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Artistic Practice and the Craft of Collaboration

by

Katharine Lark DeLamater

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the Master of Fine Arts
degree in Book Arts in the
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PUBLIC ABSTRACT

This multi-faceted project includes a body of artwork, *A Thickening Fear of Air*, alongside a written analysis of collaborative craft practice in contemporary art. The included artwork combines handmade papermaking and letterpress printing to create artists' books and two-dimensional works that demonstrate technical and conceptual understanding of the medium. This demonstration of personal artistic development is presented in conversation with a description of the artistic development of the fine art studio collaborator in contemporary hand papermaking. The body of artwork and research were conducted concurrently, which supports my argument that an impactful artist-collaborator must have recognized artistic practice in order to confidently and sustainably facilitate artistic collaboration. The research component of this work addresses the historical models that influenced the modern artist-collaborator as well as contemporary iterations of this role.

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PREFACE

Personal Artistic Practice and the Artistic Practice of Collaboration

My thesis project investigates the complexities of the ‘artist-collaborator’ role, a career path in which an artist-collaborator accomplished in a specific medium works professionally with various guest artists to produce new unique works of art. This creative method is complex as the artist-collaborator must be aware of both their own artistic practice and the needs of the guest artist at the same time. In my personal experience, I believe it is critical to maintain balance between these two interests. I have chosen to combine them in my thesis research to support my argument that a successful professional artist-collaborator must have a recognized body of work and skills in order to confidently and sustainably facilitate the production of successful work by a guest artist. This multi-faceted thesis project includes a body of my own visual artwork followed by a written analysis of collaborative craft and artistic practice in historical workshops followed by a similar analysis of contemporary collaborative art making workshops in an effort to provide a more clear understanding of the role of the professional artist-collaborator.

ARTIST'S STATEMENT

For this body of visual and written work, I began collecting lists of words commonly used to describe caves: hollow, bottomless, yawning pit... I gathered words from spelunking guides, as well as my personal observations about tenuous relationships. Language once used to describe the thrill of underground adventure can easily be transformed to describe grief and longing, as well as the quiet comfort of solitude.

The photographic images and drawings of cave expeditions, combined with the dramatic narratives of their retellings, created a rich visual world that inspired me to work more experimentally with my hand papermaking and letterpress printing practices. Early in this project, I wrote that “I simply like the way that I think when I think about caves”. In retrospect, I was referencing the sense of wonder and curiosity that ‘cave-thinking’ brought into my practice, both technically and conceptually. In her essay “The Thing Itself” Maria Popova writes:

I stood there, held in the stillness of this unrepeatable moment of wonder- the blanket of darkness, the embroidery of light, the ancient ritual of love, the brand new life. This is what wonder does—it arrests us and moves us at the same time. A moment of wonder is one of invigorating serenity—an encounter with something entirely new, and yet an encounter we recognize as an act of remembering. (238)

I developed a kinship with the curious spelunker entering a cave’s unknown: the cave’s darkness, risk, and allure a worthwhile expedition. Spelunkers’ write of the potential threats and precautions, alongside tales of routes better left unexplored.

As I began this body of work, I became a spelunker of sorts. I work closely with a bag of reference images, childhood photographs in a zip-lock bag. I spread photographs on the kitchen table like the fragments of a map, with the hope that I might piece together an understanding of

the lives before mine. Learning about my family, the mystical world of caves, they are both research—acts of unearthing. Barbara Stafford examines this in her essay “Dark Wonder: Belowness or the Ineffable Underground.” She writes, “[w]hy do we go underground? I think it’s to experience the real real, to feel, however obscurely that we exist beyond mere apparatus. [...] Embedded within this physical and existential density, you essentially know nothing”. (183)

There is a paradox in this contrast, at once knowing nothing and everything. Metaphorical references to caves and the underworld are abundant in conversational expressions: light at the end of the tunnel, unearth, get to the bottom of something—all references to the belief that there is a truth in sight, if only the path to it can be reached unscathed.

STATEMENTS ON INDIVIDUAL WORKS

Ritual Mining



Figure 1: Artists' book with handmade and Japanese papers, printed from metal type, with photopolymer and pressure printing. Produced in an edition of 20 with two artist's proofs, 2020. Photographed by Maria Carolina Ceballos.

In *Ritual Mining*, the handmade paper folios, translucent and slick, rattle with each page turn like footsteps on placid earth. As the viewer progresses through the book, the paper in each section becomes increasingly dark. Some sections are sewn shut, which is reminiscent of reaching a dead end in a winding cave. Like stalagmites and stalactites, the world in *Ritual Mining* grows from both the bottom and the top. The shadowed forms of my great

grandmother's double wedding ring quilt-top are layered with textile pressure prints and silhouettes. These images cast shadows of familiar forms across the pages, while maintaining a ghost-like fog. To reveal the full image, the viewer must try to access the inside of the French fold folios, which mirror the action of opening a map and encourage the viewer to peer beyond the traditional recto and verso. *Ritual Mining* was made possible with support from The Caxton Club Chicago.



Figure 2: Detail of *Ritual Mining*, photographed by Maria Carolina Ceballos.

