

When the Pendulum Rests

I WAS INTRODUCED to modern-day scrapbooking nearly 20 years ago. We were invited into someone's home to attend a class and then guided through the process of taking our photos out of boxes and placing as many as we could on a 12x12 page. We were encouraged to journal, if only to add captions and dates, ensuring that we would remember names and events. We added minimal decorations so we didn't distract from preserving our memories.

This went on until the marketplace expanded and dedicated scrapbook stores and magazines appeared. Almost overnight, scrappers were introduced to a myriad of embellishments and pretty papers to add to their layouts. The pendulum began to swing. Soon it was swinging as far left as possible.



The emphasis on the multi-photo layout and journaling faded out, and the new trend became what I call “The Perfect Layout.” You know the ones. They feature one perfect photo, one emotionally charged word (i.e. Beauty or Dream) and handfuls of perfectly placed embellishments. The collateral damage from the pendulum swing toward “Perfect Layouts” is the storytelling. It is said that a picture is worth a thousand words. Imagine, then, the worth of a photo along with a thousand words— invaluable!

We need to work together to bring back the genesis of this hobby of scrapbooking—storytelling. The pendulum must rest in the middle where the best of all is encouraged. We need to encourage customers to embrace layouts that tell our stories, which capture the everyday moments in life, where the living really takes place, as well as the milestones. The impact of storytelling has the potential to extend the distance our voice travels. We have an opportunity to share our gifts of guidance and wisdom long after we're gone. Layout after layout with one word telling a child he's beautiful can only go so far. Scrapbook pages should be used to tell what it is that we find beautiful about our children, what our dreams are for them, what we hope for them and what we hope for ourselves.

When one of my four sons is struggling to raise a family while pursuing a fulfilling career and nurturing a marriage, I want him to be able to open up his scrapbooks and hear my voice telling him that his dad and I understand what he's feeling. In those pages he'll find guidance, and our parenting love will be extended.

We categorize many of today's layouts as Art, which somehow diminishes journaling as a creative expression. Underestimating the importance of telling your story through written word is similar to choosing to leave out spices when making pasta sauce. Sure, you'll end up with sauce, but is it as good as it could be?

The stories must once again become center stage in our layouts, a place where the pendulum rests peacefully and beautifully in the middle. That's a good place to be.

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