Scherenschnitte/Silhouettes
Lesson Plan
A resource developed through the *Longfellow and the Forging of American Identity* program

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Suggested Grade Level: High school (includes variations for other grade levels)
Subject Area: Art

Maine Learning Results targeted:
 Visual and Performing Arts, secondary level:
 Creative Expression: A2, A8
 Cultural Heritage: B5
 Criticism and Aesthetics: C2

Time Required: 2-3 days

Materials and Resources Required:
- Sharp scissors
- Thin black paper
- Copier weight paper, plus heavier white paper such as 80 lb. white drawing stock
- Glue
- Pencils may be used for one variation; matt or Exacto knives may be used with older students.

Preparation Required/Preliminary Discussion:
Recommended: Do this lesson some time after students have studied proportions and features of the head and practiced drawing portraits from observation.

Discussion should include introduction of the terms silhouette and scherenschnitte:

***Silhouette*:** an art form originated in 18th century Europe, cutting flat profile portraits of sitters from paper, and named for an unpopular French royalist, Etienne de Silhouette. M. Auguste Edouart was one of the best-known silhouette cutters from the time when the practice was most popular, the early 1800s. He cut more than 100,000 silhouettes of famous people, but lost most of them in a shipwreck in 1859.
 http://www.silhouette-man.com/History/history.html

Scherenschnitte, which translates as "scissors-cutting," is a centuries-old folk art form from Germany. It renders ornamental designs from nature, such as birds and plants. The challenge is to draw with scissors, that is, to cut without first drawing on the paper, which takes practice. Most people have some experience with this form when they cut paper snowflakes or folded paper dolls.
http://users.ev1.net/~madrey/
http://www.geocities.com/Heartland/Valley/8063/scherenschnitte.htm

Learning Objectives:
1. Observe changes in the technology of producing nineteenth century portraits demonstrated in commercial printmaking and photography, and link them to changing cultural mores
2. Identify some of the more or less obscure artists trying to earn a living through portraiture in New England during Longfellow's lifetime

Instructions:

Basic Silhouettes: Students will work in pairs, one posing, one cutting, to *produce a series* of head and shoulders profiles. Students will cut directly into 4x6 inch light-weight black paper *without drawing first*. A lot of paper will be discarded as students practice the technique, so newsprint may be used for first efforts. Students will *critique* each other's work informally, and then each will select his/her own best work to mount on heavy white paper with glue (e.g., white glue--Elmer's—or rubber cement). Students will sign, date, and label (with sitter's name) each silhouette submitted to the teacher or portfolio; three examples should be sufficient.

Variation: Reverse Silhouette: Cut a "negative space" silhouette, that is, keep the hole and throw away the head. In other words, cut a *stencil* on a heavy piece of small paper, such as 4x6 inch oak tag, using an Exacto knife. *Option*: draw it first with pencil. Tape the reverse silhouette to drawing paper and roll water-base block printing ink over the stencil to produce an ink silhouette.

Variation: Full Figure Silhouettes and Ornamental Scherenschnitte: Students who have mastered the basic technique of directly cutting ("drawing with scissors") profiles may branch out into more complex imagery, such as traditional flower and bird ornaments or active whole figure silhouettes.

Variation: Silhouettes Simplified: Younger or less experienced students may use 9x12 inch black construction paper and draw their images with pencil before they cut and mount them.

Assessment summary:
-Project requirements met, as outlined
-Accurate proportions and features placement, plausible details
-Careful craftsmanship, neat presentation of final product
-Controlled handling of media, increasing mastery of materials and techniques
-Cooperative group interaction, including discussion/critique participation