

# FIRST CUT

Communication From Members Of The Guild Of American Papercutters

Design by Chun Lin

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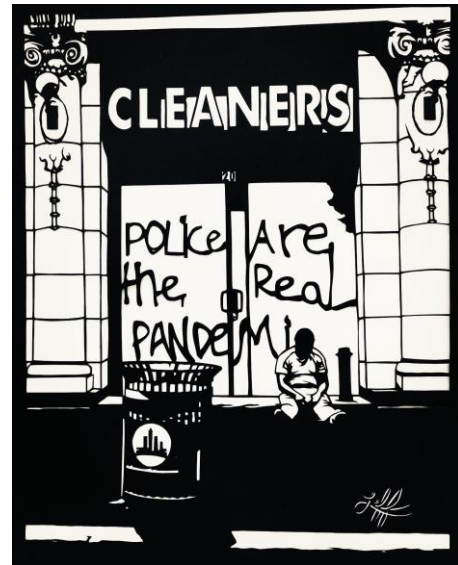
## Check In With Mindy

*Shalom which means peace, hello and goodbye in Hebrew, one of my first papercuts circa 1996 or so*



As an undergraduate so many years ago I majored in Women's Studies. I was actually the first at the University of MD. to receive this degree (1982). I created my own major. I read many wonderful books and articles as an undergraduate and along the way encountered the important feminist slogan "The Personal is Political". Fast forward many decades. Somewhere around 2013 or so I was introduced to the papercut art of British visual artist Jaqueline Nichols at an exhibit in NYC entitled The Ladies Guild Collection. This series of papercuts combined rabbinic misogyny with sexualized images of women, all on paper doilies. The entire exhibit was Jewish feminist political commentary. It was so empowering seeing texts I had struggled with for so many years being explored and questioned.

This brings me to the current day, Facebook and art. Recently someone posted a papercut on the GAP Facebook page which was not favorable regarding President Trump. A few people responded that they thought it was hate speech. Other people responded they thought it was terrific. This Facebook exchange brings up so many questions especially in light of our current political climate, Trump, COVID-19 and Black Lives Matter, to name a few current topics. What role does creating art play in your life? Have you ever created in response or in reaction to politics, to pain, to feeling invisible? If not, why not? If yes, does it help?



Untitled, 8x10", by Rosa Leff (@rosaleff)

There are many ways to express oneself- marching, talking to friends, writing poetry, letters to the editor, drawing, etc. If I have learned anything since Trump was elected, it is the importance of listening, even if I do not agree with the speaker. To protest because being silent is never a good idea, to find other means of expression so there is an outlet and a way to stay sane.

Let us keep listening to one another, we do not need to agree, we do not need to convince one another that we are right. Let's keep making art and most importantly, let's continue to send love out into this broken world.



*"I Can't Brev," 16x20", By Rosa Leff (@rosaleff)*

## *"You Can't Help It"* Rosa Leff

"Now more than ever..." seems to have become the unofficial slogan for 2020. While for some, this year has provided an opportunity to step back from the madness of the rat race and to spend time with family, others are struggling to pay their bills, risking their lives on the frontline, or ill. For some these past few months have been business as usual, others are angry, in mourning, or fighting for Black lives. Between murder hornets, protests, riots, the pandemic, food shortages, and the recession the only thing that feels certain anymore is a whole lot of uncertainty and art.



*"Justice For Big Floyd," 16x20", By Rosa Leff (@rosaleff)*

Nina Simone said "You can't help it. An artist's duty, as far as I'm concerned, is to reflect the times." I've never felt called to make political art before. When we first began our quarantine I was working small and that itself was a reflection of the times. I wanted to make things that could be completed quickly because the feeling of accomplishment was comforting. Following the murder of George Floyd my husband and I decided to risk Covid, and if necessary, rubber bullets and pepper spray, to protest. I wore sneakers (If you know me, you know how unusual that is!) in case I needed to run and asked my husband if he thought it was safe to bring my camera. I'd heard reports and seen videos of folks who were documenting protests being targeted by police.

Ultimately, I left my camera at home and decided I'd have to do my best with cell phone pictures. Whether or not I should document the changes in my adopted city was never a question. Cutting heals me.

## *From Naomi Hordes:*

Just came across this item as I was going through family memorabilia. This is a papercut that I did for my granddaughter for her bat mitzvah at age 12 (she's now 28 and just had her fourth child!). The papercut - her name in free-hand Hebrew letters - was reproduced multiple times, to be pasted up onto a single sheet of 8.5" paper. It was then printed on magnetic sheets and cut into squares, to be added to party-favor bags for her friends at a celebration at her home. (Image right.)

