

PRESS RELEASE

Interview contact: Diya Nagaraj, Curator of Exhibitions, diya.nagaraj@danishmuseum.org
Museum of Danish America, (712) 764-7001

ELK HORN, Iowa – For many, wintertime is a season in which to pursue indoor, creative activities. One of the most enduringly popular materials for these arts and crafts is paper. A product of fiber pulp, paper has been the choice writing surface for as long as anyone can remember. But a new museum exhibition in southwest Iowa highlights a paper art which doesn't utilize writing or necessarily applying things to paper at all – it focuses on the cutting of it.

Papirklip (the Danish word for paper cutting) is an art which dates back thousands of years. Requiring very few tools, it has been an accessible art form for people and cultures throughout history. The exhibition *Papirklip: A Global and Timeless Art*, open now at the Museum of Danish America in Elk Horn through May 20, displays the diversity of papercutting using examples of both historical and contemporary works by artists from various cultural traditions.

Humans have long used a variety of materials as writing surfaces, including clay tablets, animal skins, silk, and even bones. Around 105 AD, the Chinese found a way to manufacture paper using tree bark and shredded cloth, which created a product that was cheaper and lighter than many of the previous options. While it was used for writing, paper was also used for many other purposes, including wrapping and padding items as well as creating stencils for textile printing, embroidery, and lacquerware. From China, papermaking and the art of papercutting first spread eastward to Korea and Japan and then moved westward towards India and Turkey – eventually making its way to Europe. From there, it traveled to the Americas with colonists. However, *amatl*, a paper-like material made from bark, had already been used for a variety of purposes, including cutting, in Mexico since at least 75 AD.

In this exhibit, attendees will see examples of *amatl* art alongside other elaborate paper pieces by artists from Asia, Europe, and the local area. Visitors can evaluate the symbolism of papercuts created in China during the Cultural Revolution of the 1960s and 70s along with those featuring American historical commentary by contemporary artist Kara Walker. Despite differences in names and styles in languages and cultures, papercut art remains a truly global and timeless phenomenon.

Guests can join the fun by cutting their own snowflakes and adding them to a wall at the museum. Paper, scissors, and some instructions and patterns are provided, to get you started.

In conjunction with the exhibit, the museum is hosting a virtual session with Danish *papirklip* artist Torben Jarlstrøm Clausen. Clausen, from Denmark, will lead participants through creating their own *papirklip* figures on Zoom as he talks of his personal journey with paper art and about the works of another famed paper cutting artist and author - Hans Christian Andersen. Tickets for the January 30 event are available at <https://bit.ly/Papirklip>

Papirklip: A Global and Timeless Art is sponsored by the descendants of Nadjeschda and Niels Overgaard, who inspired generations of the Overgaard family to celebrate their Danish heritage. The Museum of Danish America is open Mondays – Saturdays from 10 am to 4 pm and Sundays from Noon to 4 pm. Admission for non-members is \$5 per person. More information can be found on the website www.danishmuseum.org

###

Image IMG_8516: Detail of *Drageæg (Dragon Egg)*, Bit Vejle (Danish/Norwegian)

Nicky Christensen
Communications Specialist