



Communication From Members Of The Guild Of American Papercutters

Masthead design by Jeri Fogel

May 2020

Check In With Mindy

We might still be in quarantine as this issue goes to virtual press, but luckily much of the work of the Guild can happen remotely. Well, not our conference which I am still in mourning about. It was the right thing to postpone but I am still sad about having to wait a year.

Here are three things I am excited about:

1. We had such a wonderful April issue of First Cut thanks to you, our members. You contributed wonderful articles and pictures and I hope you will continue. It adds a personal touch and gives us a way to get to know one another better.
2. Because of the pandemic and everything shut down, we are able to extend the Ex Libris submission deadline. Please take the time now to submit a bookplate. Information can be found elsewhere in this issue and on our new website. Not only will the exhibit be up for the conference next year but we want it to travel around beforehand and after. Perhaps you will want to bring it to your local library or another venue. Once the world opens up again, you will receive more information about this and you can pursue your local haunts.
3. Our new website has launched: <https://papercutters.org>. Please visit and check it out. We will also be hosting Zoom meetings to walk you through the site. Kudos to Liz Goss and Jeri Fogel for all of their hard work. There is so much this site can do including keeping us connecting to one another through the members only portal.

As always, I am here for you and appreciate your emails so keep them coming. (mindysue39@gmail.com)



Guild of American
Papercutters

Home About

Welcome to the Guild



A Home for Paper Artists

NEW WEBSITE TOUR!

Short video, plus 2 in-person Zoom sessions

On May 11, we will be sending out a link to a **four minute video**, a GAP **website tutorial**, to all current members. This tutorial will give you a **basic introduction** to our exciting new site. **After** watching the video we thought you might have some questions, so we have also set up **two possible** in-person Zoom calls to give more help; these will be hosted by Liz and Jeri. **Registration is required**--follow one of the links to choose whichever is the most convenient time for you:

CHOOSE YOUR ZOOM SESSION:

Wednesday, May 13, 10pm EST (9pm CST, 7pm PST):
[https://uso2web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZokdOiorTkjHN2UZ1-JCISOejCQzAm53UV2](https://uso2web.zoom.us/join/https://uso2web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZokdOiorTkjHN2UZ1-JCISOejCQzAm53UV2)

Thursday, May 14, 7pm EST (6pm CST, 4pm PST):
[https://uso2web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZokCQuqrjgiGdS-agmwsBlk67pMHJZCgsJo](https://uso2web.zoom.us/join/https://uso2web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZokCQuqrjgiGdS-agmwsBlk67pMHJZCgsJo)

After you **register**, you'll receive a confirmation email with a link for actually **joining** the Zoom meeting you chose.

--Take care, and looking forward to "seeing" you soon!

Interview with Rabbi Kelillah Miller

by Mindy Shapiro

Q: What year did we meet?

A: In 1990 Mindy was invited to a Seder at Kelillah's home. Kelillah was 7 years old. She is now 37 years old!

Q: Tell me a few things about you.

A: I grew up in Philadelphia in the neighborhood of Mt. Airy. I attended a lay lead service at my synagogue and growing up, it never occurred to me that I wanted to be a rabbi but as I thought about what I wanted to do, I realized it would make me very happy professionally. I decided to come home to attend the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College, which luckily was not far from where I grew up. I worked at Swarthmore College doing Hillel work for 5 years and then became the Cantor and Ed Director at Ohev Shalom Synagogue in Wallingford, not far from Swarthmore, PA, outside of Philadelphia. My family was into folk art and folk culture so I grew up around art and music as a human activity and endeavor. Being an introvert, I always liked quiet time and making things. I've done leather crafts, pottery, wood burning, papercutting and more recently oil painting was a major artistic outlet. When pregnant I had to let go of being around toxic material so found way back to papercutting.

Q: When exactly did you start papercutting?

