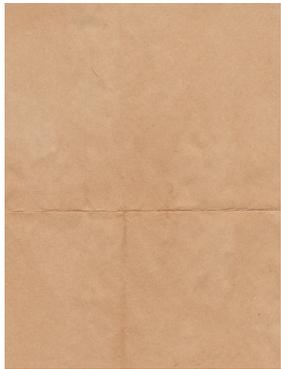


T H E



A R T



O F



P A P E R



Klara
Bajlon

Since paper was invented, it has served an important role in human life. Paper is ingrained in the history of cultures, science, communication, and every other domain imaginable.

One of these domains is art.

Before paper, humans found other ways to express their artistic inclinations. Artwork adorned cave walls and stones, and materials such as wooden panels and vellum (made from calf's skin) were used before paper became abundant and publicly widespread in the 15th century ("Drawing Materials," 2016).

Paper's significance and magnitude in the art world is unmatched. For the past six centuries, it has been the fundamental base for drawings (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2020). Over time, paper technology has evolved and developed an abundance of various paper char-

acteristics to consider in artistic endeavours. Because of paper's variety of uses, it comes in all sorts of forms to accommodate different effects.

In art, while there are no creative limits or constrictions, paper characteristics still need to be considered, as they have different functions that can drastically alter the end result. Some of the most important characteristics to consider are paper grade, colour, finish, and weight ("Paper Characteristics," n.d.).

GRADE

Paper grade indicates the brightness of the paper; in technical terms, it is the percentage of light that a sheet of paper is able to reflect. If you want your piece to shine or play around with light and movement, then you might choose a paper with a higher paper grade to enhance this feature (Parker, 2020).

COLOUR

Paper also comes in a plethora of pre-dyed or printed colours and patterns, from pastel hues to muted shades. Coloured paper is most commonly created when dye is added to the pulp before it enters a big machine, such as a Fourdrinier machine, that produces the paper (Woodford, 2020).

The appearance of your artwork depends on the colour of your paper. White paper is the most common, because artists typically use paper as a canvas for other mediums such as paint. But using paper that is dyed during its manufacturing process saves a lot of time and effort if you are working with paper as your primary medium. For example, Canadian artist Morgana Wallace creates beautiful collages from entirely paper that is pre-coloured, so she can skip that step in the process and focus on cutting out her desired shapes and adding details (Cercle, 2016).



PAPER COLLAGE by Morgana Wallace.

WEIGHT

Paper weight, which is measured in grams per square meter (GSM), refers to the thickness of a sheet of paper ("Origami Paper," 2018). For example, if an artist wants to use paper as a canvas, they would likely go for a much heavier weight that translates to thicker and sturdier paper. If they intend to bend, fold, or otherwise modify the paper, they should use a lighter weight.



ORIGAMI FIGURE by Gonzalo Garcia Calvo.



An art form that commonly requires lightweight paper, for example, is origami. Origami is an art of paper folding, originally invented in Japan hundreds of years ago, but has since become universally known. Spanish artist Gonzalo Garcia Calvo became famous for his paper origami creations; he frequently uses unryu paper, which is very thin at only 27 GSM, but produces really soft and elegant results (Jewell, 2015). Origami is a true testament to the beautiful and diverse abilities of paper.

FINISH

Paper finish is an important consideration for artists because it affects not only the appearance, but also the textural feel of the artwork. Paper finish is all about the surface of a piece of paper, and it can range widely from glossy to matte, or smooth to bumpy. For example, a greeting card designer might be inclined to use a soft, smooth finish, because their work needs to appeal to the user's sense of touch. Other popular finishes include embossed, letra, and metallic (Schinkel, 2017).



Embossed, Letra, and Metallic paper finishes.

As a result of developments in paper technology, paper has shifted from primarily being a foundation for other mediums, to becoming a medium itself. Paper art has become more innovative and creative. On page 3, we explore three paper artists who found unique ways to work with paper.

