

# The Museum of Modern Art

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PRINTED, CUT, FOLDED AND TORN

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WALL LABEL

Paper, a Chinese invention of the second century A.D., was first printed upon, by the Japanese, in the eighth century. In Europe, prints on paper such as playing cards or block-books appeared in the fifteenth century. For hundreds of years paper has been taken for granted as a material to print, write, or draw on, but only in recent years has its wider potential as a medium been exploited by artists.

The special qualities of paper, its stiffness, toughness, and pliancy, were explored three decades ago by Lucio Fontana. His work involved redefining space by piercing holes and making incisions in the paper or canvas support. More recently Jasper Johns, in his lithograph Decoy, has penetrated the surface of the image by punching a hole in the bottom center area of the composition, removing a portion of the printed image. Richard Tuttle used punched holes as a means to create a drawing device; his print consists of lithographed instructions explaining how a drawing may be made by projecting a line from two punched holes. Die cutting, a method of making a more precise hole or cut in the paper, is seen in a sequence of works from Ad Dekkers' portfolio Blanco Action.

The plate can be so manipulated - by embedding objects in it or by exposing it to a prolonged acid bath - that the printing process will emboss the paper, thus casting it in a new form. Günther Uecker, a young German artist working in Düsseldorf, has used nails to emboss illustrations complementing the various quotations, from authors such as Kierkegaard or Hegel, cited in Vom Licht. The raised and often broken surface of the paper reflects light, escaping the spatial limitations of paper.

Other forms of manipulating paper include tearing, creasing, cutting by hand, or folding the print before, during, or after printing. Iain Baxter crumpled a completed edition of prints and documented the process by including a slide with each work. Benni Efrat, in his three serigraphs from Scopes of Blue, Red and Yellow, 6 Parts, has torn each sheet before printing a sequence of primary colors which overlap to become new color; unique texture as well as a subtle variation of color occurs because of the torn edge. Mikus creases the paper with an ivory bookbinder's knife horizontally and vertically before printing; the creases are reinforced with the knife after printing. Sam Gilliam, in his lithographs Nile and Fire, has creased the paper vertically after printing, dispersing and blotting the still wet ink. Louise Nevelson has blotted or transferred ink by rerunning her print through the press with two torn shaped pieces of paper placed over it, then collaging as well as hinging the blotted images to the original print. Another artist using blotting and folding is Dieter Roth. In his etching Simple Trolley he has transferred the printed image to tissue paper, so that the image can be viewed from both sides of the sheet. Simple Trolley as well as

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the blotted image on tissue are carefully folded and placed in the portfolio Containers with other folded and torn items.

The idea of three-dimensional pop-outs in children's books was explored at Universal Limited Art Editions Workshop by Larry Rivers in his lithograph Diana with Poem. The book is stored flat, but when it is tilted forward the image pops out. Ed Moses, while working at the Tamarind Workshop in Los Angeles, printed, cut out by hand, and folded a series of prints, placing one cut and folded sheet with tabs over another sheet printed with a single color, allowing the color of the bottom sheet to show through the cut edges. The translucent and transparent qualities of paper have also been exploited by Ed Moses in a work recently executed by layering not opaque but translucent tissue sheets, printed lithographically on front and back. Nancy Graves has used both sides of the paper as well as the natural perforations of the amime net, a translucent paper, which allows the color of one lower sheet to appear through the holes.

Variation within the edition has become an additional interest for the artist as he or she manipulated paper. No two prints by Alan Shields from the same edition can be identical; each print is stenciled onto dyed paper and sewn, and certain areas are slit and interwoven with dyed strips of paper. Robert Rauschenberg's recent work involving the actual process of making paper demonstrates the way in which an artist may allow variance within an edition of prints as a result of the process. During the summer of 1973 Rauschenberg created a series of works, Pages and Fuses, at Richard de Bas, a French paper mill dating from the fourteenth century. The project included forming paper molds as well as dyeing fibers with special pigments. Sheets of Japanese paper tissue were serigraphed with various images from popular magazines, chosen by the artist. These were cut and embedded into the wet, newly dipped sheets of macerated rag paper fiber.

Recent developments in printmaking represent a move away from the traditional tools and methods into a complete involvement by the artist in the total process. Through molding, dyeing, cutting, punching, sewing, creasing, and tearing the paper upon which the printed image appears, contemporary artists have significantly extended the boundaries of printmaking.

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