

## Not Your Mother's Library Transcript

### Episode 22: A Month of Crafts

(Brief intro music)

Leah: Hello, and welcome to Not Your Mother's Library, a readers' advisory podcast from the Oak Creek Public Library. I'm Leah.

Rachel: And I'm Rachel.

Leah: We're going to dive right in to celebrating National Craft Month!

Rachel: Leah, I know that you are a massively creative person.

Leah: Yes!

Rachel: (laughs) You run the library's adult and teen craft classes, right?

Leah: I do! I just love crafts and being creative. Listeners of my mini episode about creativity already know this, but my dad worked as an art teacher for his whole career and really fostered a love of creativity. For my brother, he went the way of painting and graphic design, and I went every darn which way.

Rachel: (laughs)

Leah: I've done photography, graphic design, ceramics, textile art, and crafts. I adore crafts. I love finding some inspiration for a craft and figuring out how to make it. So, being able to bring some craft programs to the library and figure out how to tweak them for a class format has been really great. Of course, putting crafts into kits was a relatively easy tweak to make when we switched to distanced programming. Some of my favorite kits I've been able to offer were a blast from the past with 'Friendship Bracelets', a naturally crafty 'Fall Mosaics' program where people made mosaics out of beans and seeds, and a program I never figured out how to do in person as I would never have melted wax in the library—'Mug Candles'! Our very next program is mini desktop 'Zen Gardens', which I am sorry to say registration is full for, but further upcoming we have a 'DIY Bath Soak' program, where folks can put together an Epsom salt bath

blend, and 'Salt Dough Magnets'. With that kit, you'll get ingredients to make air dried—if you're patient—oven dried—if you're not—dough, some cookie cutters to shape it, paint, and magnets. Basically, you'll make the dough, cut it to a shape you like, and let it dry. Paint it, and adhere a magnet to the back. Presto, new magnet! I'm currently playing with that dough and figuring out all the tips and best practices for that program, and it's been fun. I'm also developing programs for this summer; warmer weather is on the horizon, folks! We just have to get there.

Rachel: We always receive very positive feedback when it comes to these types of programs, so you are obviously putting a lot of heart and soul into it! Oak Creek Public Library also offers a wide variety of crafts for a younger audience. The Youth Services Department has been doing this since time immemorial, be it in the form of Book & Craft-to-Go kits, monthly Take & Makes, or—most recently—our Take Out programs! When the pandemic hit last year, our librarians transformed the ever-popular Family Fun Night events into themed kits that you can register for and pick up Curbside. We just featured a 'Special Valentines Edition' as well as the 'Super Hero Training' kit, the 'S.T.E.A.M.' kit...and you can definitely look forward to more of those. Not to mention the 'Take Out Imagination Stations'! All you have to provide are basic materials like glue and crayons—and your imagination, obviously—and then we provide you everything else needed to make pretend-play areas. Past stations have included a farmers market, pizzeria, pet vet clinic, post office—you name it! There are plenty of other programs that will help your children get creative, such as 'Take out Movie Night', or 'Small Fry Drive-In'. Currently, there's a new series aimed at middle-grade students called 'Tween Fandom Crafters'. Find details on everything I just talked about on the library events calendar at [oakcreeklibrary.org/events](http://oakcreeklibrary.org/events). I'll be sure to add a link in the show notes, too.

Leah: My standby for crafting has always been yarn and crocheting. I learned when I was a freshman in college from my roommate's friend, and I've loved it since. I've always stuck to basic, basic crochet, but recently I watched a YouTube video by Claudetta Crochet. It was all about how to make an Alpine crochet stitch, and truly, though I've crocheted for over 15 years, this was the first 'fancy' stitch I've ever tried. Which is a bit embarrassing to me, to be honest. I watched that thing over and over trying to get the motion down, and I think I've mostly got it,

although were I to pick up that project again I'd need a refresher. If you're totally new to crochet and you don't have a helpful roommate's friend to teach you, Oak Creek does have several books on getting started. I might recommend "Simple Crocheting: A Complete How-to-Crochet Workshop with 20 Projects" by Erika Knight, or perhaps "Learning to Crochet" by Sue Whiting. There are books for more advanced crochet too, if you have the basics but want to take it up a step further. I think that's where I fall on the spectrum. There's a cute book on making 'amigurumi' by Ana Rimoli, which is the Japanese art of knitting or crocheting small, stuffed yarn creatures.