EXPLORING PAPER ART

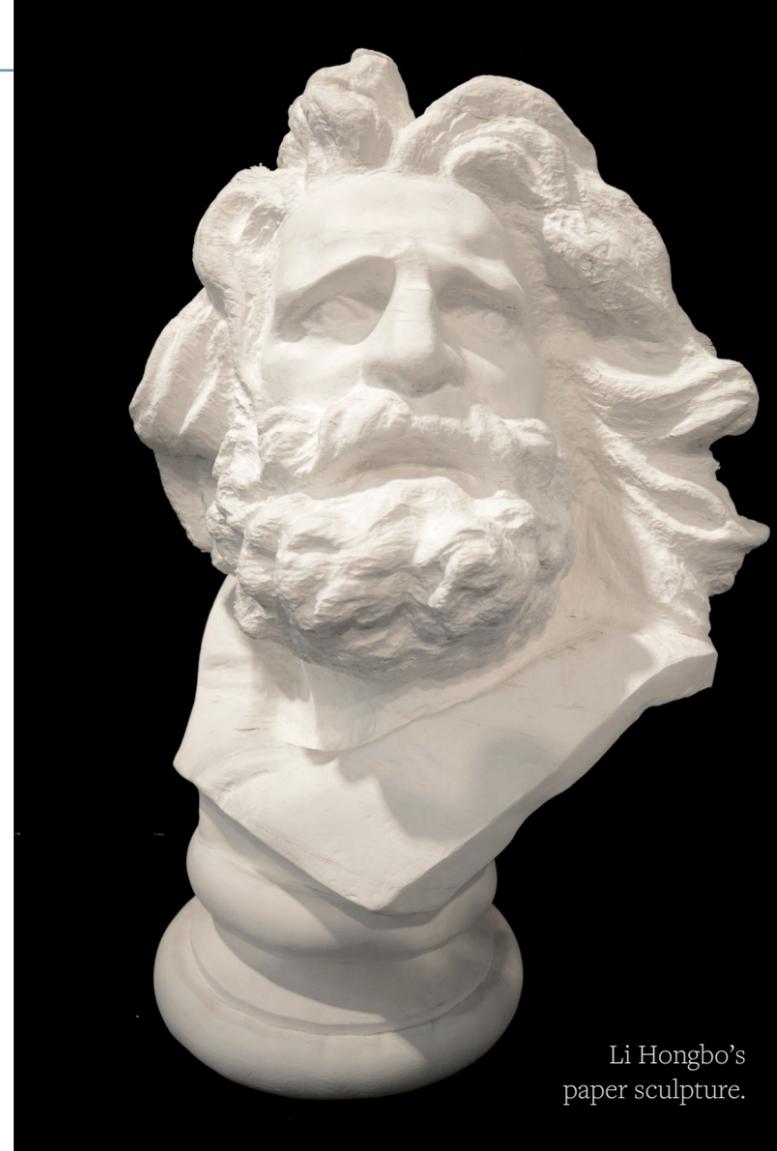
THREE ARTISTS, THREE APPROACHES

By Klara Bajlon

The sculpture to the right may look as though it is made from the most polished marble, but in fact it is carved from a heavy block of paper. Chinese artist **Li Hongbo** has been creating these avant-garde paper sculptures for years. His decision to work with paper came from its versatility. Hongbo says, “paper... had a huge effect on civilization, but it still has more to say” (Cheung, 2019).

While individual sheets of paper can be fragile; prone to tearing, wrinkling, or creasing, thousands of sheets glued together become remarkably durable. Hongbo’s larger pieces are made from anywhere between 7000 to a whopping 25,000 sheets of paper. He laboriously glues each piece together by hand in a specific structure that allows the entire

