

The story behind Paperific!

Twelve years ago, an Australian event was born from Stacey Apeitos' love of papercrafts. Since then, the event has successfully grown into what we now call Paperific. In that time, there were plenty of tears and smiles.

Cassie Bellemore spoke with Naomi Swan and Roby Sainsbury-Vale to find out more.

Melbourne Paper Arts was first held in St Kilda Town Hall in 2000 and was the vision of Stacey Apeitos who was the founder and manager of the expo. Five years later the name was changed to Paperific to avoid confusions with other papercraft shows launched in different states. From 2005 to 2006 Paperific ran shows in both Sydney and Brisbane. Since 2008 Paperific has been held at the Melbourne Showgrounds.

Stacey owned, managed, promoted and ran Paperific for the first nine years of the expo, and also had a retail stand at the event with her business, Studio Astarte. She both designed and manufactured polymer unmounted stamps and sold them along with other products that she often imported from the USA. Back in the year 2000 unmounted stamps were new to the industry and Stacey felt there wasn't an avenue for promoting and selling these new paper arts products and so the expo was born.

American-born Stacey was a quirky, friendly, fun-loving, artistic, generous and genuinely happy person. She was involved in loads of artistic pursuits including felting, stitching, making miniatures, jewellery making, art dolls and wrote two children's books. She was a deeply spiritual woman, looking for a connection between her spiritual life and art work. She was a voracious reader. She also loved the theatre, singing, and performing, which she had done a lot of when she was in college. She could also shop till she dropped!



With papercraft being her first love, Paperific began – first in her heart, then in reality. It was not a business, but a showcase all about the art of paper, combining everything together and knowing each stand was going to inspire and capture the true papercrafter. Her best friend Roby Sainsbury-Vale helped Stacey with the expo over the years. "Stacey was always out on the floor of the expo, wandering around greeting her exhibitors and her patrons, many returning year after year," Roby reminisces. "She was friendly and fun, and knew how she wanted her show to run, and to this day, customers refer to Paperific as the friendliest show they attend."

Stacey was initially diagnosed with breast cancer in 2002, which was thought to be beaten through a lumpectomy and bouts of chemotherapy and radiation. She was in full remission for just over five years, until she was diagnosed with secondary cancer in her lungs. She underwent several operations to her lungs and chemotherapy twice. Unfortunately the cancer took hold and spread to her liver and skeletal system. She sold Paperific to Naomi Swan while she still had reasonable health, and had a 'girl's trip' home to the United States with Roby in Dec/Jan 2010/11. She passed away in September of 2011.

Paperific staff were friends of Stacey's long before they became employees, due to involvement with them in art groups and everyday life. They were all in shock for a little



The Paperific team.
Left to right;
Roby, Lizzie,
Heather, Janine,
Lyn and Naomi.

while, as Stacey became critically ill very quickly, and went from walking around laughing to leaving us for good in a matter of five or so days. Her 'celebration of life' service was a beautiful spiritual tribute overflowing in attendance by friends and family.

Naomi acquired Paperific in August 2009. She is a registered nurse and passionate papercrafter. Naomi's background in the craft industry began when she lived in Canada and discovered stamping and scrapbooking through Stampin' Up!. "Paperific staff continue to be involved in the expo because of Naomi, and her wonderful generous spirit and ongoing vision for Paperific. And they are all mad papercrafters as well!" Roby beams.

Naomi's first Paperific was the November 2009 expo. Roby has also been helping Naomi with running the event. In August 2010 the 10-year anniversary was celebrated with some great new concepts; they gave away 10th birthday shopping bags to the first 200 people each day and introduced a new giveaway of prizes with the Paperific Prize Patrol. "These ideas were so popular that we have continued

both the shopping bags and the Paperific Prize Patrol since the August 2010 expo," Naomi explains. "There are many ways you can win a prize bag at Paperific; random prize draws, mystery shopper prizes and the Paperific Pop Quiz are just a few."

Paperific has always been dedicated to paper arts, therefore every expo is a showcase for as wide a range of papercraft retailers as they can possibly attract. Exhibitors come from all over Australia, and sometimes from overseas to exhibit at Paperific, as do our patrons. Of course, because of their popularity, scrapbooking and stamping are the two crafts that are always best represented, but the variety of products is incredible. Paperific provides retail products, classes and free demonstrations to the general public. "Our free 'make and take' projects offered by many businesses are what sets us apart from other expos, along with the fact that we have been running for over 10 years now," Naomi explains.

Initially Paperific had two components; a retail expo and a wholesale trade event. Over the past

three years the two events have been combined. The retail businesses demonstrate and sell their products to the general public. The wholesalers run product demonstrations and 'make and takes' for the general public as well as networking with business owners around Australia and launching the latest papercraft product ranges.

Naomi continues to strive to uphold Stacey's vision for Paperific with the motto 'Heaven on earth for papercraft lovers'. This year Paperific has been re-branded with a new logo to reflect Naomi's personality and vision for the expo. The new logo has been named Stacey, as a way to honour the original founder of the event.

"We hope to see you at our next Melbourne Paperific expo in August," Roby says with a smile.

SHOW DETAILS:
AUGUST 31 - SEPTEMBER 2
MELBOURNE SHOWGROUNDS
9.30AM - 5PM FRIDAY AND
SATURDAY, 9.30AM - 4PM SUNDAY
ADULTS \$12, FULL-TIME STUDENTS
AND SENIORS \$10.
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