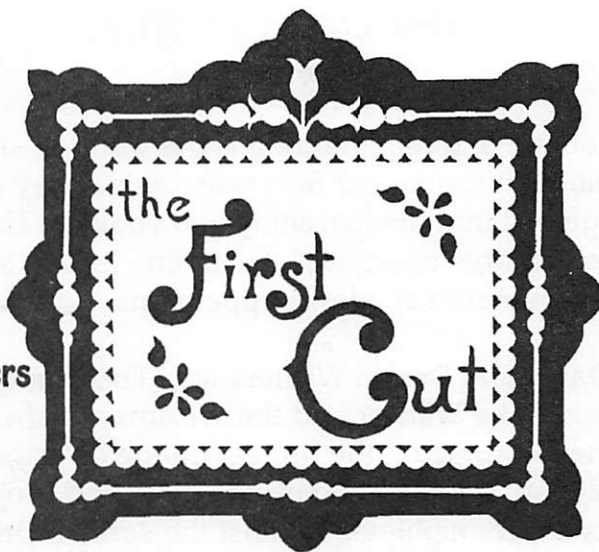


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September 1991  
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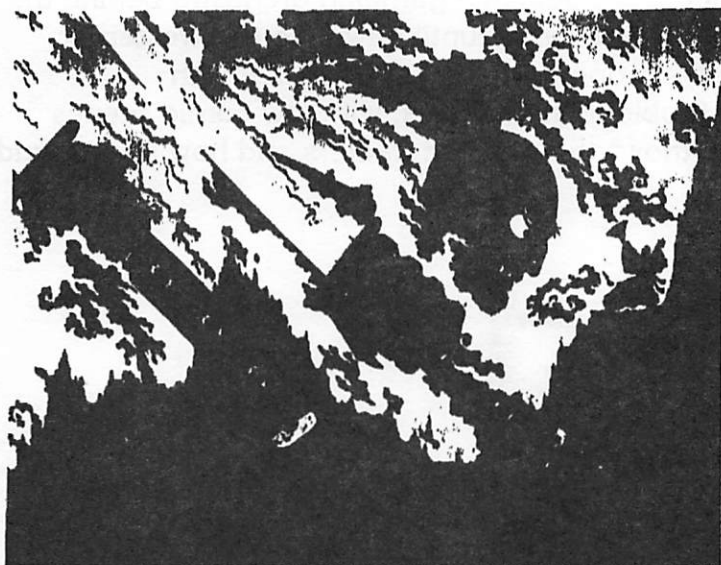
Volume 4-3



Masthead cut by  
Judith Erdmann

### GAP FALL MEETING SCHEDULED FOR MONTPELIER ART CENTER

The fall meeting will be held October 12, 1991 at the Montpelier Art Center in Laurel, MD. Bring a bag lunch and enjoy the peaceful surroundings of the center. The Executive Committee will convene at 12 noon with the general meeting scheduled for 1 - 2:45 p.m. David Wisniewski will present a shadow puppet dramatization on his first book "The Warrior and the Wise Man". The drama will utilize traditional shadow puppets and intricate rear projected scenery. The story is set in ancient Japan, and shows the superiority of reason and wisdom over brute force. The matinee will begin at 3 p.m. and run for 45 minutes with a demonstration of backstage production techniques and a period for questions and answers.



Baltimore-Washington Parkway  
to Laurel-Bowie Road (Route 197  
exit). Go north toward Laurel on  
Route 197 to Montpelier  
Shopping Center Muirkirk Road.  
Turn left. Art Center Road on  
right. Call 301-953-1993 for  
further information about the  
center.

