CUTTING THROUGH

Designs and Illustrations in Cut Paper
Cutting Through - Designs and Illustrations in Cut Paper

“[Hans Christian Andersen] had a beautiful accomplishment, which was the cutting out in paper, with an ordinary pair of scissors, of lovely little figures of sprites and elves, gnomes fairies and animals of all kinds, which might well have stepped out of the pages of his book. These figures turned out to be delightful in their refinement and delicacy in design and touch.”
-Henry Dickens (The Amazing Paper Cuttings of Hans Christian Andersen)

Illustration is not just a drawing or a painting on paper; it can be created in different media. Paper cutout illustration started when illustrators were attracted to silhouettes. They were interested in the image of a person, an object or scene consisting of the outline and a basically featureless interior. Paper cutout as an art form has been popular since the mid-18th century. The term “silhouette” was seldom used until the early decades of the 19th century. Silhouette images may be created in any artistic media, but the tradition of cutting portraits from black card has continued into the 21st century. Among the 19th century artists to work in this way was the author Hans Christian Andersen. In the 21st century, American artist Kara Walker develops this use of silhouette to present racial issues with intricate images. With their paper cutout illustrations, contemporary artist Rob Ryan and Peter Callesen are trying to reach out and communicate with their audience. These artists express their thoughts in their work not just using a brush or a pen but also by using an X-Acto knife.
Blue Hints
(paper illustration)

ENTER

Flat
collage
style images

Silhouette
black & white images

In stopmotion

Paper cut illustration
in more commercial art (with words)

Paper cut illustration
between 2D to 3D

Experience
(fun time!

Installation cut out papers
(big scale of tunnel book)
1. Hans Christian Andersen

Hans Christian Andersen (1805-1875) always loved the arts. He was an artist, a singer, and an actor. He studied in the Royal Theatre as a director for 3 years and writing at the university in the capital city of Copenhagen. Having completed his education in 1829, he began to indulge in writing poetry full time. He also wrote over 150 stories such as “The Ugly Duckling”, “The Red Shoes”, “Thumbelina”, "The Little Mermaid" and more. But, he also cut magnificent figures from pieces of paper. He used to tell his fairy tales to children while he cut a sheet of paper in front of them. Hans Christian Andersen put a hidden meaning in his paper cuttings. On the surface it could amuse, in the depth it would amaze. Some of the paper cuts are purely picture puzzle or rebus, others are icons combined to represent a linguistic symbol. Andersen’s cuttings are balanced and well designed, even though he never had any instruction and he never drew the design before cutting. He was an artist of great talent and originality.
Hans Christian Andersen

*Scene of dancer, flowers, and faces*

Paper cut out

13 ¾ " x 16 ¾"

The Royal Library, Copenhagen

Han Christian Andersen cut this illustration to raise money for the soldiers who fought in the Prussia War. Andersen is the most interesting personality in Danish cultural history. His fertile imagination and creative urge have not only strongly influenced Danish literary style but also the Danish language. Andersen’s stories become popular with the public. According to Beth Wagner Brust, the poem in the middle is written in Danish: “This paper cut is somewhat dear/ half a rigsdaler, we’ll say /But it’s really a whole fairy tale / You kind heart will have to pay.”
Whenever Hans Christian Andersen had opportunities to tell fairy tales to children, he would just take the scissors out of his pocket and made a cut paper illustration and start telling the story. Andersen taught himself to make drawings and collages, and he created puppets and puppets stages. *Men in a circle holding hearts and hands* is one example that he created for his productions. He was inspired to design them when looking at his cutout illustration.
RIGHT: **Hans Christian Andersen**  
*Vernet's portrait of Thorvaldsen*  
1833, Rome.  
Oil paint on canvas.  
30” x40".  
Thorvaldsen Museum, Copenhagen.

LEFT: **Hans Christian Andersen**  
*Cutout portrait of sculptor Bertel Thorvalden*  
1833, in Rome, at the studio of French painter Horace Vernet.  
Paper cut out  
2 ½” x 1 ¾”.  
The Hans Christian Andersen Museum, Odense.

Most of Han Christian Andersen’s cutouts are based on things he imagined rather than on things he saw. He occasionally used his skill with scissors like a camera in order to capture a scene that he wanted to remember. In 1833, when the camera was invented, he met a Danish sculptor, Bertel Thovaldsen, and became a good friend. One day, Andersen was invited to watch a French artist, Horace Vernet, paint Thorvaldsen’s portrait. At some point in this session, Andersen pulled out his traveling scissors and piece of paper and cut the silhouette from the painting.
Hans Christian Andersen

Sunflower man
1848 in the village of Soro, Denmark, for John Martin Christian Lange.

