

Marni: Hello everyone. Welcome to "Your Family, Your Library," a podcast where we discuss the many ways our library is here for families of all shapes and sizes. Each episode we will bring you information and resources relevant to your family and beyond. We are "Your Family, Your Library," and we're glad you're here. I'm Marni, and on this episode, we're going to meet the library's newest maker in residence. First, let me give you a little bit of context. If you were here for our last episode, we talked about the A in STEAM and briefly mentioned makerspaces. A makerspace is a community space with different machines to make, craft, and create. They are there to foster creativity, community, innovation, and provide access to new emerging technologies. Skokie Public Library itself has two such spaces for the community by age group. We have a youth STEAM lab called the BOOMbox. The BOOMbox is intended for grades K through 6 and has different weekly activities based on a quarterly theme. We also have a makerspace called the Studio, which is intended for teens and adults. The Studio has different machines like laser cutters and engravers, sewing machines, vinyl cutters, 3D printers and embroidery machines, plus a smattering of odds and ends throughout the space. We also have step-by-step guides and videos for all of our machines in the space to help facilitate learning. The Studio is essentially a place to get creative, learn, make and try new things. These spaces are so important because it allows access to the community with emerging technologies, new equipment, materials, and even facilitation methods that could otherwise be out of reach. Here at the library, we've seen an increase in patrons of the last year, as well as an increase in community within the makerspace itself. What we've seen is people want an outlet for curiosity and creativity and a way to create and connect with others. What is a Maker in Residence program? Why do we have it? Why did we even want it? It depends on where you go. But generally, a Maker in Residence program invites an artist or a maker or crafts person to engage in a limited time residency where they will share their artistic skills with the community. We've decided this is good for our community here at the library, as we see more requests for programming related to the maker space, and also more requests from experts for design questions. These requests for making creating inspired us to start this program here, by integrating a maker's expertise into the library's activities, the library is able to support collaboration and enhance learning through innovation in the community. Engaging with the makers expertise allows individuals to experiment and develop critical thinking skills through hands on creation. During this period, the selected maker and residents will have full access to all the machines, tools and materials in the studio. They will also be tasked with leading once a week workshops designed to integrate the specialized skills of community interests, fostering a culture of creativity and collaborative learning. The Maker in Residence also has open office hours where the community can come and interact with them, ask

questions and see what they're making. It was our hope that through this residency, the maker will engage community members and hands on experiences to share how artistic creation connects with personal and collective narratives. We wanted to integrate storytelling in making and inspire participants to engage with the maker and their community, to foster a deeper sense of belonging. Now onto the good stuff. Let's meet our first Maker in Residence. Our first maker is Julie Oh. Julie is a sewer quilter, fiber artist, and much more. She sees sewing as both an art form and a practical tool. Julie is a daughter of a dressmaker, and she began sewing at age 11. She's always been fascinated by creating new designs and experimenting with fabric. Her love for vintage fashion and sustainability inspired her to transform a collection of vintage scarves into children's dresses. She also draws inspiration for her creations from her Korean heritage and from mid-century modern design. She's also helping facilitate a community quilt project. Patrons can design a quilt square, and at the end of the month, Julie is going to make one large quilt to display in the Studio. Julie really hopes to create a ripple effect of creativity and sustainability and resourcefulness throughout the library. So welcome, Julie to the podcast. We're so excited that you're here. We're going to ask you a bunch of questions and get all your insights on what it is to be Julie, and what it is to be a first Maker in Residence. So how did you get started making, like, where did it come from?

Julie: I don't know if I've always been interested in making. I mean, just I learn how to sew when I was 11, but before that, my family's very creative. I've always watched my siblings and my parents create things.

Marni: What was the first thing you remember creating?

Julie: For myself... I used to, I don't know if it was more creating or just like learning the machines, but I would take I would go to the thrift store and buy something and, and just kind of chop it off and like, make something that fits or, or just kind of, had appliqués to it or just make it different, just even a little bit. But, I always just remember, we're always making something. I mean, everybody's making something, even if it's not seen as creative. You're, you're cooking or you're, you're, putting outfits together. You're still creating. So anything you do is, is very, it's comes from a creative mind, I think. So, you can't really get... Even if someone says "I'm not talented, I'm not artistic," I think everybody has the capability to create.

Marni: And no one here who's listening to us, but we both just rolled our eyes where people are like, I hate when people don't think that they can create something, right? It's so annoying because you obviously can.

It's the comparison that is the thief of joy that takes you away from other people. But I love the idea of little Julie running around

stealing her, not stealing. Taking, buying a jean jacket from the thrift store and adding a bunch of applications to make it cool and more exciting.

Julie: Right.

