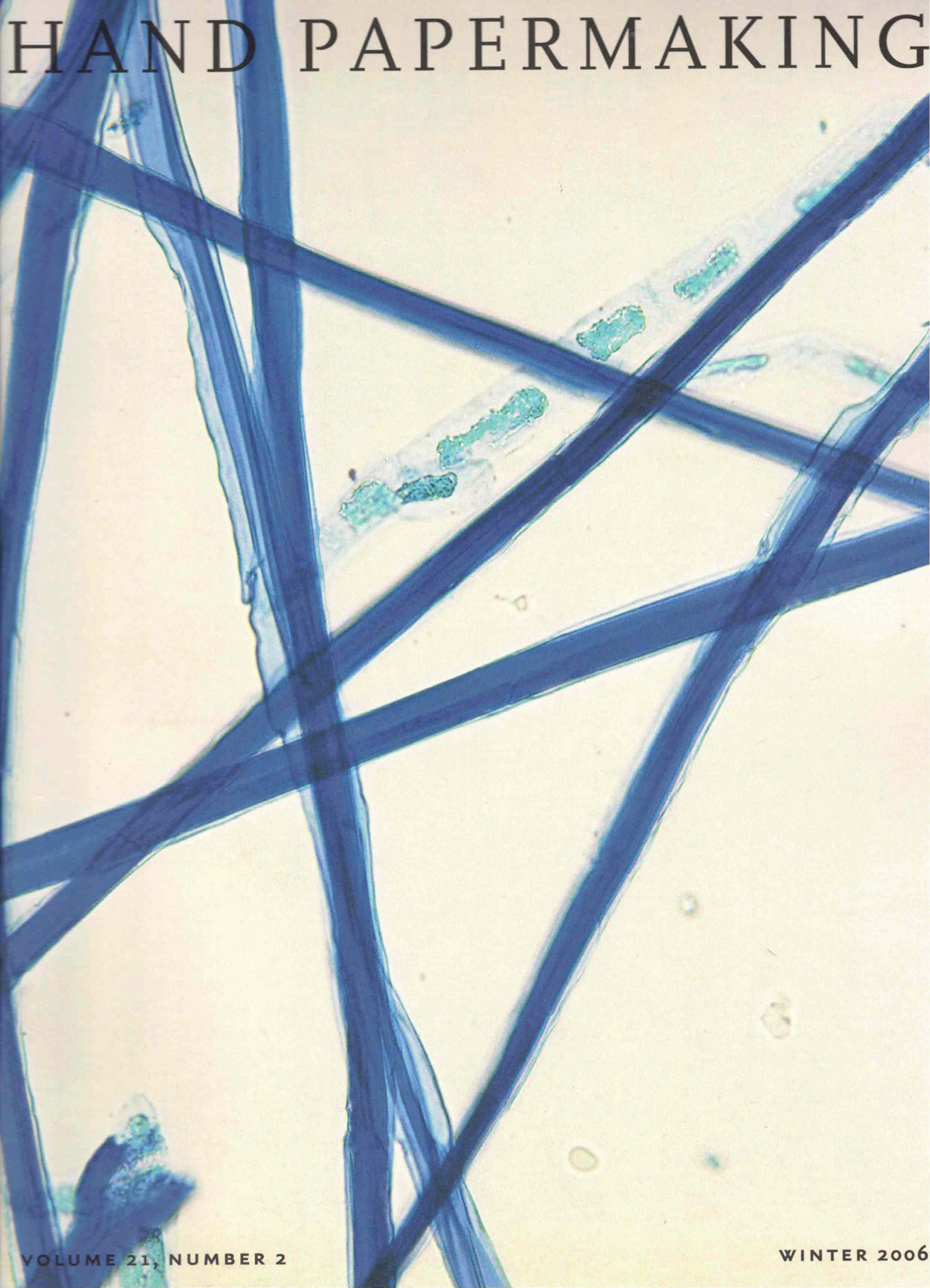
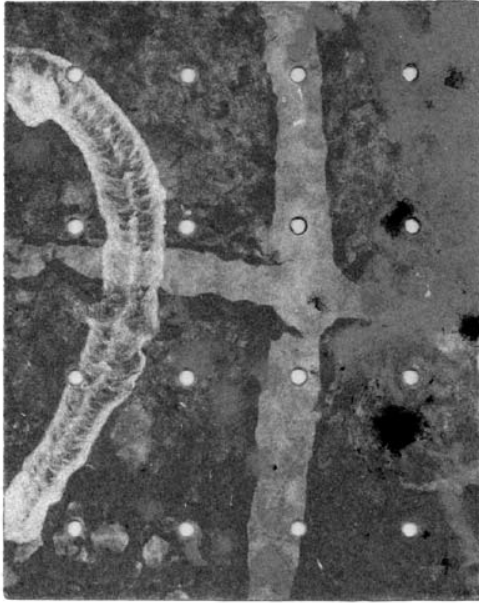


