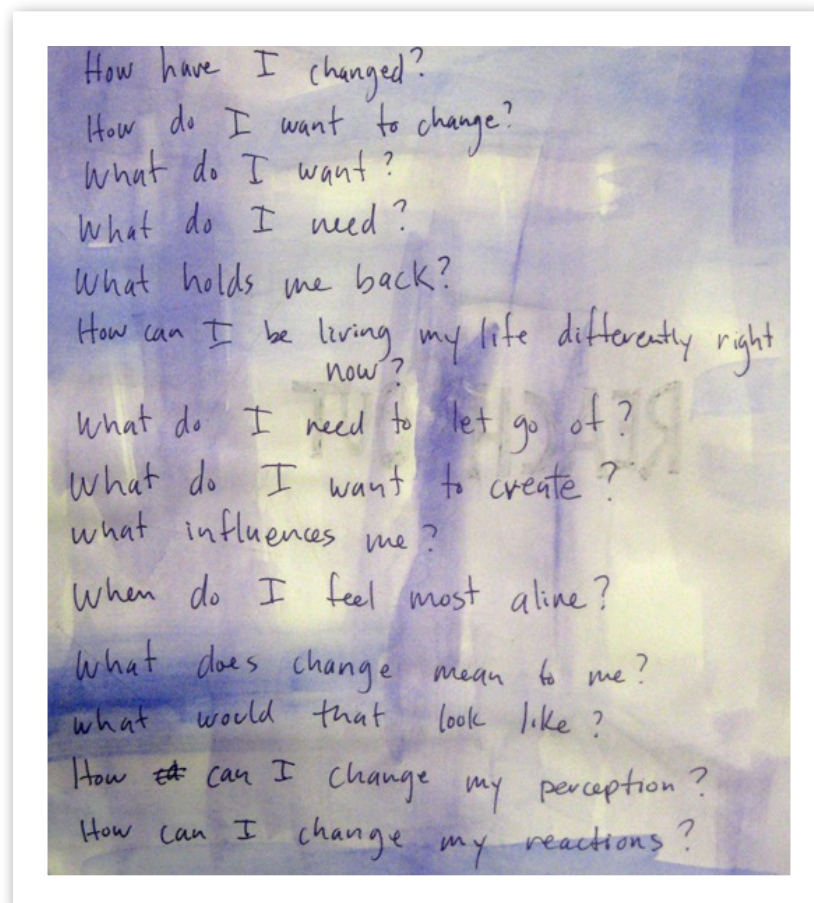


One of the ways I generate ideas it by asking questions. I ask myself a lot of questions when I work in the journal, especially when working with a big idea like “change”. It’s easy to get overwhelmed by the vastness of a topic like this. There’s just so much to it - so many different elements and ideas to consider. Where can I even start?

Asking my own questions helps me generate possible avenues for exploration and helps me to narrow down the possibilities. These questions almost always lead to more questions and to more pages in the journal. I can’t address every aspect of “change” on a single page or two-page spread, so I am sowing the seeds for future work and setting the direction of my intention.

4. I jot down some questions all about “change” on a different page that I painted with purple and blue watercolor. I plan on using some of these for further exploration for my spread and for pages yet to come.

If you don’t want to commit the questions to your page or to your journal, write them on separate paper. They can then be glued in anytime. Remember that there are no stupid or silly questions, so write down everything. Don’t edit yourself. Remember that you can always come back and add more questions later when they pop into your head. Use some of my questions, but come up with your own. What is on your mind? What do you wish to work on?



**5.** Using one of the questions that I generated (“What does change mean to me?”), I take a step into the deeper reflection and use a stream of consciousness writing to write about change. I first draw a double line down the left side of the spread giving me an area within to write. I fill the area with my writing, stopping only when I reach the bottom of the page.

