

CREATIVITY AND BEYOND

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PAPER CUTTING
CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS |
TIMELESS CRAFT



LOVE WHAT YOU DO,
DO WHAT YOU LOVE

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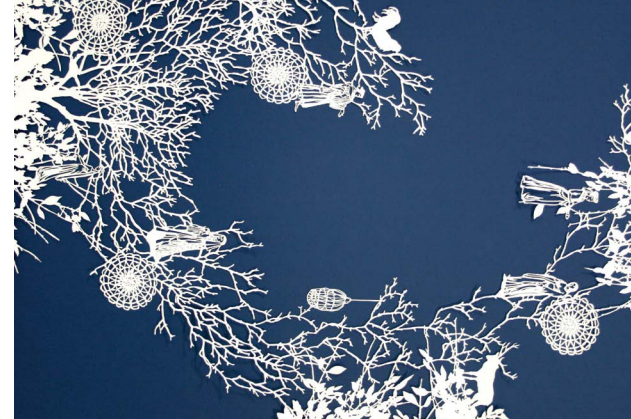
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32



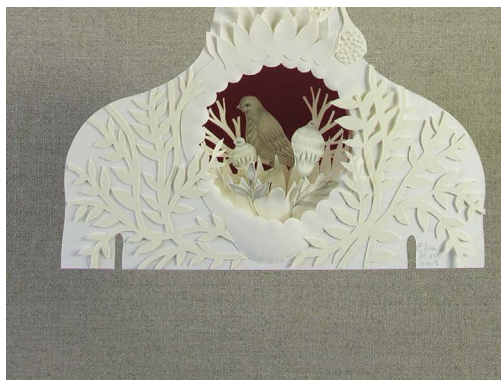
122



87



39



FEATURE ARTICLES

- 8 **DO IT TOGETHER LA ZINE CULTURE**
By Rhea Teplim
- 13 **LOVE WHAT YOU DO, DO WHAT YOU LOVE**
By Nicole Stevenson
- 16 **LITTLE PAPER PACKAGE**
By Colette Copeland
- 32 **DRINK IT UP, WRITE IT DOWN**
By Kellene Giloff
- 34 **PAPER CUTTING: CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS, TIMELESS CRAFT.**
By Sarah Dennis
- 39 **STITCH IN TIME ENVELOPES**
By Pam Garrison
- 42 **ON THE SELF BOOK TO INSPIRED YOU**
Jenifer Kline
- 50 **FUN, FLIRTY AND FUSED**
By Tracie Lampe
- 62 **READ ALL ABOUT IT: BIRTHDAY BUNTINGS FROM NEWSPAPERS**
By Maya Donenfeld

- 70 **CARDBOARD: A CHILDHOOD FANTASY**
By Sarah Hodsdon
- 80 **FOR THE LOVE OF TIN**
By Christen Olivarez
- 82 **NOT YOUR BASIC TEE**
By Christen Olivarez
- 96 **FRESH FROM THE DRYER**
By Becky Shander
- 100 **CLEAN HANDS: THE DECORATIVE WAY**
By Susan Tuttle
- 106 **BRINGING BACK BURLAP**
By Nikki Olson
- 108 **ON A ROLL**
By Charlotte Lyons
- 122 **A HAPPY ACCIDENT**
By Lisa Guerin
- 124 **COMFY COFFEE COZIES**
WBy Jenifer Kline

DEPARTMENTS

- 23 **FROM THE BIN**
By Liz Grottyohann, Johanna Love
- 55 **REPURPOSING VINTAGE**
By Jenny Doh, Joni Greenman,
- 87 **GREEN CRAFT WALKING**
By Lakeshia Motley Jess Pillmore
- 129 **GALLERY**
- 144 **A GREEN FINISH: PAPER FLOWER**
By Jana Holstein

CRAFT

- 22 **BURLAP PILLOWS**
- 48 **THE PERFECT WRAPPING**
- 86 **DAINTY DRINKS**
- 66 **KNIP, KNOT, KNIT**
- 74 **BOTTLE FULL OF CHARM**
- 94 **ELEGANT LIGHTING**
- 115 **THE NEW TRAVEL BAG**
- 118 **EYE-CATCHING UPCYCLING**

IN EVERY ISSUE

- 2 **LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR**
 - 4 **LETTER FROM THE EDITOR**
 - 140 **SUBMISSION GUIDELINES**
 - 142 **ABOUT THE PUBLISHER**
- On the cover: *Fern, Oats and Wheat* Paper art by Sarah Dennis

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PAPER CUTTING

Contemporary Artists, Timeless Craft



“ So much less—less mess, less waste, less stuff. More time—more time to say the things I have to say without detail getting in the way. ”

Were you the kind of CHILD that ate your way all around the edge of the hole in the middle of a cookie bit by bit with tiny teeth in little nibbles?

Were you the kind of child who spent much more time drawing in the margins and making multi-colored borders and underlining the titles and subtitles of your homework than ever actually doing it?