Marni: That's really cool. Okay, so from little Julie altering a bunch of clothes, chopping it off, adding things to it. How is your art and making evolved over the years?

Julie: It's still the same.

Marni: You're still chopping it off and adding things to it.

Julie: And I love vintage, designs. And I used to collect scarves and that you said something about that, and I did. It's just like having something and getting an idea. You never know when you get ideas or inspiration. So I used to collect scarves, and I one day I had kids by then. I started collecting scarves or vintage material, clothing like since high school. And then, I just never really used it and I and then one day I just looked at them and then I got an idea to make a dress out of them. So it's just the same concept of like, finding something and then and then doing pretty much the same thing, but in a obviously more mature fashion, which, you know you have better skills at that time. So this, as I evolve, I obviously developed better skills. I do what I do faster and easier. A lot of times when, when artists are asked, like, you know, how much is something worth or why, why is it so expensive? Why is your stuff so expensive, and you're not...And they ask you, how long does it take you to make this? And that is the worst thing you could ask an artist, because I guess it takes me ten minutes to fix something or make something. But it took me 30 years to get there.

Marni: Right.

Julie: So you can never, you should never ask artist, question their, you know, cost or their abilities or their skill. Because even if they're in a brand new artist or they're into in, you know, 30 years like me, I'm fast because I taught myself.

Marni: You have the experience for it, yeah, yeah.

Julie: But, so you, you should you should evolve. Every skill is, is ability from, you know, from what you learned. You could do it in five minutes as your, as your first try. But that's because you have a background in something, that makes you work outside the box and be able to do it.

Marni: Yeah. I think that's so interesting too, because a lot of time people are like, well, what's your hourly rate? And I'm like, do you

mean the 30 years of experience I have doing this? You want that included in my hourly rate as well? You're paying for my expertise let me tell you. Here's my body of work. We can work with it or not.

Julie: Right.

Marni: I think that's so interesting too because even now I feel like a lot of artists are downplaying their worth versus creating things for community and things like that. And I think it's so important to highlight those things because it is something that is valid. And the idea of sustainability and creating something new out of something old. I really like that because there are things on this earth that you can just continue to reuse, and you should fix it, and we should mend it and we should reuse it versus throw it out.

Julie: Right.

Marni: I love that.

Paul: This is "Your Family, Your Library" and it's time for a Skokie fact.

Jessica: Did you know? Skokie was incorporated in 1888 with the name Niles Center because it was in the middle of Niles Township, though efforts to rename the Village began as early as 1931. The Village's name wasn't changed to Skokie until November 15, 1940. For more Skokie history, visit the library's local history page.

Marni: All right, so you've talked a little bit about how your art and making has evolved over the years. How do you approach a new project? Has that changed at all?

Julie: I mean, this whole month has been a new project, and I think my creative mind can't stay focused. That's good and bad because, I like to try new things always. But, so. So I haven't actually sewn for fun in a long time because I changed my medium, I'm into pottery right now. So I actually, having sewn, And I got the bug, I did a big show, in December, and, and with my extra time, I made, as a potter, I made some aprons. And then, like, that was like, the first time I've sewn in years because I've been focusing on pottery for, for the last five years. And, and I got the bug and, And serendipitously, this, this application for the program came up at the same time as, like, I really miss sewing. I want to I want to do that again. So...

Marni: You're like, oh no, I missed this. I want to do more.

Julie: Yeah. So every time I sit and do something is it is a new approach. It's because it comes with a fresh start, like, you know,

fresh perspective. And, the quilting, I'm not a trained quilter. There's quilters that are meticulous and beautiful, and it's not who I am. I like, I'm more like abstract and I like to be my stuff, to be approachable. And people can do it. So I make it as easy as possible. And I think my idea is just to bring the community and be their skill set into and not really mine. Like mine is just to put it together. The, but it's, it's really just to, highlight what everyone is going to contribute to the project.

Marni: Yeah. I love when we first started talking about this community project, you were actually the one that brought it up to me and I was like, and so on board. I love this idea. It's so approachable, you were like, "it doesn't have to be good. It doesn't have to be bad. Here's how we can do it for the little ones and families. Here is how we can do it for people who have been sewing for a really long time." And I love the idea of the approachability to it, and that each square that would be donated to this community project would have like a slightly different story and a slightly different vibe. And people have been taking it very seriously. They're like, you know, I'm going to bring in quilt square. I want to make sure that it's in on time. And even staff members at the library have been making them too.

Julie: There are some really great ones.

Marni: And I love to see that. So I think it's been a really great project to show how accessible sewing and quilting can be. As well as creating this project that, like everyone, contributes to.

Julie: Exactly.

Marni: So we've talked a little bit about how you're a sewer and you're a quilter and a ceramicist. What tools have you used in the Studio throughout the month?

