

Mini-Assemblage

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Author of *The Artful Bird*



brad bartholomew

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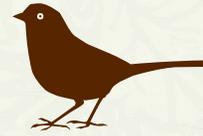
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At the end of every bird project I walk around my studio picking up all the bits of leftover wire, fabric, and thread, so I can clear some space to begin a new project. I've filled many shoeboxes with treasured bits of fabric that I use to make assemblages with small fabric birds.

This small assemblage is a quick and satisfying way to put all those tiny treasured bits to use. I cut up old file folders for backdrops, but stiff cardboard also works. Hang the finished piece from a wire loop or frame it in a shadowbox.



FINISHED SIZE

Finished size: 3" x 4" (7.5 x 10 cm)

MATERIALS

White cotton fabric scraps for body

Various scraps of fabric for wings, tail, beak, and backdrop

Cardboard (such as an old file folder) for backdrop, 3" x 4" (7.5 x 10 cm)

Wool stuffing, 2 ounces (57 g)

Brown or black embroidery floss

18-gauge steel wire, 4" (10 cm)

White thread for construction

Second color of plain or decorative thread for stitching wings and tail

TOOLS

Freezer paper

Iron

Pencil or marker for tracing

Sewing machine

Scissors for paper and fabric

Appliqué pins

Handsewing needles

Disappearing fabric marker (water or air soluble)

Forceps or long craft tweezers

Craft glue

E6000 adhesive

PATTERN PIECES (page 4)

Side Body (cut 1, cut 1 reverse)

Feathers (cut 4 to 5 of various sizes)

Tail (cut 2)

Beak (cut 1 on fold)

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1 Collect a variety of fabric scraps. I used ivory cotton for the bird body, a variety of cottons for the feathers and tail, and small pieces of metallic fabric, lace, and brocade fabric for the backdrop.

2 Trace pattern pieces onto freezer paper and cut out with paper scissors.

3 Iron Side Body pattern piece to a double layer of white body fabric. Stitch around pattern piece leaving an opening as marked for turning and stuffing. Pull off pattern piece. Trim 1/8" (3 mm) from stitching line. Clip curves. Use forceps to turn bird right side out. Stuff firmly. Close opening with tiny ladder stitches or your preferred handstitch.

4 Iron Beak pattern piece on fold of a single layer of darker cotton fabric. Cut out. Coat outside folded edge of beak with a thin layer of craft glue and pin to bird using appliqué pins. Allow glue to dry and remove pins when dry. Add a stitch to secure beak if desired.

5 Choose one side of the bird to detail (the finished bird will be glued to a support so only one side will show). Work on this side only. Hide knots and thread ends on the reverse side.

6 Draw eye and eyebrow onto bird with disappearing fabric marker. Using satin stitch, embroider eye with two strands of black or brown embroidery floss. Using stem stitch, embroider eyebrow with two strands of embroidery floss. If your marker is water-soluble, dampen the eyes to make marker lines disappear.

7 At bottom of bird poke two small holes with the tip of sharp scissors. The first hole should be 1/4" (6 mm) to the right of the stitching line and the second hole 1/4" (6 mm) to the left. Bend the piece of 18-gauge wire in half. Insert the tip of the wire through one hole,

extending through the bird's body and out the other hole. Pull wire down so that the bend in the wire is centered inside the bird's body. Push up on the wire ends to nestle the bend inside the bird's body. Apply a dab of craft glue where the wire meets the fabric on each side to hold the wire in place

8 Cut feather shapes from a variety of cotton scraps (use the Feather pattern pieces or cut freehand). Five or six feathers layered on top of one another will give the wing enough heft.

9 Using the Tail pattern piece, cut two tail pieces from a cotton scrap. Use appliqué pins to pin one tail piece on the top back end of the bird's body with the narrower part on the body and the wider part extending off. Pin the other trapezoid underneath the body so that its widest end matches up with the wide end of the first trapezoid, wrong sides facing. Using decorative thread, handstitch both tail pieces down. I like the look of long visible stitches here.