A: I started with an art class in middle school in 1997. I went to a Jewish Day School. In art class we were asked to pick a day of creation and make a stained glass type image out of paper using an X-Acto knife. I loved it and kept doing it at home. I worked with origami paper as that was the paper I had at home. Then I put it down for few years until I made a piece in college for my then boyfriend now husband.



Q: What is your current style?

A: First, I think it is important to note that I went from painting to drawing. With painting you can convey depth and create layers. In papercutting, I work in one or two colors so I was faced with the graphic challenge of how to convey depth and layers through the use of thin lines and negative and positive space.

Q: What gave you the idea to cut the Torah project?

A: As a working Rabbi, part of my job is to find ways in which to stay inspired and creative while engaging with the texts of the Torah reading cycle. As I was reading from the Torah in services, I began to notice that I would frequently have an emotional or spiritual response to a single line of text that I had never really considered carefully before. Gradually, it became clear to me that I wanted to explore some of these "single lines" through visual art. I wanted to see what I could learn about the text through the process of grappling with it graphically. I was also inspired by the Midrashic (sacred interpretive) work of our mutual friend, Rivkah Walton.

Q: How many pieces is this project?

A: There are 54 pieces, with each book of the Torah represented in a different color scheme.



Q: What will you do with all of these pieces?

A: The pieces will be donated to Ohev Shalom, where they will be on permanent display. My hope is to contribute the the aesthetic experience of the people who come in to pray, but also to use the pieces as an educational tool. I envision inviting students to find the chapter and verse referred to in each piece, and then encouraging them to make their own art based on the Torah or other sacred text.

Q: Can you describe the five pieces you are sharing with First Cut?

A: Genesis (blue): "Behold, three men were standing opposite him" - this piece explores the moment when Abraham is visited by three mysterious messengers to promise that he and his wife Sarah will finally have a child. I hoped to capture some of the tension and mystery

of the encounter before they actually meet, with Abraham and Sarah straining to see who is coming down the path to their tent.

Exodus (pink): "She stretched out her hand and took it" - this excerpt is from the very beginning of the book of Exodus, when the daughter of the Pharaoh draws the baby Moses out of the water, after his own mother Yocheved had placed him there in a basket in a desperate attempt to save his life. As in the Genesis piece, the fateful moment has yet to occur; the daughter of the Pharaoh does not yet know that there is a child inside that basket who will lead the Hebrews out of bondage.

Leviticus (green): "to distinguish between the impure and the pure" - this papercut is based on the instructions

from the book of Leviticus regarding dietary laws (kashrut). One side shows animals that are permitted as food, and the other side shows animals that are forbidden. One thing I realized in working with Leviticus is how much of it is about dichotomies in balance. I found myself using positive and negative space to create images that evoked, for me, the symbol of Yin and Yang. Purity and Impurity exist in balance and in harmony.

Numbers (Orange): "Eldad and Meidad are prophesying in the camp!" - This scene comes from a moment near the end of the career of Moses. He has become weary and is having difficulty managing the burden of leading the Hebrews. Like any good leader, he delegates responsibility and some of his prophetic power is transferred to seventy carefully selected elders. But there is some "spillover", and two unauthorized men - Eldad and Meidad - fall into a prophetic trance in the camp! I enjoyed the challenge of trying to show the moment of spontaneous (and probably frightening) prophetic inspiration.

Deuteronomy (purple): "And their children, who do not know, will listen and learn" - This text comes at the end of the Torah, which is largely concerned with legacy. As an educator, I wanted to find a way to show the messy, lovely, exciting experience of storytelling with children. It was also important to me to show a grandmotherly figure teaching the children, to honor the work that women do in cultural transmission.



Q: Is there anything else you want us to know?

A: I have so valued being a (new) member of the guild, and having a chance to see the incredible and inspired work of my fellow papercut artists. The variety of technique, expression, style, and content is a source of constant inspiration. Keep cutting, friends! (and thanks for encouraging me to join)

--Thank you so much for your time.