Julie: You know, actually I wanted to be able to learn more or use more of the tools. I actually asked Amanda yesterday to help me make...what's it called...

Marni: The epillog? Yeah, that's a laser cutter.

Julie: Laser cutter on a plastic, because I want to make these spirals, but I want to make some perfect. And that my, my personal project has a spiral circles, but I wanted to be able to draw them and, and then, and then sew on to, sew it instead of just hand drawing.

Marni: What a great use of that machine for your project.

Julie: So she's going to help me make that tool.

Marni: So you're cutting like a perfect spiral. And like a pattern to trace it on your fabric.

Julie: Exactly.

Marni: That's so cool

Julie: Yeah. So she's going to. We just talked about yesterday. She's gonna help me make that. And then I own an embroidery machine. So I feel like since I know how to use that I kind of just stayed away from that. I helped someone make, iron-on vinyl. For their quilt squares

Marni: Oh, that's so cool.

Julie: They cut. I don't know if you saw, like, the Chicago flag.

Marni: Oh, yes. The hot dog?

Julie: Yeah, my kid made that.

Marni: Really?

Julie: Yeah.

Marni: That I saw. That was just the other day when I came in. I was like that Chicago flag, that as a hot dog is so cool.

Julie: Right. And so that was his idea. And he was like, I don't need to start. And you know, you can appliqué. But then I was like, iron-on vinyl.

Marni: Perfect.

Julie: So that started. I was like, yeah, that was perfect. So I mean, there's so many ways there was actually that there wasn't enough time. Like, I'm still like, I have three days left for the month and I'm like trying to finish my project. And I think I thought that I would have more time, but I had a lot of people come. Every time...

Marni: People were so interested in talking to you.

Julie: Yeah, yeah. So I didn't have a lot of time to devote on, on learning all the machines, but I think I've incorporated as much as I can. But there's so many opportunities to use the 3D printer, or the laser cutter or the vinyl cutouts to make whatever you want and like work it together.

Marni: You're making me think we just need to make this residency

longer.

Julie: Oh God.

Marni: For next time. For next time I'm not holding you hostage, I promise. All right, well, how do you balance the creative and technical aspects of your work? Because there's a lot of technicality when it comes to sewing machines. I personally feel I've used sewing machines quite a bit in my career. In my life, I always felt like when I was working in a costume shop, everyone had their favorite sewing machine.

Because if you work on a different sewing machine, that sewing machine doesn't like you and it's not going to work all of a sudden. Do you feel like your sewing machine also has personalities?

Julie: Yeah, it's really hard for me to not use my sewing machine. So I'm at the library. I have mine at home. So it's, you know, the speed and the getting used to and where all the parts are. I'm just seeing, like, technical aspect of it. That's like second nature to me just because I've done it for so long. So. But my focus is more on the creative side because that's something new. And I not have every time I do something or even when I'm like, while I'm working on it, I always try to think way of making it better. You know, different or so. I'm constantly creating. I'm constantly changing things up. I think everybody is. But the technical aspect...eh it's fine. It's easy. It's just like second nature.

Marni: You're like, I've been doing this since I was a wee child.

Julie: It's like walking. So yeah.

Marni: I always tell that I will see a lot of people who come into the Studio and they're like, well, I've never sewed before. I'm gonna wait until Julie comes in. I was like, well, we can get you set up today. And then when Julie comes in, you can ask her a technical question. But the idea of just using a sewing machine, it's just imagine one line and you're just going forward So I feel like there's an idea that sewing machines and embroidery machines are sort of scary and hard to use. And for me, I think the sewing machine is one of the more approachable machines in the Studio.

Julie: It's so easy, right?

Mani: It's just like, so you can drive, it's that foot pedal and you're going forward.

Julie: That's exactly the metaphor I use when I teach people. And my kids learn how to sew at like at five years old. I learned that using drive versus what you're doing.

Marni: So they're amazing drivers is what you're telling me.

Julie: Yes, they are actually.

Marni: Oh good.

Julie: Yeah.

Marni: That's awesome. What are you looking forward to, to make in the future?

Julie: You know, I think all this time I've always been I don't even know how to say this, but I've always been focused on, like...

Marni: One thing at a time?

Julie: Selling my work.

Marni: Oh, interesting.

Julie: Selling it. And so if you come to my house.

Marni: You've told me about your house.

Julie: I don't have

Marni: The bings of fabric.

Julie: Yes, I have a tons of, you know, sources of everything, but I don't own anything that I make because I'm usually, like, giving it away or selling it off. And I want to focus on, like, actually the project that I had to do for my project, as sad as I am to have to give it to the library, I'm, like, really excited that I want to do more artistic.

