

"We only create products we love"

With its passion for stamps and cute images, Lili of the Valley has been going strong for nearly 10 years. Time for Stéphanie de Geus to talk to Laila Ansbergs and Lisa Barnes about how it all started



A sea of inspiration to get you started straight away



Laila Ansbergs and Lisa Barnes

In 2004 Laila Ansbergs started Lili of the Valley (LOTV). Now, nearly ten years later, it has grown from 10 stamp designs to over 500 designs, and the company has no shortage of new ideas.

"I don't have a degree in art", says Laila. "I've always been arty, but my degree was

more academic. At the time I had no idea what I wanted to do. When I was watching a craft show on a shopping channel, I thought 'I could do that' and I started sketching some pictures and toppers. Then I went to Lisa and said 'can you see if you can sell these?'

"And I did!" smiles Lisa Barnes. "I took it to local craft shops in Yorkshire to see if they were interested and they were. It sort of took off straight away after that, because six months later we did our first TV show!"

Show and stock

"We used to do everything ourselves" says Lisa. "We used to pack the stamps, deliver the stock, do the TV shows and the PR, and design the stamps. When we were really busy we would just drive down to Birmingham to do a craft show and drive back the same night, not even booking a hotel."

Even the smallest details have been thought about

"Those were the days", agrees Laila. "I'm glad we don't have to do it all by ourselves anymore! We would drive down to the TV studio with the car packed with our stock, drive to the back of the building to drop the stock off, drive to the other side and go straight onto the show to demonstrate."

"Those TV shows were dead scary at first", tells Lisa. "It's so strange, but it gets better the more you do it and we soon got used to it. It did help that we were guests on the TV show and not the presenters."

"What also helped", says Laila, "is the fact that those days the shows weren't live, so if you messed up you could always do it again. Whereas now it's all live and if you go live, there's no going back. However, you can't beat the buzz of a live show"

Recently LOTV

started doing shows again on Create and Craft TV after a three year break. "But this time our designer Dawny Phillips is going on the show to demonstrate our products. She is just really good and her demos are amazing", says Lisa.

Stamps

LOTV stamps are exclusively sold through their website and their store in Farsley in Yorkshire.

"We love what we do and we



Laila and Lisa have really given their shop style and character

Displaying card designs really highlights the stamp's cuteness





Example cards lined up in the LOTV store in Farsley



Find fantastic card inspiration right next to the stamps

For more information on new product releases and inspiration on the blog, go to www.lillofthevalley.co.uk

love running a stamping company, but as soon as we would start retailing to other stores, we would be managing a company", explains Lisa. "We love that we can work with a small team and that we're a family who all feel the same about LOTV. We also value our quality so we made the decision to put our time and energy in keeping that as high as possible and provide great customer service. Plus at the moment we have such an enormous range of stamps and shops would only have space to stock a small part of it. Here we have space to display all of them."

When walking into the store the first thing you'll notice is a sea of cards. Every stamp displayed has an example card next to it and, with 500 stamp designs, that is quite a lot of card inspiration!

"We love giving people inspiration for using our stamps", says Lisa. "Even before our new stamps come out, we have designers putting inspiration on their blogs and on our own inspiration blog. When the stamps come out, we gather all those images together on our Pinterest board. We have 48 Pinterest boards with over 2,500 cards, so our customers are never short of ideas."

"We noticed that people are always looking for the newest ranges and we're always looking for new trends and exciting ideas to make sure our products stay fresh and give our

customers new ideas to work with", agrees Laila. "We're trying to give them new inspiration and ideas on a daily basis as crafters are quite keen for new products."

Designing

Where some companies retire their stamps after a while, LOTV doesn't. "We tried it once with three stamps. We retired them and people started asking where those stamps were. So we brought them out again. We even kept one of the stamps, because we felt sorry for it", laughs Lisa. "It's called Umbrella Bunny and we just couldn't retire it, because it was so cute. It just shows how much we love the products we produce. That's our main ethos – we only sell products we love."

The company currently uses two professional artists who work exclusively for them to produce the stamp designs. Laila then redraws them by hand to produce the artwork needed for the stamp plates. "I think it's Laila's hand drawing that makes our stamps feel different as they never lose their original sketched feel", says Lisa.