Stream of consciousness writing, also known as free writing, is a creative writing technique where you let the words flow out of you. You don't censor or edit yourself as you write. It's as if the pen is hardwired directly to your brain recording every thought as it comes. Do not worry about spelling, grammar, or making sense. Spill the words out.



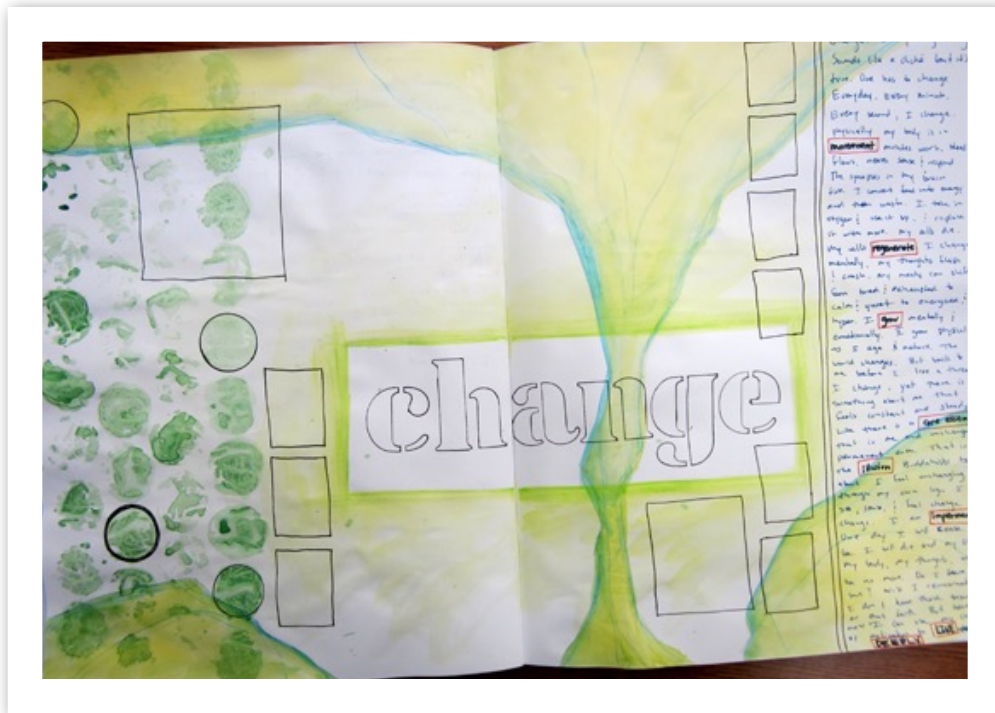
This writing will be a source for future ideas, areas for exploration, and new directions. One thing always leads to more things, supplying a constant flow of ideas.

**6.** As I allow what I have written to soak in for a bit, I turn back to some of my art techniques. I begin to use purposeful imagery as I work by drawing some “growing” shapes with a light blue watercolor pencil - Prismacolor True Blue to be exact. When I think of change I think of growth. Growth is one of the basic ways something living can change. Plants grow. People and animals grow. Growth reminds me of plants and nature, so I stick with my green color scheme. I paint yellow watercolor over the blue watercolor pencil giving me a variety of yellows, greens, and blues. I am establishing my color scheme. That waterproof ink keeps my words from bleeding.



**7.** I must say that my working method is a balance between randomness and spontaneity on one hand, and structure and deliberation on the other. I often juxtapose words, images, and collage for no reason whatsoever. It's a just a feeling that it needs to happen. Sometimes elements like rectangles can give a page or spread a but of structure. I continually come back to circles and rectangles because they create a structure and a predictability that I like. Also, they are just simple to draw, and I can easily add these shapes anytime and anyplace.

I use my black uniball pen to draw circles with a compass around some of the green bubbles I stamped in earlier, and I draw in some repeating rectangles. I use black and red ink to highlight some words in my writing by making them bold and drawing rectangles around them.



