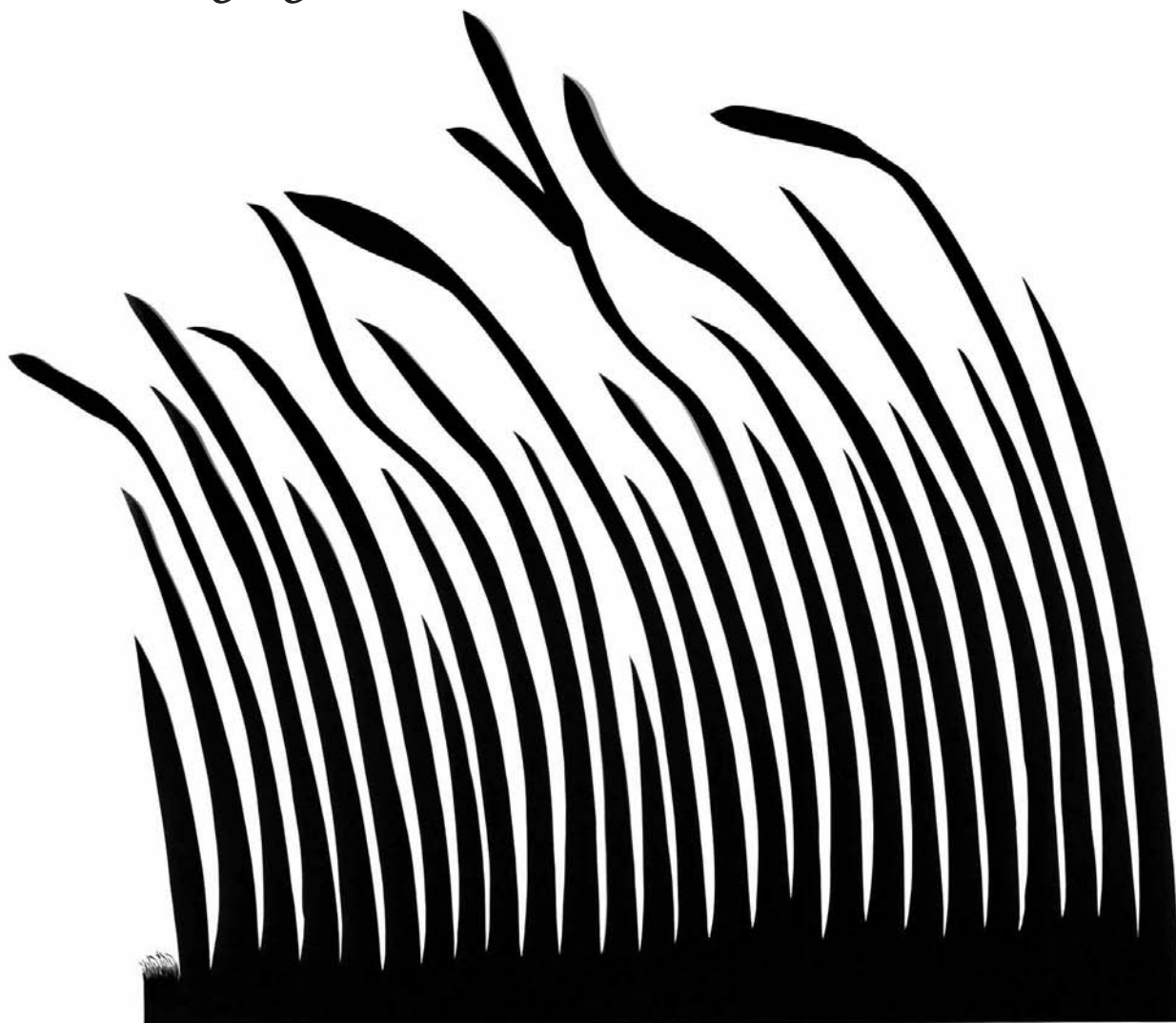


WORKSHOP

*“Want to learn  
paper cutting in  
fifteen minutes?”*



*1 “We’ll start with paper cutting itself.” 2 The warm-up.  
3 In a quarter of an hour! 4 Cutting grass can be difficult or easy.  
5 Trees are also ‘fun’ to cut out.  
6 You’re now ready for a landscape.*

PAPER CUTTING / 1

*“We’ll start  
with paper cutting  
itself”*



*1/3 Paper Cutting? Easy as can be!  
1/4 You don't think you're cut out for it?  
1/4 Discover silhouettes.  
1/4 Why in fifteen minutes?  
1/5 Are you allowed to draw first?  
1/5 Or fold it in half?*

## *Paper cutting? Easy as can be!*

*You don't need complicated machinery for paper cutting. A pair of scissors and a piece of paper is all you need.*

*Paper cutting evokes instant admiration.*

*If people see a cut-out of a dog, they think: how did you manage to create a dog out of a piece of paper? Paper cutting looks really complicated.*

*If you do this workshop, you'll learn that it's not so hard at all. But what do we care what other people think? We're just going to create things.*

