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# Süddeutsche Zeitung

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## exhibition: **Not from cardboard**

For a long time the paper cut was considered a pretty but unexciting relic of the European Biedermeier period. The Neue Galerie Dachau is now showing a selection of contemporary works that impress both with their great variety and their originality.

*By Gregor Schiegl, Dachau*

- Étienne de Silhouette had the bad luck, under Louis XV. to be appointed French general controller of finances. The Seven Years' War fell during his term of office: the first conflict in world history, which took place on several continents at the same time, devoured huge sums of money. France's finances soon went downhill, and so did Silhouette; its reputation waned. At the end of his days he should only be a shadow of himself, a silhouette so to speak. He lived in his château, surrounded by paper cutouts, for which he was very passionate. Evil tongues claim that real paintings were just too expensive for the old curmudgeon.

Nowadays hardly anyone is interested in the unfortunate Monsieur Silhouette, let alone in paper cutouts. The fact that the Neue Galerie Dachau is devoting its new exhibition to the topic of "contemporary paper cuts" may at first make some contemporaries yawn

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heartily. Paper, mon dieu! But yawned too early, messieurs dames! These works have nothing to do with Biedermeier character profiles or floral motifs.

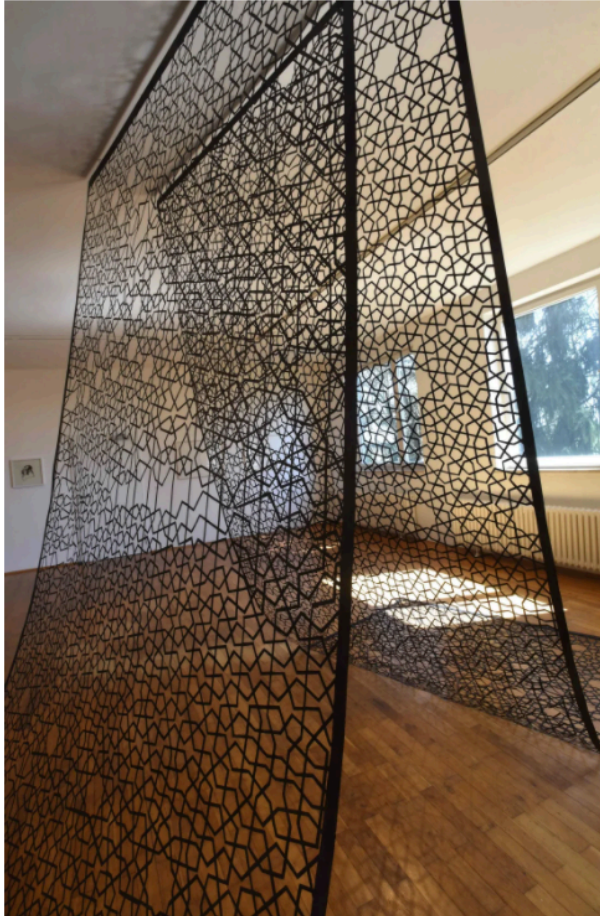


Photo: Toni Heigl

Ergül Cengiz experiments with the traditional Islamic girih pattern.

Optical borrowings can only be found in the filigree silhouettes of wild plants made of black construction paper, which the Belgian artist Victoria Martini created. They are vaguely reminiscent of the Biedermeier style of Philipp Otto Runge, but at second glance you can see that something cannot be right here: the decoratively twisted

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tendrils with their heart-shaped leaves sprout from a plant that creeps in the ground, a Venus flytrap, whose catching devices have torn open mouths with fangs same. Martinis vegetable "hybrids" are artificial structures, creatively mixed together: Here the paper cut does not imitate nature, here it recreates it. You could say that snipping against species loss.

But what does snipping mean, the paper has long since ceased to be cut with scissors, but with a fine blade, which allows for much more complex shapes than mere silhouettes. The Dachau graphic artist Martin Off shows how it is with his bizarre characters and caricatures. He puts them on paper with scrawly lines, as if the earth were shaking all the time while drawing; This vibrating creates the liveliness of his figures. In this exhibition, the heads can be seen as paper cuttings, every crooked line, no matter how fine, is cut out accurately, the funny ladies and gentlemen even cast their own shadow on the underlying paper. More personality is hardly possible.

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Sebastian Pöllmann playfully stages the Kama Sutra.  
(Photo: Toni Heigl)

Similar to Off, the Israeli artist Zipora Rafaelov relies on the dissolution of the image into a filigree web of lines that consists of a lot of air and extremely little paper. Not only the fine surgical skill of the cut amazes the viewer. The extremely elaborate scenes also overlap in multiple ways: sensual female figures, leaves and flowers and Hebrew characters, everything is interwoven. One series shows the personification of the five senses, a subject that was already popular in Dutch painting of the 16th and 17th centuries. Rafaelov adapts it anew and casts it with five Hebrew girls: Chefziba, Shira, Yona, Bosmat and Ahuva.

The work "düm tek tek" by the German-Turkish artist Ergül Cengiz is abstract and therefore also rather unusual for contemporary paper

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cutting. Two wide five-meter-long curtains in a girih pattern hang from the ceiling to the floor in the shape of a tent, a design element of Islamic art that is often found in Islamic architecture and Islamic handicrafts. Star-shaped geometric structures are created at the intersection of the lines. The artist has cut holes in the pattern, some bars are missing. But whether something is really missing is always a question of perspective. The structures of the curtains hanging one behind the other overlap, complement one another, connect, and if the lighting conditions are appropriate, the shadow even creates a third level.