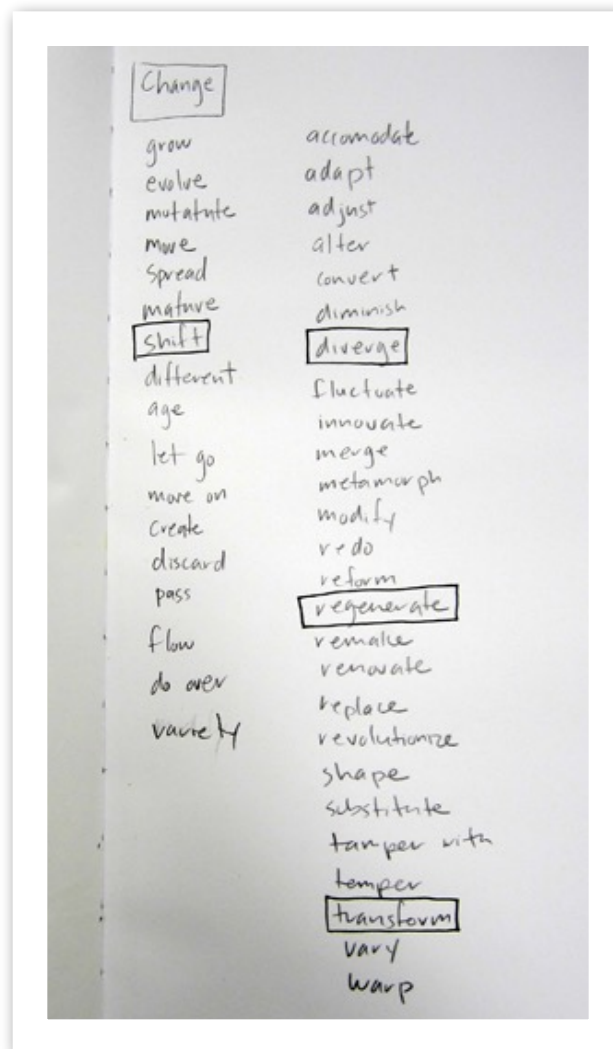
A word about pens and markers, ink is a staple of my journaling practice, and there many, many choices out there. I find that uniball Vision pens are my favorite. First of all they don't bleed through unless you are using very thin paper, and if you get the waterproof/fadeproof type, you have much less bleeding and smearing. Be careful, some of the unable are not waterproof or fadeproof and bleed easily. Some people love to use permanent markers, but they bleed through the paper very easily. I don't use them much, except for the gold and silver metallic markers. Like everything, though, pens and markers are high personal, and everyone has his or her favorite.

# Brainstorming and Solvent Transfers

As mentioned above, I don't work on just one page or with just one idea at a time. As I have been working on this two-page spread, I have slowly added to other pages in my journal, and I have started new ones. Often an idea takes hold of me, and I find myself exploring it over many pages, and this topic of "change" is no different, so I turn to a new page and brainstorm a list of words that come to mind as I think about the word "change".

8. Brainstorming is one of my tried and true techniques for generating ideas. I love words, and I often find that though a concept like “change” is very broad and intriguing, I can spawn new ideas and different directions by simply brainstorming. I also find that certain words and ideas keep popping up again and again. The word “regenerate” came up a couple of times - once in my stream of consciousness writing, and once in the list on this new page.

I will admit that the first column is my own list, but when I got stuck and couldn't think of anything else, I turned to a thesaurus (the second column). I was selective as I used the thesaurus, and I wrote down only the words that interested me. Brainstorm your own list, look up the word in a dictionary or thesaurus or search online to generate a list of words that you could use.



I drew rectangles around the words that really appealed to me, and I'll come back to these later.

9. Image transfers are an awesome way to use images from a variety of sources. One of my favorites is a solvent transfer. Be warned though. This technique uses a volatile solvent that's not all that good for you. So, use common sense, read and follow all safety labels, and use it in a well ventilated area.

