

Paper, Rope, and Paint

Unique Approaches in Mixed Media



There are many steps and stages to my art making process. I have been creating handmade wall hangings in mixed media for the past 20 years. All of the wall hangings and artwork I create are made of paint and paper. I am inspired by plant fibers, either in paper or rope form. I made the paper myself in my studio for over twenty years. After a huge [upheaval in our lives](#), I sold my beater and decided to use pre-made papers (most of the time...)

The papermaking process I have worked in is known as the western method of papermaking. I work with several different fibers; Abaca, Sisal, which comes from the Agave plant (a native South American plant), Cotton, and Hemp.

When I make paper, I order them preprocessed and beaten half stock, leaving me to rehydrate the fibers. I also process plant fibers



from scratch, (harvesting, cooking, rinsing, and beating) to add texture and variety to my work. Examples of plants I have processed include Hosta, Rose petals, Loveage, Lily stems, and Queen Ann's Lace.



I used a Hollander Beater (a second hand [David Reina Beater](#) purchased from artist [Richard Langdell](#)) for 16 years. In May of 2017, I sold the beater to the [John C. Campbell Folk School](#), in North Carolina, where I know they will put it to good use and the beloved beater will be used much more regularly than I had. In a Hollander Beater, plant fiber and water are placed in the trough of the beater and travel through the machine. A roll, similar to a gear shape, moves the water and fibers, and gently separates them as they are pressed between the roll and bedplate. Since selling the beater, I have returned to the simple format of using a blender to make pulp.



The finished pulp is dispersed in a vat of water. Then a mold and deckle (a wooden screen), or a su (a removable bamboo screen) are used to form sheets of paper (known in the paper industry as a “wet leaf”).



While the sheets are still wet, one can embed plant fibers, dried botanicals, mirrors, and gems to create various compositions. At times, ropes made of cotton, jute, hemp, or flax are embedded between the sheets. Sometimes, these ropes are added and glued after the paper has dried.

Once the sheets are dry, paint and collage can be applied directly onto the handmade paper base. I often use inks and paints to add layers of color onto the paper. I enjoy using metallic powders and paints as a finishing layer. One may also add stitching with the sewing machine and bead work. It is in this stage that each piece starts to come alive for me.



Each wall hanging is unique piece of art and titled accordingly. I usually sit in front of the finished work, contemplate the initial inspiration, and listen to what the end product has to tell me. I often find inspiration for the titles in poetry, such as the work of T.S. Eliot, the Tao Te Ching, Mark Nepo, and in the world of myth and religion. It is my hope that the title will offer the viewer a personal connection to each work of paper art but will not limit ones own creative interpretation.