

EXPERIMENTAL PRINTMAKING ON HANDMADE PAPER

Heike Berl

INTRODUCTION

Paper is a material that has inspired me time and again. To this day, its versatile properties have fascinated me, presenting itself at times delicate, transparent or smooth, at other times opaque, stable or vulnerable. During a semester as a visiting student at the paper workshop of the Academy of Fine Arts in Munich, I honed my skills which I had previously acquired at the graphic workshops of the Dresden University of Fine Arts. I learnt the art of paper reliefs and editions – an experience that first inspired my graphic work, and which in the long run has manifested itself in my current work, the relief-like folding of large-scale papers and the unique pieces in series. The essay reflects on experimental printmaking on handmade paper as an artistic source of expression. It explores the possibilities for creating graphic editions reviewing selected prints in various techniques on handmade paper.

UNIQUE PAPERS IN SERIES

In 2024, I was selected as IAPMA Bulletin cover artist in collaboration with Papierwerk Glockenbach Munich. The annual publication of the International Association of Hand Papermakers and Paper Artists contains unique handmade paper, and each year the Bulletin focuses on a different theme. The Bulletin includes articles on specific papermaking techniques, essays of historical interest, features on contemporary artistic approaches, reviews of international exhibitions, as well as paper biennials and congresses initiated by IAPMA.

The 'Imagine' edition of 780 sheets of paper for the IAPMA Bulletin cover was made with linters and pine fibres, shredded lexicon, a gold-embossed circle, and a blue-winged ink drawing. Each handmade paper is unique and signed on the verso. My concept was influenced by the theme of the IAPMA Bulletin 'Silent Strength' and a song by John Lennon. The use of voluminous fibres and recycled paper, with individual pieces from



Figure 1



Figure 2

Figure Titles and Information

Fig 1. Imagine. IAPMA Bulletin 63 (2024). Essay by Heike Berl in collaboration with Papierwerk Glockenbach. Copyright photo by www.material-matters.online / Victoria Gentsch

Fig 2. Imagine. IAPMA Bulletin 63 Handmade Paper Cover (2024) by Heike Berl in collaboration with Papierwerk Glockenbach. Copyright photo by www.material-matters.online / Victoria Gentsch

a German, English, French, and Spanish-language lexicon, conveys a strong, silent message.

For the 14 x 42 cm format, DIN A3 paper moulds were divided to produce two sheets at once per papermaking process over the course of weeks at Papierwerk Glockenbach in Munich. I created the gold embossing by hand using a Letraset industrial marking machine, and also made some paper at the workshop. After shipping, the ink drawing and signing of the edition were completed in my studio in Dresden. The motif of the blue wing above a golden circle on handmade paper stands for another aspect of the edition - the wish for a more peaceful world.



Figure 3

PRINT ROOM STUDIES

The material properties and expressiveness of paper are vital to my artistic work. The language of the paper enables me to address issues in content and form without naming them specifically. It is in this space between concept and intuition that I approach themes of history, humanity, and environmental aspects. Both historical and contemporary printing techniques are amazing and an inspiring source. I enjoy collaborating with printmaking workshops and museums to explore the world of graphic art. My study visits and lectures, such as 'Paper Gems' at the print room of the Kupferstich-Kabinett Dresden during the IAPMA International Paper Congress in 2023, are essential for my artistic approach and exchange.



Figure 4

I am very pleased to have found the German Book and Writing Museum in Leipzig, among others, as a competent partner for my research. On the one hand, the technical possibilities are excellent and versatile. On the other hand, the expertise and support provided by the graphic collection team are essential for conducting artistic research. In 2025, I studied a selection of watermarks, paper moulds, and brocade papers from the impressive historical collection and discussed their technical aspects. The watermark collection is the largest of its kind in the world and just as fascinating as a visit to the archives of the German Museum of Books and Writing in Leipzig.



Figure 5

EXPERIMENTAL GRAPHIC EDITIONS

In the year 2025, I received the Walz travel grant from the Association for Printmaking Art, Verein für die Schwarze Kunst. This scholarship enabled me to work at various European graphic workshops and museums, the Homburg Paper Mill Museum, the Leipzig Museum for Printmaking and the Helsingborg Graphic Art Museum, among others. With the support of master printers and graphic experts, I created editions in various techniques: letterpress, algraphy, chine collé, blind embossing, iris printing, and relief printing on handmade paper. After several conceptual drawings in my sketchbook, diverse editions crystallised: a papermaker at work and a landscape with a morning star – a tribute to the German poet Christian Morgenstern – a current project initiated by the Verein für die Schwarze Kunst. I tested different

Fig 3. Imagine. Detail of the IAPMA Bulletin 63 Handmade Paper Cover (2024) Copyright photo by www.materialmatters.online / Victoria Gentsch
 Fig 4. Detail of a brocade paper (undated) by Andreas Steber. Deutsches Buch- und Schriftmuseum der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek Leipzig, Buntpapiersammlung der Bibliothek des Börsenvereins, BS GS Bö 0018
 Fig 5. Dresden Papermaker I (2025) by Heike Berl in collaboration with Sheryl Jaffe. Copyright photo by www.materialmatters.online / Robert Vanis

paper variations and qualities, and colour played an important role in planning my editions.

The edition 'Dresden Papermaker' was executed in three versions in 2025, each showing a creative act: a woman working at a paper workshop with moulds and water buckets. Spontaneous lines and dynamic compositions created scenes full of intense moments. I made the paper in different colours and base fibres, kozo and linters. Painting with coloured paper pulp worked equally well as chine collé, following previously tested and planned steps before the print run. It makes a difference whether I simply print on paper or plan the series production of a sheet within the conception of the base paper. The process of hand papermaking, and thus the creation of a colourful or relief-like surface, is equally important. Diverse papers served as sample sheets or for experimenting with algraphy, frottage and other techniques. My multifaceted experience in creating printed editions and series was beneficial here. Diverse contributions to anniversary editions and international graphic exchange programs proved highly valuable.

