

Paper artist wields scissors like a surgeon

By Courtney Jones
Council on Culture & Arts

Paper artist Lucrezia Bieler uses a pair of surgical scissors to craft works cut from a single sheet of paper, and she utilizes the kind of precision and attention to detail that you'd expect from any medical surgeon.

Though she's lived in Tallahassee for the last twenty years, Bieler was born and raised in Zurich, Switzerland. Switzerland has a long tradition of paper cutting, but Bieler is mostly self-taught in the medium.

"In Switzerland, you first have a basic art education where you study everything," she said. Bieler learned to apply many of these different techniques to her cuttings.

During her second year in art school, Bieler was accepted into a four-year program specializing in scientific illustrations for textbooks and other educational materials. The program created a foundation for the many extraordinarily detailed depictions of nature seen in Bieler's work today.

"I knew that with scientific illustration, you could be trained to make illustrations of animals," she said. "You also learned to work really precisely.... It taught you how to be really patient, which is good for the paper cutting."

Bieler's first serious attempt at paper cutting was the result of a class outing to the circus. She and her fellow students were allowed to observe the animals during training sessions.

"Our teacher told us to try any medium that we thought would help us capture something really quickly," she said. "I tried brushes and other things first, and then I thought to take a pair of scissors and black paper with me and cut out the silhouettes. And I found that I really liked to do it."

That Bieler first considered the paper cutting for its speed is somewhat ironic, given that most of the cuttings she produces now take months—and sometimes years—to finish. The process of cutting out a piece alone can take anywhere from weeks to months depending on its size, but she starts working on the cuttings years in advance, sketching out ideas and then practicing on a few small detail cutouts of her designs. The time spent planning, sketching, and practicing is crucial to the final work, because the final pieces are all cut from a single sheet of paper, one mistake means Bieler has to start the piece over. It's painstaking work, but Bieler's passion for the medium



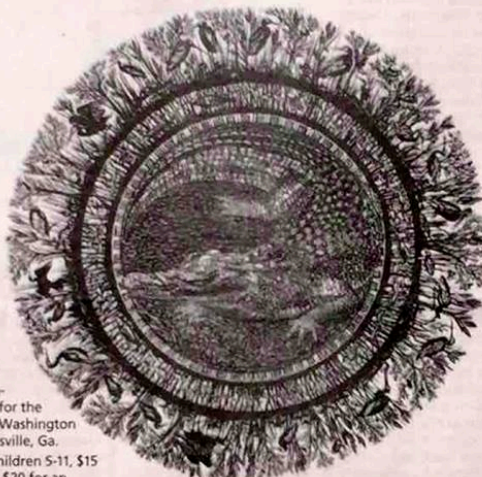
Paper artist Lucrezia Bieler's cuttings can take months—and sometimes years—to finish.



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helps her press on.

"You can make extremely fine details in parts of it, and you can spend a lot of time, but I think that's the fascinating thing about it," she said. "It's like meditation."

Some of Bieler's work will be on display at this weekend's Plantation Wildlife Arts Festival in Thomasville. The festival will feature several demonstrations and workshops, as well as works from 65 artists across the country that

specialize in wildlife art in a variety of media. The festival's focus is perfect for Bieler's work. Many of her pieces depict wildlife because she feels the paper cutting is the perfect medium to represent the fragility of nature.

"I try to show that it's almost symbolic, when you use just the paper and you try to cut it from one sheet," she said. "As soon as you damage it, it's done."

Bieler treats her

animal subjects just as a portraitist would with human subjects. She applies the same eye for detail and emotion, and crafts even the most predatory animals with empathy. For Bieler, her work is all about taking a closer look, beneath the surface. She uses the intricate details in her cuttings to draw your eye in—and maybe the next time you see a few of these creatures in the wild, you'll take a closer look there, too.



ENGAGEMENT

Vito and Jackie Bell of St. George Island are thrilled to announce the engagement of their daughter, Alyssa, to Randall Grant, son of Larry and Mimi Grant of Tallahassee. Alyssa is a graduate of FSU with a bachelor's degree in accounting, and Randy is a graduate of Embry Riddle University with a bachelor's degree in Aeronautics. The couple is planning a wedding in Florence, Italy in March 2015.

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