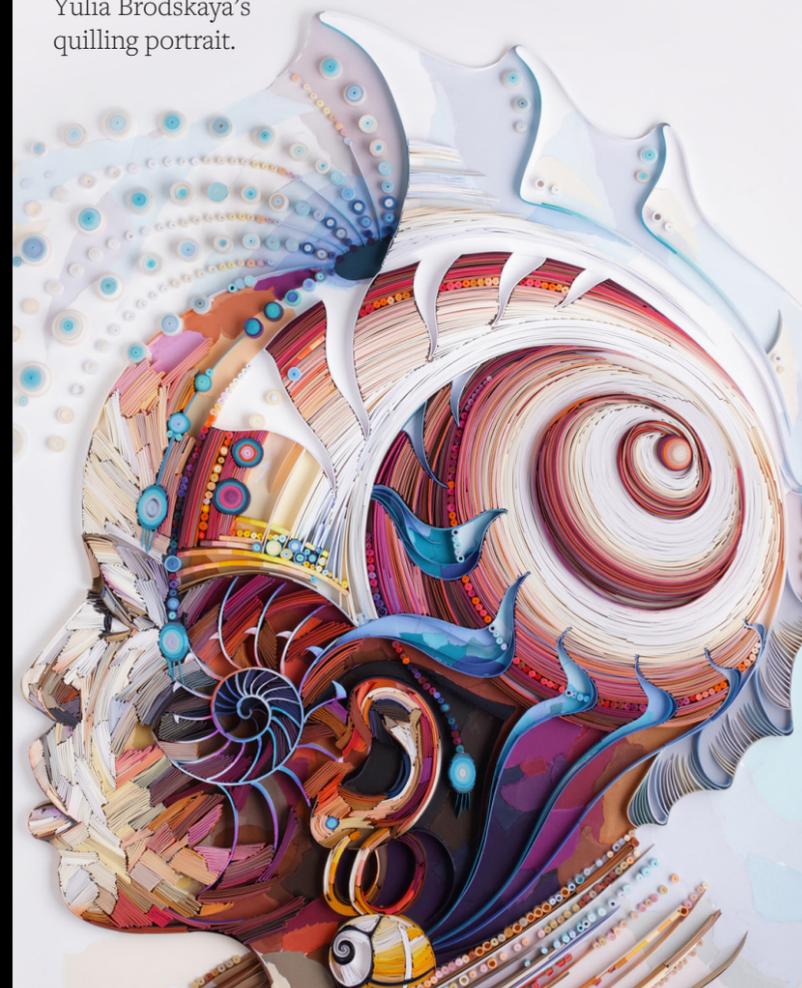
unit to flexibly move and expand in an accordion-like manner. Once all the papers are attached, Hongbo chisels them down to their final shape using a saw and grinder meant for woodworking, and sandpaper. The end result is an incredibly smooth exterior likened to marble, but with an interior honeycomb-like structure that gives it its unique mobility. (Cheung, 2019).



Li Hongbo’s paper sculpture.

“ PAPER... HAD A HUGE EFFECT ON CIVILIZATION, BUT IT STILL HAS MORE TO SAY. ”

Yulia Brodskaya’s quilling portrait.



The beautiful, colourful portrait pictured to the left is from a series of paper pieces created by **Yulia Brodskaya**, the artist who “paints with paper.” She performs a modern interpretation of quilling, a technique where strips of paper are bent, folded, and curled to create different shapes and effects (Barnes, 2018).

Brodskaya’s use of coloured paper causes dramatic contrasts between shapes and a very vibrant end result. The paper’s thickness as well as her adjustments of it, including folding, stacking, and spiraling the different sheets, offers a special texture to her artwork, and allows for significant depth as she builds up paper in different areas of her work (Staugaitis, 2019).

Paper artist **Rogan Brown**, based in France, creates incredibly intricate three-dimensional paper cutouts of natural organisms, as seen in the picture on the right. He cuts individual pieces of paper, either by hand with a scalpel or by laser, and then mounts and glues them above each other.

He uses a layering technique reminiscent of topographical maps, starting from the middle layer and gradually developing the others both beneath and above (Severijns, 2013). His larger works take months to create, as a result of the meticulous attention to detail.

Brown chose to work with monochromatic white and matte paper because his pieces experiment a lot with light and shadow. The matte white paper optimizes contrasts in lighting, focusing the eye on light movements rather than the paper itself (Blakeley, 2018).

Brown stated that he has a great appreciation for both the simplicity and accessibility of paper (Fleerackers, 2019). It is fascinating that such a commonplace substrate could be transformed into something so unique and creative.



Rogan Brown’s paper cut-out.

Paper is one of the most profound substrates in the world. Although its abundance in all areas of everyday life blinds us to the rich nuances that exist within it, once you rediscover the potential of paper, the possibilities are endless.

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Figure 3

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Figure 4

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Figure 5

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Figure 6

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Figure 7

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Figure 8

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Figure 9

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