

# WEEKEND LIFE

BEST ENTERTAINMENT BETS > 2-3C

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## It looks good on paper

The remarkable paper cuts of Danish artist Karen "Bit" Vejle come to the American Swedish Institute in an exhibit of sheer beauty.



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Cutting snowflakes or hearts out of paper is something most people first attempt in grade school. Growing up in Denmark, Karen "Bit" Vejle recalls making paper cuts at Christmas and Easter along with the rest of her classmates. But it wasn't until a trip to Copenhagen as a teenager that Vejle discovered the magic of paper cutting. She saw a man sitting outside cutting something that wasn't a snowflake.

"It was a little piece of art," Vejle said on the phone from her home in Norway about the stranger's creation. "And I was totally astonished by it. I went directly home and grabbed my mother's embroidery scissors, and from that day, I have cut almost every day."

Denmark has a rich tradition of psaligraphy (paper cutting) with the most famous Scandinavian paper cutter being fairytale author Hans Christian Andersen. Over the years, Vejle honed her craft, making more complex cuttings resembling delicate pieces of lace.

"Papercut! The Incredible Psaligraphy of Karen Bit Vejle," an exhibit of 54 of her paper creations, opens Saturday at the American Swedish Institute. Vejle describes walking through the exhibit, where her work is mounted between glass and hung from the ceiling, as entering a "forest of paper cuts." She'll talk about her art and lead tours this weekend.



AMERICAN SWEDISH INSTITUTE

IT LOOKS GOOD ON PAPER, 4C > Now cut that out! Karen "Bit" Vejle, her snips and the amazing results.

### Pop music

# 50

THE BEATLES



The Beatles in Washington, D.C., in February 1964.

### Music > Sound Affects

## Hey, Soul Asylum! What's the rush?

It looks like Soul Asylum fans won't have to wait another six years for a new album. The four-piece band has been recording fresh material with an eye toward a 2014 release. "The band has been recording fresh material with an eye toward a 2014 release."

Ross  
Raihala



There and

port on Feb. 7, 1964, they secured a spot in the nation's consciousness that gave their entire catalog a much-

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## > It looks good on paper

Surprisingly, it wasn't until recently that Vejle, 55, went public with her art. Instead of sharing her gift for transforming a sheet of paper into large-scale dreamscapes, she kept her talent under wraps for decades.

"I thought it was not very cool to be so passionate about paper cutting, so I didn't tell people about it," Vejle said. "Through all these years, I've made a lot of paper cuts. I didn't have any places to keep them, so I put them under my rugs. I never thought they would have any interest for others. So I just kept them safe under my rugs."

Six years ago, her cover was blown. "I was cutting during a weekend when one of my colleagues came to visit," said Vejle, who was a TV producer at the time. "That particular day, I had been cutting, so all over my house were small paper pieces. He came in and said, 'What are you doing?' And then I had to tell him about these paper cuts. He called the Museum of Decorative Arts and said, 'You have to come here and see what Bit has under her rugs.'"

Inspired by everything from classical music compositions to the words of Danish philosopher Soren Kierkegaard, Vejle's pieces range from the whimsical to contemplative. Using scissors, paper, patience and precision, her paper cuttings can take up to a year to complete. Her largest paper cut is more than 16 feet. And if she makes even a tiny mistake while cutting, it can be a disaster. She says she doesn't make many fatal cuts anymore.

Scott Pollock, director of exhibits, collections and programs at the American Swedish Institute, says Vejle's work demonstrates how a tradition rooted in a particular culture can be "repurposed and made personal yet widely accessible."

"As a psaligraphy artist raised in Denmark, it would be easy to pigeonhole Karen's work into something that only builds on Andersen's," Pollock said. "However, her work speaks to stories that we all relate to, utilizes material from all parts of the globe and engages a sense of curiosity and discovery that's universally a part of us all. It's neither 'old' work nor is it entirely 'new.' For these reasons, Karen is one of the most largely recognized paper-cut artists in the world today."