Rachel: Aw.

Leah: (laughs) Or maybe you'd like to create a lacier piece. Check out "Crochet So Lovely: 21 Carefree Lace Designs" by Kristin Omdahl.

Rachel: I've been getting craftier myself, which I think is a combination of now living in my own house and wanting to decorate that space as well as staying safer at home during the pandemic. Everyone has gotten a bit stir-crazy during these trying times, and what better outlet than to make stuff with your own two hands? I don't have much natural artistic talent to speak of...

Leah: Don't say that!

Rachel: (laughs) It's true, but the awesome thing about crafting is that you don't technically need talent. No offense, Leah.

Leah: Just enthusiasm!

Rachel: (laughs) It's true! Just pick up a how-to manual or watch a video tutorial, and you'll be designing in no time. To this end, I picked up a title called "Craft the Rainbow: 40 Colorful Paper Projects" by Brittany Watson Jepsen. Full disclosure, I selected this one from the shelf because the cover is just as colorful as you would expect, with an inside to match. Whether you are looking to host a party or just spruce up your domicile, this book has loads of ideas. The chapters are separated by color, which is helpful, and yes—one of these chapters is all about rainbow crafts if you can't pick just one. And, of course, if you like a craft idea but want to

change its color, that's easily done. One of my favorites is the 'balloon arch with paper leaves'. My father is retiring at the end of the month and, while we can't host a big shebang, I do plan to have a more intimate family gathering at home and want to make the celebration as memorable as possible. This balloon arch is massive and—perhaps more important—surprisingly easy to make! I just might try another craft from this book for the same purpose: the 'dip-dyed paper flowers'. These can be strung together to make a curtain of cascading flowers, hung individually from the ceiling, or even just used as table decoration. Hint: Paper flowers last a lot longer and are more cost-effective than real flowers. There is also a crafting recipe for 'flower crowns', which are so gorgeous and have always been something that I've wanted to make for myself. And my cat.

Leah: (laughs)

Rachel: Getting more into paper crafting, I also picked up a book titled "Scissors, Paper, Craft: 30 Pretty Projects all Cut, Folded, and Crafted from Paper" by Christine Leech. I'll be the first to admit that my fingers are kind of fumble-y [sic], so I really like that this book offers precise, step-by-step instructions and tips. I want to have a go at making 'Japanese-bound notebooks' which, once you have the technique perfected, can be turned into any kind of bound book! They're miniature and adorable. Another craft that looks fairly easy is the 'giant gift rosettes'. These are huge versions of the bows that you stick on presents during the winter holidays, and they can be made using a roll of wallpaper. That's pretty bizarre, right? It seems like a funky, alternative Christmas decoration. For those of you who are wondering, both of these books do come with templates for any craft recipes that require them. If you are checking these titles out from your local library, just remember to make photocopies of any templates you want rather than tearing out the pages.

Leah: That's a good point, Rachel. I recently grabbed a book entitled "The Natural Soap Chef: Making Luxurious Delights from Cucumber Melon and Almond Cookie to Chai Tea and Espresso Forte." I'll admit, the scents it's touting are perhaps a bit dated.

Rachel: (laughs) Hm.

Leah: (laughs) As is the book; it came out in 2012. But I figure the basics are the basics and it could help me teach those. Soap making is a new foray for me, and I'm still in the information-gathering stage of how to make my very own. But my fiancé loves soap. He's in the Navy, and he's picked up a bar of soap from practically every port he's ever been in. Loves trying new types, and it's a practical souvenir. But I think he'd really like if it was a project we could work on together and create the perfect soap for him. And what a nice present handmade soap could make! If I dream even a little bigger, what about bar shampoo and conditioner? There's a brand I love—Vida Bars, if anyone is interested.