Madeline Scholler skewers what flies around in the sky.  
(Photo: Neue Galerie Dachau)

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These few examples already show how far the paper cut has freed itself from the aesthetic, thematic and cultural limitations of its Biedermeier predecessor. "I wanted to present as broad a spectrum as possible in this exhibition," explains curator Jutta Mannes. The title "Black // White", which is also a concept, sets a framework for the diversity. Only black and white works are shown, which reliably ensures a harmonious look.

You can do it colorfully enough in black and white: The mobiles by the Munich artist Sebastian Pöllmann bring together ten erotic scenes from the Kama Sutra, as motorized shadow theater they come to life. The "main actors", so the title, demonstrate what men and women can do with each other with a little flexibility. Only the movement of the mobile in front of a light source turns the whole thing into a spectacle, which gives the folk figures their physicality through the casting of shadows and deprives them again as they turn, an eternal coming and going. The performance of the lovable actors may also be explicit, the effect of this fuzzy dance is more like a fairy tale. Traumatic consequences for minors are probably no longer to be feared in 2021.

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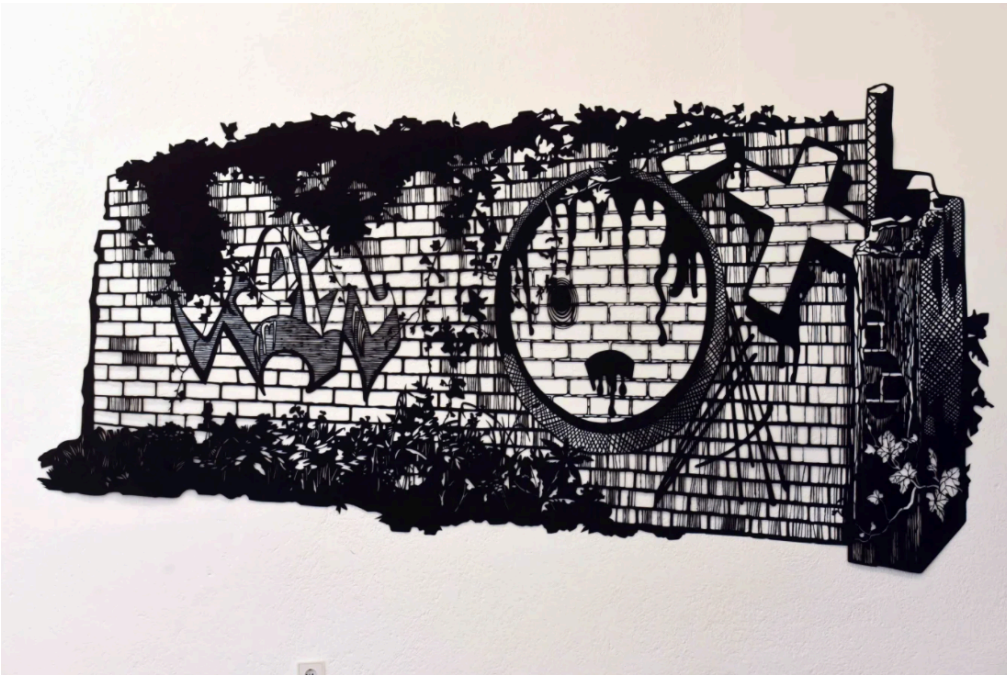
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Annette Schröter shows her "Wildwuchs 1" in the style of a dystopian comic.  
(Photo: Toni Heigl)

Andreas Kock's relief "The foam of these days" is beautiful and at the same time oppressive in its gloomy plasticity. On several levels in front of and behind one another, bubbles are set like tar-black bath foam. The processing of the handmade paper with graphite gives the delicate structures an ominous sheen. The title refers to the surreal, constantly darkening novel "L'Écume des jours" by Boris Vian from 1946, in which there are cocktail pianos, but also deadly water lilies that nestle in the lungs.

The object box of Madeleine Schollerer, who lives in Lower Bavaria, is also quite a magical, original work. Like in a natural history collection, butterflies of different shapes and sizes are pinned into a box made of black construction paper. Only at second glance does it become apparent that there are three fighter planes underneath. Reduced to

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their shape and impaled like dead insects, they lose their horror and appear to the viewer only like a curious children's toy.

The works of the Leipzig artist Annette Schröter, a shooting star of the German paper cut scene, are as far removed as possible from the idyllic bourgeoisie that prevailed in Silhouette's time, both aesthetically and in terms of content. Freely mounted on a wall, your exhibit "Wildwuchs 1" shows a brick wall overgrown with ivy, smeared with loveless graffiti, battered, crumbling walls. Such a motif would have been unthinkable in the Biedermeier period. "Only the beautiful were considered worthy of representation," says Jutta Mannes. Schröter's reduction to the surface and the abandonment of details express the destruction inherent in decay even more drastically. If Monsieur Silhouette would see what has grown out of the handicrafts of his day, he would be amazed!

***Black-and-white. Contemporary paper cuts. New gallery Dachau. Open Tuesday to Sunday and public holidays 1pm to 5pm. The exhibition can still be seen until July 25th .***

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