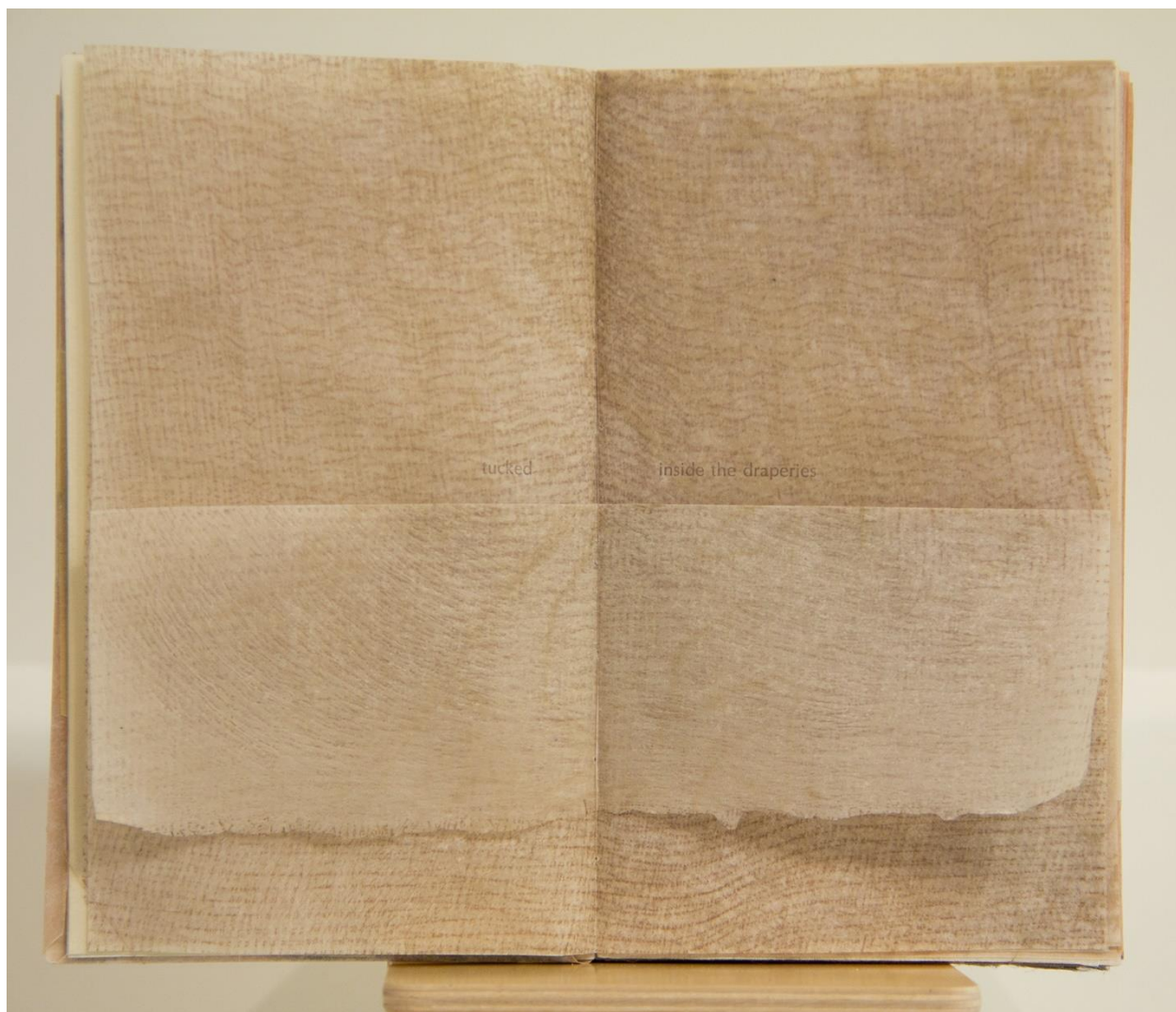


Figure 3: Detail of *Ritual Mining*, photographed by Maria Carolina Ceballos.

Seven Observations



Figure 4: Handmade paper paintings with poem printed from metal type, housed in a brass gutter drop spine binding designed by the artist, variable edition of 4 with one artist's proof, 2020. Photographed by Maria Carolina Ceballos.

In *Seven Observations*, sheets of handmade unfurl as the viewer opens the box. In absence of an audience, the poems are hidden within the enclosure, like the other-worldly cave formations that exist unseen until illuminated by lamplight. The seven-stanza poem is printed on handmade abaca papers that have been tinted using pigment washes and viscous overbeaten cotton fiber applied with formation aid. The paper of this book requires close examination, its ethereal surface resembles etched rock or bone. Clues and evidence live within a 'simple' sheet of paper, just as they reside in the well-worn paths of our memories.

Shallowed Dwelling

Shadowed Dwelling evolved into an artists' book as I attempted to put form to a poem that had four distinct sections that needed to be sequentially bound. While there were elements I sought to control, like narrative sequence, I wanted to create work that simulated the personal methods used to organize meanings around memories. Inspired by the approach of Anne Carson's *Nox*, *Shallowed Dwelling* invites the reader to engage with both the poem and the context in which it was written. In her review of *Nox*, Meghan O'Rourke writes, "[t]he Carson

method involves a kind of mashup of old and new; she proceeds through juxtaposition rather than metaphor making. What you get is the over-all action of the mind, rather than the high shine lacquer of the apt image". I chose the blizzard book, designed by Hedi Kyle, as the structure for this book because of the intimate pockets and hiding places that are constructed through the complexities of the folding techniques. The blizzard book structure formalizes the organization of notes and photographic imagery alongside the letterpress printed text of the poem. The translucency of the handmade flax paper creates an environment for the viewer to explore, much as I have explored personal memories and revelations through the construction of this book.

After Light



Figure 5: Series of handmade paper monoprints (flax, abaca, dyed cotton), variable edition of 14, 2019.

Photographed by Maria Carolina Ceballos.

After Light is a variable edition of handmade paper monoprints made using a base blend of flax and abaca fibers with dyed short cotton pulp in a deckle box. The sheets were formed using the ‘magic table cloth’ technique in which a sheet of plastic drop cloth is laid across the deckle box surface and walls, filled with pulp and water, and then pulled out from beneath, allowing the pulp slurry to drain. The gestural movement of the sheet captures the motion of the slurry as the drop cloth is removed. The hazy, slate-colored tones washed across these sheets invokes the natural desire to assign representational names to ambiguous forms, like cloud-watching, shadow puppetry, and other forms of imaginative narration. While I resist specifying what the forms could be, I see these pieces as a complement to the more constructive, narrative reliant elements in my body of work. Rather than attempt to lead the viewer to a specific conclusion, these works are an offering to the viewer to imagine, explore, and reflect on their personal interpretation of the given forms.