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Heike Berl is a visual artist working in drawing, printmaking, pulp painting and paper sculpture to trace history, nature and humanity. She holds a post graduate and a university degree from the Dresden University of Fine Arts, as well as a university degree from the Anhalt University Dessau, Germany. Heike Berl became a member of the International Association of Hand Papermakers and Paper Artists in 2016 and has supported the association as IAPMA Archive Keeper since 2019. She is the organiser of the relief prints on handmade paper study days in collaboration with Grafikwerkstatt Dresden in 2024 and 2026, Germany.

In 2012, Heike Berl was awarded the Lithographic Prize from the Munich House of Artists Foundation. She received various grants to work and research at European graphic workshops and museums, the Lithographic Academy Tidaholm, the Homburg Paper Mill Museum and the Museum for Printmaking Leipzig, among others. The artist's work is held in international graphic collections, including the Musée des Beaux-Arts de Liège, Robert C. Williams Museum of Papermaking Atlanta, University Libraries at the University of Denver, Museum Pfalzgalerie Kaiserslautern, Paper Museum Düren and the Lithographic Museum Tidaholm, Sweden.



Figure 6

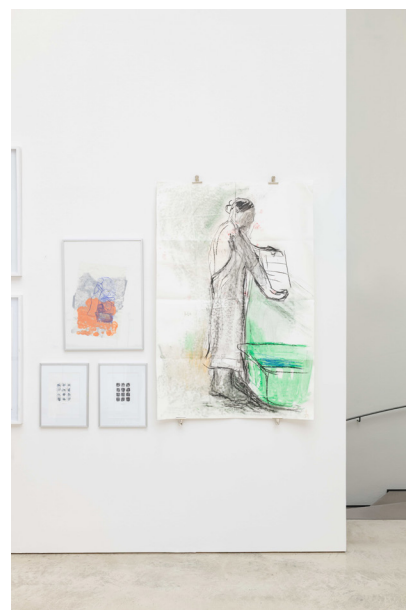


Figure 7

Fig 6. Dresden Papermaker II (2025) by Heike Berl. Copyright photo by www.materialmatters.online / Robert Vanis
 Fig 7. Drawing and print series of the Dresden Papermaker (2025) by Heike Berl. Copyright photo by www.materialmatters.online / Robert Vanis

IMAGE GALLERY



Figure 1. Imagine. IAPMA Bulletin 63 (2024). Essay by Heike Berl in collaboration with Papierwerk Glockenbach. Copyright photo by www.materialmatters.online / Victoria Gentsch

Figure 2. Imagine. IAPMA Bulletin 63 Handmade Paper Cover (2024) by Heike Berl in collaboration with Papierwerk Glockenbach. Copyright photo by www.materialmatters.online / Victoria Gentsch



Figure 3. Imagine. Detail of the IAPMA Bulletin 63 Handmade Paper Cover (2024) by Heike Berl in collaboration with Papierwerk Glockenbach. Edition of 780 handmade paper, gold embossing, ink drawing, 420 x 140 mm. Copyright photo by www.materialmatters.online / Victoria Gentsch

Figure 4. Detail of a brocade paper (undated) by Andreas Steber. Deutsches Buch- und Schriftmuseum der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek Leipzig, Buntpapiersammlung der Bibliothek des Börsenvereins, BS GS B6 0018

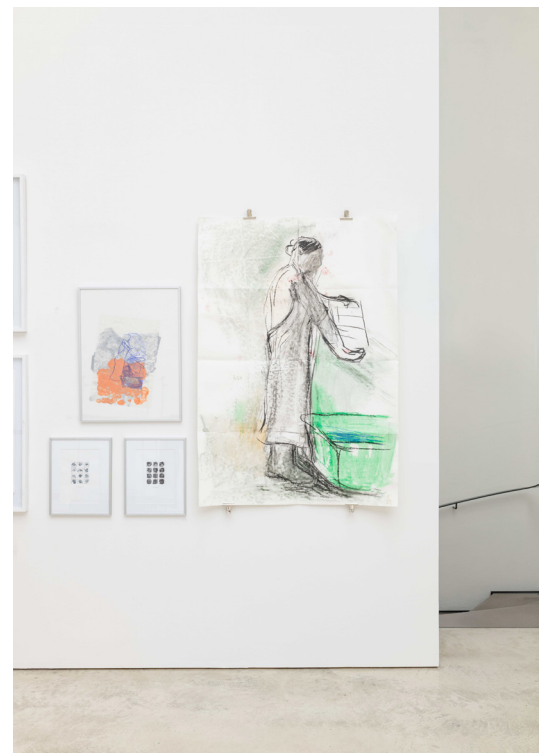


Figure 5. Dresden Papermaker I (2025) by Heike Berl in collaboration with Sheryl Jaffe. Algraphy on handmade paper, chine collé, 290 x 210 mm. Test print for the edition of the Mail Art Exchange Program by North American Hand Papermakers. Copyright photo by www.materialmatters.online / Robert Vanis

Figure 6. Dresden Papermaker II (2025) by Heike Berl. Algraphy on handmade paper, pulp painting, 300 x 220 mm. Copyright photo by www.materialmatters.online / Robert Vanis

Figure 7. Drawing and print series of the Dresden Papermaker (2025) by Heike Berl. Fine Art Christmas Market of the Dresden State Art Collections (SKD), special exhibition at Kunsthalle Lipsiusbau in 2025. Copyright photo by www.materialmatters.online / Robert Vanis