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EDITOR'S CHOICE

Amateur, pro artists enjoy this paper chase

Using paper to make art is nothing unusual, but for some, the process of making paper is itself an art—one that anybody willing to get his or her hands wet can practice with decent results.

"Paper is a wonderful medium," says Linda Sorkin Eisenberg, an artist and co-founder of Paper Press, which recently merged with Artists Books Works to form the Center for the Book and Paper Arts at Columbia College in Chicago. "You can't make a mistake with handmade paper. It just happens."

Ms. Eisenberg, who teaches the craft to children as young as 6 and adults well into their senior years, is not talking about an average sheet of typing paper.

Ms. Eisenberg's paper comes in different shapes, sizes and textures. It may have colors racing through it, pieces of lace, pine needles, flowers, feathers or whatever else sparks her fancy. This paper is unique, with no two pieces exactly alike. In other words—art.

Ms. Eisenberg says handmade paper can be used for original greeting cards, as a backdrop for photography and in sculpture. And for those who may dismiss its importance, she points out that the Declaration of Independence was written on handmade paper, and that the art form stretches "back to the 15th century."

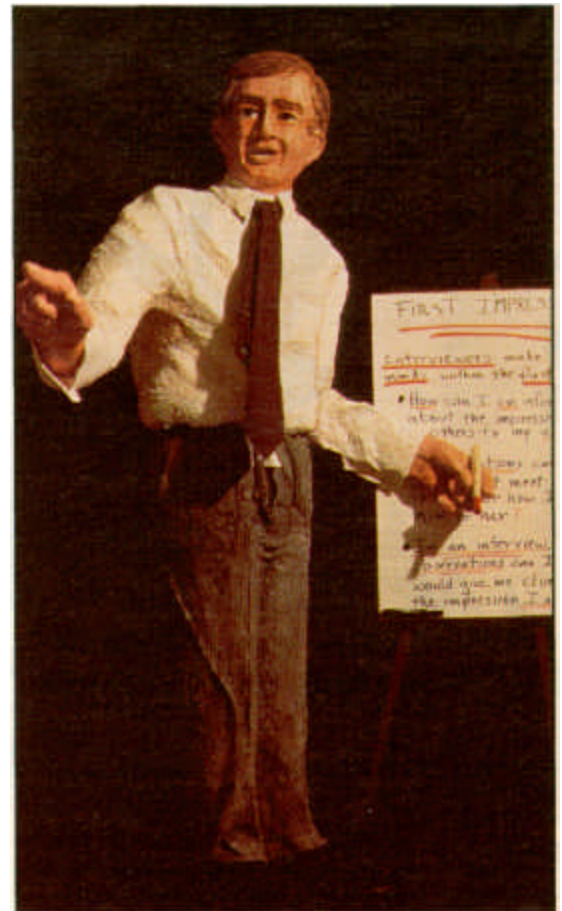
Learning to paint can be a lengthy process, Ms. Eisenberg says, but with paper, "you can go home and do it yourself and really have success."

While papermaking is an art accessible to the masses, it can also take on more complex forms.

Chicago artist Nancy Steinmeyer creates life-size relief sculptures, a half-dozen of which are on display on the lower levels of the Sears Tower Skydeck. The theme of the exhibit, which runs through August, is embarrassing moments—such as a man stepping into a dog mess on his way to pick up a date, or a woman standing in the midst of a party with her blouse unbuttoned.

Ms. Steinmeyer says she started using her kitchen blender to make paper after seeing a demonstration in college. "What's great is

Chicago artist Nancy Steinmeyer took a flier



on paper sculpture, and her works are on display at the Sears Tower.

there's nothing to it," says the artist, who now uses a restaurant blender.

The process is a simple one, she says, involving torn-up pieces of newspapers, magazines or even paper towels. The pieces are blended with water into an oatmeal-like substance, then drained into a pulp, which can then be dyed with pigments.

Homemade paper "has a different texture and is more organic," Ms. Steinmeyer says. Some will never understand its appeal, while "others say, 'This is exactly why I'm attracted to it.'"

KATE GRIFFIN