Rachel: Other brands are available. (laughs)

Leah: (laughs) They're just amazing. I wonder if I could create something sort of similar? But anyways, in this book the author, Heidi Corley Barto, walks us through the soap-making process. The essential supplies you need, step by step process, plus beginner recipes. That's me! Then she devotes some time to special kinds of soaps, like goat's milk or coconut milk, and fancier recipes. Between beginner recipes and fancier ones, I expect I'll be able to tweak one enough to make it my very own, just like I do actual recipes. Don't get me wrong—I'll put in some time following the basics and getting that down before I do too much experimenting. But I do have to admit, I do like tweaking a recipe or putting two of them together. I call it 'frankensteining' the recipe.

Rachel: (laughs)

Leah: And it's a fun process! And like Rachel mentioned earlier, you can always make a copy of a page. That would give you both the recipe and space to make any notes or tweaks to it. For my cooking recipes, I have a big binder I slide my favorites and family recipes into. I might have to start a small binder for soap making. The last bit that Barto includes in the book is how to package your perfectly handmade soap. Which is a nice bit of information to have, if I do indeed end up giving any as gifts in the future.

Rachel: I really like your idea of 'frankensteining'. That's so cute! (laughs) I said earlier that I am not very good with my hands, and that is especially true when it comes to handwriting. Leah can attest to how difficult it is to read my chicken-scratch!

Leah: Well...yes.

Rachel: (laughs) While my everyday handwriting may be a lost cause, I can at least improve it for special occasions. Calligraphy is well out of my league, so I settled on “100 Days of Lettering: A Complete Creative Lettering Course” by Jay Roeder. It is basically a practice book that helps you re-train your hands to write more beautifully. The key here is to go slowly and practice for consistency. If you keep at it, you’ll be able to pen the insides of birthday cards using an impressive scrawl! And this skill transfers to other crafts. Roeder gives a crash-course on digitizing your art, so all of the new writing styles you pick up can be used as logos for your blog, website, or social media. Or, for example, have it printed on a t-shirt. (gasps) Fashion!

Leah: Fashion!

Rachel: (laughs) If you are more interested in making comics, I recommend “Creative Lettering: Techniques & Tips from Top Artists” by Jenny Doh. The author shows you how to change your script to mimic different fonts, conform each word to fit the specific space you are trying to fill, and even how to create pictorial calligraphy. That’s when the words you are writing end up looking like an image of something when seen as a larger whole. Say that you love shoes. You could write the words “I love shoes” over and over again in the two-dimensional shape of a stiletto. Or maybe your uncle enjoys fishing. Learn how to write the line “Bernard is the best fisherman to sail the high seas!” over and over into the shape of a fish. Pictorial calligraphy such as this is often used for art and digital design. And you’re not limited to a pen or pencil, either. Go wild and take up a paintbrush, or use cut-outs...anything that you find eye-catching.

Leah: A book caught my eye when I was searching for a crafty topic to discuss: “Fables & Fairy Tales to Cross Stitch” by Véronique Enginger. It caught my attention because I’ve long held the desire to maybe get started with cross stitching, but I’ve never quite gotten there. In fact, just in writing this have I remembered that way back in mid-2020 I purchased a cross stitching kit from Amazon. I was in the middle of moving, so I think it got packed up in a box and not quite all my craft stuff has been fully organized yet. Maybe that’s just become a priority to get done! In any case, I’m even more excited to dive into some cross stitch since I know I have the supplies at home. The book “Fables & Fairy Tales to Cross Stitch” isn’t necessarily for beginners, in my

opinion. In the back of the book, the author has included techniques and tips—four pages worth. Perhaps because I'm a total newbie at it do I think it doesn't cover enough. But I've always been more prone to understanding something once I've actually gotten my hands on it and done the craft. The book does have many different patterns for cross stitch scenes that feature different fairy tales, fables, and French nursery rhymes. The text on the patterns is in French as well, so maybe I ought to have paid more attention to the book's subtitle of "French Charm for Your Stitchwork". Being a total newbie, I just thought that meant a French technique or something. Don't worry, though; if you don't speak French, the text of the book is in English, and there is something charming about the patterns provided with French text. The author really nailed that part! Maybe I'll pick this book up again once I've had a chance to do some exploring of cross stitch via that kit I already have at home.