*And we're going to do it in good company.*

*Many artists have made cut-outs. Matisse (1869-1945) for example, who said: "When paper cutting, you don't draw a line – instead you immediately have a clear form." And that's exactly the advantage of paper cutting. On top of it, paper cutting is a lot of fun. You can make cut-outs on your own. Or with a few friends.*

*I hope you enjoy this workshop!*

*Gerlof Smit.*

## You don't think you're cut out for it?

*But wait... this workshop will teach you how to create beautiful things in no time. With an ordinary pair of scissors and a piece of paper. You're not all that experienced at it yet, that's all. If you succeed (and you will!), you'll enjoy it more and more as you go along. And the more you do it, the better you'll get at it. Experience comes automatically by repetition. "But I can't draw!" It's often the case that if you can't draw, you can make cut-outs. You're not busy working with lines but with forms. Flowers, grass and trees are simple forms. Essentially, they're never wrong. Try it.*

## Discover silhouettes.

*If you look at a tree in the summer, you'll see a brown trunk and above it lots of leaves in all shades of green – forms and shadows everywhere. If you look through your eyelashes a little, or if dusk is about to fall, you'll notice colors beginning to fade, and all you're left with is the contour, the silhouette. That's what you use when paper cutting. If you make a lot of cut-outs, you'll find yourself increasingly aware of the contours of trees, flowers, cows and anything else you see. And before you know it, your world will be full of subject matter for paper cutting.*



## Why in fifteen minutes?

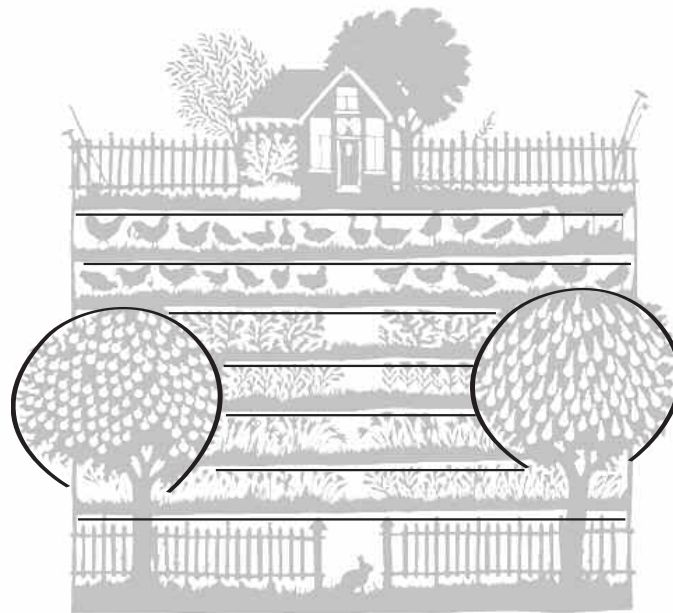
*I once gave a paper-cutting demonstration. People were allowed to choose between three things: Have their necks massaged. Have their name written in Chinese. Or have me teach them paper cutting. People did like my cut-outs, but they couldn't do it themselves, so that was that. I was intent on having a fun afternoon though, so I joined the line for the massage and spoke to the group of people waiting: "You're going to be in line for a while anyway, don't you want to learn paper cutting in fifteen minutes?" It was quiet for a second, then laughter broke out. "Me? I can't even draw, let alone make cut-outs" "But that's exactly what I intend to show you – that you can do it. In fifteen minutes to boot." And after a quarter of an hour, they were sitting around my table holding something in their hands that they never thought they were capable of producing. That could be you as well.*

## *Am I allowed to draw first?*

*There are no cut-out cops to forbid you from doing that. You want to make something beautiful, all for yourself, so just do what you want. If I were you, I would draw as little as possible beforehand. You're creating, by cutting away, by using the forms that come most naturally to you. Even with very delicate paper cutting, there's little point drawing all the leaves first. A line here and there is useful. For the "Earth" cut-out, I first set down a few horizontal lines on the back. And the very basic forms of the trees.*

## *And folding in half?*

*Of course you can fold in half. Why not? I never do it myself. Apparently it's not something I need to do. It's not always possible with extremely detailed cut-outs. Just do what you want to do.*



*Lines for the "Earth" cut-out.*



PAPER CUTTING / 2

# *The warm-up!*



*2/2 You don't have a nice, small pair of scissors?*

*2/3 Nor any nice paper handy?*

*2/3 Practicing with and without paper.*

*2/4 Your scissors.*

*2/5 Flip or turn.*

*2/6 Ways of practicing.*



**You don't have a nice, small pair of scissors? That's not important right now. You can make lovely cut-outs with a small pair of scissors.**  
**With a large pair of scissors, you cut out large shapes. Just start with the scissors in your kitchen drawer.**



## *No nice paper handy?*

*Take a piece of printing paper, colored paper or tear a piece of paper out of a magazine. A piece of thin and sturdy paper. If you have an A4-sized piece of paper, then you can tear it down the middle. That will give you an A5-sized piece, which is a handy size for paper cutting.*