*What a great idea Naomi!*





## Teaching Online

Dena Levie

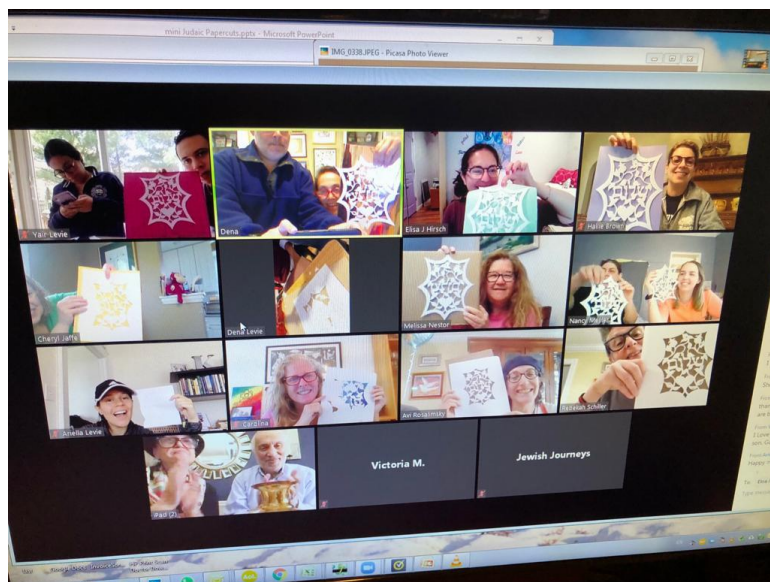
This past week I lead my first ZOOM papercutting workshop. I am involved with an organization that takes moms to Israel on an 8 day inspirational trip. We have monthly get together's for a year after the trip. This was one of our reunion monthly meetings. When we saw we weren't doing this live I thought, why not go Zoom?

My daughter made me a flyer which included all the materials needed. knife or scissor, self sealing mat, construction paper for the back and a print out of the design I sent out. I offered people to pick up an exacto knife and piece of cardboard for the class if they couldn't find them.

For the design I usually hand draw something and then put x's in the area that needs to be cut out. I wanted to try something different. I started to teach myself illustrator to shade in the areas to cut out. It wasn't easy but I was happy with the result. The design says Shalom in Hebrew. Peace. I thought it appropriate for these times. Since it was mother's day, I put a heart in the design. If they wanted they could write mom in the heart and give it to their mother!

I set up a zoom on my computer and also logged in from my phone. My phone was focused on my hands and artwork. That way people could see me and how I cut. I spoke a bit about the history of papercutting, showed a slide show of other peoples artwork as well as my own, and discussed how I got started. We then had everyone cut out the artwork. While I was speaking I muted everyone. It felt a bit lonely and I wasn't sure if people were with me. During the actual cutting process I told some funny stories and was sure to ask people to hold up their work and ask me questions and I asked them how they were doing. I wanted total involvement.

They seemed to have a lot of fun. Some people framed them already and sent me some pictures. Others asked for more designs. I'd say it was a success!



Have you taught papercutting online? We'd love to hear about your experience! What worked well? What made it challenging?





From Margaret Vance

I think hearts are one of the most fun motifs to use in papercutting so in February I got busy and made many, many little papercuts, got out my origami paper 3x3 for the littlest ones), my laminator to finish them off and gave them as Valentines to family and friends! Leaving a wide margin of film around them makes them usable as coasters, or easy to put up in a window. So much fun!!

## Papercut Bookplates

By Naomi Hordes

The Jewish people have always been pleased to be called Am Ha-Sefer - "The People of the Book". That particular book, of course, was the Torah - the Five Books of Moses, the Law given to the Jews at Mount Sinai when Moses led them out of Egyptian slavery.

But we also have a humorous saying - "Two Jews, three opinions." That is most apparent when we study the Law. How do we understand the Divine Will? What are we, as a people and as individuals required to do to comply with it? What does the Law mean?

....continued.

### PAPERCUT BOOKPLATES by Naomi Hordes

During my 50 years of papercutting I've made bookplates as *bar mitzvah* gifts for young boys beginning their collections of *sifrei kodesh* (holy volumes) and libraries of other books. Both the original, simple images and free-hand Hebrew calligraphy have been cut, usually from deep blue acid free paper, then color-copied multiple times to be printed on self-stick, mailing label sheets before cutting to size.