Rachel: I feel as though we need to enter a 'can't mess this up' craft into the equation for those of us who have a harder time with the more complex ones that are available. Learn the basics with "Stamp Stencil Paint: Making Extraordinary Patterned Projects by Hand" by Anna Joyce. Stamps and stencils are a great way for the elderly, children, and everyone else in between to have some fun. As Joyce herself writes, "Each project...was designed to be simple, effective, and deliver great results." She explains how to mix custom colors and use measuring tools, so even if you have zero experience in this area you'll be just fine. Don't want to go out and buy a bunch of stamps or stencils? No problem, because you can make your own using basic materials like moldable foam and rigid plastic film. The recipes Joyce includes are pretty cool. There is a 'crosshatch zippered pouch' that I really, really want to make. The 'patterned table linens' also look cute. This skill carries over into other hobbies like scrapbooking, which is a sweet bonus if you are trying to branch out.

Leah: Okay, the very last crafty topic I've got something to say about today is about quilting. It's something that I've dipped my little toe into and sure would like to dive on in completely. Once upon a time, I lived a big ol' condo that had tons of room, and it was coming up on Christmas. So, I took myself down to the local craft store and bought a whole bunch of fabric in coordinating colors and everything I needed to make a quilt for my mom, my Grandma Judy, Grandma Gloria, and Grandma Avis. Which...was a lot of supplies.

Rachel: (laughs)

Leah: I had great plans to cut five-inch by seven-inch pieces of fabric...piece them together in a pleasing quilt top. I'd then just zip them through the sewing machine, lay out the backing, layer on batting, and hand stitch that all together. Then I'd just need to use that quilt binding on the edges. Easy, right?

Rachel: Sure!

Leah: Folks, I finished them just in time to fly home for Christmas, and boy howdy did they take up a lot of my luggage space, which was not something I had considered in my planning. It was a near thing! Never again will I bite off that much for a project at one time. I will admit, though, making four quilts back to back did mean that the first one was a little wonkier than my fourth, so I definitely got better while I worked on them. In any case, I'd like to do more quilting now that I have a house of my own and more room. A book on our shelves caught my eye, "Wise Craft Quilts: A Guide to Turning Beloved Fabrics into Meaningful Patchwork" by Blair Stocker. The reason it really caught my eye is I have some fabric my Grandma Gloria passed along to me. It was just cool fabric I liked from her stash, but now that she's passed I adore the idea of turning it into a reminder of her. So, in browsing the book, there are so many different kinds of quilt faces. Stocker tells you a bit of a story about each one, followed by a supply list, her design thoughts, and instructions. Which is really nice, to have it all laid right out like that. In typical Leah fashion, the first one that really caught my eye ended up being a really complicated, pretty 'spirit quilt' that has cool trees all over it. I read it, and boy, I not yet up to that level of detail and piecing stuff together!

Rachel: (laughs)

Leah: But the very next pattern featured—a 'star quilt'—does look a bit more doable. I might have to take a look through my fabric stash once I have my craft supplies all organized and see what I have to make.

Rachel: I believe you can do it, Leah.

Leah: Thanks!

Rachel: We hope that you are able to celebrate National Craft Month with us, either by registering for a Take Out program kit through the library or by browsing any of the books we mentioned to kickstart your newest craze. Be sure to look to the show notes for information on everything we just talked about. Please remember to subscribe and rate the podcast if you like what you hear. You can always reach us through Oak Creek Public Library's website or Facebook page. Simply use the #NotYourMothersLibrary. Until next time, happy reading.

Leah and Rachel: Bye!

(Brief outro music)