## *Practicing with and without paper.*

*Before doing any cutting, we need to warm up first. Luckily you already know how to cut paper. You learned that as a child. That's why it's useful to first get used to it again.*

*People often hold paper in such a way that it immediately creases. Try to hold the paper as delicately as possible. Or first watch Film 1.*

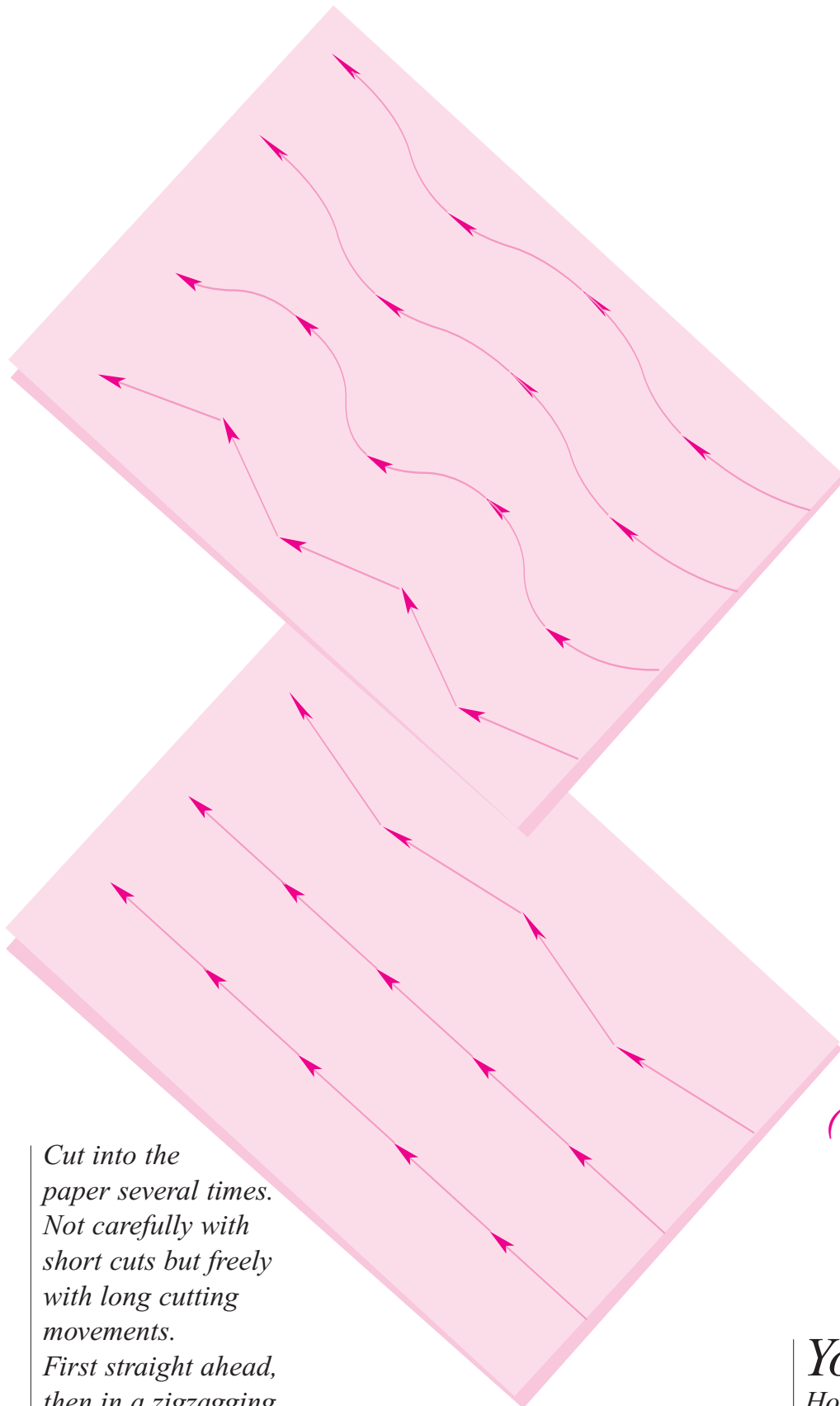
***Practice without paper.*** Hold the scissors comfortably and freely with your "cutting hand". First make a few cutting movements in space (without paper).

***Steer with the paper.*** Then take the paper in your other hand, with the thumb on top and all the other fingers underneath. Now cut through the paper several times. Not carefully with short cuts, but freely with long movements. You actually continue to cut straight with the scissors but steer the paper in the direction you want to go. So it's not the scissors that do the steering but the paper.

