

# Meditation in black and white

by Alexandra Rozkosny (Swiss Mountain Aid)

*In no time at all, filigree works of art are created from paper in her hands. Jolanda Brändle discovered her vocation in passing. Today, she is one of the most successful paper cutting artists in eastern Switzerland.*



(All pictures © Schweizer Berghilfe, Yannick Andrea)

Looking over Jolanda Brändle's shoulder, you can't help but be amazed. With a simple, small pair of scissors she is able to cut hair-thin structures out of paper. And this at a breath taking speed. The smallest, sharpest angles demand special patience: "you mustn't tear, otherwise fine paper fibre tips become visible. I ease the paper gently between the blades," she explains.

Handling the scissors for hours, always slightly bent over? That sounds exhausting and a bit straining. But Jolanda disagrees: "For me, this is meditative work," she says, "it fills me with energy. I like it best while watching a film. But it mustn't be too dramatic, a mediocre comedy is ideal," she adds with a chuckle. "I prefer to cut after 8 pm, when it's quiet in the house. I can work for up to four hours at a stretch without any problems." For this purpose, the special paper is

## Support

The Brändle farming family in Mosnang decided to put more emphasis on Jolanda's paper cutting art. To do so, she needed a larger salesroom. "Swiss Mountain Aid" supported her in the purchase.

## Swiss Mountain Aid

The Swiss Mountain Aid Foundation has been helping people in the Swiss mountains since 1943. We support projects that create jobs and added value in the mountain region. In this way, we counteract emigration and ensure that the mountain regions remain vibrant in the future. Swiss Mountain Aid is financed exclusively by donations. ([info@berghilfe.ch](mailto:info@berghilfe.ch), [www.berghilfe.ch](http://www.berghilfe.ch))



coated white on one side. If you always looked at black, your eyes would tire too quickly, she explains.

## Recuperation from everyday life

And that is how her paper cutting career began 22 years ago: in search of some relaxation from the strenuous daily routine as a farmer's wife and mother of nine children, she discovered paper cutting by chance. Very steady hands are needed, a lot of patience and the gift of perceiving the world as a silhouette. "At the beginning I said to myself: anything but cows!" she recalls with a laugh. And this despite the fact that she runs a dairy farm together with her husband. "But I don't want to just make patterns, it has to have something living in it," she adds.

Her silhouettes sometimes resemble pictures in wimmelbooks, sometimes ornaments. Alongside the traditional motifs of country life, there are always small, surprising details. Sometimes



it is a billy goat seemingly dancing on its hind hooves, sometimes a mountain biker struggling up-hill behind a farm house.

### Art for sale

Soon she was past the beginner stage and selling her first works. In 2010, she opened her first, small shop. In addition to selling original works, she began to print fabrics, mugs, T-shirts and much more with her motifs. Her work quickly caught the attention of the organisers of *Olma*, Switzerland's largest agricultural fair. In 2012, Jolanda was commissioned to design the poster for the fair. From then on, sales hit the roof. Very soon the shop was far too small.

About four years ago, one of their landlords wanted to have some of the farm land back and therefore, the Brändle's had to reduce their livestock. That's when they decided to expand the "Schererei" [wordgame: Schererei actually means "hassle" but is also a word deducted from "Schiere", meaning scissors] and make it the family's second mainstay. However, they needed a new place to do this, because the existing one had become far too small. The Brändle's found what they were looking for right in the centre of the village: the venerable "Bären" inn was up for sale. With the support of Swiss Mountain Aid and the active help of some of their children, the couple was able to convert the house into a shop and a home. Since September 2020, the new shop has been open on four days instead of two. "The best thing is that I can now work in the shop, which was not possible before because of the limited space," she says.



But anyone who thinks that the lively 50-year-old is working to capacity with her shop, her family and the farm is mistaken. She regularly goes jogging – or covers kilometres on her racing bike. And so, she often gets up early in the morning, does her rounds, and then sits down to create a paper cutting. First the physical activity and then the cutting: "That's the most beautiful thing." While speaking, she has already conjured up the next little goat from the paper.

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