Books have always been important elements of a youngster's "coming of age" celebration in our community and hopefully these book plates have found multiple "happy homes" in many volumes.



Paths through the Judean Hills lead to the walled City of Jerusalem, enclosing domed houses and the Scroll of the Law.

Hebrew in the center reads "The People of the Book" – "Am Ha-Sefer", one name by which the Jews proudly refer to themselves.

Below, lined space for owner of the book to sign his or her name.



The oval shows the Land of Israel with a feather quill below.

The quotation inside the map is from Psalms 24:1 "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof."

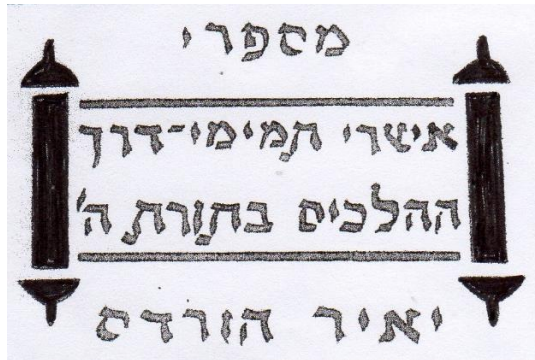
Hebrew at the top reads "From the Library of" and at the bottom, the name of the owner of the book. Multiple copies for his *bar mitzvah* (book) gifts were created.



Well, to find the answers - sometimes a variety of conflicting answers - we read more books- books of commentary, books of commentaries on the commentary. Studying more books results in collecting them. Collections turn into personal libraries.

So it was a natural little gift to give bookplates when relatives reached the age of 13 and celebrated becoming a bar mitzvah - accepting the benefits of an adult in the community, with all the attendant responsibilities.

Why bookplates? Because as a bar mitzvah they were beginning to collect their own Holy Books to study- and eventually amass their own libraries.



The image shows an open Torah scroll on its two rollers.

Inside the quote "Happy are the righteous, who walk in the path of the Lord's Law." Psalm 119:1

Hebrew at the top reads "From the Library of" and at the bottom, the name of the owner of the book. Multiple copies for his bar mitzvah (book) gifts were created.

Here are a selection of three papercut bookplates I designed, with appropriate Hebrew quotations.. Enjoy looking at them.

Then enjoy designing your own bookplates for the upcoming exhibition of them at the GAP Museum.

## A Note From Member Li Wang:

I am Li Wang, a member of GAP from China. I joined in GAP in 2013 (maybe 2014) when I taught Chinese language and Chinese culture in New Jersey. After I came back to China, I lost contact with GAP. But now I am back in touch with the help of Jerise and Melanie.

I began learning paper-cutting from my grandma when I was 8 years old. My grandma has special talent in paper-cutting and embroidery. I am also good at embroidery. My cutting works are made with scissors. My scissors are very unique, because they are hand-made by the old blacksmiths. Paper-cutting makes me crazy. I like to try different styles. Especially when I finished a children's book, I knew that cutting can work wonders. Making some interesting books for children is my dream. Here I want to show you some of my works and my scissors.



"Happy Halloween"





*"The Manderin Duck" (Top Left), "The Smoking Mouse" (Top Right),  
"The Grandma Mouse" (Bottom Left), "Castle" (Bottom Right)*





# The Silhouette

By Kathy Trexel Reed

The word Silhouette is almost as familiar to papercutting enthusiasts as Scherenschnitte. If you have ever hummed along to the doo wopp story-song "Silhouettes on the Shade", first popularized by the Rays and also the Diamonds in 1957, or by Herman's Hermits in 1965, you already know that Silhouettes are dark shapes without interior features on a light background.

Visual images of silhouettes have been around since the origins of art. Painted mythology on 5<sup>th</sup> century Greek pottery offers early examples, (even older than doo wopp). Hans Christian Anderson often cut white paper silhouettes and glued them on a dark background in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Modern British artist Rob Ryan's silhouettes are silk-screened from his papercuttings and come in every hue.

During the late 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, profile pictures were cut by hand or machine- assisted as affordable

options to expensive oil paintings. The descriptive term developed when Etienne de Silhouette, the ultra-frugal Ministry of Finance, cut paper "shadow portraits" as a hobby. He became known for both his inexpensive papercuttings and his penny-pinching financial decisions to support the unpopular "Seven Years War". His name became applied negatively to things perceived as "on the cheap."