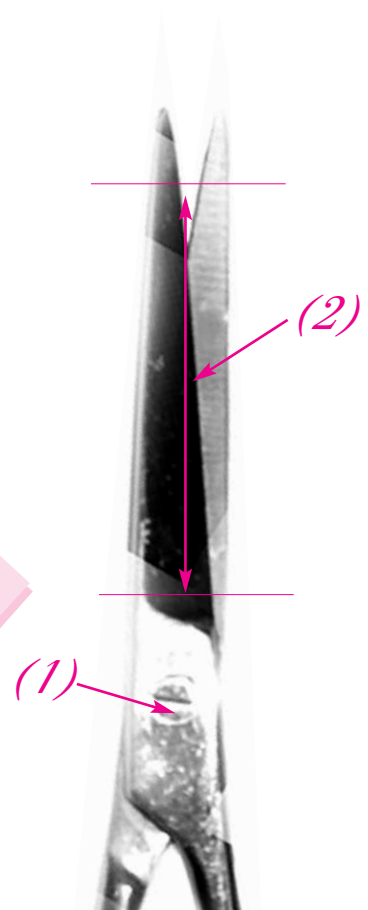


*Film 1.  
De warm-up.*





*Cut into the paper several times. Not carefully with short cuts but freely with long cutting movements. First straight ahead, then in a zigzagging motion, and then in an undulating motion.*



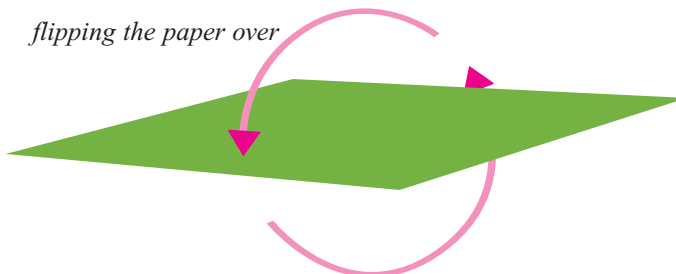
## *Your scissors*

*Hold the scissors so that you can see the screw (1). And funnily enough, you'll never use the scissor points. You cut with (2). The scissors never completely close.*

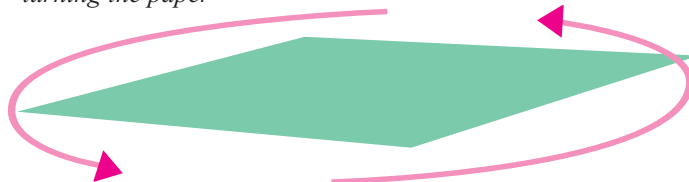
## Flip or turn?

*I always cut away from myself, flip the paper over and then cut back towards myself again. That seems pretty complicated in the beginning. It's how I taught myself to do it. Flipping the paper over keeps it nicer. I also flip it over because many of the cut-outs I make are so complicated that I can't keep turning the paper. I don't always flip over the whole cut-out but often just a piece of it. Just a branch, for example. You can also turn the paper instead of flipping it over. Find out for yourself what works best for you. Time for another film?*

*flipping the paper over*



*turning the paper*



Film 2.  
Flip or turn.

## *Practicing the shapes.*

*The flower we are going to make consists of one stem, two leaves and the shape of the flower itself. You can see how it works in the film.*

**The stem.** *It can be completely straight, of course, but you can also create a stem that twists a little.*

*First cut away from yourself, until you think: that's how long this stem is going to be. Then flip the paper over, and that's when you decide how thick the stem is going to be. Then cut your way back with a few fluid cutting movements.*

**A leaf.** *You cut the left side of the leaf.*

*You flip the paper over and finish the other side of the leaf.*

**The flower.** *There are many kinds of flowers.*

*As the film demonstrates, first cut upward. Flip the paper over or turn it and cut your way back. And now do the flower all in one go.*

*In fifteen minutes!*



*Film 3  
Practicing the shapes.*



## P A P E R C U T T I N G / 3

*In a quarter of an hour!*

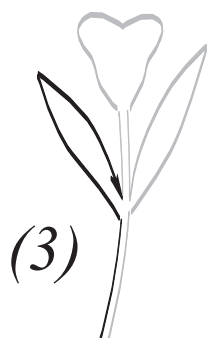
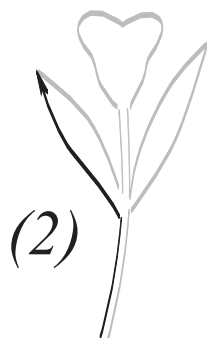
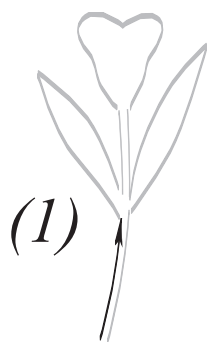
3/2 The fifteen minutes start now.

3/3 Okay, that worked out.

*Now you can start cutting.*

3/4 *There are many beautiful kinds of flowers.*





## The fifteen minutes start now.

We're going to cut out the entire flower. Take half a piece of A4-sized paper and cut out a nice big flower. Use the entire piece of paper.

Want to watch the film first?

(1) Start with the left side of the stem until you think: I want to put a leaf here on the left.

(2) The leaf will stick out a bit towards the left. Don't steer your scissors in that direction, instead turn the paper a bit to the right. And then keep cutting until you think: that's how long the leaf is going to be.

