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Paperworks

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PAPERWORKS

by

Katharina Siedler

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the Master of
Fine Arts degree in Book Arts
in the Graduate College of
The University of Iowa

August 2013

Thesis Supervisor: Associate Professor Timothy Barrett

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

MASTER'S THESIS

This is to certify that the Master's thesis of

Katharina Siedler

has been approved by the Examining Committee
for the thesis requirement for the Master of Fine Arts
degree in Book Arts at the August 2013 graduation.

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ABOUT PAPERWORKS

Opening the door to a papermaking studio for me opened the door to a very distinctive work and life environment. Having learned to look at the world from a historical point of view, I've understood the craft of papermaking in terms of the archaeology of work: the labor and materials required to produce it as well as its technical, economic, and cultural impacts.

Craft work is a controlled bodily movement. The body becomes an artifact that is shaped (and wears out), learns to see, to distinguish, and to estimate weight; the body is disciplined and impregnated with habits. In that sense papermaking is a specialization in a body technique and, as such, a medium of communicative practices.

Any kind of handmade paper shows the gesture of its producer, becoming evident in the form of mistakes made during the process, in its imperfections, and in the same moment in the skilled workmanship. And it is exactly this, the evidence of the producer's hands, that still today creates the breathtaking integrity, authenticity and beauty of historical papers.

Beyond following historical techniques of papermaking, I understand the gesture of the hand (to hollow out, to level, to add something) in my work as a practice transforming the materiality of paper into text. Text is not a feature added to the surface of a finished sheet but becomes rather integral to the material itself. Whether drawing or painting, I am, in the basest sense, always writing. My marks of rage, tenderness and rigor are written upon paper in all its haptic sensuality: its sound, smell and feel.