Figure 6: Series of handmade paper monoprints (flax, abaca, dyed cotton), variable edition of 14, 2019.

Photographed by Maria Carolina Ceballos.

Air Patterns



Figure 7: Handmade paper paintings with watermarks and stenciling techniques, unique works, 2019-2020.

Photographed by Maria Carolina Ceballos.

There are eight additional works created using additive and subtractive stenciling techniques in handmade paper. These works experiment with the different approaches to creating narratives from the same three stencils: an outstretched arm, a small child-like figure, and an abstracted house form. While the silhouettes remain constant, the shifting layouts and combinations of imagery build a foggy, dream-like world. Images occur repeatedly in our lives and take on symbolic and narrative importance especially during the formative years of life. As Gaston Bachelard writes in *The Poetics of Space*:

Great images have both a history and a prehistory; they are always a blend of memory and legend, with the result that we never experience an image directly.

[...] Consequently it is not until late in life that we really revere an image, when we discover that its roots plunge well beyond the history that is fixed in our memories. (33)

These works use similar tones and fibers to *Ritual Mining*, *Seven Observations*, and *After-Light*, which integrate the more graphic mark-making style into this body of work.



Figure 8: Handmade paper paintings with watermarks and stenciling techniques, unique works, 2019-2020.

Photographed by Maria Carolina Ceballos.

HISTORICAL MODELS OF STUDIOS AND COLLABORATIVE WORKSHOPS

Introduction

The scaffolding that supports the collaborative practice is a critical facet of artistic production. The craft of artistic collaboration requires close examinations of its creative underpinnings, a level of consideration normally paid only to the aesthetic and conceptual motivations of the final artwork. Behind monumental production of artistic works is a tightly organized system of labor that has evolved over centuries. Artistic creation has always had an important relationship to the human experience. Through time humans have created communities, schools, and other institutions to support one another's creative practice. These communities often incorporate elements from both craft production and fine art in their organization, production, and workforce.

The overlap of craft engagement and artistic production is particularly relevant to the field of book arts. The interdisciplinary practice of artist's books and book arts requires an investigation of the interrelatedness of the evolution of craft and art. Book arts interweave the craft disciplines of printing, papermaking, and bookbinding in addition to the artistic tensions of word, image, and conceptual development. There is a synergy between physical and mental engagement that is particularly evident in the field of book arts, a positively tenuous relationship presented by Richard Sennett in *The Craftsman*, "[c]raftwork embodies a great paradox in that a highly refined, complicated activity emerges from simple mental acts like specifying facts and questioning them". (268) Sennett's description of craftwork could easily be used as a compelling definition for the craft of artistic collaboration. None of this production happens in a vacuum, however, so it is crucial to also examine factors external to intimate artistic collaboration. When considering the production of monumental artistic works, economics and historical context ought to receive equal analysis of the artist's technical skills and conceptual merits. Economic and historical analysis in turn incorporates elements of craft history that influenced the development and evolution of the artist's workshop.

To acknowledge artistic creation as a vocational practice more accurately honors the diversity of contributions of both the genius/master and her workers. Based on the number of essays highlighting the benefits of newly developed co-working spaces and a new global interest in collaboration, it would appear as though creativity and collaboration are a recent merger. In 2016, *Harvard Business Review* published Piero Formica's piece "The Innovative Coworking Spaces of 15th Century Italy," an overview of business lessons drawn from the Renaissance bottega (workshop). Formica, founder of the International Entrepreneurship Academy, suggests that these humanist concepts are worth applying to our increasingly globalized workforce. Three main ideas are presented as the key insights of the article, bluntly presented with the persuasive tone of an eager sales pitch. He writes:

What can those who want to create more innovative and collaborative workplaces today — whether that's a better office in a traditional organization, a coworking space, a startup incubator, or a fab lab — learn from the workshops of the Renaissance? The bottegas' three major selling points were turning ideas into action, fostering dialogue, and facilitating the convergence of art and science.

Formica's distillation of points may be truly relevant suggestions for a general business audience, but they leave much to be desired in terms of actionable solutions. A mainstream publication like the *Harvard Business Review* can only provide so much social and historical context for the general reader; for the bottega, however, socio-historical context is crucial to understanding the success of this model. A more generous reader of Formica's article might optimistically suggest that an introduction to these concepts to a more generalized audience could inspire further investigation of these historical models.

I aim to move the analysis of historical workshops beyond Formica's summary by illuminating the circumstances that fostered dialogue, action, and interdisciplinary thought within

workshop environments. My introductory analysis focuses on the descriptions of medieval guilds and 15th and 16th century artists' workshops. This historical context will provide a broad foundation with which to create analogies with collaborative artistic workspaces that were founded in the late 20th century, with a case study of Dieu Donn  Papermill.

Medieval Guilds in Western Europe

The medieval guild was the precursor to the Renaissance bottega described by Formica. I will use the term 'workshop' to describe the bottega moving forward, since this model was also used outside of Italy. Guilds were centered on specific crafts/trades as the unifying element, a characteristic seen also in the contemporary collaborative studio, discussed later in this paper. These guilds were also tightly tied to their role in local markets and local governments. The final product produced by guilds was likely a functional item, such as furniture or pottery, that aligns with our modern understanding of a craft object. Once the guild economy was established, it continued to grow with increased specificity, dividing different processes of a single item into separate guilds. This system of labor bears relationship to the future model of the production line, used in industrial manufacturing.