Off-the-page inspiration using a selection of LOTV stamps

Art products

When LOTV began, its main focus was on toppers and découpage images. "At the time, stamping wasn't really that popular", says Laila. "It was only later, around 2009, that stamping became really popular. We noticed stamping grew in popularity and decided to turn our images into rubberstamps and from there on it continued to grow in popularity."

Swing Time and Tea Time were the first stamps they made, which set the LOTV style that everyone knows and loves – cute character images that are perfect for colouring in. "I think we just jumped in at the right time. People started to see that by colouring your own images you could make a card

in any style and because a stamp is reusable it's also good value for money."

They've especially seen a growth since the popularity of Copic markers and Letraset ProMarkers. "Suddenly people had good-quality colouring media on hand and that really gave the colouring trend a boost. I think the craft world is really benefitting from all the art supplies that are hitting the market at the moment", says Laila. "However, there are also a lot of crafters that are a little overwhelmed with all the choices out there and just don't know where to start. That's why we also run workshops at our shop and HQ in Farsley. Our beginners and colouring workshops are always popular as it provides people with the key skills and tips they need to get started. I think it's also great that we're back on Create and Craft TV, as that opens up another channel to teach new people how to use our products and to inspire them to create cards and craft projects they are really proud of. It's something we really wish to keep on doing." ○

Turn the page to see card inspiration using LOTV stamps



JUST TO SAY

Simply make

1 Create a 12x15cm tent-fold card blank from white cardstock. Cut a panel of 10x13cm of patterned paper and affix to the centre of the card front.

2 Cut a 11x14cm panel of white cardstock and die-cut a heart from the centre. Emboss using the polka dot embossing folder and attach to the centre of the card front using 3D foam pads.

3 Stamp the image onto white cardstock and colour using Copic markers. Cut out leaving a narrow border and attach to the heart aperture using 3D foam pads.

4 Attach the buttons to the top-right corner of the heart and affix the sentiment to finish.

LET'S CELEBRATE

Simply make

1 Create a 13cm-square tent-fold card blank from white cardstock. Matt the card front with patterned paper.

2 Cut a 9cm square panel of white cardstock and run through the embossing folder.

3 Die-cut the border from patterned paper and adhere along the bottom of the cardstock panel. Attach to the card front using 3D foam pads.



4 Stamp the image onto white cardstock and colour using Copic markers. Cut the image out and attach to the panel using 3D foam pads to finish.

What you need

Materials

- ◆ Lili of the Valley Dancing Queen & Handwritten Phrases set 25 stamps
- ◆ Lili of the Valley & NitWit Collections Promises 8x8" patterned paper pad
- ◆ white cardstock

- ◆ Copic markers
- ◆ 3D foam pads

Tools

- ◆ manual die-cutting machine
- ◆ QuickKutz polka dot embossing folder
- ◆ My Favorite Things Die-namics Simply Medium Scallops & Sentiment Strips dies



What you need

Materials

- ◆ Lili of the Valley My Favourite Friends & Handwritten Phrases set 25 stamps
- ◆ Lili of the Valley & NitWit Collections Promises 8x8" patterned paper pad
- ◆ white cardstock
- ◆ Copic markers
- ◆ buttons
- ◆ 3D foam pads

Tools

- ◆ manual die-cutting machine
- ◆ Embossalicious polka dot embossing folder
- ◆ Spellbinders Nestabilities Classic Heart die
- ◆ My Favorite Things Die-namics Sentiment Strips die

TOP TIP

Use low-tack tape to keep the dies in place when running the cardstock through your manual die-cutting machine



HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO YOU

Simply make

- 1 Create a 15x10cm tent-fold card blank from white cardstock and round the bottom corners.
- 2 Cut a 13x10.5cm panel of purple cardstock and die-cut a border along the bottom edge.
- 3 Cut a 11.5x10.5cm panel of patterned paper and affix to

the purple cardstock panel. Attach to the card front.

- 4 Die-cut another panel using the Stitched Mat Square and run through the embossing folder. Stick to the centre of the card front using 3D foam pads.

- 5 Stamp the image onto white cardstock, colour in and cut out. Add glitter glue to the girl's skirt and once dry attach to the card front using 3D foam pads together with a sentiment.