HAND PAPERMAKING

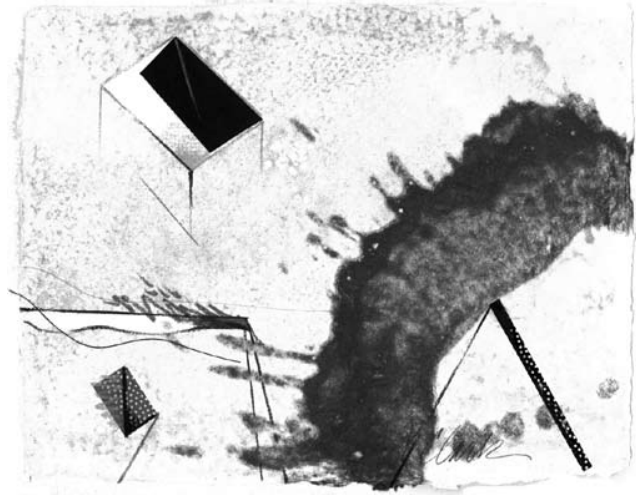
A microscopic view of paper fibers, showing a complex network of blue and green fibers against a light beige background. The fibers are thin and elongated, with some showing a distinct greenish-blue color. The overall structure is a dense, interconnected web of fibers.

VOLUME 21, NUMBER 2

WINTER 2006



Laurence Barker, *Sweet Sixteen*, 2005, 10 x 8 inches, waterspray-perforated handmade paper with pulp washes of dyed cotton and synthetic rag pulp.



Kathryn Clark, *Smoke and Fire*, 2005, 8 1/2 x 10 inches, colored pencil, collage, and pigmented cotton linter pulp on a cotton linter/cotton rag base sheet.