(3) Then flip the paper over and cut out the leaf until you reach the stem.

(4) Now flip the paper over again and finish the stem to the point where you think you'll make the shape of the flower.

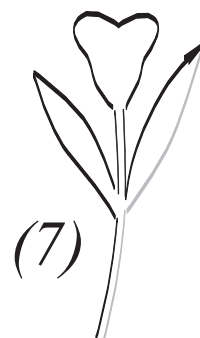
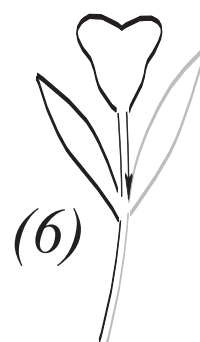
(5) Consider for a moment what kind of flower you're going to cut out. What does it look like? And keep in mind that half of the flower is on the left side of the stem. So, the center of the flower is exactly above the stem. By turning the paper, you can completely finish the flower.

(6) If the shape of the flower is finished, that means you've returned to the stem, and now you can decide how thick the stem is going to be. Keep cutting until you reach the second leaf.

(7) Now flip the paper over and cut the left side of the leaf, until you think: that's how long I want it to be.

(8) Then flip the paper over again and keep cutting the leaf until you reach the stem.

(9) If you work towards finishing the stem now, the flower will come loose. Finished, in less than fifteen minutes!



Film 4.  
Fifteen minutes.



## So, that worked out well! Now you can start cutting.

*It might not be as beautiful as you intended, but you have created something now, which you didn't initially think you were capable of. Here are a few examples. I cut out all of these with a large pair of scissors from pieces of paper that happened to be lying around. If you cut out a few more flowers, you can make a placemat out of them by laying the flower cut-out into a 'laminating pouch' (A3-sized) and putting it through a laminating machine.*



## *There many different kinds of beautiful flowers.*

*I have made cut-outs with many people at workshops. None of them had ever done paper cutting before, and below is the result of half an hour of paper cutting with white paper. I put the cut-outs on a black sheet of paper. They were pretty satisfied with what was lying on the table. And rightly so. I'd therefore like to say thanks to Afke, Agnes, Anneke, Bert, Corrie, Els, Greta, Jantsje, Meinie, Marjan, Piety, Rie, Ria, Rikkie, Thea, Trudy, Wybren and Wytse, as well as many, many others.*





PAPER CUTTING / 4

*Cutting grass  
can be difficult  
or easy.*

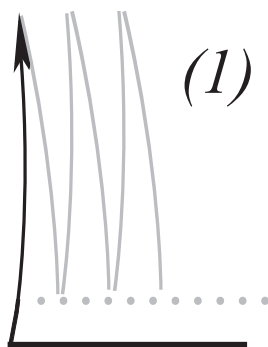


4/2 Should we give grass a try now?  
4/3 Cutting grass, blade by blade.  
4/4 There many ways of cutting grass.  
4/5 There many ways of cutting grass.

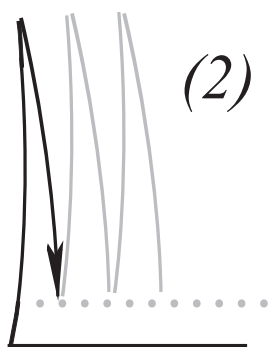
## *Should we give grass a try now?*

*Grass is always beautiful. In terms of color, there's a huge difference between lush green grass and dried-out yellow grass. A cow probably likes lush green grass the best. But when paper cutting, you're not focusing on the color of the grass but on its form. Grass with a lot of flowers among it is beautiful, but even the unsightly, untidy clumps of grass that grow on the roadside in deserts are a lot of fun to cut. Some grasses are more difficult than others. Have a look in the following pages. Start with easy grass. In the beginning, that's hard enough. You can even mow grass. I once cut out a farmer on a donkey for a book. To make it clear that it was a farmer, I first cut out the grass and then mowed it again with my scissors afterwards. That mown grass resulted in such a spectacular image that I subsequently used the technique in many other cut-outs. And I have to honestly confess that it's a very strange sensation to mow really beautiful grass that you've just cut out, flowers and all. A tad destructive, but that's okay.*

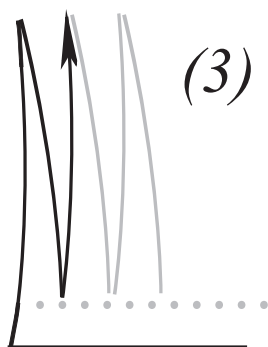




(1)



(2)



(3)

## Cutting grass, blade by blade.

*When cutting the flower, we started at the bottom left. That's usually where we start when cutting out a tree too. Essentially in the same direction as we would write. But when making a silhouette of a head, you start on the right, at the neck, then cut upwards to the chin, the lips and the nose, until you come full circle and reach the neck on the left again. Time for a film!*

*(1) So, when cutting out grass, start on the left. Cut the left side of the blade of grass until you think: that's how long I want it to be.*

*(Of course if you think it makes more sense to start on the right, that's fine too.)*

