



Traditional Jewish Papercuts: An Inner World of Art and Symbol

Joseph Shadur, Yehudit Shadur

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The making of devotional papercuts is a relatively little-known aspect of traditional Jewish folk art and culture. While many ritual objects treasured today as "Judaica" were crafted from expensive materials, often by gentile artisans executing paid commissions, even the poorest Jew could afford paper, pencil, and penknife with which to make a papercut as a deeply-felt, personal expression of faith. Many of these works are gems of unaffected artistic creation. More than any other form of Jewish art, the surviving old Jewish papercuts evoke the spirit and lore of the East-European shtetl and the North African mellah. By the mid-20th century, however, the venerable Jewish papercutting tradition had become another lost folk art. This lavishly illustrated, full-color volume features many Jewish papercuts from Eastern and Central Europe reproduced here for the first time. These, and such works from Middle Eastern, North African, and North American Jewish communities incorporate an unparalleled wealth of Jewish symbols. Joseph and Yehudit Shadur's discussions of these configurations constitute a basic presentation of Jewish iconography of the last three centuries. The culmination of over twenty-five years of their searches and research on four continents, Traditional Jewish Papercuts is the definitive work on the subject. The Shadurs' initial, profusely-illustrated, Jewish Papercuts: A History and Guide, published in 1994, won the annual National Jewish Book Council Award for the outstanding book in the visual arts. Their present work, Traditional Jewish Papercuts: An Inner World of Art and Symbol, offers readers much new material, insights, and interpretations, with detailed chapters on sources, typologies, and techniques. A special chapter deals with modern imitations and fraudulent works aimed at the collectors' market. An expanded, selective bibliography and an index are appended.



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