Craft guilds reached their peak prosperity in the 14th century. Specialties had become so differentiated that larger towns typically had more than 100 guilds. In northern Europe, for example, at the beginning of the period, carpenters built houses and made furniture. In time, furniture making became a new craft, that of joinery, and the joiners broke from the carpenters to establish their own guilds. The wood-carvers and turners (who specialized in furniture turned on a lathe) founded guilds also. Those who painted and gilded furniture and wood carvings were also represented by a separate guild. (Hannan and Krazenberg)

Significant scholarly work investigates the historic economic impact of the development of guilds. The guild model's regulation of labor compensation and conditions, production protocols, and quality standards on future workshop models are important to this study. (Hannan and Kranzberg) The guilds banded together to create job and market security, as well as create internal networks among likeminded craftspeople. These formalized infrastructures provided an environment where, as Formica describes, ideas could turn into action. Even today, artists that work for a master through organized artistic labor strive to be guaranteed these securities. Stability (economic, interpersonal, marketplace) facilitates artistic production by allowing creative energy to be invested in the production of goods and services, rather than constantly putting out fires. Further organization included a formal hierarchical workforce, designed to facilitate and increase production.

The highest position was that of the master, likely both the business owner, manager, and most highly skilled craftsman. The apprentice was the entry-level position. In the guild society, Sennett describes the apprentice's contract as "usually seven years, and the cost, usually borne by the young person's parents". (58) Apprenticeship, in this scenario, would likely have been a vocational investment for the apprentice's family, like contemporary investments in higher education. The master would also financially benefit from this 'tuition' fee, which likely would have contributed to the pupils' lodging expenses. A portion of this fee could have contributed to the workshop's capital as a method to sustain the operation in times of low market demand.

The journeyman is the position between an apprentice and becoming a master (often sometimes also referred to as a 'free-master'). The title of journeyman refers to a worker who had successfully completed the contracted length of an apprenticeship. In a contemporary comparison, apprentice and journeyman are still used in the field of electrician training to

describe different types of training for an electrician who can practice under a master electrician, but not independently (Electrician School Edu). For a young craftsperson, the opportunity to apprentice in a guild may be like enrolling in a vocational school or trade college. The development of organized production through the guild marketplace created a foundation for further workshop structures to develop, combining the guilds' economically driven approach with the demand for an artist's work in the free market.

Renaissance Bottegas, Workshops, and Ateliers in Western Europe

The 15th and 16th century workshop focused on the creation of a completed artwork, either based on a commission or as an artwork available for sale in the free market. These workshops were a development on and evolution of the guild's communal partnerships rather than a replacement of the craft-guilds economically driven production. Instead, these workshops combined successful commercial standardizations of guilds with the art market. Later in this essay, we will see how the Renaissance bottega was the foundation for the contemporary artistic fabrication studio.

The opportunity to concurrently employ and train entry-level laborers increased production potentials while freeing the master of rudimentary tasks to focus on artistic pursuits within the workshop that could not be completed by anyone but the master herself. Pupils who studied in masters' workshops sometimes went on to become significant historical masters, like Leonardo Da Vinci who spent substantial time in Verrocchio's interdisciplinary workshop (Neilson 6). Leonardo Da Vinci's tenure in Verrocchio's workshop is chronicled through his notes and drawings of workshop projects. Da Vinci is a notable story of a pupil that excelled in this interdisciplinary environment; he became an emblematic thinker focused on "the

convergence of science and art,” another of Formica’s insights. Sennett’s description and hypothetical motivations for the structure of the medieval apprenticeship are in contrast with Wackernagel’s description of the Renaissance apprenticeship model:

Even a beginning pupil probably did not pay tuition to the master; rather, from the first year of his education on, he received a small, annually increasing remuneration in cash from the master (as in the training contract of the young Michaelangelo [...]) This testifies that even the working energy of the still untrained pupil could still be profitably harnessed in the activity of the studio and thus really ‘pay its way’. (333)

This workforce investment would allow for increased numbers of commissions and free market products for a master’s workshop. These workshops developed as training grounds for future masters which expanded the field of skilled artistic production, a development valued by Renaissance humanist thinkers. In *Joos Van Cleve, A Sixteenth Century Antwerp Artist and His Workshop*, Micah Leeftang notes that “it is known from Albrecht Dürer’s travel journal that apprentices could also do work for other masters during their apprenticeship”. (32) The opportunity to study under multiple masters during a single apprenticeship would have benefitted not only the apprentice’s skillset, but also the masters’ workshops. This method of sharing pupils would not have been the default but was certainly a possibility. The opportunity to take on additional trained staff members for various amounts of time allowed for the master to temporarily increase employment numbers to meet demands, without taking on the initial burden of training a pupil from scratch. Sending their apprentices out into other workshops allowed masters to also maintain a pulse on the other workshops in the marketplace. Leeftang notes that “a ‘lad’ or journeyman could be taken on for a short-term project or on an indenture

(*knaapschappe*), in which case he was contractually bound to a master who could briefly lend him to another workshop”. (32)

While the master’s involvement with each individual artwork was crucial, the lengthy process of under painting in the master’s style by apprentices would certainly increase in productivity with more hands employed at the workshop. However, this model of employment depended on supply and demand just like the guild economy and that of larger contemporary artist fabrication studios. Leeftang makes a similar remark about Joos van Cleve’s staff ledger:

The registration of three pupils also shows that Joos van Cleve must have had the financial means to train them and his son (and possibly his daughter too) in the same period. His decision to take on so many assistants at one time seems to demonstrate a conviction that this investment in his labour force would ultimately show a profit. (33)

If this investment failed to produce the desired profit, action would likely have been taken to reduce the level of trainees.

Architecturally, workshops were open concept spaces that allowed for and supported learning through osmosis, rather than “the studiolo, a word that has the sense of a study, a room for contemplation” (Wallace). While an apprentice was likely assigned a monotonous, low-skill task such as grinding paint, she could still observe the master and journeymen as they performed more skilled tasks. Learning through osmosis in these workshops was certainly a beneficial form of ‘on the job’ training. While the master would instruct the artistic direction of the work, individual apprentices and journeymen would still hone their own artistic abilities through replicating the master’s style.

