

(Get free) Scrapbooks: An American History

Scrapbooks: An American History

Jessica Helfand

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Jessica Helfand : Scrapbooks: An American History before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Scrapbooks: An American History:

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Combining pictures, words, and a wealth of personal ephemera, scrapbook makers preserve on the pages of their books a moment, a day, or a lifetime. Highly subjective and rich in emotional content, the scrapbook is a unique and often quirky form of expression in which a person gathers and arranges meaningful materials to create a personal narrative. This lavishly illustrated book is the first to focus attention on the history of American scrapbookstheir origins, their makers, their diverse forms, the reasons for their popularity, and their place in American culture. Jessica Helfand, a graphic designer and scrapbook collector, examines the evolution of scrapbooks from the beginning of the nineteenth century to the present, concentrating on the first half of the twentieth century. She includes color photographs from more than two hundred scrapbooks, some made by private individuals and others by the famous, including Zelda Fitzgerald, Lillian Hellman, Anne Sexton, Hilda Doolittle, and Carl Van Vechten. Scrapbooks, while generally made by amateurs, represent a striking and authoritative form of visual autobiography, Helfand finds, and when viewed collectively they offer a unique perspective on the changing pulses of American cultural life.

.com Best of the Month, November 2008: The scrapbook has long been a popular and vital form of self-expression embraced by a cross-section of American society. "To read another person's scrapbook" observes Jessica Helfand in *Scrapbooks: An American History*, "is to acquire a body of knowledge about an entirely different time and place." Helfand--a prominent graphic designer, art critic, and author--has combined her considerable talents to create one of the most interesting and category-defying books on American culture this year. Through some 200 albums dating from the Victorian era through the present day--albums that Helfand personally curated and researched--*Scrapbooks* tells the story of ordinary and extraordinary lives, innovative visual ideas, and social change within the larger context of American history. The perfectly presented color photographs of album pages and schematic renderings draw readers right in. And, Helfand's detailed, yet evocative interpretations will keep them glued to the page. *Scrapbooks* is a special book that engages readers with a palpable sense of the material qualities of historic scrapbooks, and provides a stimulating presentation of the complex social and cultural worlds out of which they emerged. Like any first-rate scrapbook, *Scrapbooks* is a treasure-trove worth poring over for hours and hours. --Lauren Nemroff

The first book on the history of the American scrapbook. Discover untold stories in America's cultural history through nearly 200 fascinating scrapbooks. Author Jessica Helfand Describes the Scrapbooks Project Rich or poor, celebrity or civilian, men, women, and children of all ages kept scrapbooks. Some were ornate, with gilded covers and carefully composed pages of decoupage. Others were retrofitted from secondhand books, with chromolithographs glued sloppily on top of existing texts. Many consisted entirely of clippings, rigorously aligned and chronologically arranged, often around a central theme: pigeons, for instance, or movie stars or, not infrequently, obituaries. There were scrapbooks filled with babies, birds, and baseball statistics; scrapbooks about ice skating, dog breeding, and the intricacies of boy watching. Fragments of cloth from wedding gowns were included in bridal books, while new mothers included gentle locks from their baby's first haircut. Debutantes saved news clippings, farmers saved weather reports, high school girls saved gum wrappers, and everyone, it seemed, saved greeting cards. Even soldiers kept scrapbooks, pasting in furlough requests, ration cards, and the tattered, beloved photos of their faraway sweethearts. Clumsily folded, haphazardly pasted, randomly annotated with fascinating afterthoughts, the material presence of these personal repositories offers a long-overlooked glimpse into the American spirit. Why did people feel compelled to save the things they did? What did they value, and question, and believe about themselves and the world around them? And how did the things they saved express what they themselves, for whatever reason, could not say in words? Over time, the scrapbook came to mirror the changing pulse of American cultural life: a life of episodic moments, randomly reflected in a news clipping or a silhouetted photograph, a lock of baby hair or a Western Union telegram. As a genre unto themselves, scrapbooks represent a fascinating, yet virtually unexplored visual vernacular, a world of makeshift means and primitive methods, of gestural madness and unruly visions, of piety and poetry and a million private plagiarisms. As author, editor, photographer, curator, and inevitable protagonist, the scrapbook maker engaged in what seems today, in retrospect, a comparatively crude exercise in graphic design. Combining pictures, words, and a wealth of personal ephemera, the resulting works represent amateur yet stunningly authoritative examples of a particular strain of visual autobiography, a genre rich in emotional, pictorial, and sensory detail. --Jessica Helfand

Get a Closer Look at Scrapbooks (click on images to enlarge) From Publishers Weekly Starred . Scrapbooks were the original open-source technology, says graphic designer Helfand, who teaches at Yale, in this appreciative and analytical tour through a century's worth of visual historical record books. This eclectic, yet inclusive genre provide[s] a cross section of the range and pluralism of more than a century of modern American experience. The scrapbook compiles artifacts that illustrate their times, ranging from photographs of Rita Hayworth to ration cards, yet also render psychological portraits of their makers, whether young Victorian school girls, the mother of F. Scott Fitzgerald or WWII soldiers. A scrapbook's historical lessons can be gleaned by studying its content, form, commentary and even the wear of included items, and its intended viewers. Tracing the evolution of the scrapbook from a documentary record through manifestation of fantasy to nostalgic rendering or compendium of loved things, Helfand roughly sketches American history through creating her own scrapbook of scrapbooks. This book is colored at times by her privileging of older forms, which she sees as more personal and authentic expressions than the products of today's craft-oriented scrapbookers. But like any good scrapbook, this is a personal collage of a collective experience. (Nov.) Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

From Booklist How to elevate the happy homemaker perception of scrapbooking? Ask an articulate and scholarly (Yale graduate-school teacher and published author) designer to collect, comment on, and illustrate a memorable, thoughtful history of American scrapbooks. With more than 475 graphics, Helfand begins her journey into personal memory books by, first, defining the criteria for selection: beauty, eclecticism, storytelling, celebrity and civilian representation, and U.S.A.-centric. Then using five complete scrapbooks, from 1913 to the 1980s, as chapter introductions, the author investigates the principles of time, space, sentiment, nostalgia, and posterity, using not only her showcased items but also interweaving examples and commentary from her overall research: the diary of a Filipino American doctor; the proliferation of preformatted memory books; the very personal tales of Zelda and F. Scott Fitzgerald, Buckminster Fuller, among other famous and regular Janes and Joes (yes, men did keep these records, too). An excellent foray into the examination of a longtime

cultural phenomenon. --Barbara Jacobs