

Enjoy creating a silhouette from household objects or shadows found in nature and around your house! Or simply create some cut-out miniature silhouette portraits (from real or imagined people!) Take inspiration and creative ideas from some of the dynamic silhouettes in the Holburne Museum's collection.



Portrait silhouette:
Unknown Lady
taking tea,
Charles Christian
Rosenberg,
after c.1795,
The Holburne
Museum Collection



Silhouette: Captain Francis Holburne, William Hamlet, c.1810,
The Holburne Museum Collection



Here's an example of a silhouette someone made from drawing around kitchen utensils!



It's all about the outline!

A silhouette is a solid shape of single colour, often black, with defined edges showing the outline of the subject. The image is dependent on the outline which is why even the smallest detail is so important.

A silhouette usually sits on a white coloured background and can be created in any media.

Cut out or painted?

Silhouettes or 'shades' as they were known in the 18th century, were paper-cut portraits, generally the profile of a person, cut from black card. These shades offered a cheap but effective alternative to the more pricey portrait miniatures. Skilled specialist artists could cut a high-quality bust portrait in a matter of minutes, working purely by eye!

Other silhouettes in the Holburne collection show how profiles were painted on glass. The portrait had to be painted on the back of the glass for viewing from the front. The artist had to work in reverse, applying the details first. Once finished and backed with paper or silk, the opaque image casts its own shadow, giving a three-dimensional effect as though alive.

ACTIVITY 1

1

You need:-

- Found objects, a mixture of 3D and flat
- A pen or pencil
- Any papers you have
- Dark colours work best but you can use any!
- Scissors
- Glue
- Paint or colouring pens

2

Silhouette time:-

- Place the objects on the top of plain paper. You can use dark paper if you wish but anything will work.
- If your paper is dark, use a light coloured pen or pencil to draw around your object.
- Start to build up an image on the paper. Try overlapping the objects to see what patterns start to emerge.
- Once you are happy with your drawing, colour it in (if using light paper) OR cut the shape out (if using dark paper).
- Glue your cutout to a different coloured background to enhance your silhouette.

3

Find a new home for your new silhouette inspired masterpiece!



Isabella Lucas, 'Bath Character', Augustin Edouart c.1827, The Holburne Museum Collection

Master Snipper

Augustin Edouart (1789-1861) was a French artist who had a remarkable talent for freehand paper cutting!

He came to work in fashionable Bath in 1825 and went on to produce more than 100,000 portraits in Britain and America. His papercuts were of famous actors, local worthies and a series of 'Bath Characters'.



Ann Arter, 'Bath Character', Augustin Edouart, c.1827 The Holburne Museum Collection



Gentleman entering an Assembly Room, Augustin Edouart, c.1829 The Holburne Museum Collection

1

You need:-

- To find shadows outdoors or create your own inside with a lamp or torch (you can use the torch on your phone)
- Pens, pencils or paint
- Any papers. Light colours work best but you can use any you have!
- Be creative, you can even use newspaper if you like!

2

Silhouette time:-

- Find a shadow outside or create your own with a lamp or torch.
- Place a light piece of paper down under or near your object so that a shadow falls across it.
- Using a pen or pencil, follow the outline of the shadow and draw it on to the paper.
- Fill the drawing in with a dark coloured pen, pencil or paint. You have created a shadow SILHOUETTE!
- If you have a printer you can print a frame to surround your image. You can also use any card, paper, foil or even fabric!

3

Display your new silhouette creation!



There's plenty of shadows to discover outside, once you start looking!