In an artist’s atelier, the master made the overall design in the painting and then filled in the most expressive parts, such as the heads. But the Renaissance studio existed in the first place

because of the master's distinctive talents; the point was not to produce pictures as such but rather to create *his* pictures or pictures in his manner. (Sennett 69) At the time, some emboldened workshop pupils capitalized on their independence and responsibilities to subtly add their own portrait to the work; artists would paint members of the ensemble or witnesses to their own likeness as a way of documenting their role in the workshop's piece while maintaining the look of the master's hand. (Leeflang 36) With the use of infrared light technologies, scholars have charted the stages in painting at which the portrait was added, either in the drawn sketch or during the painting phase. Leeflang notes that:

[van Cleve's] disguised 'signature' may have been part of his marketing strategy. An artist's name would have become known mainly by word of mouth, and it is clear from the names of his known patrons that Joos van Cleve had an excellent reputation among both local and international clients. (37)

While not the focus of this analysis, this method of adding coded authorial acknowledgement and subtle self-promotion by pupils within the workshop is worth mentioning. The artist is master of the workshop who creates the templates/refines the artistic style for all employees to recreate in her style. The goal is not for the employee's artistic voice to come through, but rather to refine their technical abilities to the point of total mimicry of the master's technical finesse. Studio employees have opportunity for upward mobility within the studio to ascend the ranks and potentially become master of their own workshop someday.

There might have been several motivations for a young apprentice to join the workshop: economic motivations of steady employment, personal motivations of artistic development, and social motivations of community involvement. Many apprentices came from backgrounds outside of the artist's circle as detailed in archival documents such as ledgers and tax records.

While a master may have hoped that her children would carry on a workshop, mastery did not appear to be a trait passed on to the next generation with great certainty. Wackernagel also describes the various correlations between first generation artisans and their classes-of-origin:

[T]he upward striving from the small craftsmanly lower class as well as the unhesitating “descent” from a socially superior caste into the artistic career must be recognized as evidence and consequence of an immanent drive of artistic talent. Not by accident, then, do we also find that innovative personalities more frequently in the group of those who came to art from other classes and professional groups than among the artists’ sons. (329)

This perspective that relies on self-motivation and inherent talent aligns with the humanist thought that dominated the Renaissance period. It is a motivation also echoed by many contemporary artists and craftspeople who often describe a visceral calling to produce their work, who might describe their presence in the artistic field as inevitable. This approach might be partially motivated by the anxiety of the risk of failure.

This motivation is both intrinsic and social; the artist wants to succeed to bring their work into the world but is also motivated to prove their success for social recognition of their skill and perseverance. Sennett calls upon the sociological work of Max Weber to describe the omnipresent notion that one’s artistic pursuit is their life’s work, “Weber’s German word for a vocation, *Beruf*, contains two resonances: the gradual accumulation of knowledge and skills and the ever-stronger conviction that one was meant to do this one particular thing in one’s life”. (Sennett 263) In addition to pursuing one’s calling, the workshop may have become a second home to many of its pupils.

The artists’ workshop is often referred to in a communal sense that creates a family-like structure. It is unsurprising then that some of the apprentices went on to adopt the surnames of

their masters, a particularly poignant demonstration of the impact that the workshop and master had on their workers. Wackernagel comments that:

[T]his close bond between the pupil and the assistant and the master also explains the fact, in itself unusual, that certain artists came to be called, and so inscribed in the history of art, by a surname that came not from their biological father but rather from their first master or the studio chief of their assistant days. (334)

While this name transference is not the case in current contemporary print and paper practices, many printers and papermakers strongly identify with their original training grounds, whether a university or a fine art publishing shop. There are resources such as the Hand Papermaker Community Documentation Project that promotes the creation of a “family tree” of papermakers based on their teachers, peers, and institutional affiliations. There are other, more casual references to this continued allegiance to printers’ alma mater’s with references to printers who hail from the University of Wisconsin-Madison as the “Madison Mafia” in exhibition titles. (Georgia State University). Faculty members of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, like Walter Hamady and Warrington Colescott, trained printers and papermakers who went on to establish and work at esteemed shops in New York City, such as Pace Prints/Paper and Dieu Donné Papermill.

In the historical models of the medieval guild and the bottega, the highly refined workmanship and intergenerational legacy were of key importance to organizing and sustaining a successful workshop. Strong craftsmanship and refined artistic works in both models would have garnered a presumably loyal base of patrons which provided economic security for the workshop, master, and employees. A well-regarded shop would also attract aspiring artists/artists hoping to train with masters and align themselves with the shop’s elite status. As the bottega

evolved out of the medieval guild, it follows that one should examine how these historical models have transitioned into a contemporary context and what differences have emerged along the way. While there have been substantial sociohistorical and economic developments since the 14th-16th century, many constants remain in the fields of papermaking and printmaking, both in terms of craft processes and the need for a workshop space to successfully produce works of art.

Contemporary Artistic Production Studio Models

Art Fabrication Studios

As with the medieval guilds, there is significant economic value to running an artistic practice as a business to increase production by dividing up labor among employees of varying skill levels. The contemporary art fabrication studio is a blend of both the guild economy and the bottega; art fabrication studios are economically driven artistic factories that are headed by a single master artist who is represented as the sole author of the produced artworks. In the exhibition description of *Hired Hand*, the Art Institute of Chicago Library highlights the business mindedness of some of today's most prolific artists:

Among commercially successful contemporary artists, Takashi Murakami and Jeff Koons are two examples that hire fabricators and studio assistants to create their work. Both artists employ a staff of skilled painters to work full-time in their studio, as the high demand for their large scale and highly detailed work necessitates it. Structuring the studio as a business, Murakami's studio (known as the Office) and Koons's studio have become sites of prolific art production.

