



# HAND PAPERMAKING

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FRONT COVER: Karen Kandel (performer/writer) and Shonosuke Okura (Noh Drummer) in *Sen no Rikyu of Recycling: washi tales*, New York Theatre Workshop, 2011. Kyoko Ibe (set/costume design), Elise Thoron (director/writer), Jane Cox (lighting design). Photo: Isaac Bloom. BACK COVER: Lesley Dill, making adjustments to Poem Dress for a Hermaphrodite, 1995, 66 x 30 x 20 inches, tissue paper, thread, ribbon, ink. Performed by Sur Rodney Sur, in "Pulp Fashion" event, on December 2, 1995, at Dieu Donné Papermill, New York. Photo: Lesley Dill Studio.

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## Letter from the Editor

When *Hand Papermaking* was founded in 1986, one of the primary and continuing goals of the magazine has been to connect practitioners, historians, educators, and artists—to share research, document our findings, and advance the field as a whole. We often say that our community gathers in the pages of our publications. The organization itself has operated ‘virtually’—since the beginning, the board of directors and staff have been meeting via telephone and videoconferencing to bridge long distances. But every five years or so we make sure to convene in a room together, because we know that nothing takes the place of sharing the same physical space and time to assess, plan, and reaffirm our commitment to the handmade and the handheld. We are scheduled to do so again in 2021; we hope this will be possible given all the uncertainty with the coronavirus pandemic.

Sharing space and time and experiential connection are at the core of this issue of the magazine, in which we look at ways artists have mobilized paper in performance. The physical, aesthetic, and working properties of paper have been explored in costume and stage design, sound pieces, and kinetic artwork, both in live performance and as a document of private performance. We also examine the performative nature of the act of papermaking and the choreography inherent in the process.

Midori Yoshimoto starts off the issue by introducing us to the work of Japanese artist Shiraga Fujiko (1928–2015), an early member of Gutai, the Japanese avant-garde, performance-based collective, active in the 1950s. Elise Thoron shares her conversation with Japanese paper artist Kyoko Ibe who first incorporated paper in performance work in the early 1980s, finding that “theater is the ideal place to show the beauty and variety of washi.” Hannah Turpin writes about Fluxus performance in Alison Knowles’s handmade-paper sound sculptures, costumes, and instruments. Winifred Lutz worked with our wonderful designer Karen Kopacz to ‘re-stage’ (with coda) a photo story publication of *Light Cycle*, a performance project Lutz produced in Anchorage, Alaska in 1986. In Lucy Kay Riley’s article about Lesley Dill’s extensive use of paper costumes in performance-based pieces, Riley argues, “live performances activate the work, bringing the paper alive again.” Beatrix Mapalagama contributes a profile of Tone Fink, an Austrian artist who uses paper costumes, masks, and objects in his performance pieces and installations. Michelle Samour maintains that the process of making paper is by its very nature performative, in the ways papermakers use their bodies to transform pulp into paper, and the synchronized movements that are required when more than one are at the vat. Artist and papermaker Peter Sowiski contributes a paper sample that demonstrates the use of one of his whole-body-action, DIY, pulp-painting tools. Karen Trask reviews Sarah Bertrand-Hamel’s new permanent installation of drawings and paperworks at the Pierrefonds Public Library in Montreal, Quebec, Canada; and Lisa Cirando gives us her take on “Paper Borders,” a recent exhibition of paperworks by Emma Nishimura and Tahir Carl Karmali, presented at the International Print Center New York.

By the time you receive this in hand, I hope there is at least a timetable for when we can once again embrace family and friends, and be productive in the world beyond “sheltering in place.” On behalf of the board and staff of Hand Papermaking, Inc., I send our best wishes for your safety and health. Please send word of your papermaking doings (and performances) during this time of necessary physical distancing. In our longtime role to foster “distant gathering,” we would like to share them in the upcoming edition of *Hand Papermaking Newsletter*.

