



The Amazing Paper Cuttings of Hans Christian Andersen

By Beth Wagner Brust

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Hans Christian Andersen, the Danish storyteller whose fairy tales are known all over the world, was also a gifted artist. He made hundreds, perhaps thousands, of paper cuttings of swans, clowns, toy theaters, windmills, angels, and other whimsical images. Often he made the paper cuttings while telling a story, then gave them to the children listening to him. In this inspired biography, Beth Wagner Brust tells the story of Andersen as an artist who used his many talents to escape the poverty into which he was born and who entertained others with not only his famous stories but also his innovative and original art.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

The whimsical, often astonishingly complex paper cuttings executed by Hans Christian Andersen serve as the subject as well as the principal illustrations of this attractively designed book. Striking cutouts, typically from white or light-colored paper, are set off by dramatic black backgrounds. A succinct text outlines the major events in Andersen's life, from his childhood in a slum of Odense to his later career as a celebrated writer. As Brust emphasizes, Andersen's paper cuttings were an integral part of his storytelling performances: he cut while he spoke, unfolding a finished piece at the end of his tale. A final chapter describes some of Andersen's paper-cutting techniques and discusses the history of that art form. An intriguing glimpse of the famous author's lesser-known talent. Ages 7-9.

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From School Library Journal

Grade 5 Up-As a storyteller, Andersen relied on simple language and dramatic gestures to tap the imagination of his listeners. Sometimes, it seems, he also supplemented his tellings with the making of paper cuttings, a popular craft in the mid-19th century. Brust provides a skeleton biography of Andersen using anecdotal reports of some of the occasions when he employed his handicraft to entertain children, capture a scene during his travels, and even as a sort of universal language when in a foreign country. The more than 20 reproductions demonstrate his imaginative use of materials. While none illustrate any of his stories, many cuttings demonstrate his skill in liberating intricate shapes and in designing complex, interlocking compositions. Nevertheless, the use of "amazing" in the title is a bit of an exaggeration. Rather, the book's value is in showing a little-known facet of the man's personality. The writing is direct and informative and uses quotations from letters and diaries to spice up the simple prose; the chapter on the art of paper cutting is a useful presentation of the technical processes. An unusual book that combines biography and creativity.

Kenneth Marantz, Art Education Department, Ohio State University, Columbus

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From [Booklist](#)

Gr. 3-6. Well known today as a writer of fairy tales, Andersen was also admired in his time for his paper cuttings. To entertain his audience, and possibly himself, while telling stories aloud, he would take a piece of paper and a pair of scissors and, folding and cutting, create a design. Of the hundreds or perhaps thousands he made, some 250 still exist. Brust tells the story of Andersen's life, with special emphasis on how, why, where, and for whom he made the paper cuttings. She also explains the basics of his style and how it differed from traditional silhouette cutting in technique and results. Black-and-white illustrations, photographs of the man and his distinctive cutouts, provide helpful points of reference throughout the text. Attractive in format and well written, the book provides a fine introduction to this aspect of Andersen's creative life. *Carolyn Phelan*

Users Review

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Tammi Kendrick:

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