These spaces are built to support the 'genius' of a single artist often with projects across multiple media (painting, sculpture, digital fabrication). Jeff Powers writes of Koons's artistic

methodology, “‘I am basically the idea person,’ Jeff Koons once told an interviewer. ‘I am not physically involved in the production. I don’t have the necessary abilities, so I go to the top people’”. (Koons qtd. in Powers) This approach is by no means shared by all artists choosing to integrate fabrication practices into their studio art practice, however it highlights the potential divide between technical acuity and conceptual direction within this studio model. Presumably these spaces would shut down should the ‘genius’ retire or die, and employees would find work elsewhere.

Individuals are not trained with the goal of taking over the artist’s workshop as might have been the expectation with apprenticeship model in bottegas. Employees may be hired and fired based on the production needs of the studio at any given time. This practice has been at the center of the discussion of Koons’s studio practice, with substantial layoffs occurring in both 2017 and 2019. Alex Greenberger writes that:

The last major round of layoffs at the studio occurred in 2017, when the company let 30 workers go [...] The studio also laid off workers in 2015 and 2016. At the start of 2015, Koons’s studio employed more than 100 painters [...] But, according to a 2017 *Artnet News* report, “lackluster” sales for works from the series, which has been shown at David Zwirner and Gagosian galleries in New York, forced the studio to scale back its operations. In late 2015, around 30 employees were laid off. The following year, the blog *Art F City* reported that Koons’s studio had let go of 15 employees amid attempts by its workers to form a union.

The language used to describe the reevaluation of Koons’s labor force clearly bears relationship to conversations about employment in other industries: “scale back”, “lackluster sales”, “attempts to form a union”. This information is transparently distributed in a manner that brings

to mind if the business practices have superseded the importance of the conceptual development of the work, or if in fact the commercialization of artistic practice is central to the concept of the artwork.

Collaborative Studios

Artists are often grouped as being an enigmatic sort of creative individual that thrives in isolation, without interruption, to create their masterpieces. This is certainly true of some artists, while other artists flock to artist communities, residencies, and communes to surround themselves with like-minded individuals to receive feedback and enhance their creative process. There are then the artists whose preferred medium necessitates creative production within a shared space, likely based on the benefits of shared equipment or the scale of projects too large to create by oneself. Papermakers and printmakers are often in these shared environments, whether in an academic setting or a local arts cooperative. While printmakers and papermakers may aspire to eventually be the proprietors of their own private studios, it is unlikely that they could avoid exposure to some level of community workshop at some point in their career. Additionally, these fields have skillfully adapted craft techniques as a part of fine arts practices.

In the contemporary collaborative studio, there are two key relationships at play. First, there is the role of the collaborator (master printer, master papermaker) who is associated with a particular artistic organization (Pace, Dieu Donné, Tamarind Institute); this individual is a master of an artistic craft (intaglio, papermaking, lithography) with a breadth of knowledge about the applications of their medium. However, the collaborator is not exclusively producing/authoring their own artistic works, as would have been done in a bottega. Instead, the collaborator and their organization invite prominent and emerging artists to spend a set amount of time in their collaborative studio to create a body of work in the master's medium. The guest artist may work

in a variety of artistic media or perhaps stick primarily to one discipline, like painting. The guest artist may be enticed to work with the collaborator to reinvigorate their artistic practice by learning a new medium, or they may be interested in producing multiples, which would be an economic incentive. The collaborator can apply their wide variety of experiences to each artistic collaboration, pulling from years of experience experimenting with artist's and developing creative techniques. The collaborator can also focus her energy on the technical applications of the media, while the artist develops the conceptual underpinnings of a work; the arts organization ideally employs separate staff to manage contracts, finances, and gallery/archive work to allow collaborator to fully focus on collaborative projects.

The collaborator and their arts organization work with several artists at any given time and employs additional collaborators to facilitate additional projects, with the possibility of eventually becoming the master should the master retire or die. If the master were to leave this organization, it is assumed that the organization/institution would continue. This is distinct from an artist who runs a studio based predominately on their production of single-author artwork. The arts organization is focused on the engagement of a specific medium within the field of contemporary art and as such is interested in ensuring the success of the workshop across multiple generations.

In the bottega, apprentices and journeymen had a clear role as purely support staff for the one master of the studio. In contemporary fine art publishing studios, emerging or mid-career artists are paired with a master to create works in a new medium. Unlike the Renaissance tradition, it is acknowledged that there are now two geniuses that occupy the studio, intentionally partnered in a (hopefully) mutually beneficial creative endeavor.

The master collaborator is ‘hosting’ the guest artist, and as part of that must perform various hosting duties: preparation for arrival, anticipating needs, providing guidance as required, and resolving any issues before they reach the artist. At first glance, it would seem that the roles are at least slightly off kilter, since that description focuses on the ways in which the master collaborator is in service of the artist. There are many artistic institutions internationally that facilitate collaborative production of artistic works across the mediums of printmaking and handmade paper.

Printmaking and papermaking are both specialized art forms that require substantial amounts of equipment and professional training to practice professionally. While in concept they are both simple processes on the surface, they require specialized scientific and artistic understanding to use successfully. Printmaking, in its most basic form, is the practice of making multiples from a single matrix; printmaking is related to the printing processes that reproduce the written word, but the term itself refers most often to intaglio, lithography, and relief printing processes. Papermaking as a term is a bit more amorphous, while it can refer to a streamlined production of papers for personal and commercial artistic use, it has also come to describe any artistic processes that involve paper pulp, which is beaten cellulose fiber suspended in water.

With these basic definitions alone, the function of the collaborative contemporary artistic studio is already distinctly different from the guild society. For this analysis, I will use Dieu Donn  Papermill as the primary contemporary comparison, since it is an organization that I have been involved with in various capacities over the past five years. It is important that the Tamarind Lithography Workshop, founded by June Wayne, was a critical precursor to the increased interest in collaborative artistic studio spaces in America. Dieu Donn  is among many prestigious studios that have collaborated with and published work by contemporary artists.