Mina Takahashi



## *Skin and Body Theater: Tone Fink, Austrian Paper Artist*

BEATRIX MAPALAGAMA

TRANSLATED FROM THE ORIGINAL GERMAN<sup>1</sup>

*Tone Fink, performance at the Museum of Applied Arts, Vienna, 2004. BELOW: Tone Fink, Brusthaarbild (Chest Hair Image), 2014, drawing and collage on handmade paper.*



Tone Fink is a well-known Austrian artist. His works range from drawings, paper objects, and elaborate artist books, to animated films and performances.<sup>2</sup> His entire oeuvre is born out of an attitude that is life-affirming, easygoing, and active, perhaps even overactive. His aspiration is not only to do what inspiration gives rise to, but also to make a living from his art. Among Fink's mottos are "Perfection is the refuge of the insecure" and "Only those who change remain true to themselves."

Tone Fink grew up in the countryside. The relationships between people there were close. Everybody knew each other. His parents experienced firsthand the Second World War. As with all families, this had an effect over generations. His siblings, especially one brother, put pressure on Tone. After all, Tone was the only one who was not constantly doing physical labor, instead he was drawing and questioning everyday life. Tone decided to leave this environment as a teenager to study painting with Max Weiler in Vienna. The concept of drawing as a representation of flowing energy was emphasized in his studies. The big city made it possible for him to freely create, test his limits, and engage with the unfamiliar.

It is important to Tone Fink to be free and to not let anything curtail his creative urges; that includes being free as a body that can address its sexuality as unburdened as it can address its childhood. If necessary, he performs naked. He believes art is revolt, rebellion, and anarchy, and that it belongs to the unconscious.

When I was a student 30 years ago, I remember seeing a thin book by Fink in the library. It was full of his sayings and drawings. Back then, I was not so enthusiastic about the sexual overtones of his work, but today, I know that it was and is not his intention to shock. He sees himself as a sexual being and does not hide this trait.





Tone Fink, with Hockthronen (*Squat Thrones*), 2004–2006, wood, papier-mâché.



Tone Fink, activating Untitled, 2003–2004, from a performance/installation at Kunsthaus Bregenz, Austria, 2004.

In his early graphics, paper functioned purely as a carrier. Later, the surface is scratched, slit, perforated, torn, folded, and sometimes pasted over. With these violated surfaces, the back of the paper might become the front of the piece. The worked paper becomes a haptic object.

I have often found a close relationship between skin and paper. Fink has red hair and freckles, with the accompanying particularly sensitive skin. I asked him about it and he reported that he had various skin ailments including abscesses during his childhood. He calls his own works *Skin* and *Body Theater*. He adds papier-mâché or strips of paper as a top layer to most of his objects. He perceives objects without this layer as unfinished.

Paper is common in many households and can be easily reshaped. We fold it, it gets wet, and the surface deforms; an unneeded note is crumpled and thrown into the wastepaper basket. In this way we are all daily paper performers. The transformative properties of paper can encourage receptive artists, like Fink, to create in space and to work in a process-based way. In my opinion, paper always has spatial qualities; even a sheet I take out of the computer printer is already a curved surface in space.

Humorous and ironic features make Fink's work accessible to many exhibition visitors and collectors. After all, every visit to an exhibition opening is also an entertaining evening, and a purchase of his work brings a sense of light-heartedness into one's own four walls. The attitude of the work is: Fight for your freedom, work hard, and don't take yourself and the world too seriously. Fink uses word play and unusual linguistic combinations as titles of his drawings. For readers who understand German, here are some completely untranslatable examples: *Brustzwergreigen*, *Maikäfertompteur*, or *Reizhorndraufgänger Weißsagunger*. Fink

even plays with his own name; the title of one of his exhibitions is *GEH.finkelt*, which in English means "cunning."

Fink describes himself as a man of great drive. Movement plays a major role in his work. The drawings usually begin without a sketch, with lines, and bundles of lines that become bodies. Energies are distributed on the sheet according to Fink's inner needs. Nobody sits rigidly in the picture; the bodies are in motion in relationship to their surroundings. In his objects, movement is emphasized via handles, wheels, or rungs. Sensual objects are moved like giant toys. Some are mobile and therefore can be experienced. When stationary, they impress as formal architectural interiors. Rollers, spheres, ladders, cubes, discs, points, and ovoids stand motionless in space and wait to be activated. The performer will climb, push, pull, or jump over them. Visitors to openings and exhibitions are encouraged to move the objects.

