

## Love What You Love Podcast

### Episode 52: Stamping and Papercraft with Ulrika Friesen

November 16, 2021

Welcome to *Love What You Love*; I'm Julie Rose. I'm insatiably curious about people and the world around us, and absolutely in love with passion and unselfconscious enthusiasm. Every other week I geek out with someone about the thing that they love, and then I share it with you.

Welcome back! Or, Welcome! I've known our next guest, Ulrika Friesen, for about five years now. We work super closely together every day at the day job. I say we're partners in crime; she likes to say we're partners in goodness, so that gives you a little sense of her point of view. As long as I've known her, she's been super passionate about stamping and papercraft, so of course I had to get her on the show!

In this episode, we talk: how to craft with friends during a pandemic, the deep joy of organizing your stuff, pyramid schemes, discovering your creativity, quite literally delivering joy, and so much more. So enjoy this cozy chat with my friend and find out why Ulrika loves stamping and papercraft, and why you might learn to love it too.

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**Julie:** Hello, Ulrika! Thank you so much for joining me today!

**Ulrika:** Hi, Julie.

**Julie:** So, we talk to each other every day because we work together.

**Ulrika:** We do. [laughs]

**Julie:** I want to talk to you about something you're super passionate about, which is stamping and doing paper art. So, maybe you can just start with, like, what is it that you do and what kind of things do you create?

**Ulrika:** Yeah. First of all, thanks for having me. I make greeting cards with stamps and paper crafting. And I love to create these cards that I send to friends, and family, and just use some of my creativity that I never thought I had.

**Julie:** Tell me about that. Why did you think you didn't have creativity?

**Ulrika:** Because, you know, my sister's a music major, and has always played music, and she was always artistic, and she could draw, and she could do all these things, and I never had anything growing up. And then I started collecting stamps, and I would play with them, but never really did much with them. Then I met a friend who did stamping too, and she taught me that there's so much to do with stamps, and cards, and paper that I finally figured out that that's where some of my artistic stuff is.

**Julie:** You started collecting stamps. What was it about collecting stamps that was interesting for you?

**Ulrika:** You know, it's so funny, I was thinking about that recently, and... I don't know, they just, kind of, called to me. They seemed like they'd be fun to play with, and I just became a collector of stamps; rubber stamps on a wood block. And I would just use them here and there on, like, an envelope, or just make a very "flat" card, as I would call it, but never really figured out how to make it "pop," so to speak.

So, I actually met a friend who... she was a Stampin' Up demonstrator. And when I learned that she made cards, I was like, "Oh my gosh, you have to teach me how to do this," because her cards were *amazing*, and they had that pop that made you want to, like, hold it, and look at it, and feel the paper. So we started meeting once a month. There was me, and her, and like three or four other girls. And Maria would teach us how to make cards and different techniques that you could use with inks, and paper, and all kinds of sponges, and... I don't even remember half the... She was so creative with the things that she did.

And she would teach us all these techniques and how to make cards that you would want to share with someone else, where all my other cards... they were so flat. I would give them to my mom and my sister, or something, and they were one layer. She was making these three-and-four-layer cards that I never even imagined that that was what you could or should do with the paper.

**Julie:** So, what was the first thing that you made?

**Ulrika:** Oh, I don't remember exactly, but I'm sure it was a card that had, like, a stamped background, and then you would stamp a picture on another piece of paper and color it in, and then you would, what we call, "fussy cut," which is to, like, hand cut out the image, and then stick it all together, and it would have a little sentiment on it. I probably have it somewhere because I save a lot of my cards that I seem to make. I don't always mail them. [laughs] I used to be a lot worse. I used to save *all* the cards I made and wouldn't share them, and now I'm much better at actually sharing the cards I make. I take photos of them so I remember what I made.

**Julie:** Yeah, I always know, when there's a holiday of any variety, I'm going to get a card in the mail. [laughs]

**Ulrika:** [laughs]

**Julie:** I love it! And you're right, it's so cool to get your cards because they're completely different than any kind of other card you'd get. And I know you're very social, and you're very relationship-oriented. Is that part of the process? Is that part of the thing about creating cards, that connection?

