

Sara Davies: “There are so many inspiring people in this industry”

Founder of *Crafter's Companion* Sara Davies has won a grand total of 22 awards with her company. Stéphanie de Geus spoke to her about *her company, family life and crafting*



“I always knew I wanted to start a business, I just didn’t know what kind”, says Sara. “My parents both had their own businesses which they shaped around our family life, so it was something I really wanted to do as well. I’ve been brought up with the solid understanding that setting up your own business is a lifestyle choice, not a job.”

Sara went to university to do a management degree, and it

was during her final year when she undertook a placement at a mail order company that she took her first step into the crafting world.

“While I was at university I came up with the idea for the Enveloper. It seemed so simple that I couldn’t understand why nobody had done it before. Initially I was going to wait and graduate before producing it, but I was afraid someone else would come up with the same

idea first, so I started the company while I was still at university.”

Sara started producing her Enveloper, which would later evolve into the Ultimate Pro, from wood. She asked local people to produce the board and Ideal World took on the distribution. “The first time I went on the shopping channel with the Enveloper, I was scheduled to go on after a cardmaking kit”, says Sara.

“They showed a preview of the product and the phonedlines were so busy with people asking about the Enveloper that they had to put me on earlier!” Overall they sold 30,000 copies and the board proved to be so popular that they couldn’t meet the demand. “Everyone wanted one for Christmas!” laughs Sara. “I turned my dorm room into an office and back home my little sister would pack the orders after she came home from school. I’d work on my business during the day and study at night.”

While running a business, she still managed to graduate with honours and at the top of her class. “The university wasn’t supportive at all of me running the business besides my studies because they felt it would have a detrimental impact on my grades – they wanted me to wait until I’d graduated instead. I wanted to prove to them that I could do it – and I did! There was one tutor who was supportive and even let me theme my dissertation around new product development in small companies, which was really useful for my business. The thing with management studies is that it’s very dry and theoretical. Running a business at the same time gave me a chance to put the knowledge into practical use straight away. When I graduated in the



Sara is involved in every step of the process



Sara Davies



The Crafter's Companion warehouse

For information, inspiration and the newest products, go to www.crafterscompanion.co.uk

summer I had a company that had grown beyond my wildest expectations."

Becoming a crafter

Although Sara wasn't specifically a paper crafter when she started Crafter's Companion, she has since become one as the company has grown, continuously learning new techniques and skills. When colouring stamped images became more and more popular, Sara asked designer Leann Chivers to teach her how to colour. "It proved to be very hard for me to get my mind around colour combinations and how that worked, so I came up with the idea to develop a system that made it easier for people. I figured that if it was hard for me, it would be hard for someone else as well, plus it had to be affordable for crafters. That's how the idea for the Spectrum Noir pens was born."

The pens were a massive hit, and Crafter's Companion recently introduced a second generation of the markers. "We're constantly looking at how we can improve our products, and colouring has proved to be so popular. The same goes for specialist colouring pencils at the moment, but they can be very expensive. We were looking for a way to make them more affordable for crafters and

to make their lives easier by introducing colour families." The Spectrum Noir Pencils went on sale this month. "So far the response has been out of this world, and pencil colouring to supplement alcohol pens is turning out to be the next big thing as our pencils are a good quality, affordable option."

Sharing knowledge

In November 2013 Sara won two big international awards, the Women of the Future Awards Entrepreneur accolade sponsored by Shell and a Stevie Award – both in the same week! "At the time I was heavily pregnant, but I went down to London anyway to be present at the awards ceremony and I won! That same week I won an award in New York – that made me really happy! Unfortunately I couldn't be there in person to pick up the award though!"

Having set up a successful company, Sara is now focusing on helping other people with their businesses. "I help and mentor other small businesses in the region as part of the Entrepreneurs Forum and I also invest in other small businesses in our area as part of an angel investment scheme. The difference is that we invest in the business and also mentor the owner. You always get so much more out of it than you put in."



