

Make It from Your Heart

CLOSE to my HEART™

How to Achieve Balance in Your Artwork

We've talked quite a bit about how to make harmonious color combinations based on color theory and the color wheel. Today we'd like to branch out and look at some other visual elements that can boost your artwork beyond the use of color.

Balance is a design principle that refers to the distribution of visual elements (such as shapes, colors, space, and textures) and how they relate to each other in terms of their visual weight. That term "visual weight" sounds a bit complicated, so let's take it back to the playground to explain.



Consider two children on a seesaw. To have a fun experience, the children on either side of the seesaw should be relatively the same size or weight. If one child is heavier than the other, the seesaw is unbalanced and it will continuously want to tip to the one side, creating an unpleasant experience for everyone involved. The same idea applies when working on two dimensional paper projects, such as scrapbook pages or cards.

We tend to strive, usually without thinking about it, to create artwork that is balanced. A balanced work, where the visual weight is distributed evenly, appears stable, is pleasing to look at, and makes the viewer feel comfortable. Work that is unbalanced does the opposite. Sometimes artists create unbalanced art on purpose, but that is pretty rare in scrapbooking and cardmaking.

So how do we apply this design principle to our craft?

There are a few different approaches to achieve balance in your artwork—and we brought examples! So far we've been alluding to probably the simplest approach, and that is something known as reflection symmetry, where one side mirrors the other (both kids on the seesaw are the same size). This is an easy way to achieve balance and doesn't require too much consideration. Simply draw a line (hypothetically, you don't really have to draw a line) down the middle of your work and then mirror what you create on one side on the other side. The line can be drawn vertically, horizontally, or even diagonally.



NOLA STAMPING HINT

Lay an extra blank piece of white cardstock on top of your page to see what it looks like visually. This can also help you spot things that are out of place, or see where embellishments should go.

How to Achieve Balance in Your Artwork, continued

Radial balance is another type of symmetrical balance where the visual balanced is based on a circle (don't worry, we won't quiz you on these terms we're throwing around—the principle matters more than the vocab!). The design has a center and it extends from there. Daisies, a star, and the sun (when depicted with it's rays) are all examples of shapes in radial balance. The page above is a beautiful example of one way you could use radial balance in your scrapbooking.

The downside to symmetrical balance is that it can sometimes come across as too simple, or boring, since both sides are visually the same. But there's more, so keep reading!

Asymmetrical Balance

To have balanced artwork does not mean that all of the pieces on your scrapbook page or layout have to be the same size and laid out in perfect symmetry. Back to the seesaw—if you have a big kid that wants to play but don't have a child of the same weight to balance him out on the other side, you create the weight by stacking two or three kids opposite the big kid. Another option would be to move the big kid closer to the center of the seesaw with just one smaller child on the opposite end to achieve balance where the two can play harmoniously.

In art, if you have a large object on one side of your work it can be balanced with several smaller items on the other side. Or, instead of increasing the number of parts on your scrapbook page (because sometimes we don't have them or just don't want them), move the larger piece closer to the center and balance with the smaller elements on the opposite side.



Take a look at our asymmetrical page above. This page is asymmetrical because it has unequal visual weight on opposite ends. To balance it, our “heavier” elements were moved closer to the center and were countered with a handful of lighter elements on the other corner.

When done correctly, asymmetrical balance is more interesting to look at. It offers more visual variety and even has a more modern feel to it.

To determine whether or not your artwork is balanced, rely on your perception of it. No one area should draw your eye so much that you can't see the others. Also, consider how it makes you feel. Do you like it? Is it comfortable to look at? Or do you sense that something is off?



June 21, 2018 ~ <https://blog.closetomyheart.com/2018/06/21/how-to-achieve-balance-in-your-artwork/>

A banner for NOLA STAMPING. On the left is a logo featuring a fleur-de-lis with wings and a heart. The text "NOLA STAMPING" is in a large, serif font. Below it, in a smaller font, is "For more, visit www.NOLAstamping.com or shop the online store at nolastamping.closetomyheart.com". At the bottom left, there is a teal banner with the text "CLOSE to my HEART".