*(2) Then you flip over the paper until the corner points towards you. Then you finish the blade of grass until you think: that's how high the ground should be.*

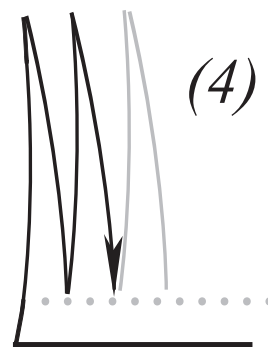
*(3) You flip over the paper again, and you cut out the left half of the next blade. And you continue doing this. (4, 5 and 6). Now you might think: "There's probably an easier way of doing this. I'll hold the paper in the same position and cut out the space between the blades." That's okay too, but you won't get as nice a result.*

*But cutting grass like this is getting tedious.*

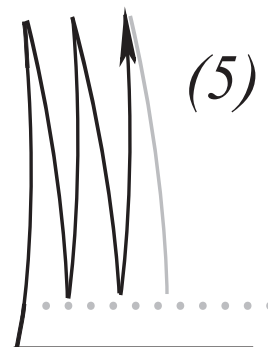
*Sometimes there's a stem with a tuft in between the grass, or a bud or a flower. That takes more time, but it's much more attractive. You already know how to do that because it's the same technique as when you cut out a single flower. If the wind is blowing hard, the blades of grass will all point in the same direction.*

*The grass becomes more animated if it grows in the other direction once in a while. That's a bit tricky, but it can be done. If the blades grow to the left, you can cut out each subsequent blade more upright. If you want to go to the left again, make a few small blades of grass until you have the space to let them "hang" towards the left.*

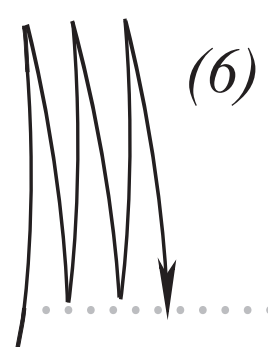
*See pages 4/5 for examples.*



(4)



(5)



(6)



Film 5.  
Cutting grass!





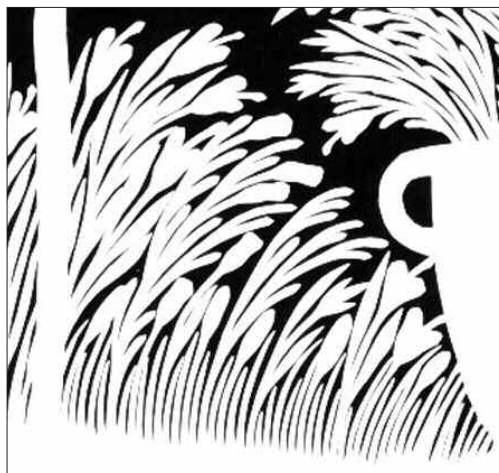
*cheerful grass*



*grass with flowers among it*



*grass in the desert*



*grass cut out of white paper*



*grass with flowers among it*



*grass, half mown*



A B C A B C A B C A B C

(5) A: grass leaning more and more to the right, B: a few small blades of grass, C: and grass hanging towards the left again

PAPER CUTTING / 5

*Trees are  
also “fun”  
to cut out.*



*5/2 The tree: does it exist?*

*5/3 Various trees.*

*5/4 Yet more trees.*

## *The tree: does it exist?*

*If someone says he's going to cut out a tree, then it's obvious to you it's not going to be a frog, but not much else has been determined yet. There are trees with or without leaves, trees with a crown, trees "cut to shape". There are trees that stand still, trees that "sway". But there are also palm trees, trees with a thick or a thin trunk. Large, monumental trees and small trees that have just been planted. Let the trees that you see inspire you. The landscape is full of them. Look closely at a tree you see, with your eyelids pressed slightly closed, then you'll see its contour better. Or make a tree that's purely something out of your imagination. I can explain how I cut out a tree. Start at the bottom left (or right), cut out the crown or branches. Continue until you reach the bottom right (or left). If you don't feel completely confident, draw a few lines on the back where the trunk, the crown or perhaps branches will be. The following pages contain a few examples of "my" trees. Simply go ahead and make your own tree. Have fun.*







*A tree with apples (I cut out the apples with a scalpel) and a tree with a crown.*