Marni: But also it's in the library. So it's still yours. It's not going away.

Julie: Yeah, I know, I love that. So that actually like sparked in me to do something more personal, more artistic to show off my skill instead of just like getting it done or making it utilitarian, like just, you know, being able to use it and, and be done with it. And I want it to be more artistic, and I want to start doing that for myself.

Marni: I love to hear that you want to make more art for yourself, because I feel like there is a sense of capitalistic society where we have to create and make and do things for other people. But my family has a big artistic background as well, and my grandma was a painter, and so it was always

sort of like encouraged that you would make stuff and display it in your house. And I love the idea that and not like a vanity way. I'm just like, I'm proud of this. I made this with my own hands. I'd love to make you something too. And I think that that, that is not celebrated enough. So I love that. If this is what you got out of this residency, that's amazing to hear.

Julie: Yeah, yeah, it's. I, it's, it's I see I go to other people's homes, other artists and they have so many things that they've created or, you know, they know personally that someone else created for them.

Marni: Yeah.

Julie: And I'm just like my house. I mean, I love my style.

Marni: That's good.

Julie: I like my furniture and all, but it's like, I don't I don't have anything to showcase what I can do.

Marni: That's a great goal for the rest of the year.

Julie: Totally.

Marni: I also think that's really cool too, because sometimes when you it's more personal, when you can be like, if someone comes to your home and they're looking at the walls or if they're looking in your cupboard, if they're looking at mugs, if they're looking at something, a piece of clothing, you can be like, oh, I made that, or my really dear friend "blah blah blah" made that, or oh, that was my grandmother's she gave to me or it's just really interesting that there's more of a connection to it, like more emotional connection to it. Then there is just a I bought this in the store at some big box store. Every 12, 12,000 other people have the same print in their home. And I think the more personal aspects of it, whether it be like people think it's good or bad art, I still think that even better is relevant. Just because somebody doesn't like it doesn't mean it's not art. Yeah.

Julie: Yeah, exactly. Exactly.

Marni: That's really cool. Okay, one more question. Are you ready? What advice do you have for future makers?

Julie: I think anybody and everybody should just do something that makes them happy. Artists make things for a reaction, good or bad. Some artist makes provocative things and one, you know, they try to get a bad reaction or, or a thoughtful reaction. I make art to make people happy. And so whatever, people's, intentions are for creating it makes your mind

spin. It makes you happy.

Marni: Makes your heart fuller.

Julie: Yeah, exactly. So whatever the goal or the, the intent for creating, I think anybody should do it. If even if it's just to kill time, even if it's just to make friends or find a date, whatever it is.

Marni: Even if you think it's bad.

Julie: Even if it's bad, like even if you just like, oh yeah, I don't want to go, but fine, I'll just go with you because you want to do it.

Marni: Bad art is still art.

Julie: Yeah. So, my advice is just to go out there and do it, because even if you're doing it for someone else, it brings them joy.

Marni: Yeah.

Julie: And you never know if it could also bring you joy. And I think that's most important in creating.

Marni: I love that, I love that the joy or the reaction that you intend is the most important thing that you're getting out of art. It shouldn't be what you want to do. What you want other people to feel is how you want to feel when you're doing it.

Julie: Exactly.

Marni: Which is so it's just such a great message to share with people. Everyone's so rushed. You can just take 30 minutes to make some bad art, an hour to make some good art, whatever you want. And I think that's really great. Start somewhere, even if it's small.

Julie: Exactly.

Marni: We hope we've inspired you to come to the library and make with us. But you don't have to visit the library to tap into your creative side. Creativebug offers thousands of art and craft classes taught by experts. Find courses on knitting, soap making, painting, and more. More information is in our show notes.

Marni: Thank you so much, Julie. Thank you. I know that your time, in our very first maker in residence program, is winding down. I hope that you've enjoyed it as much as we've enjoyed having you here in the studio. Every time I go into the Studio, whenever I meet with one of our specialists, they're in the Studio. They were like, "oh, did you hear? This person came in and they talked to Julie and they were so

happy." Or they never sewn before and then they talked to Julie and they made a quilt square, and they were so happy. Or I'll get calls or emails from patrons being like, "the deadline hasn't passed yet. Can I bring it my quilt square?" So I feel like you're making a really big impact on the community here, at least the creative community here. So and I've been really glad to see it. And people really love it also.

Julie: Thank you so much. Thanks for choosing me.

Marni: Of course. Thanks for applying. Well, folks, that's it for us this month. Remember to keep in touch with us. We'd love to hear from you. Email us at podcast at Skokie library dot info and don't forget if you've enjoyed this episode or previous episodes, rate and review on your favorite pod catcher. Bye friends!