Paper cut out
5 ½ “ x 8 ¾”.

The Portman Collection, The Royal library, Copenhagen.

Although Han Christian Andersen loved children and enjoyed being with them, he never married or had children of his own. He never owned a house. Even when he was not touring Denmark or other parts of Europe, he moved around Copenhagen, a guest in other people’s homes for weeks or months at a time. He made thirteen scrapbooks for the children that he loved with. The books included his own cuttings made out of bright colored paper, along with pictures he had cut from magazines, advertisements, printed sheets, postcards and wrapping paper. Sunflower man is one of the images inside of the scrapbooks.
Hans Christian Andersen

*Untitled*
1874 at Rolighed, the Melchior
Paper cut out
10 ½” x 16 ¾”
The Hans Christian Andersen Museum, Odense.

The Melchiors, a wealthy Danish merchant family, become good friends with Han Andersen. Their country villa became one of Andersen’s working places. The year before he died, Andersen made his last large cutting as a gift for Mrs. Melchior. Its grim images do not show in his other cuttings. They reflect the artist’s poor health and his knowledge of his approaching death. At the center of the piece, there is a cross, an image seldom seen in his cuttings even though Andersen was a religious man.
2. Kara Walker

“One of my earliest memories involves sitting on my dad’s lap in his studio in the garage of our house and watching him draw. I remember thinking: ‘I want to do that, too,’ and I pretty much decided then and there at age 2½ or 3 that I was an artist just like Dad.”
—Kara Walker

Kara Walker (b.1969) received a BFA from the Atlanta College of Art in 1991, and an MFA from the Rhode Island School of Design in 1994. She is well known for showing her topics like race, gender, and sexuality through her cutout figures. Kara Walker applied her intricate silhouettes directly onto the walls of the gallery and made them look like a theatrical space in which her cutout paper characters become violent towards one another. With one foot in the historical realism of slavery and the other in the fantastical space of the romance novel, Walker’s nightmarish fictions simultaneously seduce and make the audience think about the real issues in the world in which we are living. Walker currently lives in New York, where she is on the faculty of the MFA program at Columbia University.
Kara Walker

Cut

1998

Cut paper on wall
88 x 54 in. (2223.5 x 137.2 cm)
Collection Donna and Cargill MacMillan

Kara Walker is best known for her cut-paper silhouettes. She began working with these images around 1993 while she was a graduate student at the Rhode Island School of Design. She is interested in kitsch and explores this in her cutout paper illustration. Kara Walker’s work is layered with images that reference history, literature, culture, and the darker aspects of human behavior. All of her work represents power. The characters in her work show power struggles of all kinds such as physical, emotional, personal, racial, sexual, and historical.
Kara Walker constructs a story in an unusual format for an installation. Slavery! was installed in a 360-degree installation modeled after the 19th century cyclorama. A cyclorama is a large, cyclindrical painting. She thought that this antiquated art form insists the viewer participate in the story by walking across the periphery of the landscape as if looking on the events taking place. Additionally, the circular structure of the work eliminates a clear beginning or end to the story. In the artist’s words, Slavery! Slavery! was the first time that she had a completely circular space. It was built to surround the viewer so it feels different from the normal flat wall and builds a narrative that doesn’t actually start on the left.
Kara Walker

Darkytown Rebellion

2001
Cut paper and projection on wall
14 x 37 ft. (4.3 x 11.3 m)
Collection Musee d’Art Moderne Grand-Duc Jean, Luxembourg

Kara Walker works with the cycorama, wall-sized murals, and light projections. She started to experiment with moving images in 2001. Using cut-paper puppets, hand-built stage sets, and Super 8 film in her studio, she began to animate the characters in her style. For Darkytown Rebellion, Kara Walker applied paper cutout illustration to the wall. Then she projected with vibrant light from colored transparencies on several overhead projects placed on the floor of the gallery. Kara Walker wanted the viewers are further involved with this installation, so their shadows are also cast onto the wall as they walk through the space.
3. Andrey Shushkov

Andrey Shushkov (b.1986) is interested in everything around him. In his teenage years, he realized that he wanted to create his own fairy tales. In 2005, he started his film education at the Saint-Petersburg University of Culture and Arts. He studied directing, photography and scriptwriting. At the same time, he was learning as much as possible from the internet. Andrey Shushkov fell in love with animation and started to work as a freelance photographer. During 2009-2010, Andrey Shushkov worked on his short animated film called "Invention of Love". He made this film for his thesis project. It is a film about a love story from the world of gears and bolts. The color and the structure were inspired by Lotte Reiniger's paper cutout works like Hansel and Gretel or The little Chimney Sweep and Antony Lucas's film called The Mysterious Explorations of Jasper Morello.
Andrey Shushkov

