

# First Cut

COMMUNICATION FROM MEMBERS OF THE GUILD OF AMERICAN PAPERCUTTERS

NOVEMBER 2017

ISSUE II

## We're Hunting!

During our delightful August meeting at Sequanota Camp, the GAP board formed a nomination committee for board positions open in 2018.

Please help us on our hunt! If you know a GAP member who you think would make a good Treasurer, President, or Vice President, please send your ideas to Melanie Kehoss at [mkehoss@outlook.com](mailto:mkehoss@outlook.com).

We are also seeking general board and committee members, so if you are interested in becoming a more active member of GAP, you can also email [mkehoss@outlook.com](mailto:mkehoss@outlook.com) to find out more! Board members *attend* about four meetings per year through phone conferences, and are encouraged to attend one in-person meeting per year. Committee members work with their committees to achieve particular goals, such as publications and Collection planning. I am happy to answer any questions about the benefits and responsibilities of serving on the board or a committee.

## Are you there?

The 2018 GAP calendar will be here soon! Make sure you get yours by updating your address now.

Email us at: [GAPguild@gmail.com](mailto:GAPguild@gmail.com)

## We Need To Talk



GAP members will be gathering in Portland, Oregon July 22-25 and we need A COUNT!

We need to reserve rooms for this event at Reed College soon. The cost will depend on the number that attend, our current estimate is about \$300 for four days of room and board and a conference fee of about \$185 (hopefully less!). We will have final numbers soon.

Just let us know you want to have a great time "cutting it up in Portland"!

Those who are not current members of the Guild of American Papercutters still have plenty of time to join, or may pay a higher conference fee to attend.

## Show Us How

Want to teach a class at the Collection? Send us a proposal!

Have something you'd like to learn about? Tell us your ideas!

Send proposals to:

Marie-Helene Lawler Grabman  
[scissorcutter@yahoo.com](mailto:scissorcutter@yahoo.com)



## You Asked For It: (Member Profile)

ROSA LEFF

*After our last issue you all sent me tons of feedback. Many of your ideas didn't make it into this issue, but I can't wait to do you proud! There was one request that I got over and over though. You wanted to know more about me- Rosa Leff, your new editor. You asked for it, so here you have it!*

I grew up mostly in Philadelphia but moved to a farm near Middlebury, Vermont when I was in high school. My dad started a goat farm and now raises sheep. His house isn't near anything (at all) and I'm an only child, so I spent a lot of time alone. I drew, painted, knitted, crocheted, sewed and did every other art form I could think of to pass the time.

I got my BA at Sarah Lawrence College where I was able to spend a semester in Cuba at the Instituto Superior de Artes de La Habana. While I was there I got to study under Alejandro Cordobés, an artist featured in the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes de La Habana. He really pushed me towards line drawing, which has been a tremendous help in terms of my knowing what makes a cut 'work.'

After college I went straight to University of Pennsylvania where I got my Master's in Elementary Education. While I was there I was so swamped that I didn't get to do much art unless it was for a class project, like when I was asked to create a children's book.

That was my first attempt at cut paper. I'm no storyteller so I knew if I wanted a good grade I had to wow everyone with my images. I have always had a mild obsession with the children's book writers and illustrators Eric Carle and Ezra Jack Keats. Both use collage and painted paper to create their images. I found scissors to be really limiting so I hit up a Dick Blick Art Supply and bought my first Exacto knife and a rotary mat.

After that I got so caught up in teaching kindergarten for The School District of Philadelphia that I didn't get back into art, of any kind, for another three years. Eventually I realized that

part of why teaching was burning me out was because I wasn't taking the time to do anything for myself. I went back to cutting and tried to see how much detail I could capture with the medium.

The response to my work was really positive and I decided I might as well try showing professionally.

I'm so glad I did!

Discovering papercutting was a thrill because it is a medium I can (almost) fully control, which feels so very necessary after a long day teaching kindergarten. I still struggle to find a way to keep thin straight lines that only have one...



THE DISCOMFORTS OF TRAVEL - WEARY PASSENGERS SETTLING FOR THE NIGHT.



# First Cut

## Member Profile: ROSA LEFF

...connection from curving based on the direction the fibers of the paper pull them. If anyone can figure it out, please let me know. I can pay in cheesecake.

Most of my cuts are based on works by other artists, so I'm not sure what it says about me that I am so often drawn to images of women in vulnerable positions or women who appear to be self-destructive! The piece that got the biggest response was "Chick-fillet," (featured below) which depicts a mermaid being butchered by a chef in a restaurant kitchen. It's cut by an



illustration by Kim Jung Gi. I've had people walk up to me wanting to talk about everything from misogyny to ethical eating because of that cut.

"Silk" is a scene from a comic by Jim Steranko. Although the context is explained in the story, the single image alone leaves you wondering about the "Silk Stocking Killer" hidden behind the door and featured in the newspaper headline. We don't know how it is that this woman came to find herself bound, or if her potential savior will be successful in rescuing her.