David's wonderful books, illustrated with dramatic papercuttings are The Warrior and the Wise Man, 1989; Elfwyn's Saga, 1990; and Rain Player, about Mayan Indian times is due out next month

All these books sell for \$13.95 + postage and handling individually. There is a 40% discount from the publisher for orders of 10 or more books. You may order through any regular or children's book store or directly from the publisher: CLARION BOOKS at 215 Park Ave, South, NYC, NY 10003 phone 212-420-5800

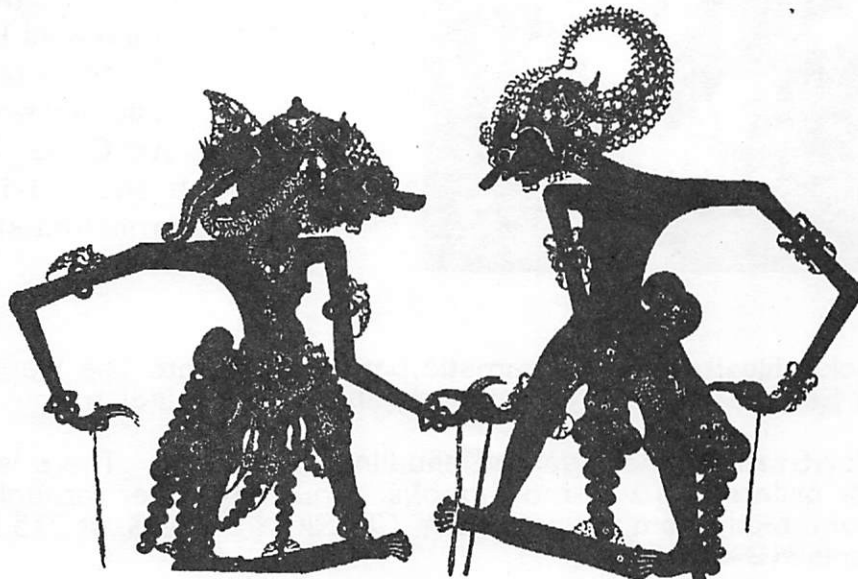
# SHADOW PUPPETRY

Steve Woodbury

One aspect of the art of silhouette and papercutting is the world of shadow puppets. Shadow puppets are an age-old tradition in China and Southeast Asia. They were brought to Turkey and Egypt; some have even suggested that theater enjoyed a vogue in Europe in the late nineteenth century (see for example the "ombres chinoises" illustrating issue 1:4 of FIRSTCUT). And in this century, Lotte Reiniger made animated shadow puppet films.

Contemporary In January, David and Donna Wisniewsky (The Clarion Puppet Theater) brought their adaptation of David's book *The Warrior and the Wiseman* to the Adventure Theater at the Smithsonian. Using an overhead projector, the project image onto the back of a translucent screen. Small shadow puppets are manipulated on the overhead projector, creating large figures on the screen. Other puppets are manipulated against the screen. Brightly colored scenery (cut from colored transparent plastic) moves past. Special effects are created with polarized light. There is no way to describe in words the total affect of the music, narration, the brightly colored scenes and the action on screen. I was thoroughly entranced, and I hope others will also have the opportunity to see this show.

Indonesian The traditional shadow theater of Java (wayang kulit) is in many ways a contrast. The puppets are cut of this leather and brightly painted, and move only at the shoulder and elbow. They are highly stylized, but individually recognizable. Their gestures are often subtle, and much of the time not much appears to be happening. (In fact wayang kulit is regularly performed on the radio!) The dayang, or puppeteer, must know hundreds of stories (mostly drawn from the Indian epic the Mahabharata), and the voices and characteristics of hundreds of characters. He not only manipulates the puppets, but sings, improvised the dialogue (providing all the voices), creates sound effects and conducts the traditional gamelan orchestra behind the screen. A performance generally lasts from nine in the evening until dawn. To the Westerner, wayang kulit presents analogies—very imperfect—to opera (vocal performance with instrumental accompaniment), to Shakespeare (noble refined drama, with low comic scenes interspersed), and to sitcoms (everyone in Java knows the main characters and how they sound and act).





Readers are invited to share experiences and opinions. Letters must be signed. Request for anonymity will be respected. Letters may be edited for space reasons. Please mail letters to Ellen Haberlein at 3504 Farm Hill Dr, Falls Church, VA 22044

-ed.

