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The art of silhouette cut-outs



An artist in her field:
Mrs. Julia Feiner

All creators of well-known artistic silhouette cut-outs have chosen the subjects of their works from their immediate surroundings. Even if they use only a small pair of scissors and black, sometimes coloured paper, we are fascinated by the superb diversity, the abundance and richness of this little world which mostly reflects rural life. Let us think of the works by the Swiss labourer and coal merchant Johann Jakob Hauswirth (1808–1871). He was a master in his sphere. In his spare time, he carried his cut-outs from house to house and sold them at Fr. 5.— a piece. He remained a poor man all his life, but did not doubt for one single moment that collectors would one day fight for his works and that even museums would demand them. Louis Saugy of Rougemont (1871–1953) and Christian Schwizgebel of Gstaad, as well as David Regez of Diemtigtal emulated him.

Julia Feiner-Wiederkehr, born at Riehen BS in 1910, showed her genuine talent for drawing already as a young girl. At the arts and crafts college in Basle, she attended classes for textiles and learned printing on fabrics. Later, she repeatedly stayed in Munich and Sweden in order to become familiar with textiles.

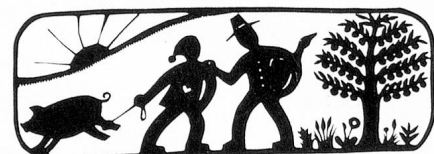
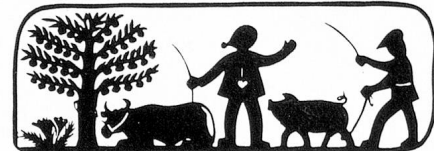
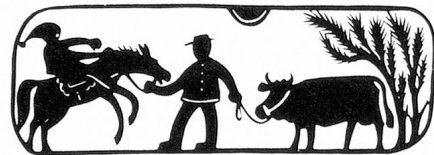
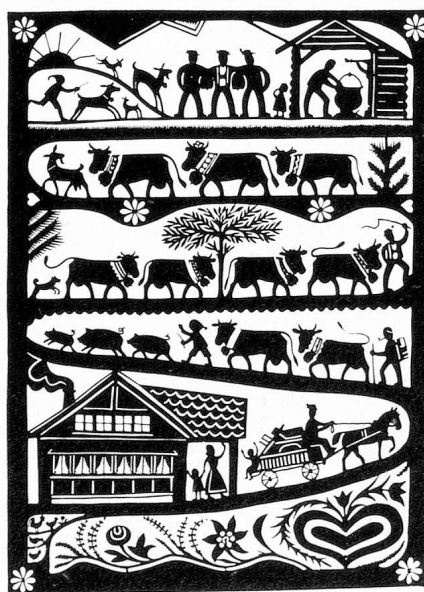
At an early age, she was enthusiastic about silhouette cut-outs. She admired the works of Johann Jakob Hauswirth who had spread this old and popular rural art. Again and again she came back to this kind of expression, and she began with simple decorations, small bookmarks and congratulatory cards. Finally, she was successful in realising large works of unique character.

Mrs. Feiner worked without previous rough draft and used a pair of scissors and black paper as single tools. With incredible talent and



(Photo Armbuster)

decisiveness she created above all the life of the farmer and did this in a fine perceptive manner. It was through her cut-outs that one discovered her rural and simple sur-



roundings with their accent on custom.

It was through a pleasant idea that her talent and works became known outside her residential town of Riehen. A «Laeckerli» firm had long had the intention to wrap their famous biscuits in a box decorated with silhouette cut-outs.

Julia Feiner agreed to decorate the boxes for this famous Basle speciality. With cut-outs of particular delicacy she represented the various manufacturing processes of the «Laeckerli»: The family which harvests the corn, the trip to the mill, the bee-keeper with his hives and the group of cheerful children at the confectioner's.

Julia Feiner who put her talent at the disposal of an old Basle tradition, has contributed towards establishing a well-deserved reputation for this old and popular art – the silhouette cut-out.