

Bound & Lettered

ARTISTS' BOOKS & BOOKBINDING & PAPER CRAFT & CALLIGRAPHY



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Randall M. Hasson. An alphabet written with the square Speedball A-Series nib and inspired by lettering of the early twentieth century. "Writing with a Bent Nib," page 28.



CLAUDIA LEE

My background has always been in textiles, beginning with hand-weaving to create pillows and wall pieces for the interior design field as well as for galleries and specialty shops. It was while taking a handspinning workshop with Persis Grayson at Peters Valley School of Craft that I first saw someone making paper by hand – I knew immediately this was something I wanted to do. It was still early days for hand papermaking in the United States, though, and several years passed before I found someone who could help me get started.

Since that time, I have moved the loom out of my studio in an effort to narrow my focus and develop a signature body of work that, though basically handmade paper, also incorporates many textile techniques, including weaving, spinning, dyeing, and stitching.

When you make paper almost every day for more than thirty years, it's impossible not to get caught up in the magic of the process. It begins with a humble plant growing in yard, field, or woods; cooking the plant to remove non-cellulosic materials; beating it into pulp; and adding the pulp to a vat of water.

Next is stirring the vat with your hands. An experienced papermaker can tell by the feel of the pulp in the water if the amount of pulp is sufficient for a sheet. With each dip of the mould and deckle into the vat, the sheet miraculously forms before your eyes.

A critical eye then examines each newly formed sheet. If the sheet isn't perfect, it goes back into the vat to be reformed into a new sheet.

A perfect sheet is couched onto a support fabric called a *felt*. The mould and deckle is dipped back into the vat, and another sheet is formed and couched, then another and another, creating a stack of wet sheets that is called a *post* of papers. The post is placed in a press, the sheets are compressed, and more water is removed. This is an important step in that the pressure affects the surface of the sheets.

The freshly pressed sheets are then removed from the felts and placed on a forced-air dryer. The sheets are under pressure, which keeps them flat, and air from a fan is forced through the stack, drying the sheets. Opening the dryer is like opening a huge gift. The wet sheets have again been transformed into dry papers, with lovely surfaces, edges, and colors – another magic moment.

I make sheets of papers for bookbinders, printmakers, and other artists to use for their own work, and also for those who just love paper. In addition, there are the papers I use for my own artwork. Basically, I'm making my own art materials, and one of the wonderful things about that is I can design a paper for a project and not have to rely on commercial papers. This gives my work its distinctive look, and I always have a paper that does exactly what I need it to do.

When I began stitching on paper, I wanted to create sheets that could stand up to the handling involved and would be substantial enough to support the heavy stitches. I also wanted to add pattern and color to white sheets before I began the work on them. To do this, the wet sheets were pressed between textured fabric that





embossed the paper, creating an irregular surface. Next, the papers were waxed and pigmented. The textured surface took the colors in different ways, adding additional interest to the surface.

These early sheets became flat wall pieces, but after several years, I wanted to explore more dimensional forms, and – through much experimentation – my boxes were born. They are still evolving and becoming more sculptural, turning into tabletop screens and lamp bases.

One of the joys for me has been the opportunity to teach workshops across the country for schools and organizations as well as in private classes in my studio. I love sharing with students; as any teacher will tell you, when you teach, you are also learning from your students.

Today, I am developing a new class based on my current studio work. This will be a papermaking class that focuses on folding, pleating, layering, and stitching, along with wax-resist and coloring with indigo and black walnut. The possibilities with this kind of work are limited only by imagination.

I'm looking forward to seeing what will develop from this new work and from this class. My job is to show up in the studio every day and see where each new piece leads. Ideas are already forming.

Above: Papers in the studio at different stages of wax resist, indigo dyeing, and drying. All photos on this spread by Claudia Lee.

Below: Freshly made sheets of abaca paper, cast on assorted industrial metal forms.

Opposite page: Details of handmade paper, inspired by boro patchwork. Abaca, wax resist, and indigo.



For more information on Claudia Lee's workshops and her studio, Liberty Paper, visit claudialeepaper.com.

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Left (with detail above): Light sculpture. 22" x 6.5" x 6.5".
Abaca, wax resist, and indigo. Photos: Ben Corda.

Below: Long box. 4" x 11" x 3.5". Abaca, wax resist, pigments, and hand stitching. The paper has been specially made for use in constructing boxes. Photo: John Lucas.

Opposite page:

Top left: **Falling Leaves.** Wall piece. 18" square. Abaca, wax resist, pigments, hand stitching. Photo: John Lucas.

Top right: Three light sculptures. Assorted dimensions. Abaca paper, cast on industrial forms. Photo: John Lucas.

Bottom: **Bird in a Boat.** 20" x 25". Abaca, wax resist, pigments, copies of pages from my grandmother's handwritten 1952 journal, collage, hand stitching. Photo: John Lucas.





Opposite page:

Top: Three batik lamps.

Each measures 12" x 8" x 5". Abaca, wax resist, pigments. Photo: Ben Corda.

Bottom: **Aha Box.** 7" x 5" x 5". Black cotton rag, white cotton rag, pigments, wax resist, hand stitching, buttons. Detail is shown at left. Photo: Ben Corda.



Left: **Towering Box.** 14.5" x 5" x 5". Two sides of the box are shown. Black cotton rag, white cotton rag, abaca, wax resist, pigments, and hand stitching. The box's lid reaches almost to the bottom. Photo: Ben Corda.

Below, left: **Governor's Award.** 14" x 14" x 3". Layered sheets of abaca, wax-resist, and pigments. The central image is a section of my grandmother's handwritten 1952 journal. Fourteen of these wall pieces were commissioned by the Tennessee Arts Commission in 2011 to be presented to that year's recipients of the Governor's Arts Awards. Photo: John Lucas.

Below, right: **White Box.** 4.5" x 3.5" x 3.5". Abaca, hand stitching. Photo: John Lucas.







Left and above: **Box with Red Stripe.** 8" x 5" x 5". Indigo blue cotton rag, white cotton rag, wax resist, pigments, hand stitching. Photo: Ben Corda.

Below:

Left: **Cowie Box.** 12.5" x 4" x 4". Black cotton rag, white cotton rag, pigments, collage, stitching. Photo: Ben Corda.

Right: **Indigo Tower.** 15.5" x 7" x 7". Abaca cast on industrial metal form, indigo. Photo: Ben Corda.