I have researched a number of transfers using all types of solvents, but the one I feel works the best is xylene. I find that other solvents work to varying degrees, and some leave an oily stain on the paper. Xylene works exceptionally well to transfer any toner based image, and photocopies and laser prints work equally well. However, this technique will not work with inkjet prints or prints from many of the all-in-one machines that are common in homes. It must be toner, not water-soluble ink.

I use Goof-Off remover, a small photocopy of a brain, a color laser print of a work of art by Dinah Wakefield, and a color laser print of a scanned magazine image to create the three transfers. I like how the image of the women is near the edge, as if she has **changed** her mind and is leaving. I also like how the layers underneath show through the transfer.s



With these transfers, the toxicity of the solvent is not your only concern, you want to be careful about what's on the other side of the page. Incidental transfers can happen easily if you have photocopied images or text behind where you are transferring. Xylene can easily soak through several layers of paper, so pay attention.

Also understand that these are not perfect transfers. The images are somewhat fuzzy and incomplete in areas. That is part of the process. If you are set on "perfect" images, collage the images into your journal. For a video tutorial for this technique go [here](#).

# Stylistic Concerns

As mentioned above, I randomly and spontaneously add elements and media to my pages, but often these random spontaneous acts involve using the same elements and the same materials. Because I continually go back to the same shapes, colors, and media, I develop my own style and mode of working in the journal. This gives a consistency to my pages as repeated elements pop up again and again.

What are you drawn to? What colors, shapes, patterns, images, and art materials hold your fascination? These are the things that point to your style.

**10.** Watercolor pencil is one of my favorite media. It is portable and easy to use. The pencil gives me lots of control, yet with a little bit of water, very painterly effects can happen. They are also very good in the layering process, and have become a staple in my artistic arsenal. I use a Dark Green Prismacolor watercolor pencil and some plain water around the large rectangle in the upper left and the small rectangle in the lower right. I also use the dark green to create rectangles in the other corners. These are consistent lines and shapes that I use as I develop me layers.



**11.** As mentioned above, ink is another basic material, and I am rarely without my black, blue, and red uniball pens. I learned long ago to commit things in pen. It forces me to accept what I write or Draw because there is no erasing. As a result, mistakes, crossed-out words, and ink smudges are common in my journal.

I use a green uniball Vision Needle pen to draw in some lines in the “growing” shape I did earlier. I also, draw in stripes from the sides of some of the rectangles. I use a silver metallic paint marker to write the words “shift”, “regenerate”, and “diverge”. I outline these words with my black uniball, and write the phrases underneath these words.



# Collage

Collage is an important part of my journaling approach. Most often it is the mundane fodder from everyday life, but sometimes it is more deliberate art papers and specific shapes.

**12.** I glue in two wristbands from a local movie theater for no other reason that they match my color scheme. Although random, these bands help to document my everyday life even on a page that has a very specific purpose. This also builds in stylistic consistency. I cut out very specific shapes from green construction paper using a hobby knife and a cutting mat. Because I have been exploring the idea of growth and rejuvenation with this spread, I cut out a variety of simple “leaf” shapes. To repeat some structural elements, I cut out some square and rectangle shapes as well.

I glue in all the collage elements with UHU glue stick. I turn the elements over on a scrap piece of paper so that I can spread the glue over the entire back. The scrap paper keeps glue from getting all over my work surface and my journal. Make certain to



burnish the collage piece so that it is well adhered to the page.



**13.** When using collage in the later layers of a page, the collage can seem a bit odd because it appears to sit on top of everything and may not feel like part of the page. By drawing, painting, and writing on top of the collage, you can push the glued on pieces into the page making them really fit into the page.



Green, yellow, and brown watercolor paint and pencil tie into my color scheme, create some contrast, and help push the collage into the page. I use green and black ink to reconnect some lines that were divided by the collage. This really helps to pull the floating collage pieces into the page.