The Davies family with baby Oliver

Sara was also appointed head of the Craft Hobby Association (CHA) UK after spearheading the launch of the UK chapter back in 2011. The association is holding a trade event in June this year, The One Big Show. "However, this isn't a trade show showcasing new products, it'll be all about educating and networking. There'll be experts from the sector to help people to become more successful and to teach them to protect their ideas. We want to help each other grow and share knowledge. More people need to be like this as the market really is big enough, and with the channels in the US, there is a place for everyone."

"I am no serial entrepreneur", says Sara. "I have no intention of selling the company and starting again. Ever since I was introduced to crafting, I knew I wanted to have a company within that industry. Every



level of consumer from the crafter's through to craft business owners are so passionate about the industry and there are so many inspiring people who are willing to help others. And I love it."

Flip to the next page for project ideas using the new Die'sire embossing folders



BELIEVE YOU CAN

Simply make

Tina Theis
Designer



1 Stamp the nature images using blue ink across the card blank as shown.

2 Cut an 11.5x15.5cm panel of Core'dinations cardstock and run it through the embossing folder. Sand over the top to highlight the pattern and distress the edges using scissors. Ink the edges using blue ink.

3 Matt the embossed cardstock panel onto yellow cardstock, but before adhering, stamp a small image to the top of the yellow cardstock and tear the blue panel as shown. Adhere together, matt onto a piece of blue cardstock and affix to the card front.

4 Draw the shape of the kite onto blue mirror card (it needs to be 9.5x8cm at the widest

points). Cut out a smaller kite from patterned paper, cut it into four sections and attach.

5 Glue a length of string to the back of the kite and tie small strips of ribbon to the string.

6 Affix the kite to the card front using 3D glue gel. Stamp the sentiment onto yellow cardstock, trim and attach. Wrap ribbon around the left-hand side of the card front, tie a ribbon bow and adhere to finish.

MUM

Simply make

1 Print your background from the CD-ROM onto white cardstock along with six flowers and your chosen letters.

2 Cut your patterned paper to measure 20x14cm, use a corner punch to shape the corners and matt onto brown cardstock, rounding the corners. Adhere to the card front.

3 Cut a 12x14.5cm panel of orange cardstock, punch the corners and ink the edges. Run through the embossing folder and matt onto brown cardstock.

Adhere to the card front towards the left-hand side.

4 Place three cutout flowers on the right-hand side of the card front and affix three more in the bottom-left corner of the embossed panel.

5 Cut the printed letters into smaller panels and ink the edges using orange ink. Matt onto brown cardstock and affix to the card front using 3D glue gel.

6 Add gems to the flowers to finish.

What you need

Materials

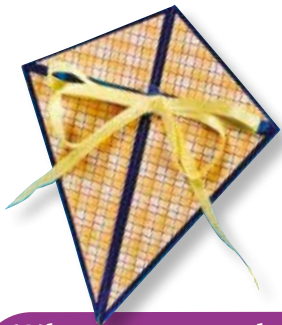
- ◆ white, brown & orange cardstock
- ◆ cream 21x15cm tent-fold card blank
- ◆ Crafter's Companion Die'sire Embossalicious Resource CD-ROM
- ◆ Crafter's Companion Die'sire Sentimentals Friends & Family stamp set
- ◆ Collall 3D glue gel

- ◆ brown & orange inkpads
- ◆ gems

Tools

- ◆ manual die-cutting machine
- ◆ Crafter's Companion Die'sire Embossalicious Gothic Script embossing folder
- ◆ computer & printer
- ◆ corner-rounder punch
- ◆ ball tool





What you need

Materials

- ◆ yellow cardstock
- ◆ blue Core'dinations cardstock
- ◆ cream 15x21cm card blank
- ◆ blue mirror card
- ◆ yellow patterned paper
- ◆ Crafter's Companion Die'sire Sentimentals Vintage & Nature stamp sets
- ◆ Collall 3D glue gel
- ◆ blue inks
- ◆ baker's twine
- ◆ ribbon

Tools

- ◆ manual die-cutting machine
- ◆ Crafter's Companion Die'sire Embossalicious Let's Fly A Kite embossing folder
- ◆ sanding block



MEMORIES

Simply make

1 Run a 19cm-square panel of yellow cardstock through the embossing folder. Sand over the top to reveal the pattern and round the corners. Matt onto Olive and yellow cardstock, round the corners and adhere to the card front.

