HAND PAPERMAKING

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FRONT COVER: *Peter Gentenaar,* Overslaande Bloem *[Turning over Flowers], 2005, 110 x 110 x 50 cm [43 5/16 x 43 5/16 x 19 11/16 inches], bleached flax pulp poured on a bamboo frame. Photo: Piet Gispen.*

BACK COVER: *Beck Whitehead,* Desert Car, *2007, 11 x 14 x 2 inches, abaca pulp painting mounted on wood. Photo: Beck Whitehead. Courtesy of the artist and Craft Alliance, St. Louis, Missouri.*

Letter from the Editor

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In this, what I call "the issue devoted to the working artist," we investigate some of the technical, philosophical, and aesthetic concerns that artists (along with curators and related art professionals) face when they work in, on, and around handmade paper. It is written entirely by practicing artists or those who work very closely with artists.

Helen Frederick starts off the issue by introducing a range of artists who work in handmade paper, posing to them the question, "Why paper?" Tatiana Ginsberg presents the work of artists who create public art or long-term installations using handmade paper and discusses the challenges and technical considerations of working with a material that is often regarded as fragile and ephemeral. In her essay that addresses "what we talk about when we talk about paper art," curator Elizabeth Finch shares her thoughts, and those of her colleagues, on meaningful and accessible object descriptions for paper art.

Catherine Nash summarizes her research on how artists in the field operate their Hollander beaters to achieve a wide variety of pulps. *Hand Papermaking* invited Nash to select three of the artists she interviewed—Betsy Dollar, Margareta Mannervik, and Vicky Sigwald—to contribute the three handsome paper samples that are tipped into this issue, illustrating a range of beating methods.

With the growing number of well-equipped papermaking studios, we are pleased to include in this issue a list of 76 studios around the world that share their workspace and technical expertise with artists. A detailed table noting comprehensive information about each studio is available on Hand Papermaking's website at www.handpapermaking.org/magazine. We would like to thank Helen Hiebert and IAPMA (International Association of Papermakers and Paper Artists) for their help with the survey. In another article, Jill Littlewood includes IAPMA in her essay about local, international, and virtual communities for paper artists.

After work is created in the studio, artists (and collectors) must consider appropriate framing and storage solutions. Eyal Danieli—an artist and conservation framer who has worked extensively with paper artists—outlines his recommendations to safely and elegantly frame handmade paper artworks. Art conservator Claire Gerhard takes us through the process of assessing and improving, using low-cost methods, the storage environment for both two- and three-dimensional handmade paper artworks.

In addition, Amanda Guest—whose artwork was featured in the Summer 2005 issue of *Hand Papermaking*—reviews an exhibition of small but fiery works on paper by the late Lee Krasner, and Helen Hiebert profiles Peter Gentenaar's distinctive work as an artist and technical innovator for the *ON* section. Let me take this opportunity to note that I intend on devoting an entire future issue of the magazine to *ON*. If you wish to champion an artist, artisan, or organization working in the field of hand papermaking, please send me a proposal for an *ON* feature. It can be an essay, Q&A, conversation, or any format that best suits your subject. And as always, I look forward to hearing your comments on the magazine and news of all things paper in the field.

–Mina Takahashi

Why Beat Pulp? Mapping New Paper Terrains

HELEN C. FREDERICK

Sandy Kinnee, What You Can See Won't Hurt You, Will & Won't Armani Suit B, *2007, 30 x 22 inches, various marks on handmade rag paper. Photo: Charles Walters. Courtesy of Art Selection, Zürich.*

In 2007 I chaired a panel for the College Art Association annual meeting in New York, to examine ideas behind the theory, practice, and production of works in paper and to explore the shared boundaries between traditional and new art media. For this article, I have selected salient portions of the panel and added a few additional projects that highlight how the technical prowess of hand-formed elements and their inherent aesthetic demands challenge and fascinate many artists working in hand papermaking today.

