

Devola Lady Gets National Recognition

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NO COMPETITORS Mrs. Ferdinand Luther of Devola will exhibit some of her pictures which she makes with tiny scissors and black paper at

the West Virginia Institute of Technology at Montgomery on July 14. This form of art is so rare that it is believed Mrs. Luther is the only person who is able to produce such deli-

cate, lacy pictures in such a medium. Note the tiny scissors in her hand with which her cuttings are made.

(Photo by Helen M. White).

By HELEN M. WHITE
Of The News Staff

Mrs. Ferdinand Luther of Devola is receiving national recognition in art circles for the exquisite and delicate pictures which she creates with tiny scissors.

Recently, Mrs. Luther was invited to participate in a cultural program for underprivileged children, ages 14 to 17, to be held at the West Virginia Institute of Technology at Montgomery, under the direction of Mrs. Evelyn Crandall.

The talented artist from Devola will exhibit some 20 pieces of her work. She will also give a lecture and a demonstration of her unique form of art on the evening of July 14.

Mrs. Luther's work has to be seen to be believed and even then, one is reminded of the story of the farmer who, on seeing a giraffe for the first time, shook his head and declared, "I still don't believe it."

Basically, her work is classed as silhouettes. However, she has refined this art to such a degree of lacy intricacy and beauty that there is no name for the resulting pictures and "silhouette - cutting," is a misnomer.

"I start with a piece of fine grained, tough, white paper such as architects use, and color one side of it black," Mrs. Luther explained.

On the white side, she draws a rough sketch of the design. Then, with scissors a scant inch in length, the artist cuts away all but the hair - fine lines and the emphasizing shadows that will form the picture.

A Tangled Mass

When the actual cutting is completed, the work looks more like a tangled mass of black and white threads than like a work of art.

Now, with small, deft fingers, Mrs. Luther untangles the spiderly, paper strands, careful not to tear or damage any. With a darning needle for a paste brush she attaches the cutting here and there to a sheet of silk, or paper, with the black side up.

The result is breath - taking. Whether it is a flower or tall grass nodding in the breeze, a lovely Madonna and Child, an insect with every miniscule lineament carefully delineated, or an illustration from some fairy tale, the picture is life - like and realistic in every detail.

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Natives of Esthonia, one of the small Baltic States, Mr. and Mrs. Luther and their two sons, Lars and Hulda, now grown to manhood, came to this country in July, 1955, after having been swept forth and back through Europe in the tide of refugees, the tragic by-product of war.

"As far as I have been able to find out," Mrs. Luther said, "I guess I am the only person who has ever perfected the art of cutting pictures to this extent. No one taught me. It is something I developed by myself," she related.

Fascinated by Possibilities

"When I was 13," she continued, "I saw an ordinary, heavy, black paper, cut - out in a shop window and, for some reason, it fascinated me.

"I remember that I went home, got a pair of regular sewing scissors, and immediately tried to cut a picture. As I worked with the scissor and paper that day, I became entranced with the artistic possibilities that could be developed in this medium," Mrs. Luther related.

Although this tiny, slight, woman with her slow smile had studied art and music since she was first enrolled at the age of five in art and music classes in St. Petersburg, (now Moscow) Russia, from that day on, scissors - art became her consuming passion in the field of art.

During the terror - filled war years when her husband was in the army and she and her two small sons fled, hid, and hungered before the advancing enemy, her set of tiny scissors were miraculously never lost, or wrested from her.

Most of her treasured possessions were either left behind in some blind, midnight dash ahead of soldiers, or traded for food, but she managed to cling to her tiny, irreplaceable scissors.

After they arrived in this country, Mrs. Luther worked for several years in the Washington County Public Library in Marjetta, but now with their two sons educated and on their own, Margarethe Luther can devote her full time to her art.

Earlier this spring she was invited to New York to meet and confer with some of the most important art sponsors and critics in the country.



FIRE BIRD — The old legend of the Fire Bird, illustrated in this picture cut from black paper by Mrs. Ferdinand Luther, is one of several that will be on display at Montgomery.

(Photo by Helen M. White)