



## One Man's Quest to Master Handmade Papermaking

BY RAVIKUMAR KASHI

**M**y first exposure to handmade papermaking happened when I was around 11 or 12 years old. We had visited Vishveshvaraya Science and Technology Museum in my home town Bangalore, as part of my school trip. There was a section on papermaking with pictures and information; beside that there was a live demo of handmade paper being made. I liked it instantly and visited that section many more times.

When I was 15 I read an article which explained how to make recycled paper at home, and decided to try my hand at it. I soaked some newspaper in fenugreek overnight and pulverized it with a stone grinder in the kitchen. I made a thick rough board from the resultant pulp and dried it in the sun. Later I tried painting on the board, but it was too absorbent- I didn't know why at the time.

When I was in Baroda in 1990 I had visited Kanoria Centre in Ahmedabad where

a papermaking workshop was going on and later took a look at some of the works made during the workshop. Several years later, in Bangalore, I 'discovered' 'Vishwaneedam', a Khadi Handmade Paper Making Unit near my house. I used to buy ready pulp from there and use it in my work. Around 1997 I started using this recycled pulp for casting various objects and forms. One such work called 'Encounter' won me the National Academy award.

### Qualifications

In 2000 my friend Archana Hande, who had gone to Glasgow School of Art on a Charles Wallace Grant returned to India. She told me that there was a Handmade Paper Making Resource Centre in GSA, where I could learn paper making exclusively. I applied, and was very excited when I later received a grant from the Charles Wallace Trust towards the September 2001 course.

My teacher at GSA, Jacki Parry, a print-maker and fiber artist, would fix a time with me every week when she would come and teach me the intricacies of the medium. At the end of the term I had a show of my works in the faculty. After returning I continued using the medium and had several shows of paper based works.

In 2008 I went to Seoul, to take part in Korea International Art Fair (KIAF). That is when I discovered Hanji paper in the Insadong area. I decided that I wanted to learn the traditional method of making that paper. For the next several months I was trying to figure who could teach me. One day a person called Penelope, an Australian lecturer teaching in Seoul, replied to an online advert I had posted saying that she knew a Korean student Aimee Lee, residing in US, who had come on Fulbright scholarship to learn Hanji. I wrote to Aimee, and she readily agreed to help me.

### Looking to the East

Finally, after many months of striving things fell in place. In 2009, I went to KIAF again and after completing the show I went to Jangi Ji Bang, a small village. I stayed at one of the mill workers' house as a paying guest. My teacher Seang Woo taught me every step of the fascinating process. He knew a smattering of English and we communicated with lot of dramatic gestures and dictionaries in hand. I documented the entire process and took elaborate notes. His father Jang Yong has been declared a national asset, but I could not communicate with him because he did not know any English. Along with teaching me Hanji my teacher also taught me Washi, the Japanese traditional technique for making paper. Now I knew not only Western but also Eastern methods of papermaking. This new exposure brought fresh elements to my work.

Even after all these years, I feel I have explored only a portion of the possibilities that the papermaking process can offer. The coming days are indeed very interesting, and I'm planning to use papers made from various plant fibers extensively to create large installations. 📖

## HANDMADE PAPERMAKING



Ravi Kumar's Teacher Boiling



Hanji Making



Paper Painting

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Medium – Cast cotton rag, archival inkjet printing on Hahnemuehle 'Monet' canvas  
 Size – 15.5” x 25” x 3.5”  
 Year of execution - 2011



Yesterday once again  
 Acrylic, Oil Colours and plastic on MDF Board  
 48” x 48”, 2011 Year of execution - 2011

ABOUT RAVIKUMAR KASHI :

Ravikumar Kashi was born in Bangalore in 1968. He completed his B.F.A. in Painting from College of Fine Arts, Bangalore in 1988. Further he completed M.F.A. in Printmaking from Faculty of Fine Arts, M.S. University of Baroda in 1990 and M.A. in English, from Mysore University in 1995. In 2001 he studied handmade papermaking under J. Parry at the Papermaking Resource, Glasgow School of Art, Glasgow, UK, with a grant from the Charles Wallace India Trust. In 2009 he learnt Hanji - traditional Korean paper making from Jang Yong Hoon and Seong Woo at Jang Ji Bang, Korea, with a funding from INKO Centre, Chennai.

Since 1991 he has had several solo shows in Bangalore, Mumbai, New Delhi, Chennai, and Hyderabad in India and London & Glasgow in U.K., Palo Alto, California, U.S.A., and Shanghai, China. His recent solo show 'Game' was exhibited at Gallery Sumukha, Bangalore and Chennai and Pundole Art Gallery, Mumbai in 2010.

His works have been part of several museum shows, numerous curated shows, group shows and art fairs in India and in New York, New Jersey, San Francisco, Berkeley, Munich, Seoul, Singapore, Hong Kong, Yokohama, Perth, Mexico, Toronto, Dubai, Nairobi, Beijing, Burma including 10th Triennale of India in New Delhi and 11th Asian Art Biennale, Dhaka, Bangladesh; Yokohama International Triennale of Contemporary Art, Japan; Arad Biennale, Romania. 'Edge of Desire' traveling show of Recent Indian art shown in Perth - Australia, New York - USA, Mexico- New Mexico, He was selected for 'Best of Discovery' section in Sh 07, International Art Fair, held in Shanghai, China. His works have been shown in Santa Fe International Art Fair and ArtAsia Fair in Miami in U.S.A and KIAF- Korea International Art Fair in Seoul.

He has won Karnataka Lalit Kala Akademi award three times and National Award in 2001. He also writes on art in Kannada and English published in various magazines and newspapers. Recently two of his Kannada books 'Anukta' and 'Kannele' on art were released.





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