Visual arts over the past ten years have been increasingly influenced by three factors: 1) collaborative projects, disseminating new ideas, often international in scope; 2) new technology, redefining the methods, meanings, and audience of images; and 3) cross disciplinary/multi-media and language-based projects, engaging two, three, and four dimensions. We live in an age of expansive interpretations, in a time where much of art is moving from static to mobile interfaces. Yet art gives us the opportunity to experience what we cannot see—for example, there is still that material moment for many of us, when we put our hands into a papermaking vat, feel the moving water, and recognize the familiarity of the actions when we engage with pulp. Those of us who have come to hand papermaking from printmaking appreciate the poetics of retrieval. Taking impressions, we make prints. It is a heightened activity that provides new syntax and increased associations. In discussing his concept of "liquid modernity," the great Polish philosopher Gustav Bauman comments on how we have moved away from a "heavy" and "solid" hardware-focused modernity to a "light" and "liquid" software-based modernity.[1] However, technologies can streamline but also disembody. "By now most of us have figured out that machines don't save time and work, they just substitute another kind of work and often require more time," says book artist and media personality Pattie Belle Hastings.[2]

In hand papermaking, the consuming process of preparing the material and working the pulp gives us time for conceptual and creative thinking which leads to the expression of rich, complex ideas in the work. Through the hand papermaking process, we find multi-media possibilities for layers of meaning with hidden ingredients and a capacity for mimicry. Papermaking offers hybrids of different technologies such as surface articulation for photo

Eve Ingalls, It's Only a Wave, Ma'am, *2006, 9 x 12 x 13 feet, stainless steel, abaca handmade paper. Photo: Ricardo Barros. Courtesy of the artist.*

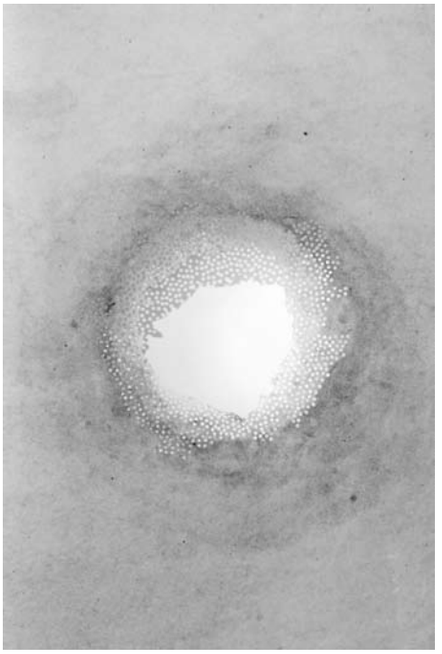
and digital photography, the ability to make lightweight components to challenge spatial expectations, ways to invite natural reactive interventions by introducing material into the pulp, and to explore paper's relationship to its environment by means of translucency and strength. The artist can investigate paper's distinguishing characteristics of expansion, contraction, and rebuilding through burning, scoring, and cutting. But most interestingly, handmade paper allows a certain level of concentration and focus in the fluid electronic age.

"Paper comes from the reorganization of a destroyed past," explains Sandy Kinnee.[3] In his work *The Mummy's Curse and the Armani Suit*, Kinnee explores the allure of mummy paper. As the demand for paper rose in the 1800s, the price of rags soared. A previously untapped source of cheap rags was discovered by the owner of a papermill: Egyptian mummies. He imported a boatload of them and removed the linen wrappings, which were then converted to pulp. While turning the pulp into butcher paper, the mill workers contracted cholera. The story, while fascinating, is no more than a tall tale, concocted by the mill owner himself. Yet something about mummy paper catches our attention: it is the idea that a sheet of paper can be more than it appears to be, in this case, the engine of an ancient curse. Paper has the potential to embody elements beyond dimension, color, and texture. It has a history. The ruined or discarded is reshaped into a new form, reincarnated, and given new life. On the way to becoming paper, a bale of cotton waste, the pages of a 200-year-old book torn loose from their binding, or an Armani linen suit that no longer fits is reduced to a bucket of worthless, tangled, threads. The soggy mass retains a history of having once been an Armani suit and maybe the memory of how good someone looked in it. Symbolically, paper is an answer to the human desire to start anew. "For me," Kinnee states, "the unseen attributes within the strands provide an excuse to make pulp…Making paper is far too labor-intensive to be undertaken without proper justification. I find my excuse in the provenance of the material. The invisible and poetic dimension of papermaking is the bond it makes between the past and the creative act in the future."

For Eve Ingalls, hand papermaking offers "a medium that creates a dynamic bridge between nature and culture."[4] Paper is a natural product and a surface on which we document crucial aspects of society. In her work *Empire on Course*, Ingalls uses off-white paper to signal the presence of a writing/drawing surface on which thinking and mapping have taken place. And yet the paper is not flat. She encourages pulp and water to react to natural forces and become active participants in the building of form. She creates flexible armatures by placing wire between newly formed sheets of paper that become twisted by the shrinking action of the drying process. The action is similar to the spiraling of a dead tree trunk as its drying cells collapse. The thinner wires allow the force of the drying paper to dominate, resulting in a pastoral environment of rolling hills. The thicker wires restrain the freedom of the paper, just as urban development restrains nature. This results in a flat, rigid terrain of city grids. In another paper sculpture *Fingering Instability*, Ingalls lets the natural flow of water act as a drawing tool. This process suggests the fragility and breakdown of human attempts at survival in the face of nature's power. Layers of meaning accrue from the reactive interactions between cultural and natural references in the sculpture.

