

Hand Paper Making in Austria

In September of 2012, my husband, Jon Snyder, and I were invited to be artists-in-residence in Gmunden, Austria, by the members of the ARThaus4 collective studio and gallery. While in Austria, I wanted to do a project that would be of and about the place. Because I am a printmaker and book artist, the idea evolved to make paper using local cotton cloth. The paper would then be used for a collaborative project, perhaps a book. Ludwig Hobl, of Hobl+Sohn (Son), enthusiastically agreed to help produce the paper. Hobl+Sohn is a family run, hand paper making company operating within the Austrian Paper Making Museum, housed in a former paper mill in Steyrermuehl, near Gmunden. Ludwig, the son, is involved in the process of paper making from start to finish. He makes beautiful custom-shade watermarks, has won the Austrian prize for outstanding handcraft, and recently developed a handmade paper for fine art printing. His hobbies are jewelry making, which gives him patience and skill to make the watermarks, and fire juggling, which gives him balance and motion for pulling sheets of paper.

The first step of our paper making project was for ARThaus4 members Heidi Zednik, Donna E. Price, Anette Friedel, and Sylvia Vorwagner to collect fabric from family and friends. The fabric was then cut into small pieces, proximately one inch square. This fabric was delivered to Ludwig who placed the three kilos of fabric into a large Hollander beater. It took five hours to turn into pulp. Since we didn't want white paper, one favorite shirt was added to the fabric mix, which yielded a light blue paper. Unfortunately this made cleaning the beater a long job for Ludwig. We arrived the next day with our rubber boots ready to turn all the pulp into paper. Ludwig guided us through the entire process. He was wonderful to work with - patient and helpful and funny. It was an amazing day! After pressing the paper we laid the sheets, still on the felts, to dry in the loft. After drying, some of the sheets were pressed between boards for a smoother finish. The end result was approximately 150 sheets of A4 (about 8.5 inches by 11 inches) that the group used in various ways.

The paper was split up among the five artists; I returned to Philadelphia to make my book. I created several linoleum cuts to illustrate different details of my time in Austria and printed these images on some of the handmade paper. Text was written by me and either typed in Austria, on an old typewriter, or printed in Philadelphia. Art work on some of the paper was created by Heidi and Donna. I interleaved the Austrian paper with Twinrocker handmade paper that I painted with acrylic colored paste. The finished book evolved from the notes and drawings that I kept while in Austria. The book is bound in medieval style, in oak boards.

View the video here: <http://youtu.be/rwSGJvZWYjg>

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