



Dedicated to promoting artists' books and bringing increased visibility and appreciation to the field, New York non-profit Printed Matter, Inc. defines artists' books as "publications that have been conceived as artworks in their own right. These 'projects for the page' are generally inexpensive, often produced in large or open editions, and are democratically available...it is this potential to reach a larger audience that lends the books its social qualities and increases its political possibilities."

For example, mixed media artist **JoAnna Poehlmann** brings her wit, sensitivity, and love of nature, art, and history to a variety of media, including watercolor, prints, sculpture, and limited edition books. She pays special attention to the binding and boxes that are created to house the work—implicitly challenging the line between book and object.

Artist and printmaker **Jim Lee** runs his own press producing limited edition hand-printed letterpress books. While he may use the landscape—and the people who inhabit it—as subject for prints and illustrations, he also creates books that contain poetry and work by other writers. Varying book sizes and formats according to content and sometimes

utilizing craftspeople who specialize in edition binding, Lee's approach reflects the broad-based aspects of book arts as a whole—where style, materials, and methods of production are widely varied.

As suggested above, artists' books are often collaborative endeavors—with information springing from various sources. For example, master printer and printmaker **Ruth Lingen** worked with illustrator **Henrik Drescher** to produce **Comeundone**—a limited edition piece in the form of the Swiss cross, with engravings by Drescher printed onto stenciled paper handmade by Lingen.

**Lena Vigna**  
Curator of Exhibitions



(above left)  
**JoAnna Poehlmann**  
*The Stamp Collection*, 2014  
Hand colored lithograph and collage, edition 15/15  
7 x 4 1/2 x 1/2 inches  
Racine Art Museum, Gift of the Artist

(left)  
**Caren Heft, Canicular Press**  
*Paradise in the Smallest Thing*, 1988  
Letterpress and rubber stamp on handmade paper, Gampi paper, Arches® paper, and Xerox®  
8 3/4 x 11 5/8 inches  
Racine Art Museum, Gift of Hannah Gollin  
Photo: Jon Bolton



(above right)  
**Donna Rosenthal**  
*My Fair Ladies: The Free Spirit*, 2011  
Found vintage atlases, found vintage buttons, and steel  
20 x 13 x 11 inches  
Racine Art Museum,  
Gift of Gregg, Terrie, and Kirsten Maki in Honor of Emily Maki  
Photo: Jon Bolton

## Cut, Fold, and Form: Featuring Kiff Slemmons and Julie VonDerVellen



Even in a culture that seems more and more digitally-oriented, paper is pervasive. Over the ages, artists have included paper in their practice in a variety of ways, such as a surface for an image, a component of a larger piece, in the form of a book, or as a sculptural medium.

While there are aspects of paper that are fragile and delicate, it can also be versatile and durable. Historically, it has been utilized in a myriad of objects such as jewelry, clothing, lampshades, and vessels. Blending creativity, design, and engineering, papercraft traditions offer a repertory of techniques that extend the possibilities of the material. These methods include the folding practice of origami, papercutting, and quilling—creating designs from curled paper. Contemporary manipulations of paper play on its physical properties and capabilities, as well as its history as both a handmade material and an integral part of mass communication where it is utilized to convey news and images to a large audience.

Whether emphasizing the structural, the conceptual, or both, the artists whose works are featured in **Cut, Fold, and Form** transform paper—a familiar and seemingly mundane material—into vessels, sculpture, adornment, and artist's books. Featured artists Kiff