Opportunities

The Book as Art v. 8.o: Infinity

Presented by the Decatur Arts Alliance (Georgia)

Full details at: <https://sidearts.com/2020/04/the-book-as-art-call-artists/>

Entry Deadline: 5/29/20

Exhibition: August 28–October 17, 2020

(Thanks for sharing Liz Goss!)

Virtual Member Events



National Juried Exhibition

The Delaplaine Arts Center
Featuring work by Rosa Leff

<https://prezi.com/view/xsoNS4KIGKm3sP5Np5Z1/>

*Honorable Mention for "Before The Rush"



GAP's Permanent Collection

See a virtual tour of GAP's Permanent Collection, guided by Jaci McCusker at Laurel Arts Facebook, posted April 11. GAP is featured on the last half of the video!

<https://www.facebook.com/somersetlaurelarts/videos/141946413894118/>



Demystifying the Role of a Curator

Demystifying the Role of a Curator

Featuring the work of Janelle Washington

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gcHePn4-iac&feature=youtu.be>

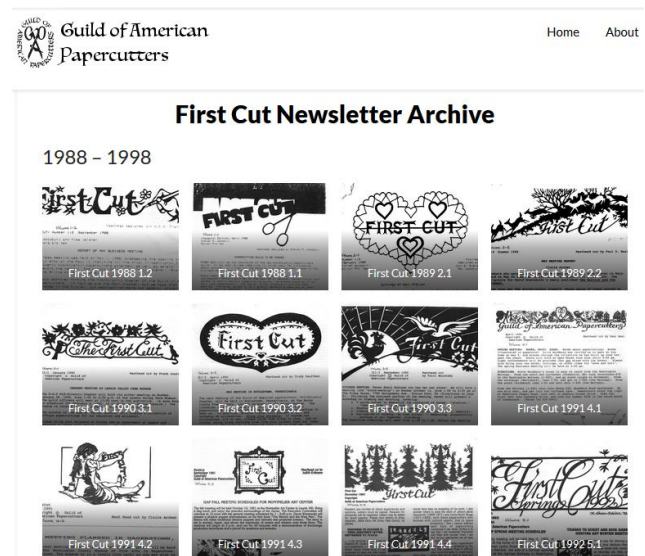


City of Mount Dora Recreation

Richard Schuchman

<https://www.facebook.com/101890247246136/posts/459474868154337/?sfnsn=mo>

Help Document Our History: *First Cut*



A while back, art historian and GAP member Martha Kreisel (author of *American Women Photographers: A Selected and Annotated Bibliography*), sent us an Index (based on theme and author of articles) to almost all the articles that have appeared in *First Cut* over the years. The new website is offering us the opportunity finally to make good use of Martha's work: Jeri is using Martha's index to make the archives (which contain all *First Cut* editions now!) more browsable. If you are interested in helping to proofread and test out the Index, or if you would be willing to add to the Index each month going forward so that we can continue Martha's work, please get in touch with Jeri at jerise@jerise.com !

Member Profile:

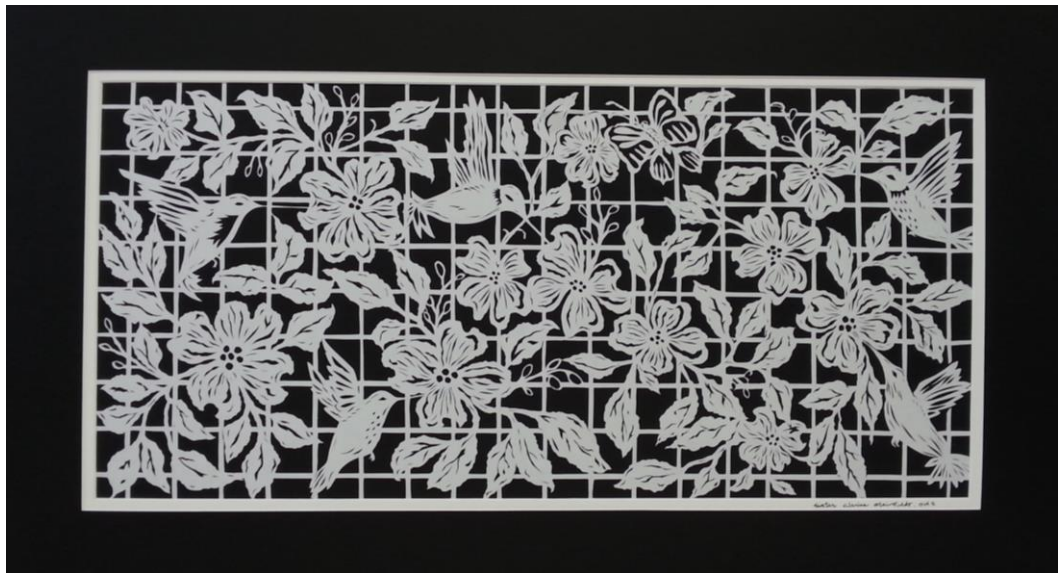
Sister Clarice Steinfeldt, SDS



I am not doing much cutting these days....but I did ✂ letters for a 8 x 11 poster to invite the retired Sisters with whom I'm living to a Sing along. Seven of fourteen joined and I did the leading of song. Four of us who got the initiative, plus three others appeared. After singing for 40 minutes, we concluded our time together with the plan to meet again on Wednesday for a second Sing and Chat session. Here is the picture of the white stallion in my [Swiss Miss Cocoa] cup and the papercutting which I created being inspired by the white stallion.



PS: FYI: I joined GAP in 1995 and have participated in meetings and involvement over these years. My work is exhibited in our Sisters' Gallery in our all girl's high school, Divine Savior Holy Angels in Milwaukee. Although my studio is in the Gallery, I have been working out of my bedroom at my residence which is about five minutes from the studio/Art Gallery.



Member Update:

Richard Schuchman

I actually use a lot of my own photos in my cuttings and I have one particular picture window now that has inspired two of them. The third one, Christmas Cactus, was from a pic I took at my previous residence on the back porch.

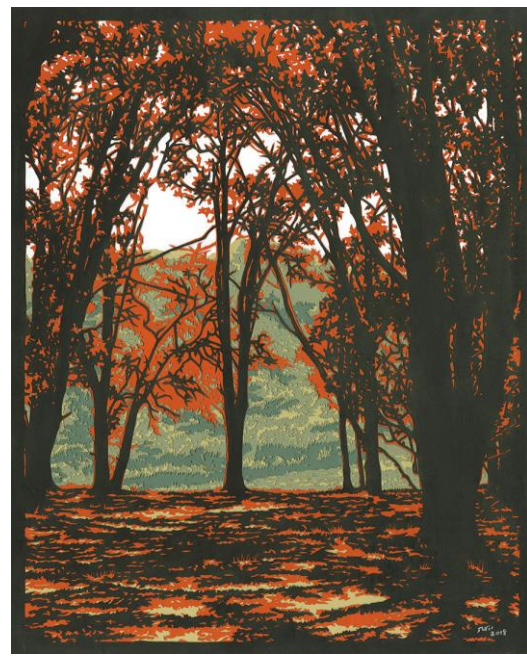
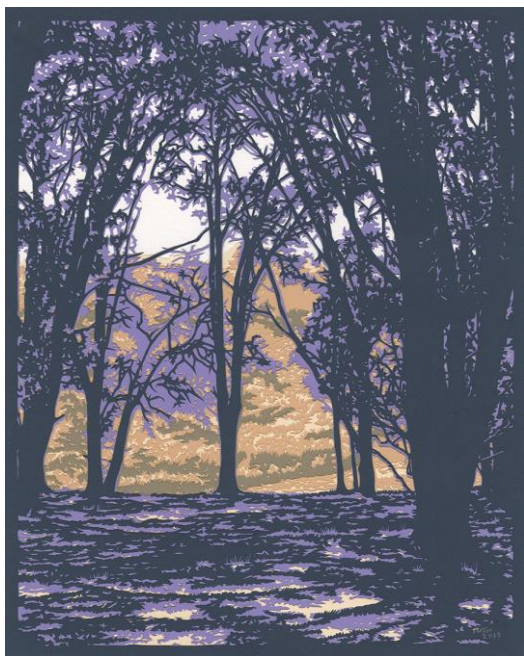
I've included the original photos for all of them. Like any good storyteller, I tend to *cough* "embellish" on the photo I'm using.