**Ulrika:** Yes, totally. It brings out, like you said, the social part of me. You connect with these other people who love to make cards, and we just sit around, and laugh, and sometimes drink wine, and goof off, and... We've kind of gone through different groups of us. Now there's probably eight of us that get together on a really regular basis. And some of the girls are, you know, super creative and they come up with the cards that we make together. And other ones, they just come up with ideas to improve on that card but they don't want to make the card, kind of thing. We all do different parts.

The other thing that's so amazing when you get together with a group of people to make a card, you all have the same products and the same idea, but you get five different cards if there's five of you. They all might have the same main stamp, and you might start with the same example, but none of them look the same, which is one of the things I really love. You put your own little twist, your own little creativity on the card.

**Julie:** Yeah, that is super cool. How long ago did you start doing the stamping and crafting?

**Ulrika:** Oh... So, I was thinking about that recently too. I met Maria in 2004, and we did stamping together for about four, maybe five years with one little group. And then we kind of parted ways because we both left the company we were working at. So, it was probably a three-year break. And we kind of synced back up, and we got this new group that I hang out and do stuff with. And Maria had to step away from stamping for medical reasons, so I kind of took over the group.

I didn't quite do it the same as Maria did because Maria can think up these things off the top of her head, where I need inspiration to come up with my cards. So, we came up with this little group, so now... I guess we've been doing it together for, like, seven years, this latest group.

**Julie:** Wow.

**Ulrika:** Yeah. And I have to say, crafting is what got us through the pandemic.

**Julie:** Yeah, I was going to ask you about that. So, during the pandemic, you guys still got together, but over Webex. How did that work?

**Ulrika:** It actually... It worked out really well. What I did was I set up... We picked Saturday afternoons, and I made a Webex meeting and invited the girls. We would log on to Webex in each of our own spaces, and we would pull out our crafting stuff. In the beginning, we said, "Okay, we're going to do a card with flowers." So, everybody would get their own stamps that had flowers and we would all, kind of, create a card that had the same theme.

Or we would say, "This week we're going to do a special technique," and we were still teaching each other different things, because that's one of the things we used to do when we met monthly. One of us would be what we call the demonstrator, and they would come up with a card idea, and they would decide what stamps, what colors, what paper we were going to use, and then, kind of, teach us that card. That was kind of hard to do when we were at home with the pandemic because we didn't all have the same stamp sets. So, we tried to, kind of, morph it a little bit so we were still doing maybe a new technique. Someone would still teach a new technique, but you used whatever you had at home.

And we would meet for, you know, three hours, four hours, like we did when we met in person. But we started doing it weekly instead of monthly. So, we actually are still meeting every Saturday afternoon over Webex, and now it's morphed into, "I have a birthday card I need to make," so I make a birthday card, and someone else has started her Christmas cards already, so she's working on her Christmas cards. So now it's just time to get together and craft. It's set aside every week. It's not all eight of us all the time, but there's three of us hardcore girls that get together every week. And we just hang out for four hours.

**Julie:** And just chat and craft.

**Ulrika:** Exactly! And then some days, you know, one of the girls, she's like, "I'm not feeling very crafty today. I'm going to organize my stuff." Or another girl was like, "I'm just not feeling it today. I'm just going to chitchat with you guys today." And so we just... It's just a way to connect.

**Julie:** Yeah, that's awesome. That's always been the common thread for you in all of this, connecting with other people; doing it and then sending the cards.

**Ulrika:** Exactly.

**Julie:** So, my gosh, it's been almost 20 years that you've been doing this.

**Ulrika:** Oh my gosh! [laughs]

**Julie:** Sorry. [laughs] Sorry, hun.

**Ulrika:** Yeah, I guess so.

**Julie:** So like, what keeps you going? I know you just went to a virtual crafting conference. You're still super into it. What is it about crafting, and stamping, and doing this that keeps you going for so many years?

**Ulrika:** It's a little bit of everything. Part of it's the organizing my stuff, which is funny that that's not even creating, the crafting, but there's a whole part about organizing all the supplies and coming up with an easy way to locate the paper you want or the stamp you want. One of the things, I think, that keeps me going is the reaction I get from my friends and my family when they get a card and how much joy it brings them.