*A tree with leaves (and birds) and three very different palm trees*





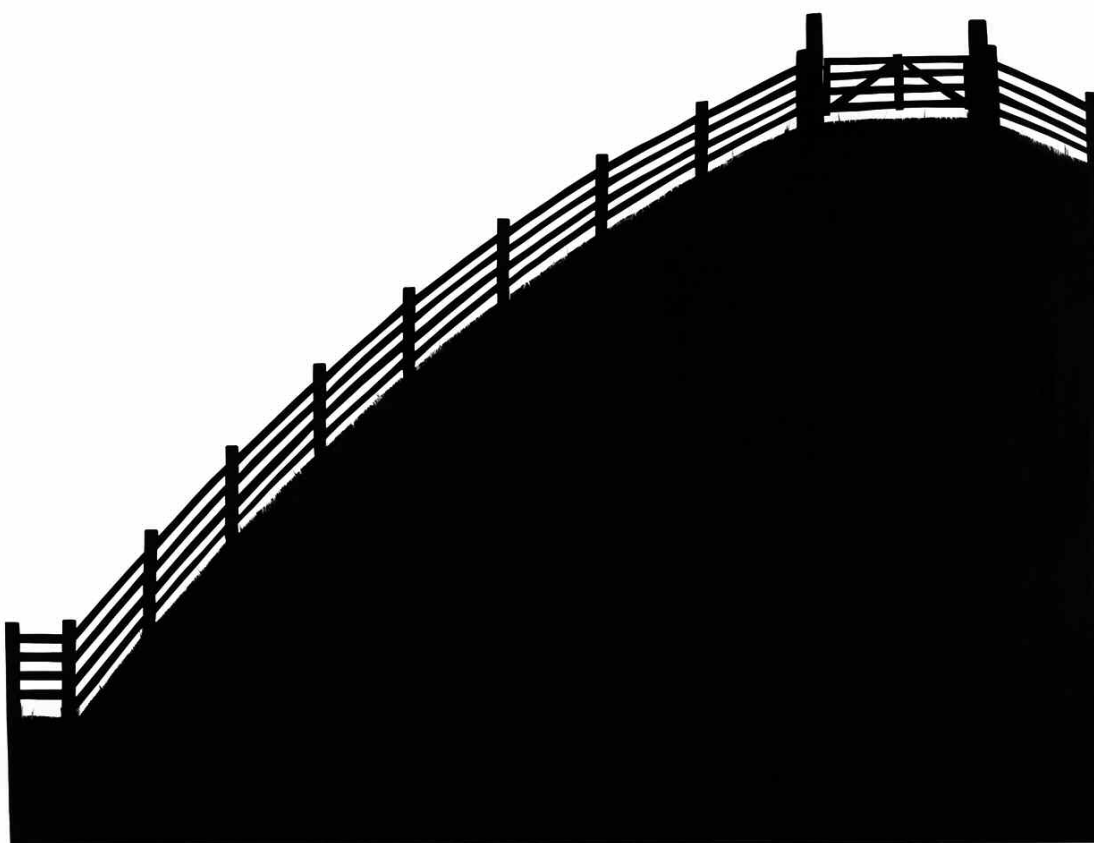
*A tree (actually it's more of a trimmed hedge) and half of a thick tree (and a small willow tree)*



*A young tree (with branches and leaves) and an imaginary tree  
(once again, the holes were made with a scalpel)*

PAPER CUTTING / 6

*You are now ready to do  
a landscape.*



6/2 Your own landscape.

6/2 Proportion and perspective.

6/3 Various landscapes.

6/4 Various landscapes.

6/5 Various landscapes.

6/6 What now?



## *Your own landscape.*

*You've already cut out flowers. And grass and trees too. If you put them all together in a cut-out, you have a landscape. The following pages contain some examples of my landscapes. They're not meant to suggest that you have to do it that particular way, but more to illustrate that the word "landscape" can be quite freely interpreted. Have a look at the works by other cut-out artists. There are many beautiful landscapes out there. The best inspiration for cutting out a landscape is of course a landscape itself. Not everything that you see outdoors is interesting material for paper cutting. Some things are beautiful because of their color. That's more a painter's territory. A cut-out artist looks for subject matter with a beautiful and interesting contour. If you want a precise reproduction of a landscape, you're best off using a photo. Choose subject matter that appeals to you and position it in the cut-out in a place that you like best. Anything that helps you to achieve this is permitted.*

## *Proportion and perspective.*

*One of the nice things about paper cutting is that you don't have to worry too much about perspective. Proportion either, for that matter. A house is easily five or six meters high. Geese and chickens are about 30 centimeters. In the "Earth" cut-out opposite, the geese and chickens are one-third of the house's height. Still, no one finds that strange. If you were to come across geese that size in real life, you'd definitely give them a wide berth.*