Ingalls enjoys handmade paper's great expressive potential. "It can express the lightest of air molecules and the heaviest of stones. It can be as smooth as glass and as rough as tree bark. Paper can feel erased, burnt, or gnawed away, and it can therefore suggest that both cultural and natural elements are struggling to survive the effects of environmental degradation. Paper is an ideal medium in which to document the intricate effects of wear

Rie Hachiyanagi, Silence, *1999, 14 x 14 x 12 feet, Japanese kozo paper, installed at the University of Northern Iowa Gallery of Art. Courtesy of the artist.*



Lisa Hill, detail of Tegument: Time, *2007, 70 x 11 inches, pigmented raw flax, wax. Assisted by Gretchen Schermerhorn at Pyramid Atlantic, Silver Spring, Maryland. Photo: Greg Staley. Courtesy of the artist.*

and tear on the natural as well as cultural fabric of the earth." Ingalls also appreciates papermaking's capacity to forge a link between ancient processes and current technological developments. "In Thailand I learned ancient techniques of papermaking...But I also engage in techniques in papermaking that have been inspired by new technologies. In many of my sculptures I have used visual ideas developed in Photoshop and similar programs." For *It's Only a Wave, Ma'am,* Ingalls created a model, scanned it, and gave the scan to an architect who translated it into a set of drawings. The drawings were in turn given to a fabricator, who constructed a stainless-steel armature that she covered with handmade paper. "The play of the two worlds, the natural and the technological, added a great deal to the meaning of the piece, which is about climate change," Ingalls describes. "Papermaking, a superbly rich and expressive medium, places me in the 'thick of things,' where the pulse of life can be felt with exceptional intensity."

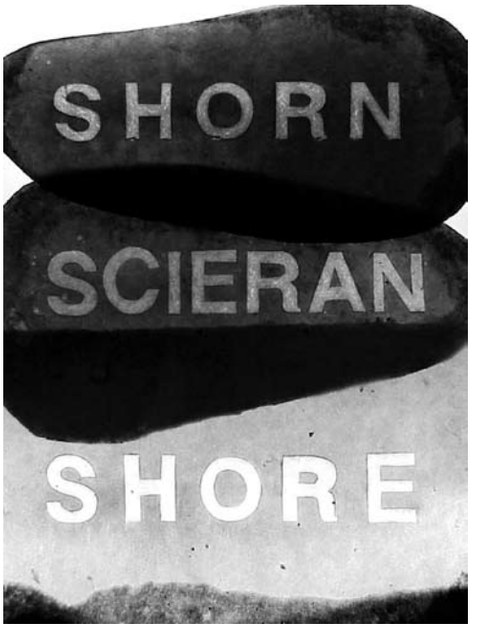
Rie Hachiyanagi explores the cultural significance of a sheet of paper in her work *Silence*. "Paper was originally invented to record and transport human expression across time and distance," states Hachiyanagi. "Paper is intended to have a voice attached to it, thus without markings it remains silent. Yet, a blank piece of handmade paper with its unique qualities can express what words cannot." For Hachiyanagi, the origin of paper parallels that of humanity. "Although plant fiber grows naturally, paper cannot come into existence without human hands...We cannot give birth to ourselves yet we must recreate the self. I believe that both the existence of paper and the way we exist are verified only through expression."[5]

Recently Lisa Hill worked at Pyramid Atlantic with Director of the Papermill Gretchen Schermerhorn to create a massive body of work stimulated by the similarities of paper and skin, exploiting aspects of science and biology. Hill created a group of books, encasements, and large-scale, suspended works that examine various membrane structures and explore flax paper's inherent ability to hold its strength while being manipulated by removal, puncturing, shrinkage, and stretching. In her project, paper is a personal mapping device, revealing scars and disfigurements that tell its story. "Just as skin does, the paper I create communicates visually and tactilely through an unspoken language that is layered and complex," explains Hill. "Some of my work is so fragile that you might wonder what holds it together, what secrets it held and what vulnerabilities it keeps at bay... Much like folds of skin, I reveal and hide information by layering hundreds of sheets of paper that curl away from each other, come together, curl away again, and come together again. The interior and exterior implications of this are palpable and the effect creates a certain level of intimacy, which is deepened by the haunting shadows of the dark gaps in between the 'pages.'"[6]