Her work is in high demand, too. Besides showing her paper cuts around the globe, including two shows later this year in China, she has been commissioned to do work for French fashion house Hermes and a few luxury hotels. Vejle believes one of the reasons her work, and paper cutting in general, is so valued is because people realize the level of skill required to make such complex pieces.

"We have all tried to make a little snowflake, and we all know it is quite difficult," Vejle said. "So when people come in and look at these very big paper cuts, they immediately know this has taken a long, long time. I think that fascination is the key point why it has taken off like this."

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PHOTOS COURTESY KAREN BIT VEJLE



Using scissors, paper, patience and precision, Vejle's paper cuttings can take up to a year to complete.

**What:** "Papercut! The Incredible Psaligraphy of Karen Bit Vejle"

**When:** Opens Saturday; through May 25

**Where:** American Swedish Institute, 2600 Park Ave., Mpls.

**Cost:** \$9 adults, \$7 ages 62 and older, \$5 ages 6-18, free for ages 5 and younger

**Artist appearances:** Vejle will discuss the exhibit at an opening reception from 5 to 8:30 p.m. Friday. She will lead tours of the exhibit at 10 and 11:15 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. Saturday.

**Information:** 612-871-4907 or [asimn.org](http://asimn.org)

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## > The Beatles

first, with the stereo versions a mere afterthought. There are notable differences in some of the songs, and many serious Beatles fans deem the mono albums to be the closest reproduction of the Beatles' original intent for how their music should sound.

### WHAT'S DIFFERENT ABOUT 'THE U.S. ALBUMS'?

In England, the Beatles originally released their music via 14-track albums and as singles, many of which were not repeated on the full-length records. For a variety of reasons, from the way royalty payments were calculated to the desire to wring the most cash out of what was thought to be a passing fad, the Beatles' U.S. label, Capitol Records, chose to create its own versions of those records, cutting them back to 11 or 12 songs and adding singles and other oddities along the way.

In the U.S., young Beatles fans grew up spinning titles like "The Beatles' Second Album," "Something New" and "Beatles '65" that were created Frankenstein-style from numerous sources specifically for the American market. The tinkering ceased with 1967's "Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band," and the Beatles' final albums arrived with the same track lists and cover art here and abroad.

"The U.S. Albums" collects 11 titles unique to the United States, from

the early Capitol albums went out of print and — in the band's mind, anyway — out of mind.

But millions of people grew up listening to the U.S. albums, and many later passed them on to their own kids, so there was always a demand for them on CD. The Beatles finally found out just how large that market was when they tested the waters with "The Capitol Albums, Volume 1," a 2004 box set that offered four of the early U.S. albums on CD. It quickly went gold, as did 2006's "Volume 2," despite the sets' flimsy, garish packaging.

So the arrival of "The U.S. Albums" isn't too surprising, especially given all the free publicity it's going to get this year. Hardcore fans will devour the many slight variations in song mixes and versions that can be found in the box, although the differences are probably too subtle for most listeners.

Boomers are just as likely to enjoy finally owning titles like 1966's infamous "Yesterday and Today" on CD for the first time. The original album art is one of the most familiar, if jarring, images of the group that exists and shows the grinning Beatles surrounded by slabs of raw meat and



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## > Ross Raihala

left for Saturday's gig with Caroline Smith, Heiruspeks and the Cactus Blossoms joining Howler.

First Avenue has another all-local show planned Thursday. It's the venue's annual Best New Bands night and includes Allan Kingdom, BBGun, Black Diet, Frankie Tear-drop, Fury Things, GRRRL PRY and Southwire. The \$7 tickets are a steal.

Another group of homegrown musicians will play Friday at a benefit for the victims of the New Year's Day fire on Cedar Avenue in Minneapolis.

The concert will be held at the nearby Cedar Cultural Center, with proceeds benefiting the affected families. The fire killed three residents of the apartments above 516 Cedar Ave. S., displaced the survivors and destroyed the Otanga Grocery Store.