*Invention of Love* (Animated short 2010)
Inspired by Lotte Reiniger works and Antony Lucas’s Jasper Morello film.
Diploma project. 9:45MINUTES

Written & Directed by Andrey Shushkov
Original Music and Sound: Polina Sizova, Anton Melnikov.
Violin perfomed by Anna Gudkova

Andrey Shushkov’s *Invention of Love* is a story that starts at the end and flashes back to the beginning. A tinkerer starts his record player and reminisces about his lost love. The woman is from the countryside, never having seen the city. Upon their marriage he brings her back with him to the city. The city is completely industrial, with even the animals being mechanical. The woman was not expecting this, and in horror she tries to find any shred of nature she can within this mechanized wasteland. She dies, and the flashback ends. In a desperate hope, the tinkerer tries to invent love through a mechanical woman, only to find that it is not the same as what nature had provided him.
4. Rob Ryan

Rob Ryan (b.1962) studied fine art at Nottingham Trent Polytechnic before going on to an MA in printmaking at the Royal College of Art. Ryan is a highly acclaimed illustrator and his work is the result of the painstaking hand cutting of papers. These intricate works are either sold in paper cutout form or developed as limited edition screen-prints, or transferred onto a variety of media including china, fabric, jewelry and cards. He works with an X-Acto knife and huge paper. First, he designs the figures and the contents, and then cuts section by section one day at a time. Ryan’s intricate and beguiling paper cutouts have acquired a huge public following. Today, Rob Ryan is collaborating with high profile companies and figures in the fashion world and including Lulu Guinness, Tatty Devine, Liberty of London, Paul Smith, Elle Magazine and Vogue.
Rob Ryan
Alphabet
2004
Paper cut out
The Museum Of Us exhibition at The Horse Hospital Gallery

Ryan was making screen-prints and paintings for years before he started cutout illustration. After he graduated from the Royal College of Art in 1987, he was inspired by silhouette and shape, not by color or perspective. He was doing a lot of writing and he was constantly working on sketchbooks but they are mainly filled with words for him. He wanted to do something new and he was doing a lot of these pictures in which he was folding the paper. The image was totally symmetrical. He thinks this is the way to show his thinking process while creating the piece and it is a big part of his work.
Rob Ryan's work is unique and decorative. He said the reason his paper cutout work became more decorative is because it is cut from one sheet of paper that forces him to make an intricate pattern. He has to get the trees and foliage linking together, and it develops. Rob Ryan creates his art with a pencil drawing, and then every tiny detail of the illustration is cut out with a scalpel (often with the help of his assistant Hazel, an artist in her own right) and sprayed with color.
Rob Ryan's work captured the public imagination because he wrote about his experiences and put himself in people's shoes and in their imaginations. This also influences his commissioned works that are commercial work like book jackets, illustrations for Vogue and textile designs. Rob Ryan keeps a balance with his imagination and commercial assignments. He wants his work to become more accessible and easier for the public to approach.
When Rob Ryan painted, the works were very decorative, like his cuttings today. At college, he was interested in the English illustrators of the 1940s and ’50s. At the same time, he liked Italian and German painting, like the 19th-century romantics including Caspar David Friedrich. That is why most of his work is romantic and sweet. But, sometimes his work is quite dark because of his different writing. Rob Ryan’s paper cutouts have that mixture of sentiment and something more sinister in the shadows.
Rob Ryan

*Special Edition Ryantown 2nd anniversary print (Edition 120)*

2010
Screen print
51.5cm wide by 38cm high

'Every night at the same time, I pick a star, hold it tight and think of you a thousand miles across land and sea, I feel you in my heart thinking of me.'