## HAGERSTOWN COMMENTARY

Dear GAP:

I was truly delighted to receive the wonderful exhibition catalogue. I am so glad to see that papercutting is slowly gaining its well-deserved spot in the art world. It's taken it a long time.

I would like to take this opportunity to express some of my thoughts concerning the art of papercutting. I admit it up front. I am a purist - and I am ambivalent about it. Personally, I always feel reluctant (although I have done so ) to use color papers even to create pieces that reflect my Swiss heritage. Glue and color pencils, watercolors and 3-D are out! When it comes to challenging myself and admiring the work of others only a single sheet of black or white paper will do. The whole point and difficulty of this art form is to create a visual impact based on the play of contrast alone: black and white, foreground and background, solid and lacy, simple and intricate, static and dynamic - and all this achieved with cutting tools.

First there are papercuttings proper:

Among them are pure outline cuttings or silhouettes. These are often favored by crafts people and amateurs because they can be easily duplicated and are effective on many articles. It is very difficult, however, to achieve artistic results with pure outline cuttings because they require the most stylistic abstraction.

Then there are contrast cuttings which in addition to outline, have interior holes. These are used to modulate and pattern areas of focus or to render a picture more naturalistic. The bird, instead of remaining a generic dove or rooster as it does in folk art, emerges as an unmistakable titmouse with a unique pattern of feathers in its specific habitat.

There are other techniques that use paper and scissors only. Texture is created by partially

cutting out a shape and lifting it slightly off the backgrounds.

Next on my list of proper papercuttings are colored cuttings in the Polish style. The effect is created by artfully staggering layers of colored papers cut to nestle within each other. The finer the cuttings and the better they fit one into the other, the more amazing the result.

It is with the next technique that I feel uneasy whether to call it a papercutting proper. Although the effect of 3-D is undeniably beautiful, I am curious whether the 3-D arrangement or the cutting is responsible for the rich effect.

And then there are collages and decoupage:

Collages are not papercutting proper, even though the artist uses pieces of cut paper. It's the gluing and artful arranging of different colored papers that creates the picture, not the skill of cutting. One notable exception to this are the many collage/cuttings by Matisse, no doubt one of the greatest modern papercut artists.

I admit, I have the hardest time with decoupage. The more complicated the outline, the prouder the cutter. But the impression was still essentially that of a painting. The cutting seemed incidental, like an afterthought. Is it a papercutting or a painting cut out and mounted on a dark background?

In the end, I feel torn between two opposing sentiments.

1) true artists can and do excel within the strictest limits of their medium. They develop the most out of the external limitations and they welcome and surrender to the exigencies of their specific tools.

2) True artists never give up inventing, playing with and combining any and all available means to shape their vision of the beautiful. I wonder how others view this conundrum? What definition for papercutting does the GAP offer?

-Susanne R. Cook-Greuter  
Wayland, MA

## RESPONSE TO FRANK JOEST'S LETTER IN AUGUST '91 FirstCut

I have heard so many conversations alleging that there is no other way to teach a novice than to give them a pattern and ask them to cut it out.

No one will argue that there is something between learning to hold a pencil and to write in cursive and more still to write in a calligraphic hand. We must first learn to hold the pencil, to own the shapes that come from it in the form of letters. What calligraphy teacher gives a student a prelettered piece and tracing paper as a means of teaching her art. An acceptable drawing may result, but the crafter is NOT a calligrapher!

What is the difference if, when teaching a novice cutter, we merely provide a pattern. You see the problem is that if it is a lovely design, the novice has some reason to want save his attempt and, therefore, believes he has accomplished something. Which, perhaps he has — but he is NOT a papercutter.

I believe that we must first teach the coordination of scissors control. Make the scissors part of the hand. Do this with "patterns" that are obviously throw aways. — How about pictures from magazines? Learn to cut a consistent distance and smooth line from the edge of the subject. Get closer and closer to the edge. Cut the hair on the head. Experiment with technique. Cut out parts of the interior. Then throw the cutting away. It is a learning experience. It is trash!