Material into Content: Pulp Painting Today

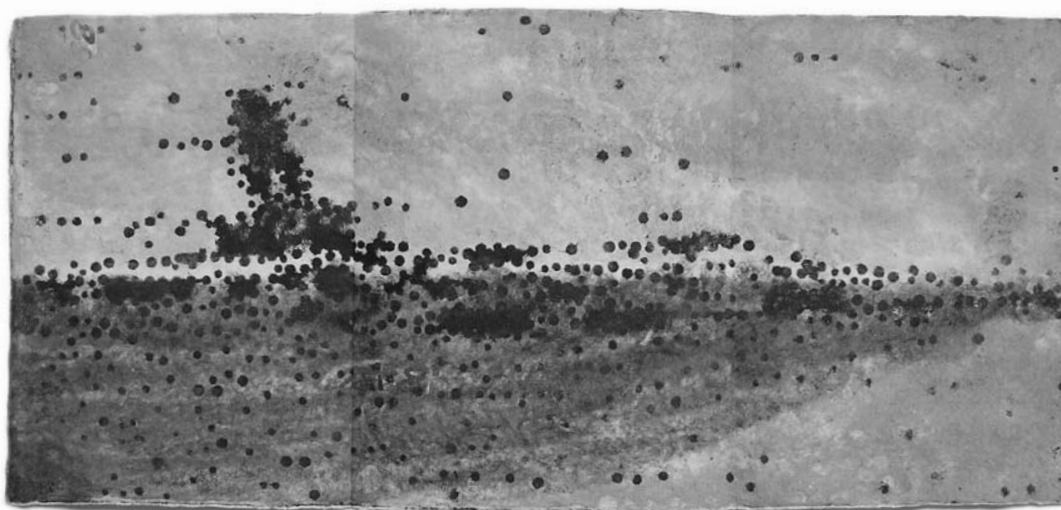
JANE GLAUBINGER

The following text has been adapted from the author's essay accompanying *Hand Papermaking's* recently published limited-edition portfolio entitled *The Art of Pulp Painting*. In addition to the essay, the portfolio includes 18 pulp paintings (all reproduced here) and statements by the contributing artists outlining their aesthetic and technical considerations along with biographical and contact information. Ed.

In the 1960s a spirit of experimentation in American art included an intense exploration of paper's characteristics—its malleability, texture, weight, and color—which resulted in innovative and intriguing works of art. This development was fostered by a revival in hand papermaking. While Dard Hunter was the pioneer, establishing his Lime Rock mill in 1928, it was Douglass Morse Howell who began to explore the creative possibilities of paper pulp in the 1950s.

Howell experimented with sculptural pieces constructed from string and wood dipped into vats of paper pulp. He also "painted" with the pulp in myriad ways. He re-immersed the mould into separate vats of different colored pulp, creating patterns with a template, or poured colored pulp into areas shaped by copper fences. In 1955 these "papetries" were shown at the Betty Parsons Gallery in New York, possibly the first exhibition of contemporary handmade paper art in America. Howell shared his enthusiasm and technical expertise with students like Laurence Barker who, in turn, taught numerous neophytes. Knowledge of hand papermaking then spread rapidly so that by 1979 there were 22 workshops coast to coast at which an interest in making beautiful sheets of paper co-existed with a curiosity to explore the artmaking potential of the medium.

A mutually beneficial relationship also existed with the printmaking workshops which proliferated in the decades after Tatyana Grosman founded Universal Limited Art Editions (ULAE) in New York in 1957. Realizing that "the paper is a completely integral part of the graphic work of art," Grosman collaborated with Howell who produced special papers for her printmakers. In the early 1970s Ken Tyler added papermaking facilities to his printmaking studio and induced prominent artists such as Robert Rauschenberg, Frank Stella, Ellsworth



Peter Sowiski, *Fortress Tri-Fold*, 2005, 10 x 21 inches (open), pigmented cotton pulp on a cotton/abaca base sheet with screen-printed inclusions.

Kelly, and David Hockney to work with paper pulp which gave the new medium legitimacy and publicity. A paper renaissance ensued, generated by a plethora of articles, books, exhibitions, and an increasing number of students and artists learning about and working in handmade paper.

The motivation to innovate with paper pulp remains the same today as in the 1960s, the nascent period of the medium. Artists rebel against the slickness associated with the mass-produced, machine-made aspect of minimalist art and much of modern life. Instead, there has been a return to craftsmanship and simple, basic methods of artmaking. An increased concern for the environment has led to an interest in pre-industrial, “natural” methods of production and materials, and a more intimate, personal means of expression. Paper pulp has a directness and plasticity that makes it a flexible medium with which an artist can readily convey his ideas.*

To survey current practice in pulp painting, *Hand Papermaking* devoted its most recent, limited-edition portfolio to the art form. The contributing artists, limited to an 8 x 10 inch format, created intimate works which necessitate close study. Like poetry, they distill and summarize meaning so that each image, refined to its essentials, yields a profusion of rich associations. Although the 18 artists included in the portfolio each bring their own background and vision to painting with pulp, all exploit the characteristics unique to this medium. The ragged deckle edge, uneven texture of the surface (the result of layers of wet pulp), and the ability to embed or collage other materials, all proclaim that the object is handmade and unique.