'These same stars and this same sky hang over both you and I, In our dreams and in my heart, they help us feel less far apart.'  - Rob Ryan

Rob Ryan designs cut paper illustrations and creates his own story books. 'This Is For You,' was the first book he published. It is a romantic fairy-tale told through paper cutout art. This is a beautiful two-color print to commemorate the 2nd anniversary of the Ryantown shop on Columbia Road.
5. Peter Callesen

Peter Callesen (b.1967) is a Danish artist and author. He studied foundation art skills at Århus Art School in 1993 and went to Goldsmiths College in London 1997. He creates intricate paper cutout artwork from A4 (letter size) paper and makes large-scale installations pieces. He feels that A4 paper is a material that we are all able to relate to, and at the same time the A4 paper sheet is neutral and open to fill with different meanings. He thinks that the thin white paper gives the sculptures a frailty that underlines the tragic and romantic theme of his works. For most of his work, he made the flat sheet of paper into figures that expand into the space and interact. Using the negative two dimensional space left by the cut paper, Callesen points out the contrasting three dimensional reality it creates, even though the figures still stick to the original paper without the possibility of escaping. Peter Callesen is still an explorer who uses his cutout illustration to reach out to the audience and communicate with people.
A4 series pieces

Peter Callesen worked almost exclusively with white paper for different objects, paper cuts, installations and performances. A large part of his work is made from A4 (8.5” x 11”) sheets of paper. He takes away all the information and starts from scratch using the blank white A4 paper sheet. For his creations, he feels that he found a material that we are all able to relate to, and at the same time the A4 paper sheet is neutral white and open to fill with different meanings. The thin white paper gives the paper sculptures a frailty that underlines the tragic and romantic theme of his works.

Peter Callesen
Butterflies Trying to Escape Their Shadow
2005
Acid-free A4 80 gsm paper and glue
Peter Callesen
*Distant Wish*
2006
Acid-free A4 115 gsm paper and glue.

Peter Callesen
*Snowballs*
2005
Acid free A4 80 gsm paper and glue
Framed Work

Peter Callesen’s colored and framed paper cutout works derive from earlier pieces such as ‘Bridge’ and ‘Still Life’. They deal with dreams and the impossible. This informal style in earlier works has developed into more precise aesthetics. These works exist in the gap between the recognizable everyday object and the material in which they appear. The framed work is the ideal pure copy of something real as well as the vertical direction coherent in most of Peter Callesen’s paper works. It could also indicate the aspect of something platonic or religious.

Peter Callesen

*Water Always Finds its Way*

2006

Acid Free A4 80 gsm paper, glue, acrylic paint and oak frame

47.5 x 37 x 7 cm.
Peter Callesen
*On the other Side*
2009
Acid free A4 120 gsm paper, glue, acrylic paint, water color and oak frame
47,5 x 37 x 7 cm
Peter Callesen

*The Core of Everything*

2006

Acid free A4 80 gms paper, glue and oak frame

47,5 x 37 x 7 cm
Peter Callesen
*Alive, but Dead*
2006
Acid Free paper, glue, acrylic paint, and oak frame
127 x 94 x 11,5 cm
BIO

Jennifer Yoo

Jennifer Yoo was born in San Francisco and raised in Korea. She trained to be an artist while she was a MICA undergraduate. Jennifer Yoo’s greatest strength and talent is an ability to make cut out paper art. She is studying Illustration Practice in the MICA graduate program. She wants to harmonize her emotions and artistic skills in order to fully express herself through art. Yoo’s ultimate goal is to create works that could positively influence people and engage the public. Her wish to become an artist known for artworks that touch people’s hearts, rather than be an artist famous for a particular style that fits in a particular period.
EXHIBITION-RELATED PROGRAMS

1. ART WORKSHOPS FOR ADULTS AND TEENS

This fun craft project, it will involve the entire family. Try to make silhouette cuttings and décalcomanie style paper cutouts. This workshop will allow children and adults to express their creative ideas.

**Thing we need:**

- Sheets of 8.5” x 11” paper.
- Safety scissors
- Pencil

**HOW TO**

1. Cut the sheet of paper in half, lengthwise from top to bottom. Make three folds in one of the halves, pleating the paper into quarters.

2. Draw a silhouette or any other forms on the top layer of the folded paper.

3. Cut out your silhouette or forms. Do not cut the folded edge. Unfold the sheet to reveal your own paper cutout illustration.

**TIPS AND WARNING**

- Be sure to supervise young children using scissors.
2. ART TALK

- Artist’s talk with Peter Callesen.
- Artist’s talk with Rob Ryan.

-Talk about how do they create their works and demonstration of the process they use to make their cutout illustrations.
- Q&A section

3. VIDEO LECTURE (darkened room)

- History of paper cutout illustration (slide show on a loop)
- Rob Ryan : work in process. (movie clip)

Show how he creates his own ideas and show the working process.

- Early cutout stop motion animation: Prince and Princess.
**Bibliography**

**Books**


**Internet Resources**


[http://learn.walkerart.org/karawalker/Main/IntroductionToThemes](http://learn.walkerart.org/karawalker/Main/IntroductionToThemes)