It's like, I have a good time making it, and then I get a little extra spurt of happiness when I send a card and someone says, "Oh my gosh! I got your card! Thank you so much." The personal touch just does so much. And we get so little paper, actual mail, these days. It's fun to just send something sometimes so someone can have something fun.

**Julie:** Yeah. Now, you were born in Sweden and your family is super involved in Swedish and Swedish-American activities. Is there, like, a tradition of papercraft in Sweden?

**Ulrika:** You know what? Actually, now that you say that, there is... At Christmastime, they do make some Christmas hearts out of paper, and you kind of weave two colors of paper together to create a little heart ornament. And there's also some little candy popper-type things that you wrap in paper, and you put a little candy in a little tube, and you wrap it in paper, and it becomes a little decoration. So, there has been... Now that you say that, there has been paper crafting in my life a long time and I guess I just never put two and two together.

**Julie:** Have you done those hearts on any of your cards?

**Ulrika:** I haven't, but you know what? Now I'm going to have to! I'm going to have to. It's been a while since I've made those, so I'm going to have to check that out and relearn how to make them.

**Julie:** Maybe you can talk us through what the process is. You talked a little bit about finding inspiration, but if you were to sit down to make a card, what do you do?

**Ulrika:** First of all, I think about who I'm making the card for, like if it's a specific birthday card I'm making. So, I'm thinking about the person and what they like; if they're into dogs, or cats, or they really like certain flowers, or if... I made a Halloween card for a friend who likes candy corn. So, I actually had seen a candy corn stamp and bought the stamp just so I could make him a Halloween card this year.

And so, I think about the person that I'm making the card for. Then I kind of dig through my supplies and... if I know they have a favorite color, I'll try to incorporate that color. And then I just, kind of, play with the stamps and see what... you know, stamp them on paper and maybe color them, or I stamp some different sentiments to see which fonts go well together. I just play around with it. And it's really funny; sometimes they

come really quick and you can whip out a card in, like, ten minutes because somehow it just all flows. And then other times you sit, and you design, and you try, and it doesn't work.

We always joke about, "If people knew how long it took us to make a card, they'd appreciate them even more!" So, I just kind of lay out the paper... And part of it, you're trying to find the colors that coordinate together. I'm recently learning that, you know, there's different ways... They have color wheels that you can look at how colors connect, like if they're part of the color wheel and they're across from each other, they will go well together, but then if you can think about it, like, colors in the spectrum that are next to each other also work but you don't always think about them that way. So, you use... the rainbow is where a lot of color base starts, and then the different shades of the colors.

Just the other night I colored... I've always enjoyed coloring, actually, now that I'm... You're making me think about all kinds of things! As a kid, I used to color a lot, and that's one of the things with the stamping. I'll stamp an image and color it, and that's very relaxing to me. And then I can turn it into a card. So, I did that the other night and I didn't like how the stamp coloring turned out, but then when I put it on some paper, like a background to, kind of, put it on a card, the coloring didn't look so bad anymore. The colors looked better together when I was able to match them with a background.

**Julie:** You're growing in how you're approaching things, and you're learning to trust your intuition about these things.

**Ulrika:** Yes, exactly, which I'm not always good at but... [laughs]

**Julie:** No, I know. [laughs] So, in addition to the process, what kind of material and gear do you need to do this kind of stuff? I know that you had, like, an embosser at one point. Like, what are all the things that you could do to make a card?

**Ulrika:** Oh my gosh. That could take hours to talk about. So, besides stamps, you know, there are stencils that you could use to color in a stencil with ink. And you can... to get the ink on the paper, you can stamp it directly on there, you could use a sponge to put it on there, or you could use a paintbrush. They have... The new things are these little brushes that... They're like makeup brushes that you use to put the ink on the paper. So, with the stencils, that's really fun because you can get all kinds of different colors down on the paper.

Like you said, there's the embosser. There's dry embossing, which is a folder that has an image in it, and then you use the... What I have is called the Big Shot, and it's a press, basically, that you're pressing your paper through to get the image from the embossing folder to change the texture of your paper. And then there's the wet embossing, which is where you use a heat gun and powder to... you dry powder onto your stamped image and that raises the image and you can, kind of, feel the image on the paper.