While this list is not exhaustive, I would like to mention the importance of the following studios as well for their contributions: Pace Prints, Universal Limited Artist Editions (ULAE), and Gemini Graphics Editions Limited (G.E.L).

The contemporary collaborative studio is in effect a merger of the specificity of the guild's focus on a particular medium, combined with the interdisciplinary artistic projects that were occurring in 15th and 16th century artists workshops, for example, one artist working in both painting and sculpture. In her curatorial essay for *Pure Pulp: Contemporary Artists Working in Paper at Dieu Donné*, Bridget Donlon articulates this material ambiguity as potential:

Creative papermaking shares a common ground with printmaking, painting, and sculpture. It permeates these three forms, yet it is its own entity, and this undefined position poses a challenge for the artists who work at Dieu Donné [...] It is also a material that can go awry if not properly controlled, which is why each artist is paired with an expert papermaker as a studio collaborator who provides a technical framework and creative sounding board. (Donlon 12)

In both historical and contemporary workshops, the master's aesthetic prevails. In a contemporary context, I refer to this as an institutional aesthetic. Historically, there is reference made to the artist's style as the primary aesthetic consideration of the workshop. Paul Wong, master papermaker at Dieu Donné from 1978 to 2016 also held the title of artistic director. The title of artistic director implies that Wong's aesthetic sensibility primarily guides all of Dieu Donné's artistic projects, which are sometimes facilitated by one or two other professional studio collaborators. The artwork produced in these partnerships should be representative of the artist's visual and conceptual goals and hold true to the publishing studio's aesthetic. An established studio aesthetic does not imply that all the work produced there is redundant or unoriginal but is

rather a fixed variable that can be integrated into the practice of the variety of guest artists' collaborative editions.

A strong institutional aesthetic can secure collectors and patrons who choose to purchase works from each edition produced by the publisher. In marketing, this would be called 'brand identity', a strategy that is used to create a sense of loyalty to one brand or institution. There are multiple approaches to how proprietary processes relate to institutional aesthetics. For example, if a unique technique was developed within the walls of a specific studio, that could become a definitive tool for an institutional aesthetic. These technical advancements are not made in a vacuum but are instead the direct result of collaborations with artists. These artists are highly skilled in their traditional media, but likely new to the field of hand papermaking. This exciting new energy, paired with the technical knowledge of a master collaborator, is fertile ground for innovation. Paul Wong describes an instance of this serendipitous technique development during a project with a New York painter:

Throughout many years of collaborating with Virginia Jaramillo, many Dieu Donn   process terms were invented, such as 'double dipping,' 'skinny dipping,' 'throwing veils of pulp,' 'random couching,' 'pulp painting with the mould,' and 'metal drying' (to simulate a metal surface). Many of these techniques were affectionately identified as the 'VJ Theory,' named after her series called *Theorems*. (qtd. in Gosin 26)

These are just a few techniques that have become essential to the Dieu Donn   project technique arsenal. The role of the master collaborators like Paul Wong in this artistic relationship is to provide technical guidance, while maintaining a deep engagement with the project to help the artist harness their creative motivations into a monumental handmade paper artwork. On this relationship, Margaret Mathews-Berenson writes:

Working closely with each artist, [Paul Wong's] function is to demonstrate specific techniques, offer suggestions, and generally help realize an idea or facilitate a special project. His uncanny ability to grasp the artist's innermost thoughts and patiently coax them into a concrete state of being have earned him the respect of everyone he works with.

Artists at Dieu Donné are accepted through a rigorous application process for one of two residency programs, the Workspace Residency, which began in 1990 or the Lab Grant Residency, which began in 2000. (Stein et al. 87) The formalized structure of these collaboration mandates the length of time each artist will have with their collaborator, as well as other contractual negotiations like sales cuts, etc. The Workspace Residency Program is open to emerging artists in New York State. The Lab Grant Residency is for established mid-career artists; Ann Hamilton, Jim Hodges, and Jane Hammond are among the recipients of this prestigious residency. These residency opportunities are mutually beneficial. The artist can explore different visual and conceptual avenues with the support of an expert, hopefully inspiring new creative directions for their work. Collaborations with artists also promote technical innovation to the experts at Dieu Donné, with the possibility of discovering a new landmark technique alongside an artist. Affiliation with renowned artists also adds to the integrity of Dieu Donné's reputation as a cultural institution in the competitive New York City art-world.

In contemporary studios, there is reverence for the master when they are in the studio – perhaps this means no music, or no conversation. Perhaps the master's presence insures everyone will go out for a beer after a completed workday. This control over the environment has a dual motivation: the master collaborator might require certain working conditions for her own success, but the master collaborator is also required to facilitate ideal working conditions for the

visiting artists. The master collaborator is responsible for arranging the studio, coloring fibers in advance of the artist's arrival, and facilitating thoughtful engagement and experimentation with the unfamiliar medium of paper pulp. Bill Lagatutta, Tamarind master printer and workshop manager describes the delicate nature of facilitating collaboration:

Our job is different with every artist. I must be sensitive to each artist's particular needs and adjust my methods accordingly. I have to know when, and how to make suggestions, and when to step back and not say anything at all. Robert Motherwell once said a master printer is like a chameleon, changing colors depending on the environment. [...] It's the master printer's job to facilitate the artist's ideas, to shepherd every project to a successful conclusion". (Bill Lagatutta qtd. in Devon 64)

During studio workdays, the master collaborator is likely pulling expertly formed sheets of paper for the artist to use in various applications. While most guest artists could likely gain some level of technical proficiency in the sheet-forming process, it is nearly impossible that could occur within the time frame of their visit, which is about seven days spread over several weeks and months. The master collaborator must seamlessly reconcile these logistical tasks with the specific needs of each artist, who have unique dispositions especially in an unfamiliar studio environment.