# Final Layers

My spread is pretty well developed, and I don't plan on doing much more to it. I just want to add a few more things to bring it to a close. I don't like saying that a page or spread is finished because I may come back at anytime and add more to the spread. Colored pencil and acrylic paint are two media that are very effective as finishing layers because of the waxy nature of the colored pencil and the plastic nature of the acrylic. Not much will stick to them.

**14.** Using various green and brown Prismacolor pencils, I define several areas around the spread by shading and layering color. This enables me to bring more depth to the darker areas, to define edges, to bring in crisper detail, and to push some of the collage elements further into the page. The changes to the page at this stage are a lot more subtle, and I am only strengthening what I have done already. But feel free to add whatever you feel like. Perhaps your changes aren't as subtle.



**15.** Acrylic paint is a great way to wrap up this spread, and I can bring out areas that have been lost in previous layers. I can also create a greater sense of depth in some areas by bumping up the contrast between light and dark. Finally, I can add those last finishing touches so that I have a balanced and visually dynamic spread.

I stick to my color scheme and use phthalo green, cadmium yellow, and titanium white acrylic paint. In some areas, I thin the paint with water so that it blends into the page, and in other areas, I use the opaque quality of the paint to cover what is underneath. This brings a lot of push and pull into the spread.



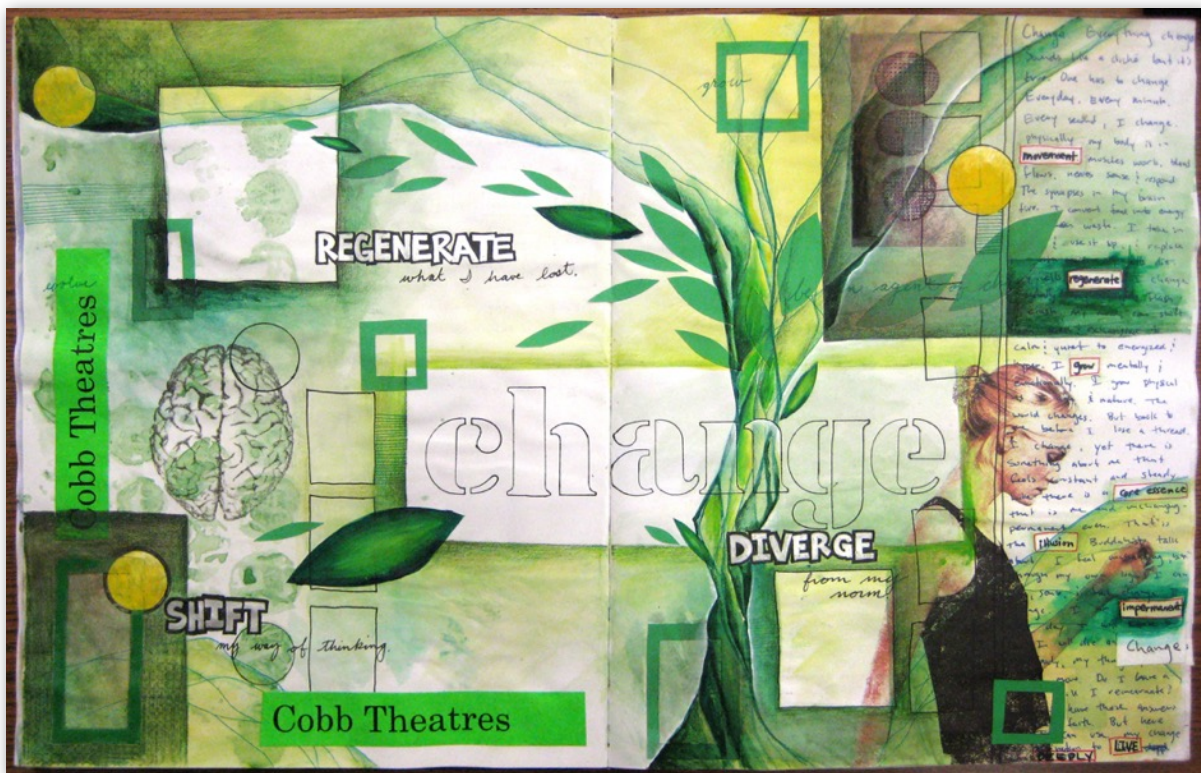
## Final Thoughts

This journal spread has been a lot more deliberate than most of my other pages. I only stuck to doing things that I could document, and didn't do a lot of the random things that I normally do as I work in the journal. But it is always good to have some structured pages intermingled with more random