

# Rose Ann Chasman

Chicago, Illinois

"Choose life: that is one's craft," says Rose Ann Chasman's business card, bespeaking the vitality of her art and its spirited and spiritual origin. For over 20 years Chasman has explored and extended the boundaries of Jewish paper arts and so has helped revitalize interest in them.

Beginning with jewelry and vitreous enamels, Chasman recalls how a jewel-like exhibition of Tiffany glass influenced her paper cut art. At the 1982 exhibit of Tiffany glass at the Museum of Science and Industry in Chicago, she saw the Tiffany Chapel which had originally been created for the World Columbian Exposition of 1893. The stained glass windows used a white material rather than the usual black leading between the colorful panes.

Chasman began to seek that same kind of jewel-like delicacy and color to create

*Papercut: "Shabbat Malkah IV," by Rose Ann Chasman. Hand-made Twinrocker paper backed with hand-colored papers and metallic foils, 18" diameter. The figures are adapted from a seventeenth century Amsterdam woodcut showing the Jewish woman lighting the traditional brass Judenstern Sabbath lamp. The Sabbath Queen is a crowned and featureless complement to the woman, while the lamp and its beams radiate outward.*

"stained-glass" designs of papercuts backed by hand-colored papers.

When she has a new idea, Chasman describes the creative process as "simple: You close your eyes and look at what's on the inside of your eyelids." That may be easier for someone who could draw a piano bench in perspective at age three: "That

was when my mother knew she 'had one,'" the artist explains. Always

creating something artistic, Chasman gradually came to connect her talent with her spiritual core.

She learned the Hebrew alef bet in fifth grade religious school.

Proceeding through youth group activities through confirmation classes, Chasman remembers that she kept "wanting something more intense, more for the mind to chew on."

She credits Rabbi Isenberg, one of her teachers, with helping her realize that the Bible is its own best commentary if you just pay attention to the words. But to do that, you need to read the texts, not translations as she and her classmates were then doing.

It was after attending Antioch College that Chasman found some of what she had been looking for at a University of Chicago's campus Hillel holiday service. No, the holiday was not Yom Kippur with its ponderings and ponderous tone, it