I was always busy jumping over and around the cracks in the sidewalk, and I looked up at the spaces in the sky that lay between the shapes made by criss-crossing telephone lines and power cables waiting for a jet plane or a bird to pass perfectly into the center of the frame that I had created in my head. I shut my eyes as if they were a camera shutter and captured that moment and made it mine.

The world joins up with itself over and over again. Roads cross rivers on bridges; and one day you learn that rivers cross roads in aqueducts. Pavements turn sideways into pedestrian crossings, and then back into pavements. Tall buildings become one with the clouds, and airplanes draw lines in the sky with vapor trails that I used to look up at in wonder but now view with dread or even guilt.

I do like this whole paper-cutting thing. I like the fact that I don't need paint or brushes or water or oil or palettes or canvas, just a piece of paper, a knife, and a pencil, and a rubber eraser. So much less—less mess, less waste, less stuff. More time—more time to say the things I have to say without detail getting in the way. No adding on of paint, layer after layer, and no more never quite knowing when to stop. Only taking away and taking away, first of all; all of the holes from the middle of all of the doughnuts in the world, and then the tiny slivery gaps that exist in the spaces in some lovers' entwined fingers, or maybe that tiny little island of nothingness that lives between two pairs of kissing lips. And then a bigger hole that really is the entire sky, and so on and on until all the gaps fill up and slowly become the solidness that is the world we live in that somehow lies between.

Originally, I turned to paper cutting as a means to stop myself from putting writing into my work. I had always used small sentences here and there in my work. (I guess I just had things that I wanted to say.) However, these phrases had started to grow and extend to such an extent that my pictures were composed entirely of lettering. I had a small book of Tyrolean paper cuts of very pastoral images, rolling hills and gates and trees, wooden chalets, and cows

with huge bells around their necks being led down from the mountains. These charming pictures had been cut through vertically folded paper and had perfect symmetry; I thought that if I worked that way, I wouldn't be able to put words in the pictures because they would be mirrored back to front on the facing side when unfolded. So I must admit that I was originally drawn to paper cutting by a form of self-censorship. However, I soon became transfixed by this world of perfect symmetry. It was a place where I could give the world my own imposed order, making it the neat and tidy place it so isn't.

So I started to make my own paper cuts from single folded sheets of thin paper with the sharpest scalpel blades.

In this new two-dimensional world, it was always good for people to be doing things, keeping themselves busy. This suited me because I like to be kept busy myself. People seemed to be constantly climbing up ladders or hanging upside down from the branches of trees. I began to love living in the new world. It was a place where things always joined together and supported one another. In short, they helped each other out.

Clouds hung from tiny, finely cut chains as if they were a part of a stage set in a Victorian puppet theater. A forest of trees rose up to become a vast city of buildings, here a blade of grass, a daisy, a tree joined

together in a solid shape to form a hill on which two lovers ran hand in hand against a skyline made up of shadows of trees that reached up to become part of a black sky as solid as a curtain out of which countless star shapes have been cut, through which the starlight of the heavens shines...All connected, all one, all parts of each other on equal footing within the same plane. After all, we are all a part of each other, all interconnected and dependent on each other. When parts separate from the whole in nature, they wither and die, alone. These blackened shapes, their arms and hands reach out, always wanting to touch, their gestures are frozen in time as if the light had been thrown on and then hastily thrown off to their own startlement. But then, delicate as these flimsy pieces of paper are, they can still seem sometimes as solid as granite statues.

I think that the current artistic revival and interest in working with cut paper stems from a certain type of artist. One who loves to draw and also loves shape and solidity, but who does not want to be tied down by the weight of sculpting or the complexity of painting. An artist who wants to freely explore a material so light and fragile and easy to work with, with which she or he can create small worlds for us as light as our lives are themselves. The artist creates silhouettes in which we are mirrored, for after all in the larger scheme of things, our brief lives really leave so little behind after all the living has been cut out of them, that we are but shadows ourselves.

SARAH DENNIS



The arts:
Paper Carrots and *Whale spirit*
Paper art by Sarah Dennis



Start creating your own works of papercut art!

BASIC PAPER CUTTING TECHNIQUES

TRANSFERRING YOUR DESIGN

Step 1

Use pencil to draw your design and be sure to use bold, thick lines.

Step 2

Place your tracing paper face-down on the reverse side of your cutting paper. Use a little masking tape to hold it in place. Firmly scribble over all the lines of your design with a pencil.

Step 3

Remove the tracing paper and reveal your design.

CUTTING A STRAIGHT LINE

Work on the mirror image you've created of your design. For straight lines it's best to use your metal ruler.

CUTTING CURVED LINES

For curved lines it's best to move the paper around, rather than your scalpel.

PRACTICE!

Now it's time to start practicing cutting lines and simple shapes. You want to cut deeply enough that you go through the paper in one smooth cut, but not so deep that you get stuck into your cutting mat.

SUPPLIES:

1. Cutting mat
2. Metal ruler
3. Pencil
4. Scalpel
5. Blades
6. Tracing paper
7. Backing material