

Paperific: from strength to strength

By Vanessa Cavasinni

Paperific is celebrating their 15th birthday this year, and to celebrate we look back at how this papercraft show has evolved and what makes it so special



The pamphlet from the first-ever Melbourne Paper Arts Show!

Art Stamps Australia at Paperific 2011.

Fifteen years ago the Melbourne Paper Arts show was born through Stacey Apeitos' love of papercraft and stamping. Stacey had been manufacturing her own unmounted stamps in a time when wood-mounted stamps were saturating the market, so Stacey set up her own boutique event at St Kilda Town Hall to promote her products and those of 30 other exhibitors. It was a celebration of papercraft.

In 2005 the show's name was changed to Paperific to avoid confusion with expos held interstate. In 2009, Stacey sold the business due to her deteriorating health to Naomi Swan, a registered nurse who was also a Stampin' Up! demonstrator and remains an avid papercrafter to this day.

Throughout the fifteen years of operation, some aspects of Paperific have remained the same, while others have naturally evolved. Initially, there was a separate wholesale show, but that side of the event has ended as businesses now deal directly with distributors from the United States. Another change has been the logo, which Naomi updated in 2010 and named Stacey in honour of Paperific's founder.



Owner Naomi Swan on prize patrol.

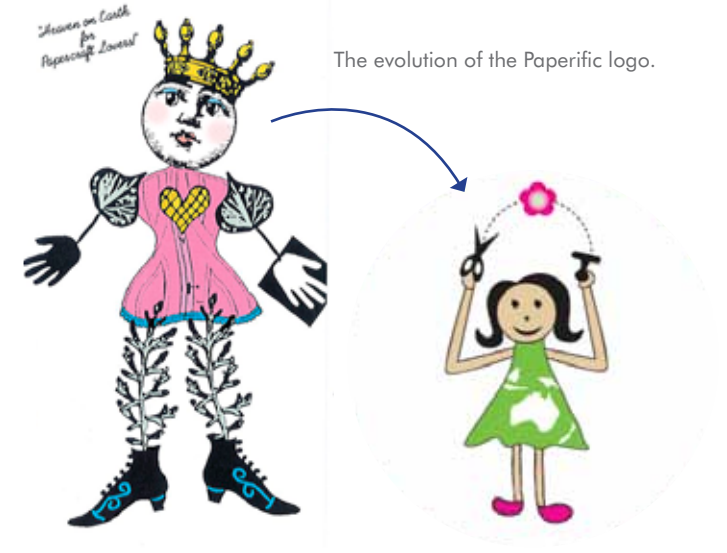


Founder, Stacey Apeitos getting ready for a show.

There was a large swapping culture in the early years of Paperific. Papercrafters would trade pins, tiny books, tags and ATCs while enjoying the expo. Naomi intends to bring the swapping culture back at her new event, Melbourne Paper Arts Tarts, with their 'Great Card Swap'.

The other main change has been the focus of the event, as exhibitors have responded to the changing trends in papercraft over a 15-year period. In the early years of Paperific, the main focus was on stamping and cardmaking. About ten years ago this shifted to scrapbooking, and about three years ago mixed media also became very popular. Stamping and cardmaking have also made a big re-emergence in the last couple of years.

Dina Boyling of Catchy Crafts has also noticed some old favourites coming back to the forefront. "I have noticed an increase in the use of watercolours. This year we are going to be concentrating on bringing back the basics such as heat-embossing, alcohol ink backgrounds and brayering." Cathy Heenan from Eclectic Images (now going into their tenth year as a Paperific exhibitor) is a big believer in all forms of papercraft working cohesively. "For a while stamping was overshadowed by scrapbooking, but now the creative possibilities of combining the two – especially with off-the-page projects – is endless," she states. "Stamping has certainly



The evolution of the Paperific logo.

become more artistic with the various colouring media and techniques, and I think this trend is very exciting."

One aspect of Paperific that hasn't changed is the make and takes. Make and takes have always been a defining part of Paperific, with every exhibitor given extra space for demonstration, so that attendees can learn new techniques and try out new products before making a purchase. Little Bits have exhibited at every Paperific show bar one, and its owner Lesley is very fond of the make and takes. "They have been a great innovation which allows the consumer to sit and play with a product to make a small project to take home and remember us by," she explains. That interaction between store and consumer is invaluable.

Having been run for fifteen years, it's inevitable that once in a while something isn't going to go according to plan. Louise Green of Art Stamps Australia can recall one such occasion that she describes as "a matter of sink or swim for exhibitors and customers alike." It was a busy Saturday morning at the show when an incredibly fierce storm pelted down on the Melbourne Showground Pavilion. "The deluge was so intense and heavy, causing the roof to crack, exposing everyone to a bombardment of hail stones!" she recalls. The show had to be evacuated and the security guard had to convince some passionate attendees that they really had to stop shopping! That's how much people love Paperific!

Whatever it is about Paperific – whether it's the random prize patrol, the make and takes, or the fact that it has always been run by fanatical papercrafters themselves – the vibe of the show has always been one of excitement, creativity and a shared passion. This overall mood of the show is what has made Paperific so successful and kept customers and exhibitors alike coming back for more for 15 years. As Cathy Heenan put it, "It is just too important an event on the papercraft calendar to miss."