

A Cut Above

Contemporary paper cuts refresh both eyes and mind

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The art of paper cutting originated in China not long after paper was invented (around 100 BC), but didn't become popular until it started appearing at folk festivals in the 12th century. Paper cutting quickly became an integral part of Chinese people's daily lives, and by the 14th century it was also popular in the Middle East and Europe.

For over 2,000 years, Chinese theatrical performances have used paper to serve a decorative purpose, whether it be for romance, comedy or drama. But while most old-fashioned paper cut designs reflect nature and ordinary life, modern paper cutting has reinterpreted the traditional form, and meaning, of this folk art.

A number of contemporary artists have departed from the

obvious flat paper art and arrived at the manipulation of paper in a 3D form. Peter Callesen (Denmark), Richard Sweeney (UK), Su Blackwell (UK) and Hideo Iwasaki (Japan) have all produced great examples of a more complex use of paper cutting, leading to the coining of the term "Paper Sculpture" for these amazing works. In addition, many neo-classical paper cuts use bold colors and lines, as exemplified by artists such as Kevin Miller (US) and Yoshikazu Hara (Japan).

Contemporary paper cuttings connect their audience with both the real and unreal, simple and complex, allowing both artist and viewer to create eye-catching scenes with this ancient art form.



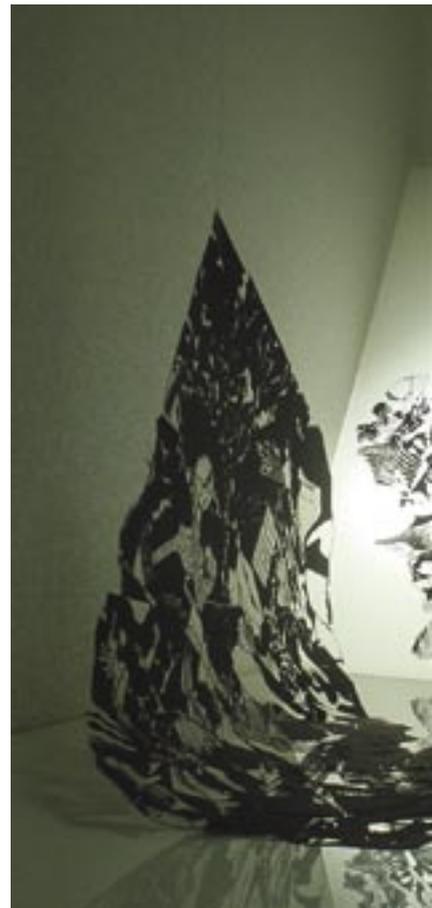
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1. Image of Reality 2005 by Peter Callesen. A "paper cut painting" of cherry blossom flowers. Photo courtesy of Helene Nyborg Contemporary. www.petercallesen.com

2. Portrait of Ryunosuke Akutagawa (a well-known Japanese author, 1892-1927) by Yoshikazu Hara. <http://kad.heavy.jp>

3. Lunablu by Kevin Miller. A plain air paper cut, part of the display window at a recycled clothing store. USD 300. www.littleboats.org

4. Magnolia Tree 2007 by Su Blackwell. This book-cut sculpture made from second-hand books aims to bring to

life Hans Christian Andersen's famous fairytales. www.sublackwell.co.uk

5. Impenetrable Castle 2005 & 6. Cradle 2006, both by Peter Callesen. Photo courtesy of Emily Tsingou Gallery. www.petercallesen.com

7. Mobile Composition III 2007 by Hideo Iwasaki. A combination of two pieces of paper cut, part of his series of 3D installation hanging paper cuts. Prices start from USD 300/sheet. www.f.waseda.jp/hideo-iwasaki/papercut.html

8. Richard Sweeney's paper sculpture installation for the DKNY flagship store in London. www.richardsweeney.co.uk



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