Handmade paper: A mixture of handcraft, art and fun

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Abstract
The idea of a paper making workshop was devised to counterbalance the serious technical discussions. It turned out that many were interested: both adults and “conference children” wanted to participate in this adventure (fig. 1).

First: thanks to Jacek Kmiecik for the photographs!

1 How we did it
The aim was to walk through almost all stages of the technological process — from making the pulp, scooping it with with a sieve, removing excess water with a press (figs. 2 and 3), drying the paper sheets, up to putting the product to use.

The work was accompanied by stories about the history of paper — its way from China through the Arabic empire to Europe and about the improvements in fabrication technology.

2 How we used it
One person wrote a letter (fig. 4), another a solemn memorial — a sheet of such paper was used to prepare a diploma for Sam Guravage as an award for the best presentation (fig. 5).

3 Why we did it
Also important was coming to grips with the creative process, i.e., composing a decorated paper sheet with such additions as dyes, grass leaves, flowers and even . . . banknotes (fig. 6). On one of the sheets a four-leaf clover grows — will it bring luck to somebody?

The unaided composing of the paper-picture seems to have been the greatest attraction of the workshop — all the time new students were turning up — “I will yet do this so . . . or perhaps so . . .”

Figure 1: Participants waited patiently in a queue; children, youngsters and grown-ups were interested in touching the in statu nascendi paper.

Figure 2: Helping hands: the pulp was scooped with a wire screen or sieve.

Figure 3: Strong hands: excess water was removed using a hand press.
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The results were presented at a post-workshop exhibition (fig. 7)—it can be seen that amazingly varied ideas emerged despite the simple means, and the number of works created in such a short time bespeaks that we are much in need of such “amusements”—of such creativity written even with the smallest “c”, even if our everyday occupation is a so-called serious one. Or, perhaps, besides for a playful moment, something will remain in one of the typesetting souls? A broader, different view of the mysterious charm of paper as a medium not only for history, tradition, information, but also beauty?

Figure 4: Nice paper needs thorough concentration to write a nice letter

Figure 5: Sam Guravage receives his handmade diploma from Jerzy Ludwichowski.

Figure 6: “Here are the colors of nature so that you see what I see” reads the text in the Arabic script by Hossam A.H. Fahmy. Hossam explained further that: “The blue/green background represents the lake and the trees. The flowers and the leaves are for the blooming spring around us and for a hope for a fruitful \TeX/METAFONT future”—perfect touch!

Figure 7: The variety of the ideas was impressive, indeed...