And then there's also dyes now that cut out images. So, you use your press, your Big Shot, or they have lots of different electric ones and hand crank ones, and it cuts out the paper image and you can use that. So, for a while I was going through a phase where I wasn't actually stamping anything. I was just doing paper crafting to make my cards. I wasn't actually stamping anything. I would cut out words, and cut out images, and glue them onto my card base. And I would make a card with different levels or

layers of paper on it. Then, there's all kinds of... There's things that you... Of course a paper cutter, and that's not as simple as it sounds. [laughs]

**Julie:** No? Why?

**Ulrika:** Because they have, you know, the guillotine kind, and the rotary ones, and they have ones that have blades that are self-sharpening. And to find a good one that'll cut really thin is, in my opinion, something that you want because, you know, you have certain sizes of paper you want. And if you want to cut off an eighth of an inch, you have to have a pretty good paper cutter to cut an eighth or a sixteenth of an inch off of your card base to line it up.

And then, you know, sometimes... Like I said, I do coloring. So I use alcohol markers, or I use watercolor pencils, regular colored pencils. And the inks these days that they have created, there's alcohol inks, and then there's what they call pigment inks which stay wet a little longer. It's almost... I don't know exactly what makes it do that. It's almost more like paint or something. And then there's these ones that are combined, alcohol-based and this pigment ink, and if you add water they react to the water.

**Julie:** Ooh...

**Ulrika:** I mean, it goes on and on, Julie. [laughs] You would be, I don't know, mortified at how much I have in my closet. So much stuff.

**Julie:** Right. You have a whole closet in your office that's just filled with crafting stuff.

**Ulrika:** Yes ma'am. [laughs]

**Julie:** I remember how excited you were when you guys put in the organization scheme in there. Just so happy.

**Ulrika:** I was so happy. I look at it now and it just makes me happy looking at it because I can see all my stuff now. That's one of the things. I can see what I have and be able to find things easier.

**Julie:** Even though everything's all organized and beautiful, do you still find yourself going through phases where you only go for one thing?

**Ulrika:** Yes.

**Julie:** So what's your thing now?

**Ulrika:** You know, I... flowers. I seem to be buying a lot of flower stamps lately. But they do require coloring, which is... I think maybe I've kind of gotten back into the coloring thing. So, I think that's what's drawing me to them, because I can stamp them and then color them different shades. I'm learning how to actually do shading and not just have solid colors. So, the alcohol markers have helped with that because you can... The ones I have have three different shades of the same color in one pen, which is kind of cool. So, you can put it down, and then you can make it lighter and darker in spots more easily than with a regular pen.

**Julie:** So where do you go to get all this gear? Like, just Michael's? Or are there specific stores?

**Ulrika:** You know, it used to be Michael's. When I first started, that's actually where I would go to buy all my woodblock stamps and where I would, kind of, drool over all the stamps.

But as... You know, everything has gone on the internet and all that. So, I first... like I said, with Maria, she was a Stampin' Up demonstrator.

**Julie:** What is Stampin' Up?

**Ulrika:** Stampin' Up is a company that makes stamps, and they make a lot of the other... They make ink, and they have colored paper that coordinates with the inks, and they have what they call embellishments, which are little, you know, sequins, or buttons, or whatever you want to stick on your card; ribbons. And they're all color-coordinated. And that was one of the things I actually really liked about Stampin' Up, was that my ink and my paper, and if I... I'm not really an embellishments gal, but if I wanted to add some kind of embellishment, or some ribbon, or something, all the colors were the same. If I had used red, it was the same red.

That was the one thing that I struggled with in the beginning. I would have red paper, red ink, but the reds weren't the same. Blues are even worse. So, with Stampin' Up, they had already done all that color coordinating for me so I didn't have to think about it. They had soft subtles, and they had their earth tones, and then the regals which were the darker shades. So, it was all very coordinated for me so I didn't have to think about, like, "Does this color go with that color?" And then I didn't have that part of me that didn't like how the tones weren't the same.