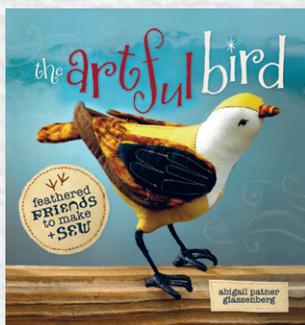
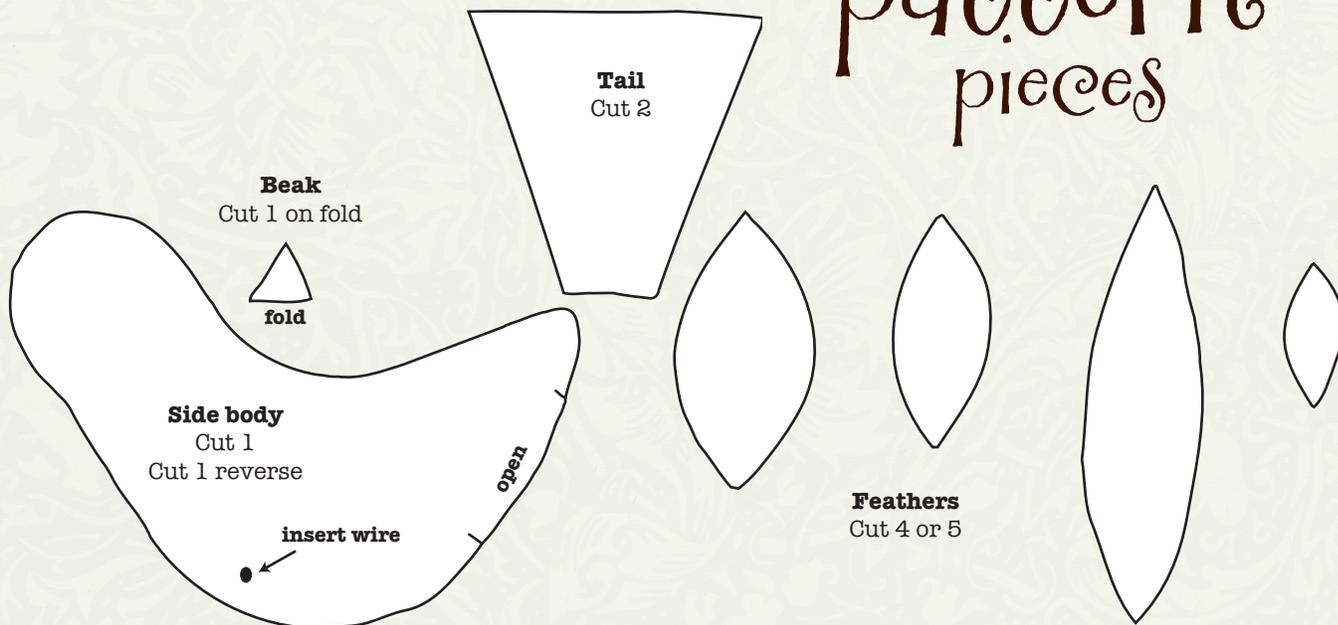
10 Layer the feather shapes in a staggered way on the bird's side until you like the way the "wing" looks. Pin and handstitch using decorative thread. Not all parts of each feather shape need to be stitched; just use a few stitches to be sure everything is attached.

11 Cut a variety of fabric scraps and layer them on top of the cardboard support until you find a pleasing arrangement of color and texture. Hold the bird up to the backdrop to see how it will look when attached. Machine stitch the fabric to the cardboard. Stitching lines can be straight or curvy, simple stitches or decorative stitches, with white thread or decorative thread.

12 Apply a few dabs of E6000 adhesive to the back (undetailed) side of the bird. Press bird into place on backdrop. Let dry according to package instructions or overnight.



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