Take care and be safe,
Richard Schuchman

<https://paperillustrator.tumblr.com/>



"Christmas Cactus"



"Forest Cathedral"
(In Blue, Original Photo, & In Orange.)

Scherenschnitte

By Kathy Trexel-Reed

Because Pennsylvania's heritage includes a strong German-speaking influence, many Somerset Countians have some recognition, though often humorously vague, of the German language word Scherenschnitte. Literally translated as Scissors (Scheren) Cuttings (Schnitte), it came to America with German-speaking immigrants in the 1700's.

Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, has an abundance of Scherenschnitte history, while Somerset County, PA. (home of GAP National Museum & office) has less evidence of it. My theory for that difference is simply that immigrants in the eastern part of our state were more comfortably settled earlier, than our local citizens who were cutting trees at this mountain frontier, instead of paper. (Note: we [in Somerset County] too have "Pennsylvania Dutch" neighbors, which actually is a mis-taken understanding of "Pennsylvania Deutsch"; Deutsch translates to mean German.)

The art form shared by German-speaking immigrants became a convenient way, before the Industrial Revolution....

Scherenschnnitte

By Kathy Trexel-Reed

...(or Hallmark), to commemorate births, baptisms, and marriage certificates. Lovingly cut, these often included nature references, painted accents and evolved into "lacy" paper Valentines.

Symmetry was often an important design element in Swiss work, achieved by cutting the paper while folded. Intricate borders and themes depicting landscapes and local traditions also characterized Swiss papercuttings. Germanic and Dutch designs tended to be more surreal personalized, and romanticized.

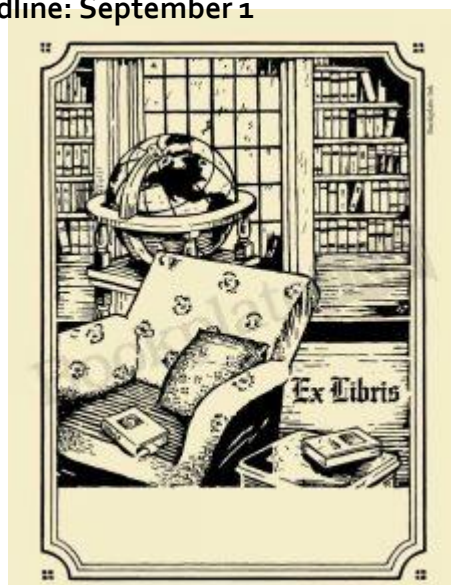
Examples of these influences are part of the Guild of American Papercutters Permanent Collection, and can be seen in regular exhibitions at Laurel Arts, where the GAP Museum and home office are located.

Note: Weeks ago I submitted this article for L.Arts' April ArtLink (with the 2 wonderful Arlington/Kehoss poster images attached.) Like Cindy Stinson-Chennel mentions, "German" influence is often oversimplified/ misrepresented. "German-speaking" is a more accurate description of the central European influence, which includes: German & Austrian Scherenschnitte, Swiss Marques & Scherenschnitte. (Neighboring stylistic cousins include Danish, Dutch Knibben & French Silhouette too.)

Call for Artwork:

"Ex Libris" Bookplate Exhibit

New deadline: September 1



Celebrate the art of papercutting by designing a cut-paper book-plate to be exhibited first at GAP's National Office in Somerset, PA, and then as a traveling show, hosted by GAP members around the country. Papercuttings original in design and execution, 6" x 4", may be mailed c/o Kathy Trexel Reed, Director, GAP Museum, P.O. Box 384, 214 S. Harrison Ave, Somerset, PA 15501, **by September 1, 2020**. Members may submit **two** papercuttings for the fee of \$20. For more information, and the required submission forms, go to: <https://papercutters.org/call-for-artwork-ex-libris/> (no login required!).