2 Stick a length of green trim just below the centre of the card front. Wrap green ribbon around the left-hand side of the card front as shown. Adhere flowers and leaves to the ribbon using 3D glue gel.

3 Stamp all three of the butterflies from the stamp set onto white cardstock using pale green and Olive ink. Cut out and stick across the card front using 3D glue gel.



5 Tie a double bow using yellow ribbon and adhere in the top-right corner.

6 Stamp the sentiment onto white cardstock, then die-cut and matt it in the same way as the embossed panel from Step 1. Attach to the card front.

TOP TIP

Use a ball tool on the reverse of the flower petals to shape them. Turn the flower and use the ball tool again in the centre to create a three-dimensional flower

What you need

Materials

- ◆ white, Olive & yellow cardstock
- ◆ white 20x22cm card blank
- ◆ yellow Core'dinations cardstock
- ◆ Crafter's Companion Die'sire Sentimentals Vintage stamp set
- ◆ Crafter's Companion Sheena Douglass A Little Bit Scenic Flying Colours stamp set
- ◆ Olive & pale green inks
- ◆ green trim
- ◆ yellow & green ribbon
- ◆ paper flowers & leaves
- ◆ Collall 3D glue gel

Tools

- ◆ manual die-cutting machine
- ◆ Crafter's Companion Die'sire Embossalicious A Stitch In Time embossing folder
- ◆ sanding block
- ◆ corner-rounder punch



Donna Ferguson
Designer



21ST BIRTHDAY CARD



Simply make

- 1 Create a 15cm-square card blank from Centura Pearl cardstock. Cut another piece measuring 14cm square and die-cut the heart doily from the centre of the panel. Run the rest of the panel through the embossing folder.
- 2 Matt the panel onto dark and light peach Core'dinations cardstock and affix to the card front.
- 3 Cut two leaves from green Core'dinations cardstock, one stamen and two rows of flowers from light peach cardstock. Quill the flower using double-sided tape and add a flat-backed pearl to the centre.
- 4 Stamp the sentiment onto green Core'dinations cardstock and die-cut into a circle. Cut a strip of green cardstock into a banner shape, stamp a second sentiment and matt onto dark peach cardstock.

FRIENDSHIP CARD

Simply make

- 1 Create an 18cm-square card blank from Centura Pearl cardstock, matt with green cardstock and cut a slightly smaller piece of yellow cardstock. Cut a 15x9cm panel of green cardstock and a slightly smaller piece of yellow cardstock.
- 2 Run the smallest yellow cardstock panel through the embossing folder, then ink the edges of both yellow cardstock

What you need

Materials

- ◆ Centura Pearl cardstock
- ◆ green, yellow & dark peach Core'dinations cardstock
- ◆ Crafter's Companion Die'sire Sentimentals Nature stamp set
- ◆ ribbon
- ◆ flat-backed pearls
- ◆ Collall 3D glue gel
- ◆ Dried Marigold, Mustard Seed, Worn Lipstick & Peeled Paint
- ◆ Ranger Tim Holtz Distress Ink

- ◆ Ranger Inksentials Cut-N-Dry foam

Tools

- ◆ manual die-cutting machine
- ◆ Crafter's Companion Die'sire Embossalicious Let's Fly A Kite embossing folder
- ◆ Crafter's Companion Die'sire Large & Small Sunflower Quilling dies
- ◆ Crafter's Companion Die'sire Stamen, Leaf 2, Lace Border 4 & Cameo Stamping Frame dies

panels using Distress Ink. Matt the smaller panel onto the smaller piece of green cardstock.