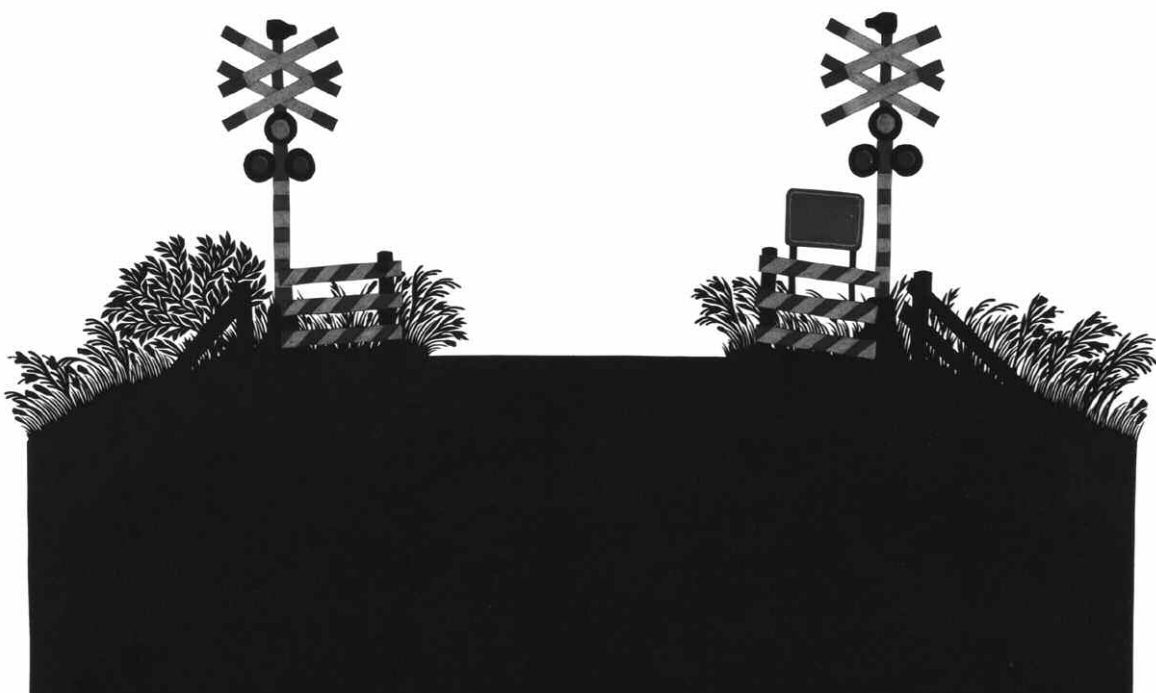




*A few cows in a windy landscape.*



*If I were you, I wouldn't immediately start with a horse.  
But they do look beautiful in a landscape.*



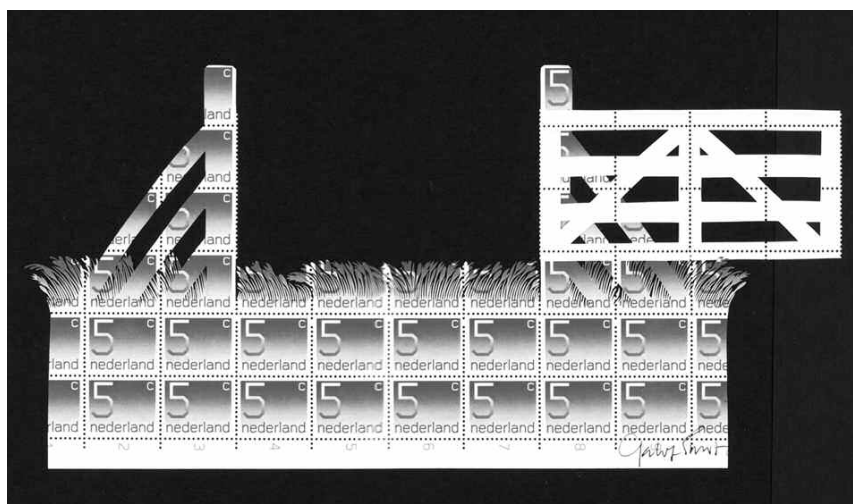
*A Ditch railroad crossing. A nice example of an interesting contour.*



*There aren't many trees in Arizona,  
but these large cactuses result in fabulous landscapes.*



*If you think away your garden tools, you're left with a landscape.*



*A landscape made from a sheet of stamps. The gate is open.*





*A Californian landscape with a beautiful contour.*



*This cut-out is a landscape exactly one meter wide.*



*Here's another landscape with a beautiful contour.  
I saw this in the High Sierras in Colorado.*

## What now?

*Did you enjoy doing this? There's more: loads of ideas that you can do and create with paper cutting. If you're interested, go to my download page on my website: [www.gerlofsmit.com](http://www.gerlofsmit.com). Enter your e-mail address and you'll automatically have everything sent to you for free. Also good to know: I will only use your e-mail address to keep you up to date and do nothing else with it.*

*Comments or criticism? Go to my guest book on my website or e-mail me at: [gerlof@gerlofsmit.com](mailto:gerlof@gerlofsmit.com). In developing the workshop, I was lucky to receive a lot of help from a number of people. My thanks goes out to them: (in alphabetical order) Doet Boersma, Peter Borsboom, Maruscha and Jaap Gaasenbeek, Martijn, Thea and Stijn Smit, Suzanne Vastenburg and Herman Zeilstra.*

*This workshop is completely free for you. I also give this workshop with several people. That, of course, is not free. I don't know where you live, but I often travel to the States during the summer for several weeks. You never know. You can contact me at: [gerlof@gerlofsmit.com](mailto:gerlof@gerlofsmit.com).*

*© Gerlof Smit! You can receive the workshop for free and even print it out (only for private use). As many times as you want. If you plan to use it for other purposes, though, please contact me first.*

Gerlof.