Then, if the novice is still uncomfortable with his/her artistic talent — then give a pattern so they have something to show for their effort. The novice now has two routes to take. Either he is an understanding and appreciative patron of the work of other papercut artists. Or he is a new artist to swell the ranks. And it is my feeling that both types of people are a great benefit to our cause.

In no way are my ideas meant to keep anyone away from the organization. But I believe it is the responsibility of our member teachers to foster more than pattern cutting as the way to participate in this art form.

-Kerch McConlogue  
President, GAP  
Baltimore, MD

## CALENDARS AND COFFEE MUGS READY FOR SALE

Our new GAP birthday calendars, coffee mugs and the Hagerstown exhibit catalogs will be available for purchase at the October meeting.

The calendars, with beautiful black and white papercut illustrations for each month, are printed on high quality glossy stock. The size is especially handy with ample space to note birthdays and special occasions. They will make great holiday gifts. Pick them up now while the supply lasts! The price is \$4 each for GAP members and \$5 for nonmembers.

To purchase CALENDARS by mail, send your check payable to GAP for price total plus \$2 for postage and handling for up to three calendars and \$3.50 for more than that. PA retail customers add 6% sales tax. Send order to: Doreen Rhoads, 315 Ridge Road, Annville, PA 17003

see MUGS, page 6

## ANOTHER RESPONSE TO FRANK

## JOEST

A copy of this letter to Frank was posted to us.

Dear Mr. Joest

I am writing to tell you how much I like the papercutting art that you do. I first became acquainted with your work by ordering some patterns from Alison of Florida. When your video tape came out. I ordered it also. I do appreciate your work, and want you to know I have tried my hand at cutting most of the patterns you have available, and have also attempted lettering some. I do not feel I am an artist. I have yet to be very pleased with any original cuttings I have done, but I keep working. I can see the ideas in my head, but somewhere between there and my hand they loose a lot!

I appreciate your comments in First Cut encouraging us who are not yet or may never become artisans to have a place in the papercutting world. I am "stuck" out here in the Midwest and the opportunity to see examples of such fine work just doesn't exist. Being able to use a variety of patterns and now by seeing examples of cuttings in exhibit catalogues etc, is providing me with some of the educational support that I need. I do hope that the Guild will not deprive us of membership.

Again, thank you for your impact on my attempt to enjoy such a beautiful art!

-Gayle Woods Graham  
Reading, KS

## SUKEY'S LETTER OF ENCOURAGEMENT

Like a young baby, The Guild of American Papercutters is fragile, depending on caretakers for life and growth. Many GAP members freely give of their time, talents and energy to make sure the guild will succeed. Members have hosted and provided interesting and educational programs for meetings; officers work hard and long so meetings run smoothly; activities and monies are recorded accurately and kept secure. By-laws which are near completion have been conscientiously debated and recorded. Each of the three exhibits required hours of organizational work, attention to detail by planners and participants. Catalogs and calendars, cups and stickers required designing and plain "dig-in" hard work to make the "idea" become "reality". We are proud of our beautiful logo, letterhead and stationery. Membership mailings and newsletter are most challenging tasks met by volunteers who also have regular

jobs, families and very busy lives. Every member is important and can participate in the life of the guild.

"Some suggestions that everyone/anyone can do:

1. Write a letter to the newsletter. Send in news about your papercutting activities, techniques and tips, or supply us with sources for papercutting items.

2. Illustrate for the newsletter a favorite paper cutting and/or design a FirstCut masthead.

3. Plan a location for a guild meeting, suggest program topics or find a location for an exhibit.

4. Bring in new members.

Each participating member sharing time, talents and ideas will help to keep the guild thriving. We have become friends working hundreds of hours together to make the guild "grow and go". The spirit of volunteerism is alive in our group. We shoulder responsibility and get the job done well. My heart is filled and overflowing with "Thank You".