The theme that dominates the portfolio is nature. Four of the artists, who produced landscapes with panoramic views, evoke

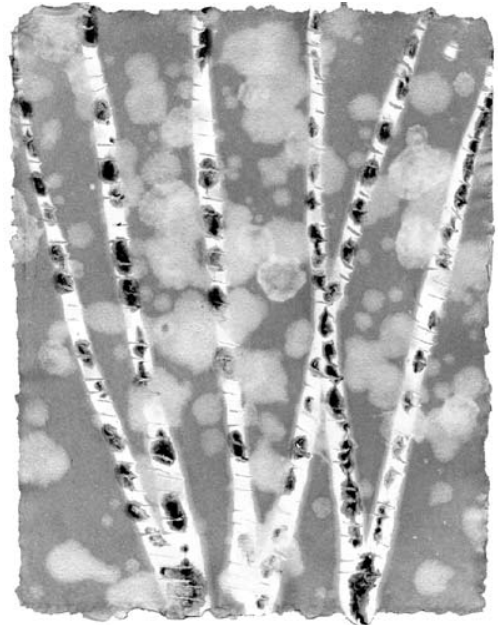
rather than replicate each locale. They all demonstrate a sensitivity to natural phenomena such as geography, weather, and the time of day, and suggest the variability of sky and water. Whereas Bobbie Lippman and Peter Sowiski utilize vaporous layers of pulp to achieve the effect of amorphous, floating clouds, Margaret Prentice and Lynn Sures employ washes of transparent white pulp for the frothy edges of breaking waves. In spite of the small scale, each of these works creates the illusion of infinite space where earth, water, and sky expand beyond the sheet. In *A Good Day To Paddle*, Prentice contrasts diffuse layers of pulp, which describe sea and sky, with a foreground of brown kayaks, flat geometric shapes printed from a woodblock on a solid beige ground. Since most of these boats are fragmented by the bottom edge of the sheet, the composition seems to extend beyond the confines of the page.

Although Lippman, Prentice, and Sures depict pleasant views, Sowiski presents a lyrical, moody landscape. The sky may be tinged with blue and pink, and a rose triangle dominates the right foreground, but an overwhelming sense of foreboding is produced by the large black airplane taking off and falling black circles that form dark blotches on the ground below. Sowiski achieved his goal for *Fortress Tri-Fold* (the piece is 21 inches unfolded) “for the nightmarish, psychedelic vision...when wonderment changes to fear, and beauty turns ugly—when a B-52 takes off as you hold it in your hands.” Vietnamese rice straw paper screenprinted with insects and the text “B-52” are incorporated into the pulp of the base sheet. Sowiski explains, “Examining our military might and menace keeps us mindful of the high tech, high stakes times we find ourselves in.”

Beverly Sky, however, is interested in wilderness conservation and offers a lovely, placid close-up of tree trunks in *Autumn Birches*.



Lynn Sures, Lake Michigan, 2005, 8 x 10 inches, pigmented cooked raw flax pulp poured and painted on uncooked raw flax base sheet.



Beverly Sky, Autumn Birches, 2005, 10 x 8 inches, pigmented overbeaten flax pulp painting on cotton/abaca base sheet.



Bobbie Lippman, Untitled, 2005, 8 1/2 x 7 1/2 inches, pigmented cotton rag pulp on a base sheet of abaca with a trace amount of pigmented, overbeaten cotton rag.



Margaret Prentice, A Good Day To Paddle, 8 x 10 inches, 2005, woodblock print on unbleached abaca paper with poured, pigmented cotton pulps.

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