Fink builds these "utility" objects himself. The fittings are made of wire, wire mesh, metal, wood, and plaster, and are covered with papier-mâché or a masking paper. The motifs are reminiscent of mobile carriages, roly-poly toys, or seats. There are giant see-saws, swings, and wheelchairs. Making objects is deeply rooted in the family through his father, who was a blacksmith, and his uncle, a wainwright. Fink's mother sewed traditional costumes, which influenced his production of masks and dresses made of paper.

Performance requires a willingness to show oneself and to be a part of the dynamic that develops spontaneously among the participants. To pretend, to react, to be fully present. Fink naturally brings these qualities with him.

He also welcomes the opportunity to experience himself in the other person and thus to get to know himself anew. He writes:





*Tone Fink, erFAHRbar, a paper car performance/installation at Kunsthau Bregenz, Austria, 2019.*





*Paper-covered objects for Tone Fink's performance piece, *Aufstand der Tiere (Revolt of Animals)*, a procession that will take place in Schwarzenberg, Austria, July 2020, as part of the town's 750th-anniversary celebration.*



*Tone Fink, *Light, Movement and Shadow of My Papersmile*, a performance and installation (with Chantal Dorn) at the Oita Prefectural Art Museum, Japan, 2016.*



*A procession of performers in paper masks and costumes leaving the museum for the streets; as part of *Light, Movement and Shadow of My Papersmile*, a performance and installation by Tone Fink (with Chantal Dorn) at the Oita Prefectural Art Museum, Japan, 2016.*

Showing and seducing, moving and “being” are important for me, that I am alone again when drawing and labeling, painting, and handicrafts. That’s why my films are important to me, because I love to present theater to the audience with my creations and make them want to participate. In order to actually constitute oneself as the mobile that unites becoming and being, one must realize in oneself the impression of becoming lighter (becoming an imaginary mass). Think with the body! In order to see, one does not have to stand still.<sup>3</sup>

Fink works alone on his art. Exceptions are the performances with groups of 30 to 70 people; they move through the city like processions. One participant of a performance said in a personal conversation that the group enthusiastically wandered the streets and euphorically showed their bodies, which had been transformed by paper skins in various forms. These processions and vestments are prepared by the participants themselves and run by Fink for their suitability. For this purpose, groups come together and spend weeks making paper objects, masks, and paper dresses.

In the filmed performance *Was das Zeug hält (To a Fare-Thee-Well)*, the actors spread glue on themselves and rolled around on pieces of paper. More and more paper pieces covered the skin until only a moving “paper object” was created. It would be hard to imagine a more physical relationship to paper. Here, paper actually becomes the outer skin.

The size of some of his books also makes turning the pages of them into a performance. The papers are handmade, thick, physical, and stiff.

Fink is successful because he is spontaneous and very active, completely familiar with himself, experimenting with forms, materials, and colors with relish. He believes that what is considered beautiful is born out of the practice of everyday life; one should locate one’s instinct, the sixth sense for the powers of the earth.

#### NOTES

1. Editor’s note: Much appreciation to Michael Durgin, with assistance from Marco Breuer, for translating the original draft from German into English. The original draft in German, from which this article derives, is available on Hand Papermaking’s website at <http://handpapermaking.net/magazine/web-only/>.
2. A comprehensive overview of Tone Fink’s work is available at his website, [www.tonefink.at](http://www.tonefink.at). There are also a number of films about and with Fink on YouTube.
3. Tone Fink, quoted in Tone Fink: Zeichnung, Malerei, Objekte, Performance, Filme 1967–2000, an exhibition catalogue accompanying his retrospective exhibition at the Bregenzer Kuntsverein, in Bregenz, Austria, July 14–September 3, 2000 (Vienna: Triton Verlag, 2000).