SCHERENSCHNITTE

Scherenschnitte (translated as "Scissor Cutting") is a traditional folk art dating from the 1500s in Switzerland and Germany. Symmetry, an important design element in the Swiss work, is achieved by cutting the paper while folded. Germanic design tends to be more surreal, while Swiss cuttings are characterized by intricate borders and themes depicting landscapes and local traditions. The Pennsylvania Germans brought the art of *scherschnitte* to America in the 1700s and used the cut work to decorate correspondence and birth, baptismal, and marriage certificate. Along with the devotional cards described in this exhibit, the decorative love letters shown here evolved into the traditional lace Valentine.



Love Letter; Unknown Artist, Pennsylvania, 1840. Cut paper with watercolor and ink. The State Museum of Pennsylvania.

Meditation and Papercutting

By Rosa Leff

At its core, Maum Meditation teaches that we have created a false mind. From the moment we are born we snap mental pictures of everything around us. That is, we create memories. And though some memories are wonderful, they are all, good or bad, flawed. These false memories are naturally informed by each moment leading up to them and distorted by each moment after.

By living in these false minds we prevent ourselves from being able to experience the sublime joy of truly understanding how insignificant we and our lives are. Each meditation session begins with the chant "I am grateful to the method of throwing away me which is false and therefore must be truly thrown away." Once we are able to throw ourselves away, to remove ourselves and our feelings from each memory we have and make, we will feel peace.

I began following Woo Myung's teachings just over a year ago. I'd worked hard to become upwardly mobile, I had a great apartment, the best two dogs that have ever graced the planet, and a husband I'm (still) inseparable from. But I wasn't happy. I'd spent years shelling out more than I could afford on therapy and trying to manage my depression and anxiety with pills but nothing worked.

My first few guided Maum sessions were alarming. I sobbed hysterically while my guide, Jisu, calmly asked me questions that allowed me to reframe, for myself, traumatic events from my past. The release quite literally left me feeling lighter. Within a few weeks I was easily able to sit (eventually without tears) and meditate for three hours each session. I began hanging out in the lobby after each session, drinking tea, and chatting with my new tribe because I was quite literally so relaxed that it wasn't safe for me to drive. I had so removed myself from the past and present that I couldn't pay attention to road signs or traffic signals.

Maum Mediation was more than I ever could have hoped for in terms of my mental health and its impact on my papercutting was the cherry on top.

There were days when, during my meditation sessions, my false mind would drift into something like an animated papercut film. I'd managed to successfully



"Sorry, Not Sorry"

throw away so much of a memory that what was left was black and white. All of the details of a situation that seemed so important at the time really weren't. I was able to reduce an image from my false mind down until all that was left was Truth. My papercutting is the same. I primarily work from photos of urban landscapes. With my style there is no "messy grey area." Even the most chaotic of my images are just two solid colors. I cut away at the paper, metaphorically throwing away all that is unnecessary and distracting until one true image remains. I find my papercuts often feel more true than the moment I experienced them because in spending so much time cutting away at a sheet I am able to truly process each element of it and decide what really is.

It is through meditation that I am able to see pieces like "Sorry, Not Sorry" or "Let Them Eat Plate." The former was a meditation on the decision to cut off all contact with my mother, a decision I have not once regretted. The latter is an expression of my frustration at my parents for allowing me to live a life of opulence one day and hunger the next rather than simply making a dang budget. Papercutting is a meditative process in and of itself. Sure, I spend a lot of the time listening to audiobooks and reality TV, but even then I am forcing life to slow down. Meditation and papercutting give me a way to make something beautiful out of life's most mundane, and even its ugliest, moment