Eventually the art form became widely popular in France, England, and the United States, and the tradition continues. Collectors treasure silhouette images of family ancestors or notable public persons, but valuable cuttings by Auguste Edouart or Martha Ann Honeywell are rare.

Although the invention of photography has become a convenient form of memory-making, contemporary artists continue to use the Silhouette as an art-form to comment on social issues and explore history. Kara Walker, New York city, is well known for her room-size tableau of cut-paper silhouettes to comment on power, race, and gender relations. Guild of American



Papercutters members choose cut-paper as a medium, sometimes specializing in the profile portraiture, or by sharing original, hand-cut creative expressions. Early and contemporary papercuttings are part of the GAP Permanent Collection, exhibited for the public on Laurel Arts second floor. Classes can also be arranged by request at laurel Arts office.

## A Note From Member Sally Blakemore

Here is an article about my travels and work in China. I love China and Picture This Post, written by a writer I worked with in NYC in 1980 for Theatre Crafts Magazine wrote the article. We reconnected 40 years later and discovered our art paths had crossed.

It is an enjoyable look at traveling with Colette Fu through southwestern China and finding the paper makers and cutters in China.  
Love your work and your magazine and organization!

Here is a link to the story— <https://www.picturethispost.com/making-paper-and-making-magic-a-conversation-with-sally-blakemore/>

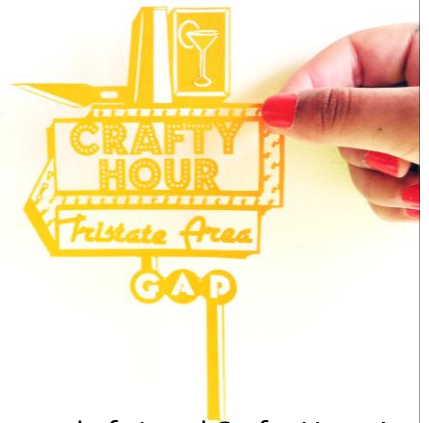
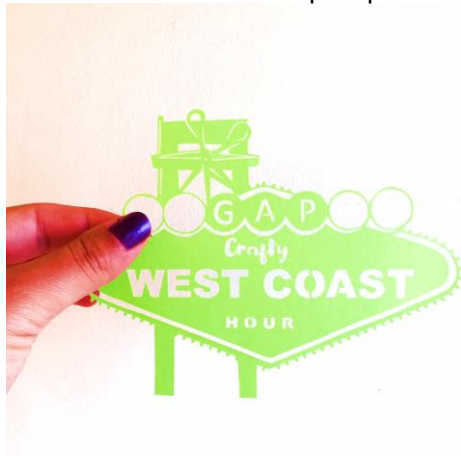
This is also now a top feature in the [Picture this Post Art section](#) and the [Picture this Post Culture section](#). This is also now rotating as a top feature in all 24 local editions' front pages—list below in my signature. We are also publishing this on our Travel pages— <https://www.picturethispost.com/category/travel/> and also our Asia section— <https://www.picturethispost.com/category/travel/asia/>

Your biggest fan,  
Sally Blakemore  
(We love you too Sally!)



## Crafty Hour

We're totally bummed that conference had to be postponed BUT we can still be friends!



This month two of our newly formed regional chapters got together for our first round of virtual Crafty Hours! Guild members join up with other folks from their area. They bring a beverage, some paper, and whatever they use to cut: Scissors, knife, scalpel, chainsaw, sickle.... We don't judge! The goal is just to get together and get cutting!

The DMV (D.C., MD, & VA) Chapter talked about techniques for rounding tight corners, papers, and life in quarantine. West Coast Crafty Hour host, Bianca, writes: "We were thrilled to see friends and some new faces at our West Coast Crafty Hour. We caught up and shared recently finished work & works in progress. We offered inspiration (through the art of Bovey Lee and intricate Japanese stencils) and noted neat tools (like a Japanese hole punch with interchangeable sizes!) Jeri will be hosting the first Tristate Area (NY, NJ, CT) Crafty Hour in July.

**Are you interested in having a Crafty Hour in your neck of the woods?** Hosting couldn't be any easier! We'll create your logo, send you an email list with the members in your region, provide you with a flyer template to spread the word AND co-host your first session! **For more info please contact: [rosaleff@gmail.com](mailto:rosaleff@gmail.com)**