In a cross-disciplinary investigation, Hill approached papermaking with conceptual ideas formed between art and science, an interest in digital media, various resources, and samples. As her technical papermaking assistant, Schermerhorn was the responsive and skilled hand to guide Hill's creative expression in the papermaking studio. Schermerhorn introduced various pulps that best suited Hill's project and created an environment for Hill to experience the medium and develop her own personal techniques such as using a spatula to remove extremely thin sheets from the mould.

For Hill, indeed the paper–skin connection has personal resonance. "Skin cells may be the key to stem-cell scientific development that will result in cures to diseases and conditions like Lupus," asserts Hill. "My daughter was first diagnosed with the disease because of a butterfly skin rash. Working with paper that has a history and timeline mirrors skin which contains information about genetics and identity. It is skin that protects us,

Helen Frederick, Release, How Can We Go Forward When We Do Not Know Which Way We Are Going? *2007, installation: artist-made flax paper (20 inches in diameter each), smoked with solar plate etching and chine collé, and found objects on wall-mounted shelf. Courtesy of the artist.*



Helen Frederick, detail of Scieran, Shorn, Shore, *2002, 16 x 6 inches, watermarks in artist-made flax papers. Courtesy of the artist.*

envelops us, and through stem-cell applications, could very well be the source of a body's 'healing.'"

Finally regarding my own creative work, I believe that the new media alternatives have their ancestry in the white of paper and the essence of celluloid; therefore I use the essential information carriers—paper and electronic media—as my expressive materials. Through the transformative qualities of these materials, I am interested in investigating where the visible and invisible lay side by side. My multi-dimensional piece *Suspension/Scieran/Shorn* (2001) reflects on a person experiencing two states of being, a landmark between two things, an island in the midst of the sea, a civilization transforming itself, and new technology that is always altering our way of thinking. The work identifies the dual sense of self in the twenty-first century. I enjoy investigating the story as it emerges and becomes visible either as material substance or electronic imaging. Language is an important part of the work to create inner sound and movement so I often work with artist books as a component of a larger installation work that, in this case, includes cast paper, watermarks, video projection, and sound. *Suspension/Scieran/Shorn* is a play of opposing traditions, that of materials hand formed and that of resources electronically conceived and produced. In a more recent work titled *Release, How Can We Go Forward When We Do Not Know Which Way We Are Going?* (2007), I again explore the intersection of old and new by utilizing digital technology to capture iconic, memory-laden images and burn them onto handmade paper, returning to a Japanese tradition of smoking paper.[7]

In summary, many contemporary artists are choosing hand-formed paper for its striking translucency, strength, nuance, and rich expressiveness in their printed or sculptural works. They experience a certain level of concentration in our electronic age in the physicality of the material. And their works show that visual artists have clearly discovered paper as a solution for new visual languages and renewal.

NOTES

1. Zygmunt Bauman, Liquid Modernity *(Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2000).*

2. Pattie Belle Hastings quoted in exhibition brochure accompanying "Raptured Browsers: Books as Visual Language: Pattie Belle Hastings, Clifton Meador, and Ward Tietz," at Pyramid Atlantic, October 31–November 30, 2006.

3. Sandy Kinnee, working abstract prepared in fall of 2006 for "Why Beat Pulp?" CAA panel, February 15, 2007. Section pertaining to Kinnee is quoted and adapted from his working abstract.

4. Eve Ingalls, working abstract prepared in fall of 2006 for "Why Beat Pulp?" CAA panel, February 15, 2007. Section pertaining to Ingalls is quoted and adapted from her working abstract.

5. Rie Hachiyanagi, working abstract prepared in fall of 2006 for "Why Beat Pulp?" CAA panel, February 15, 2007. Section pertaining to Hachiyanagi is quoted and adapted from her working abstract.

6. Lisa Hill, e-mail message to the author, December 20, 2007.

7. Release *was included in the exhibition "Of Paper" at the Montpelier Cultural Arts Center, Laurel, MD, September 7–October 26, 2007. The show featured eighteen prominent regional artists working in hand-formed paper. Catalogue available, contact Ruth Schilling Harwood at the Arts Center, tel 301-953-1993.*