3 Die-cut and emboss the lace border and cameo stamping frame from dark peach cardstock and ink the edges using Distress Ink.

4 Stamp the sentiment onto the non-shiny side of the Centura Pearl cardstock, die-cut into an oval and, with the frame still attached, ink the edges using Distress Ink.

5 Using the non-shiny side of the Centura Pearl cardstock, die-cut four rows of the small sunflower and two rows of the large sunflower. Colour using all of the Distress Inks and Cut-N-Dry foam. Ink the sections of the leaves using different colours, making sure to blend them well. Ink the edges of the leaves using Peeled Paint Distress Ink.

6 Use two rows of the large sunflower, two rows of the small sunflower and a row of the stamen to create the flower. Quill the flowers, securing them with double-sided tape, and add a flat-backed pearl to the centre. Create the smaller flower using the same technique.

7 Assemble the card, placing the embossing panel on the left-hand side and the die-cut border along the top. Wrap with two lengths of ribbon and tie in a bow. Affix the sentiment panel together with the leaves and flowers to the card front to finish.





What you need

Materials

- ◆ Centura Pearl cardstock
- ◆ light peach, dark peach & green Core'dinations cardstock
- ◆ Crafter's Companion Die'sire Sentimentals Imagine & Memories Are Made stamp sets
- ◆ Tuxedo Black Memento inepad
- ◆ Collall 3D glue gel
- ◆ flat-backed pearl
- ◆ key charm

Tools

- ◆ manual die-cutting machine
- ◆ Crafter's Companion Die'sire Embossalicious Antique Keys embossing folder
- ◆ Crafter's Companion Die'sire Heart Doilies, Small Rose Quilling, Stamen & Leaf 2 dies
- ◆ circle die

5 Add the die-cut sentiment to the heart doily using 3D glue gel, then place onto the card front at an angle using 3D glue gel.

6 Add the banner, leaves and flower to the card front using 3D glue gel and adhere the key charm to the left-hand side of the sentiment to finish.



I LOVE YOU TO THE MOON

Simply make

1 Create a 15cm-square card blank from Centura Pearl cardstock then cut a slightly smaller piece of patterned paper.

2 Run the patterned paper panel through the embossing folder and ink the edges using Peeled Paint Distress Ink.

3 Die-cut green cardstock into a circle frame and ink the edges. Stamp the sentiment onto the non-shiny side of the Centura Pearl cardstock and die-cut into a circle, inking the edges while the frame is still attached.

4 Die-cut three rows of the small sunflower, one stamen and one set of leaves using

the non-shiny side of the pearl cardstock. Ink the edges, assemble the flower and add a resin flower to the centre.

5 Matt the embossed panel onto green cardstock, wrap ribbon across and adhere to the card front. Place the frame and sentiment on top using 3D glue gel. Adhere the flower and leaf as shown to finish.

TOP TIP

Blend Distress Ink while it's still damp as it will blend more smoothly. Also remember to always clean your surface between using different colours

What you need

Materials

- ◆ Centura Pearl cardstock
- ◆ green Core'dinations cardstock
- ◆ Crafter's Companion Die'sire Sentimentals Love Is All You Need stamp set
- ◆ Peeled Paint Ranger Tim Holtz Distress Ink
- ◆ patterned paper
- ◆ Collall 3D glue
- ◆ white ribbon
- ◆ resin flower

Tools

- ◆ manual die-cutting machine
- ◆ Crafter's Companion Die'sire Chantilly Lace Stamping Frame, Small Sunflower Quilling die, Stamen & Leaf 2 dies
- ◆ Crafter's Companion Die'sire Embossalicious Gothic Script embossing folder

