

CHARLES BURNS

The world's leading silhouette cutter

Charles is a silhouettist and is often described as “the world's leading silhouette cutter”

After leaving Art College, Charles began his career by working as a street portrait artist in London's famous Covent Garden. You would find him in the Piazza every weekend, drawing portraits for tourists. From these humble beginnings his career has developed both nationally and internationally. He found he could cut silhouettes, as well as draw. He has been invited and booked to cut silhouettes of many notable figures of our age, including the late HM Queen Elizabeth II (three times), HM King Charles III, President Bill Clinton, President Nelson Mandela and a whole host of actors, artists, performers, celebrities and sporting personalities.

Charles will tell you that all he needs to earn a living is a pair of scissors and a pocketful of paper. This rather belies the *extraordinary* skill with which he uses his tiny scissors and the unbelievable hand-eye coordination which guides his work. Whether appearing on stage, or mixing with guests at a party, he can cut a convincing likeness in 90 seconds or less.

Silhouettes are an old and oft-forgotten English art. You may know them as the small, black profiles, set in ornate oval frames, to be found in various town and country houses. Silhouettes (or “shades” as they were then known) were at their most popular in the Georgian and Regency periods. They took a back seat when the new art - photography – arrived in the 1850s, with brief periods of revival in the 1900s and 1920s. Today, silhouette cutting remains an almost lost art.

Silhouette-cutting is suitable for all age groups. As there is no language barrier, it's wonderfully well received at international and multicultural events too.

This is the art which Charles has made his own. He is undoubtedly its foremost practitioner today. His enthusiasm for this obscure, niche art is very infectious! It must be seen to be believed.

Speech topics include:

- Lectures on the art and history of silhouettes
- The story of his own journey from street artist to royal silhouettist
- Lessons from a street artist for the corporate world
- The silhouette – forerunner to the selfie?

Whatever you ask him to speak about it will certainly include a live demonstration of silhouette cutting: bringing an audience member on stage to pose for a silhouette.

Charles has written a book, ‘Mastering Silhouettes’, in which he outlines the various techniques used to make them many years ago. He has also presented the award-winning documentary Silhouette Secrets. When not demonstrating and speaking about this art all over the world, he spends his time collecting antique silhouettes and learning whatever he can about the lives of the artists who made them.

**Charles Burns is available through Diana Boulter at DBA Speakers.
Please call her on 07554 440537 or email diana@dbaspeakers.com.**

Charles' diary is booked well ahead for prestigious parties, client events and weddings.