-Sukey Harris  
Annville, PA

## THE NEXT SHOW?

A proposal has been made to consider for the next major GAP show a theme that would include not only a design topic but also specific size and framing requirements as well. For example, all pieces would be 15x15 inches square and finished in frames of the same shape and color. If the artist wished his piece to be larger, it would need to be comprised of several 15 inch squares. The total show would be hung in much the same manner as squares of a quilt make up the final design.

There have also been beginning discussions considering a show of GAP papercuttings that could travel to several different locations. In addition to the fact that our work would be accessible to more people with a minimum of additional work, crating and shipping of a uniformly sized show could be relatively painless. Only one catalogue would need to be produced; perhaps it could be sponsored by a corporation who would reap some benefit from association either with us or with the participating museums.

We have received communications from several members offering their contacts at various show sites. We need to form a committee to put together a viable proposal to sell the idea to our next prospects, be they museum or sponsor. Please call Kerch McConlogue (301-945-7441) if you want to be involved in this project.

## SOURCES

The May/June '91 issue of HOW magazine is billed as their 2nd Annual Guide to Designing with Paper. It deals mainly with printing on different papers. But there is a wonderful article about Julie Hodde, who does paper sculpture constructions. The magazine is available in art stores specializing in graphic arts or call the publisher at 1-800-333-1115.

## WORKSHOP PLANNING STARTS

GAP is considering a workshop/convention for cutters across the country — perhaps in 1993. We will be looking for teachers who will share information with beginners and experts on a wide variety of topics related to papercutting, including cutting techniques, paper properties, mounting and framing, and historical topics, to name a few. Proposals for workshops would be considered by the conference committee. Compensation for travel and teaching time would be available. A group of GAP members will need to get started on this project as well. Locations will need to be reserved, advertising planned, and all manners of conference planning begun. Please call Kerch McConlogue (301-945-7441) or speak up at the next meeting.



## 1916 GERMAN SCHERENSCHNITTE DESIGNS

A portfolio of ten scherenschnitte designs dating from 1916 is being offered for sale by Miss Iby Siemens of Montreal. Each 4x7 inch design (approximate size) represents elves in a garden environment accompanied by a German poem. Anyone interested in purchasing these designs may contact Miss Iby Siemens, 3940 Cote des Neiges, Apt. C-42, Montreal H3H 1W2, CANADA.

**TO: All those who helped make the Hagerstown Show a huge success.**

**\*\* THANK YOU FOR YOUR WONDERFUL EFFORT AND A GREAT SHOW! \*\***

All members who submitted their superb papercuttings are to be commended for their excellent work and their contribution to papercutting art. The catalog shows the professional quality of work by our members. Each of our shows has advanced the art of papercutting and raised the appreciation of our members and the public for papercutting. It was another wonderful show!

The following people deserve special thanks and appreciation:

**Sandra Gilpin** maintained excellent liaison with the museum and coordinated all requirements for exhibitors.

**Sharon Schaich** shouldered a mountain of work in taking on the responsibility for the beautiful show catalog.

**Kerch McConlogue** to whom you mailed your cuttings, was chief collector, warehouser and deliverer.

**Dick Harris** videotaped the show for future GAP viewing and to be used to "sell" our organization to other museums.

**Neil Haring**, with members' husbands' **John Gilpin** and **Dick Harris**, teamed up with **Sandy** and **Sukey** to take down, pack up and mail back the cuttings.

Four cuttings were sold at the show. We wish that there had been more exhibition space, that there had been room to hang all the cuttings that we received as well as all the cuttings that arrived too late to hang. Please don't be discouraged in any way if your cutting wasn't hung; it was not a reflection on the quality of any piece but only a constraint of space. Papercutting is a wonderful artistic medium, because in papercutting's many styles and types of cutting there are opportunities to express many moods. Let your creativity loose and cut a new piece for the next show. When and where will it be? Send your suggestions to the Newsletter editor, **Ellen Haberlein** at 3504 Farm Hill Dr, Falls Church, VA 22044

### **MORE ON THE HAGERSTOWN EXHIBIT**

**Jean Woods** of the Washington County Museum of Fine Arts was very pleased with the exhibit. Part of her letter to GAP follows:

"A letter to let you know how much our visitors and members enjoyed seeing the Papercutting Exhibition sponsored by your Mid-Atlantic Chapter of the Guild of American Papercutters. The works were quite varied, exquisitely cut and had a wide

range of thematic topics. The exhibition was enjoyed by both young and old and we would very much like to have you participate in future years in another exhibition."