So many of my images speak, in some way, to the cultural expectations surrounding gender norms. As odd as it is to see a mermaid being butchered by a man, it seems even more unlikely that a merman would be butchered by a woman.



"Silk," based on an illustration by Jim Steranko

It's hard to let go of my papercuts when they sell because I've spent so much time with them and they are images that really speak to me. It's strange and wonderful to think about the fact that my cuts hang in strangers' homes, that their families pass by them everyday. I love that my papercuts can become part of the background of people's lives. There's no place like home, and I feel so fortunate to be a part of others'.

You can see what I'm up to on my website [www.rosaleff.com](http://www.rosaleff.com) or follow me on Instagram @rosaleff.

## Enough About Me!

Let's talk about you!

Send me pictures of your work. Tell me what you've been up to. Let me know what you'd like to see more of in First Cut Magazine. Want to be featured? Ask me how! Email me at **[rosaleff@gmail.com](mailto:rosaleff@gmail.com)**

# First Cut

## Planning A Papercutting Exhibit: The Ups & Downs DAVE REICHARD

Why did I get into this? That was the question I asked myself many times during the two years it took to plan and bring to fruition an exhibit of papercutting art.

A little back-ground: I'm not a really good papercutter, but my family members, for whom I make occasional gifts, think I am. I started taking sketching



classes to try to get better. I do volunteer work at a nature and art center near Buffalo, NY, where there's a gallery local artists may apply to use for exhibits. I also belong to a local art society.

What I realized over time was that almost no one I met through these various art-related organizations knew anything about papercutting. A few knew it had something to do with a long strange word they couldn't spell or pronounce. [*Scherenschnitte*, which means "paper cuts" in German.] Just as depressing was that when some of these same people saw my own work, they thought it was really good. But I knew better.

So, in a weak moment, I decided to do something to introduce more people in western New York to the art of papercutting. That meant organizing an exhibit to

include better papercutters than myself. And I had to find such people before trying to reserve the nature and art gallery.

I knew of a few local papercutters, and I got some names from GAP. I called or emailed the 5 or 6 people on my list. Three sounded very interested. Two never responded to follow-up emails or phone messages, and the third moved to the other end of the state. Only one person, Joan Brash, a fellow GAP member, liked my idea and agreed to help. Joan wouldn't let me give up. We expanded our participation criteria to include other paper artists, including paper collages and origami. We still hoped to recruit more papercutters, but we decided to take the big step of applying to use the gallery. It was November 2015. We got approved! . . . for August 2017.

It was a long time in the future, but it gave us time to breathe, reflect, and try to recruit more papercutters. One thought we had was to contact some of the many papercutters in neighboring states to see if anyone would like to visit Niagara Falls and bring along items for the exhibit. So, one day I called Kathy Trexel Reed at the GAP Museum in Somerset, PA. She was kind enough to give me some names and contact information. Joan knew a few of the names including papercutters in Vermont.

Joan and I have relatives in Vermont and Pennsylvania, respectively, so we called seven artists in those areas and indicated that we would even pick up and deliver their work so it would not need to be shipped. We asked if they would participate. Everyone said "yes!"

All of a sudden we had a legitimate papercutting exhibit, with very accomplished artists! Other recruitment efforts began to bear fruit, and soon we had to start turning people away. Everyone was excited!



# First Cut

## *Planning A Papercutting Exhibit: The Ups & Downs* DAVE REICHARD

Then, in January 2017, the roof fell in, almost literally. The building housing the gallery at the nature and art center was declared structurally unsound. It was not immediately known if it could be fixed or how soon. Eventually, in April, we were told the gallery would not be available in August. We now had an exhibit, but no place to hold it.

Again, we decided not to give up. But there weren't many options, especially free ones like the nature and art center.

The first place we called was a local retirement and life-care facility that I knew had a very nice public gallery made available to local artists. I spoke to Michelle, the event planner, and explained why I was calling and a bit about papercutting. She sounded interested and said she had one upcoming artist who might be cancelling their show. She said she'd get back to me. (I could not conceive of waiting another two years!)

For once, we got lucky. Michelle offered us over two months, but we had to open in late June, six weeks earlier than originally planned. Of course, we said "YES!"

The rest, as they say, is history. No more drama or major setbacks. I told Michelle more about papercutting and she got more excited, saying they had never had anything like it in the gallery (which, of course, was really the whole point).

The gallery mailed out announcements to a list of over a hundred addresses we supplied. They sent out press releases. The nature and art center put us on their website and Facebook pages; some of my fellow volunteers came to help hang the exhibit. We had an opening reception at which I gave a presentation. Many people asked questions and showed interest as Joan and two other artists did demonstrations.



*Demonstration of papercutting using scissors.*



*GAP Member Ellen Lengel with her work.*

Michelle said it was one of their most popular exhibits. Some residents asked for papercutting classes. Numerous people told me how much they enjoyed the exhibit. One day, when I visited the gallery, a woman came up to me and said, "Can you believe people can do this?"

"No, ma'am, it's hard to believe."