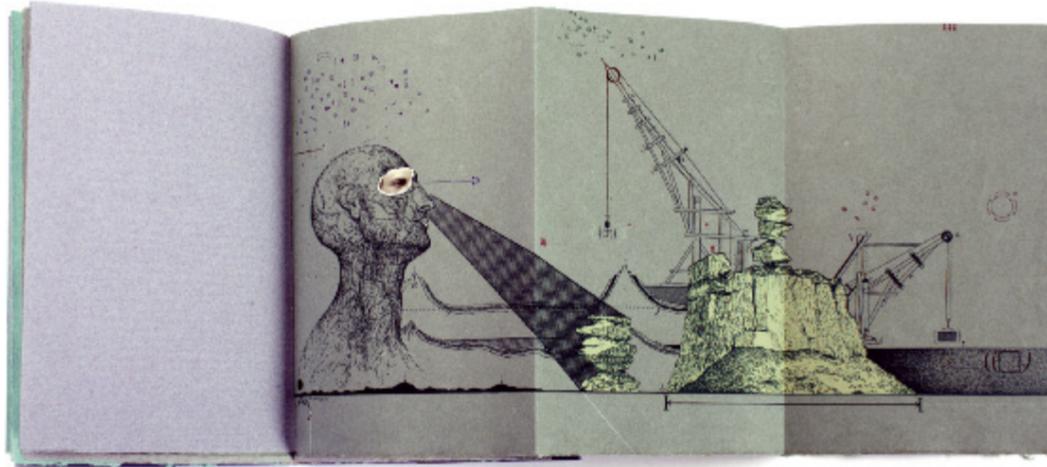
Slemmons, who makes ornate paper jewelry, and Julie VonDerVellen, who creates complex sculptural paper watches and clocks, are represented by multiple works. Artists from RAM's extensive, growing collection—such as **Dominic Di Mare**, **Walter Hamady**, **Caren Heft**, **Jim Lee**, **Ke-Sook Lee**, **Mary Merkel-Hess**, **JoAnna Poehlmann**, **Kay Sekimachi**, **Merle Temkin**, and **Michael Velliquette**—expand the conversation.

(above)  
**Julie VonDerVellen**  
*Two Times*, 2014  
Paper, book cloth, and acrylic paint  
9 x 17 x 4.5 inches  
Courtesy of the Artist  
Photo: Jim Escalante

(left)  
**Kiff Slemmons**  
*Back to Back, Tip to Tail*, 2013  
Handmade paper from Arte Papel Oaxaca  
23 x 2 x 3/4 inches  
Collection of the Artist  
Photo: Rod Slemmons

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**R | A | M**



In the last few decades, artists have turned to paper as a medium for material exploration, narratives, and large-scale installations. Since the mid-twentieth century, the interest in individual or limited edition artist made books has produced a dizzying array of responses to paper as a carrier of meaning on both actual and metaphorical levels.

**Cut, Fold, and Form** combines 3D objects with flat—yet constructed—pieces and artist made books. The variability of types of work reflects the versatility of the material and the individuality of the artists who use it.

Featured artists **Kiff Slemmons** and **Julie VonDerVellen** employ various techniques such as rolling, cutting, folding, and weaving to create jewelry and sculpture that engages larger social or personal issues.

While **Kiff Slemmons** made her name working with found objects and metal—several examples of such works may be found in RAM's collection—she has also been collaborating for over 10 years with artisans in Oaxaca, Mexico, to revive papermaking traditions. Invited to create jewelry designs for a workshop emphasizing handmade paper, Slemmons directed her inquisitive nature, willingness to experiment, and eye for design and structure to a non-precious material that was less familiar to her.

Looking for designs that could be replicated by others, Slemmons manipulated sheets of paper—cutting, folding, inking, and rolling it. The resulting adornment—necklaces made of rolled paper “beads” or bracelets made of geometric paper discs—reflects her sensitivity to materials.

Drawing on an interest in the book as a carrier of meaning, **Julie VonDerVellen** weaves paper into sculptural objects that become metaphors for memory, emotion, and the narratives of human life. She combines a background in traditional book making with textile design—using paper to specifically link to books, yet pushing the concept of how stories can be told. For example, VonDerVellen's *Time* series encompasses paper watches and clocks that represent different stages—or chapters—of a particular moment in her life. While each piece represents something specific to the artist, the



overall body of work with its recognizable timepieces, could also resonate with anyone viewing the work.

