

sure now should flatten the sheets that previously were on the top. Some hand papermakers dry the sheets in hot lofts, on fishing nets that are suspended from the ceiling. Some other papermakers hang the wet sheets on a clothes line as if they were laundry. In Japan, wet sheets are brushed on boards and dried in the sun. These methods contribute to the beauty of the paper's surface.

The patience of the hand papermaker is rewarded in many ways. Each sheet is as interesting to our tactile and visual senses as it is beautiful. Each is a work of art that may bear the signature of the craftsman in the form of a watermark. This watermark is produced by a brass wire that has been formed into letters or a design then sewn to the mesh screen of the mould. While the paper is forming, the shape of the brass wire is naturally formed into the sheet and can easily be seen by holding it up to the light.

Although a uniquely rich and attractive sheet of paper is incentive enough to mould paper by hand, there are even more practical reasons to encourage this art. Since handmade papers are formed slowly, the fibers have more time to interlock, and by this strong bonding, the paper is stronger. Also, handmade paper has no grain direction; since the fibers are equally shaken in both directions, they are equally entwined.

Time also allows for the fact that there is no difference between the "wire side" of each sheet and the "felt side." What is more, handmade paper is cleaner and clearer than machine made papers, again by virtue of the slower process by which each sheet is formed.

The cradle of hand papermaking is the Orient, where paper was first fabricated in China nearly 2,000 years ago. Today, very exquisite handmade papers come from Japan, where the ancient craft is still pursued as a cottage industry. In the Western world, only cotton fibers are used in the hand paper making process. Although Oriental papers are often called "rice papers" they are not now and never were products of the

oldest ones move very, very slowly. This accounts for the handmade look and properties of mouldmade paper. In fact, it may be at first difficult for the novice to distinguish mouldmade paper from a handmade sheet. One simple way for an inexperienced student of fine paper to make this distinction would be to examine the deckle edge of the sheet in question. While handmade papers have four natural deckle edges, mouldmade papers have two natural deckles on the outside edges, and two so-called artificial interior deckles. These are made by a wire seam cutting across the widths of the cylinder mould called a waterline, along which the wet sheets are torn apart.

Mouldmade paper does have some genuine advantages over handmade papers besides faster production; uniformity being one. A run of mouldmade paper can be as consistent in character and weight as if it were made by machine, yet so much more attractive. Mouldmade papers can practically come in any size too, whereas handmade paper is limited in size to that of a mould one workman can grasp.

Both handmade and mouldmade papers are today produced in colors other than the traditional white, off-white and cream. Non-acidic whiteners and dyes have been developed to give artists working in every medium a broader choice of colors, while still maintaining the paper's acid-free character.

Machinemade papers

The demand for great quantities of paper, at low cost, was met in 1806 by the Fourdrinier paper making machine. It forms paper on an endless wire woven cloth in much less time than mouldmade and handmade methods. However, the demand for quality performance by the art community makes this method of producing paper the least important among those who put paper to its noblest use. These are the people who can take a sheet of paper between their fingers with an appreciation for the intellect, the skill and the pride that binds it together.