What you need

Materials

- ◆ Lili of the Valley It's My Party & Handwritten Phrases set 25 stamps
- ◆ Lili of the Valley & NitWit Collections Promises 8x8" patterned paper pad
- ◆ white & purple cardstock
- ◆ glitter glue
- ◆ Copic markers
- ◆ 3D foam pads

Tools

- ◆ manual die-cutting machine
- ◆ QuicKutz polka dot embossing folder
- ◆ Lil' Inker Designs Stitched Mats Squares die
- ◆ My Favorite Things Die-namics Simply Scallops Medium & Sentiment dies
- ◆ corner-rounder punch



LOVE YOU ▾

Simply make

- 1 Create a 13.5x10cm tent-fold card blank from white cardstock.
- 2 Die-cut another rectangle from white cardstock using the Stitched Mats Rectangle and matt with patterned paper.
- 3 Die-cut grass from green cardstock and attach along



FOR YOU ▲

Simply make

- 1 Create a 12cm-square card blank from white cardstock. Cut a 9cm-square panel of patterned paper and fix to the centre of the card front.
- 2 Cut another panel of white cardstock measuring 10cm square and die-cut a circle slightly off centre. Run the panel through the embossing folder and attach using 3D foam pads.
- 3 Stamp the image and colour in using Copic markers. Fix to the card front together with the sentiment die-cut using 3D foam pads to finish.



TOP TIP

When fussy cutting, try using serrated scissors if you don't have a steady hand

What you need

Materials

- ◆ Lili of the Valley So Many Presents & Handwritten Phrases set 25 stamps
- ◆ Lili of the Valley & NitWit Collections Perfect Pair 8x8 patterned paper pad
- ◆ white cardstock
- ◆ Copic markers
- ◆ 3D foam pads

Tools

- ◆ manual die-cutting machine
- ◆ QuickKutz polka dot embossing folder
- ◆ Spellbinders Nestabilities Classic Circles dies
- ◆ My Favorite Things Sentiment Strips die



TOP TIP

Don't be afraid to go over the edges while colouring images or elements as it creates depth and interest

the bottom of the panel as shown. Adhere the panel to the card front using 3D foam pads.

4 Stamp the image onto white cardstock and colour in using Copic makers. Cut out and fix to the card front using 3D foam pads. Add a sentiment to finish.

What you need

Materials

- ◆ Lili of the Valley So Many Presents & Handwritten Phrases set 25 stamps
- ◆ Lili of the Valley & NitWit Collections Perfect Pair 8x8" patterned paper pad
- ◆ white & green cardstock
- ◆ Copic markers
- ◆ 3D foam pads

Tools

- ◆ Joy! Crafts loud dies
- ◆ Spellbinders Nestabilities Classic Circles die
- ◆ My Favorite Things Die-namics Fresh Cut Grass & Sentiment Strips die
- ◆ Lil' Inker Designs Stitched Mats Rectangle die



YOU'RE WONDERFUL

Simply make

- 1 Create a white 14.5x10cm tent-fold card blank.
- 2 Cut a 13x10cm panel of pink cardstock and die-cut a scalloped border and fix to the bottom of the panel. Matt the panel with patterned paper and fix to the card front.
- 3 Die-cut a circle from white cardstock and run through the embossing folder. Fix to the card front using 3D foam pads.
- 4 Adhere a length of green ribbon to the scalloped edge as shown and fix a flower border on top using 3D foam pads.
- 5 Stamp the image and colour using Copic markers. Attach, together with a sentiment strip, to the card front using 3D foam pads to finish.

What you need

Materials

- ◆ Lili of the Valley So Many Presents & Handwritten Phrases set 25 stamps
- ◆ Lili of the Valley & NitWit Collections Perfect Pair 8x8" patterned paper pad
- ◆ Doodlebug flower border
- ◆ white & pink cardstock
- ◆ green ribbon
- ◆ Copic makers
- ◆ 3D foam pads

Tools

- ◆ manual die-cutting machine
- ◆ Spellbinders Nestabilities Classic Circles die
- ◆ My Favorite Things Simply Scallops Medium & Sentiment Strips dies

TOP TIP

Use Glossy Accents to create shiny surfaces such as mirrors and glass