(above left)  
**Walter Samuel Hamady, The Perishable Press Limited**  
*The Pool from the Novel Dorit in Lesbos*, 1991  
Handmade paper, letterpress, and collage, book no. 116, edition 64/107  
12 1/4 x 12 1/8 inches  
Racine Art Museum, Gift of the Artist  
Photo: Jon Bolton

(left)  
**Jim Lee, Blue Moon Press**  
*Seven Deadly Sins – A Primer for the Morally Upright*, 1996  
Color linocut and letterpress on handmade paper, edition 35/50  
10 3/8 x 7 3/8 x 1/4 inches  
Racine Art Museum, Gift of Friends of Typography, Madison, Wisconsin  
Photo: Jon Bolton

(above right)  
**Julie VonDerVellen**  
*Wrapped* (detail), 2014  
Handmade paper and acrylic paint  
15 1/2 x 3/4 x 1/4 inches  
Courtesy of the Artist  
Photo: Jim Escalante



Artists such as **Kay Sekimachi**, known for creating woven bowls and boxes as well as weavings and wall hangings, chose to use paper for both its visual and physical properties. She was introduced to origami as a child and would combine folding techniques with stitching and layering.

Inspired by the natural landscape, **Mary Merkel-Hess** constructs basket-like forms by combining three-dimensional collage and papier-mâché. Merkel-Hess responds to an “image” of the landscape—the feel of the whole, an examination of form (such as a blade of grass), or a color—that she records in a sketchbook. She then translates that into a three-dimensional piece by building up layers of paper and mixed media over a mold.

Influential fiber artist **Dominic Di Mare** reveled in the process of making paper that he used in works exploring personal recollection, myth, and symbols. He states: “the process triggered feelings and memories that seemed central to my being...



[it] mirrors an important part of my life. Living aboard a boat and the catching of fish—the struggle that is so much a part of that existence—seems to be reflected in the magic of reaching into the water, ‘catching’ the pulp, and ending with the frozen wave [the piece of paper].”

Using cut paper and a colorful palette, **Michael Velliquette** crafts sculptures and reliefs that explore the capacity of paper as a material, as well as the role of the handmade, the ornamental, and the imagination. Reveling in the labor and focused intensity of papercutting, Velliquette produces a bounty of flowers, eyes, feathers, and symbols.

Artists in RAM's collection reflect how the book—or the idea of a book—can be a rich and complex site of exploration. Some, such as **Gayle Wimmer**, reference it as subject matter while others create actual books that cover any number of topics. **Reconstructing Memory: Lo Stenditio/The Drying Room** by Wimmer is an installation composed of dictionary pages—preserved in beeswax and gauze—and hung as if drying on a rope, as well as a table with individual pages that visitors can handle. Inspired by a print drying room at Fratelli Alinari Studios in Florence, Italy, Wimmer explores memory and the “literal and metaphorical fragility of the written word” as she activates viewer senses through sight and smell, and with the loose pages, touch. While the dictionary pages—from a 1921 *Webster's New International Dictionary*—do not form a proper narrative, they do offer the visitor an opportunity to recall their own stories, memories, and associations.

Artists' books—a category of making in its own right—can encompass aspects of printmaking, papermaking, illustration, design, and more. An artist can be involved in directly producing the book or can work with a team that implements an idea or a combination of both. Artists' books as a whole make use of the idea of the book, as well as its physical format, as a starting point for aesthetic and conceptual investigations.



(above)  
**Mary Merkel-Hess**  
*Campana II*, 1996  
Gampi paper, paperboard, and rattan  
23 x 19 inches  
Racine Art Museum,  
Gift of Karen Johnson Boyd  
Photo: Jon Bolton

(left)  
**Ruth Lingen, Pooté Press**  
*Comeundone*, 1989  
Text and drawings by Henrik Drescher  
Letterpress on stenciled handmade paper, line engraving, collage, and metal, edition 40/100  
6 x 6 x 1 inches  
Racine Art Museum, Gift of Paul Quick and Wisconsin Bell in Memory of Christopher Blaesing  
Photo: Jon Bolton, Racine

(below)  
**Kiff Slemmons**  
*Pulseras* (Bracelets), 2012-2013  
Handmade paper from Arte Papel Oaxaca  
3 1/2 x 2 inches each  
Collection of the Artist  
Photo: Rod Slemmons