ones. Also, I didn't work straight from start to finish on this. As shown in some of the earlier steps, I brainstormed and wrote ideas on other pages, but I also began and developed a lot of other pages. Actually, this page took about five months as life happened, I filled many other pages and had several major bouts of inactivity.

As ideas come up, it is often necessary to start new pages and allow an older idea to have it's own room to grow. And so it has been with this spread. It has sown the seeds of many other pages, and my life has been a lot about change lately. I have more to share, but that will come later.

I hope that you have enjoyed a look into my way of working, and I hope that you have a lot of good ideas now bouncing around after this workshop. I just want to stress again that this has only been one way of working, and I am constantly mixing up the techniques and concepts that I use in the journal. It is my hope that you have not seen this as a recipe to follow in order to get a "Change" spread that looks like mine. I hope that you have infused the journey with your own way of working, your own images, and your own ideas.

The visual journal is always a place for authentic self-discovery, and I have shared this little journey as a way to allow you to tap into your own voice and to cultivate your own ideas and concepts of Change. It is up to you to carry on and allow the momentum to take you where it needs to go.



My Change Spread

Here is to change, growth, and self discovery!

# Layers: A Quick Look



Stenciling the word "change".



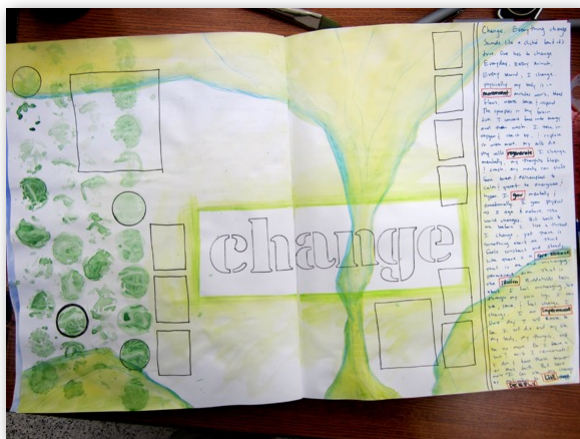
Watercolor pencil around "change".



Stamping bubble wrap.



Writing, watercolor pencil & paint.



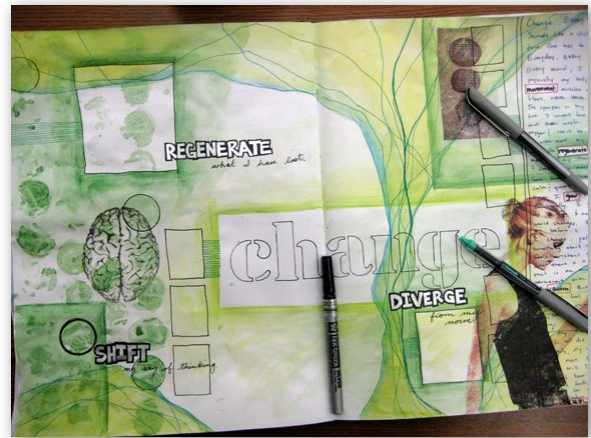
Drawing in rectangles in ink.



Solvent image transfers.



More watercolor pencil.



Ink and metallic paint marker.



Collage.



Pushing the collage into the page.



Shading with colored pencil.



Wrapping up with acrylic paint.