### **GAP MUGS FOR SALE**

CALENDARS cont. from page 4

Mugs with GAP logo will be on sale at the meeting for \$6, and exhibit catalogs containing photos and artist statements are available for \$3.

To order MUGS OR CATALOGS by mail, send check payable to GAP and order to: **Harris, 514 East Main Street, Annville, PA 17003-1511**, mugs \$8; catalogs \$3.75, this includes postage and handling. PA residents add 6% sales tax.

### **MATting AND FRAMING CLASSES**

**Paul Beal** will be teaching a three-hour workshop on Mounting, Matting, and Framing on October 29 at the Laurel Arts Center in Laurel, MD. Call Paul for details. — 814-267-4276

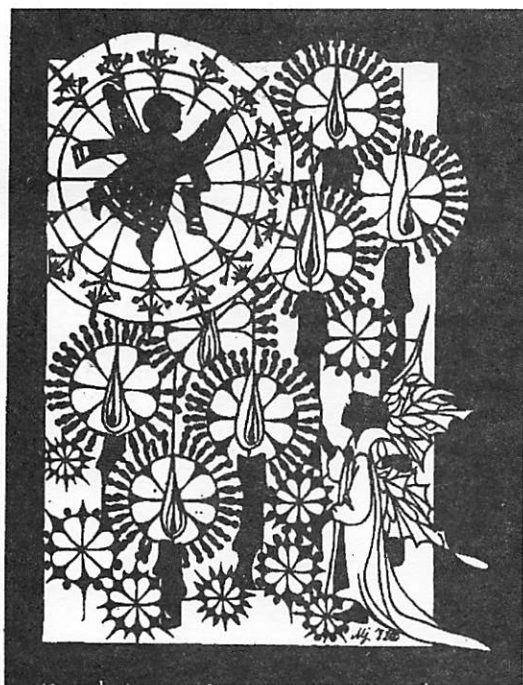




**ROD OF JESSE**



**JOYOUS CHRISTMAS**



**CANDLESHIP**



**VICTORIAN CHRISTMAS**

Mary Jane McIntee, 2085 Church NE, Salem, Oregon, (503)-362-5669, a retired 4th grade teacher, is known for her traditional cut paper work shown in this sampling of Christmas cards. She uses origami or fadeless art papers, brown wrapping paper or patterned gift wrap plus card stock; toothpicks to glue and cuticle, manicure or small paper scissors to cut. She pencils the design on the white side of the colored or german silhouette paper. She advises caution in trying to be too elaborate or cutting too many designs at one time. She pays particular attention to the play of black and white positive & negative space and feels very strongly about tradition, both in her home and cards,

usually religious. "To me, it must be something of me." In most cases it must express the person. McIntee started paper cutting in 1952, after reading "A Shady Hobby". At first using designs of others, McIntee's own designs are simple evocative images of religious subjects, Mexican Gallic, Spanish, Indian & Southern Appalachian Mountain Traditions. In her first two years as an artist in Education, Mary Jane taught paper cutting to over 2,000 young people. Mary Jane would love to illustrate children's books. Original cuttings of the above cards are approximately 8" X 11". Rod of Jesse and Joyous Christmas are for sale.



**FOR INFORMATION WRITE TO:**

**GUILD OF AMERICAN PAPERCUTTERS**

**Richard Harris**

**514 East Main Street**

**Annville, PA 17003-1511**



**FOR INFORMATION WRITE TO:**

**GUILD OF AMERICAN PAPERCUTTERS**

**Richard Harris**

**514 East Main Street**

**Annville, PA 17003-1511**

**October 12, 1991**

**Montepleier Arts Center**

**Laurel, MD**

**Program on Shadow Puppets**