It's really funny. If you ever listen to any kind of online crafter, you know, a lot of them started with Stampin' Up. They joke that Stampin' Up's a gateway drug. It gets you into it. They have a catalog that you can have. Now of course it's a catalog you can get online. When I first started, you only got the paper catalog, and you would flip through the catalog and dogear the corners with the stamps you wanted to buy. It was very much... And they still are very much a Tupperware or Avon kind of pyramid type thing.

So you would have a party, invite your friends, and then you get points to get free stuff. It was all very much the pyramid scheme. I would say, in the last... Since I started up the second time with this new group of girls, seven years ago, there's a lot more online and you can just go out and look at websites. A lot more companies are popping up. Like almost every day, I feel like, I learn about a new stamping company that makes stamps. They don't all do the paper-ink-embellishments stuff. Some of them do have the whole gamut, but some only do one style of stamp.

Now, there's also clear stamps that you put on an acrylic block so you don't have the wood to hold onto. They're clear stamps that you can store easier in a smaller space. Like, most of my stamps are either in, like, DVD cases or in little folders that I put in a bin. So, where block stamps take a lot of space because you have the big wood block that the rubber stamp is on, now you have these little clear stamps that you take and you put on your own block, and then you stamp them and put them away.

**Julie:** Oh, I see what you're saying. Yeah, got it. Interchangeable.

**Ulrika:** It's kind of hard to... Interchangeable. So it's a little hard. Some companies only make these little clear stamps, right? So, we go online, and you can find them. Then you start getting emails, "This place has this one, and this one..." It's almost overwhelming sometimes.

**Julie:** There's these companies that make all this stuff. Is it primarily for cardmaking? What kinds of things do people do with stamps besides cards?

**Ulrika:** People still do scrapbooking, so they might make their scrapbooking pages with stamps and stuff. For the past three years, I've made calendars, like a desk calendar. I actually need to start working on the 2022 desk calendars. Of course, now that I've made them a couple years, my sister's expecting one, my three friends that I've sent them to are like, "Oh, when are we getting our calendars?" And you've got to, kind of, see... So, the cool thing with that is I've found templates online so I'm not making, like, the monthly calendar part. I'm just decorating something I've printed out that has the months and the days on it.

**Julie:** Do you do bullet journaling?

**Ulrika:** I don't personally do that, but that is also something else that people do. And they also use it in their notebooks to add something creative and fun to doodle with or color in.

**Julie:** What's your favorite part of stamping, and what's your least favorite part of stamping?

**Ulrika:** My favorite part is seeing that finished product and going, "All right. I really like this. It turned out better than I thought it would in my head."

My least favorite... Probably the cleanup. [laughs] Because there's so much stuff that... And you pull out so much stuff to make these cards, and then it's just like, "Augh. I've got to clean it all up." Because I'm a bit of a neat freak, so I don't leave it out... Once I'm done, I've got to clean it up and put it away.

**Julie:** You do it primarily with your friends, but what is it like to do it with your friends versus doing it by yourself? Are there benefits to one or the other? What are the drawbacks to each?

**Ulrika:** I've been doing a little more by myself lately, and I don't know what has spurred that on. But I think part of it is, right now I'm worried about... I have Thanksgiving coming up that I want to make cards for. I have a little advent calendar I want to make for people, so those have to be done before December 1st. And then my Christmas cards, my calendars... and I'm thinking, "Oh my god, what about all the birthdays in between?!"

So, I think that's what's kind of motivating me to do a little bit on my own. But it's really the camaraderie and the help you get from each other when you're stuck, when you do it together. Like, I'll have a layout and it doesn't quite look right, so I'll point my camera to what I have and I'll go, "Okay, what's wrong with my card? Why doesn't it feel right?" And then someone will go, "Oh, what if you moved..." I haven't stuck anything down yet or done a final gluing, so they're like, "What if you move that flower so it's up at the top, and group those other two together...?" And we just kind of play with the design as a design team. And then you kind of go, "Oh, okay. I can see that and how that works."

And it's really funny, sometimes you'll go, "Okay, I have these two. Which one do you like better?" And half of the girls will like it one way, half will like the other way. So they're like, "Okay, that didn't help." [laughs]

**Julie:** [laughs] "Thanks, guys."

**Ulrika:** Exactly. And you know, I don't know that there's really any negatives or downsides to doing it together. I think, by myself, I don't have that help sometimes when you get stuck, so you just have to put it aside, and work on something else, and come back to it when you're by yourself. But there is something about working by yourself where

you just, kind of, get in the flow, and all of a sudden two hours have gone by. Even though that can happen with a group too, but it's almost that when you're by yourself you can just... It's almost, for me, a little meditating, right? You're not thinking about what work thing haven't I done, or I have to do the laundry, it's just, "Let's just have some fun."

**Julie:** I love that. If you had a favorite piece of art that you've created or one of your friends have created, or both, in any of your sessions, what would you say that would be?

**Ulrika:** I have to say that, my friends and I, we made a card with Ruth Bader Ginsburg's quote, "Women belong in all places where decisions are being made." And my friend bought a little die set so that we could make a little Ruth Bader Ginsburg paper doll.

**Julie:** Love it!

**Ulrika:** And so, I actually have it hung on my wall so that I see it. I made one card that I sent away, but I made a second one that same day so that I could have one for myself to keep. I have it on the wall.

**Julie:** I love it. And thank you. [laughs]

**Ulrika:** [laughs]

**Julie:** Oh my god. So, just wrapping up. If a listener wanted to start doing this, it sounds like it could be a little intimidating to start. How would you suggest that they get started?

**Ulrika:** It can be a little bit intimidating. And I think the first thing that people need to remember is that you don't have to have it all. You don't have to have all the, you know, special cutting tools, and poking tools, and special brush, and all this kind of stuff. Just remember that you'll grow into it if you like it. And then I would start by getting on YouTube and watching some of these... I guess they're called influencers, but they're crafters that share their techniques and their processes on YouTube. I follow a lot of them on Instagram.

So, there's Cathy Zielske, who... She loves the plain and simple... clean and simple cards, which a lot of my cards are like that. Sometimes I think they're basic because they don't have all the frilly stuff, but they're just clean. And she's got the greatest sense of humor, so she not only is super crafty, she's funny. There's Jennifer McGuire, and Gina K, and Kristina Werner, and all of them really do amazing card work but they show it to you in the basic steps, and you just, kind of, follow along and watch what they're doing. And you just try.

It's only paper, so it's not like it's some super precious thing that you're working with. You're working with paper. So if you make a mistake, you know, get another one. I have a friend that's told me, "There are no mistakes in stamping. Only embellishment opportunities."

**Julie:** I love that! I'm going to use that in my life, I think. [laughs]

**Ulrika:** [laughs]

**Julie:** Oh my gosh. That's awesome. Well, Ulrika, thank you so much for taking so much time to talk with me about this. I've actually learned a ton. This was awesome.

**Ulrika:** It was so fun. Thank you, Julie.

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You can find Ulrika on Instagram [@Stamping\\_Rika](#). I'll include that link in the show notes of course, along with links to Ulrika's favorite nonprofits and mine too. Huge thanks to Ulrika for sharing her passion with us today.

Just a reminder that you can find this podcast on Instagram [@LoveWhatYouLovePod](#), on Twitter, [@WhatYouLovePod](#), and the website is [LoveWhatYouLovePod.com](#).

All of the transcripts for *Love What You Love* are available for everyone on the website. Thanks to Emily White, transcription magician and proprietress of The Wordary. If you need transcripts, reach out to her at [Emily@TheWordary.com](mailto:Emily@TheWordary.com). The music for *Love What You Love* is called "Inspiring Hope" by Pink-Sounds. A link to that artist is included in the show notes.

As always, thank you so, so much for listening. Let's hang out again soon.

### **Links:**

Find Ulrika on [Instagram](#)

### **Stamping and Papercraft Tutorials:**

[Cathy Zielske](#)

[Jennifer McGuire](#)

### **Ulrika's favorite nonprofits:**

[Card Care Connection](#)

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Transcribed by Emily White: [Emily@TheWordary.com](mailto:Emily@TheWordary.com)