The artist might trust these assistants for direct involvement and handling of artwork and materials but are not direct replacements for support staff provided by the mill. There are specific preparatory tasks, like beating fiber and readying studio equipment, that require at least a low-level of specialized training. The most common form of assistant in the contemporary publishing studio is an intern, working at the studio for academic credit or even more likely as purely volunteer.

There are significantly different motivations for internships at prestigious studios in the 21st century than the hopes of vocation and livelihood in the 14th-16th centuries. Internship roles vary from place to place; some studios might heavily rely on their interns to maintain workflow, whereas other studios may not include interns in fabrication, instead filling their days with preparatory ‘busy-work’. Unlike the contractual apprenticeships of the early-modern era, interns are very rarely hired as full-time staff beyond their internship stay, likely three to four months (the course of a semester or summer vacation). While an internship might not directly translate into full-time, salaried employment, the opportunity to spend time alongside a master remains a coveted position. Sue Gosin describes that,

[A]s early as 1977 [Dieu Donné] started offering apprenticeships. By the early 80s, a handful of other mills had opened studios in downtown New York, concentrating on various facets of hand papermaking such as paper casting and pairing lithography and etching with handmade paper. But even with these other outlets, zealous students lined up for workshops and internships. Although we did not formalize this training into official programs until the late 80s, we taught and advised many of the next generation of papermakers. (27)

A critical distinction between the motivations of guilds and Renaissance workshops and Dieu Donné is the reality of artistic production as a viable commercial venture. Paul Wong describes Dieu Donné’s transition to non-profit status:

As the years went by, the rent increased, the materials got more expensive, and it became harder to meet the financial requirements of running a commercial business, so Sue and I decided to consider alternatives. We discussed various options including partnering with a school or print publisher. Eventually we decided to apply for nonprofit status to find support for our art collaborations and ongoing research. (Paul Wong qtd. in Stein 35)

These economic difficulties are not unique to Dieu Donné, which is now funded by major groups such as the National Endowment for the Arts, the Andy Warhol Foundation, and the Windgate Foundation. The Tamarind Lithography Workshop faced similar growing pains beyond the initial grant funding from the Ford Foundation; Tamarind is now affiliated with the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque. (Devon 2) Pace Prints and other studios with a gallery affiliation can often be found at art fairs, which appears to be a business model more closely tied to a commercial gallery strategy.

These three established studios have each selected a different economic path to maintain their success: not-for-profit, educational affiliation, and private commercial enterprises. Each of these business structures, while not necessarily correlative, likely impacts the kinds of work they are respectively able to produce. In a non-profit setting, there may be more artistic freedom available to artist and collaborator since the funding is not entirely dependent on the sale of the artwork thanks to external grant awards. However, the initial budget for each project is likely much more conservative than a for-profit workspace. The for-profit workspace in turn relies heavily on returns from the sales of individual work, likely catering the kinds of work they produce to that of market interest and demands. While there may be more economic freedom here, there may be less artistic freedom. The educational affiliation is likely the middle ground between the two, with the additional benefits and challenges that accompany institutions of higher education.

DESCRIPTIONS OF THE ARTIST-COLLABORATOR

Craft techniques and conceptual artistic foundations have become intertwined in both my aesthetic appreciation and understanding of art. I cannot see a work of art without, as part of my observation process, beginning to reverse engineer how one could produce a similar or derivative

work in handmade paper. This is how I engage with the art world around me, as I compare my material vocabulary and process to that of another artist. In writing about my own artistic work, I work to provide relevant technical details within my discussion of the conceptual artwork. I hesitate to outline every technical detail within my artistic writing. Overindulgence in technical jargon removes an element of wonder and curiosity that I hope to elicit from the viewer. As an aspiring artist-collaborator, I often reflect on what the ethics are on sharing my processes with other artists in a way that I can support their artistic growth, without feeling as though I am removing all of the magic from my own artistic works. While I have limited experience working directly with other artists, I believe this is a struggle that I will continue to try to reconcile throughout my career. If one is to argue that the profession of artist-collaborator is one of professional problem-solving, I need to reconcile my desire to remain private about my technical process while prioritizing the creative endeavors of another artist, the guest artist.

The ability to think in this translational mindset through collaboration with artists further enhances my own personal creative practice, because I practice mentally isolating the various elements of an artistic work based on their materials: how could paper be used in place of clay, paint? How would this change the meaning of the work? What might be the motivation for this change? I owe this unique perspective to my early exposure to collaborative artistic practices as a twenty-year old intern in New York City.

In college, as I spent classroom time learning about art history, I spent equal time learning how to process fibers in the papermaking studio. The most impactful learning experience, however, was the time I spent outside of the classroom in these professional studios, where there was a constant hum of creative energy that co-existed with the reality that many individual's livelihoods depended on the success of a given artwork. I immediately became

enthralled by this model of making artwork, in which art existed as a creative collaboration of many hands and minds. Since college, it has been a feasible option to both create my own personal artworks while facilitating the artworks of others by sharing my understanding of handmade paper.

I concurrently developed my artistic practice and my technical skills in hand papermaking and printmaking throughout my undergraduate education and the two now feel nearly symbiotic in my personal artistic practice. The materiality of hand papermaking is directly tied to my conceptual interests and because of this I primarily create my personal artwork using some amount of handmade paper. My conceptual education as an artist permits me to assess the role of handmade paper in the works of other artists because I have a broad understanding of the art historical, aesthetic, and theoretical context in which others create their work. As a practicing artist myself, I also have understanding and empathy for the creative process and the various ups and downs associated with somewhat turbulent experience of creating artworks to share with the world. Throughout my creative professional career, I anticipate further evolutions of this definition as determined by artistic-collaborators and the artists that work alongside them.

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APPENDIX

Included below are the poems included in the artists' books.

"Ritual Mining"

I live spun

as the darkness

tucked

inside the draperies

to think

I had almost forgotten

the sky,

its sunlit sip

no longer remembered

this life can survive

even

the narrows

there is no such

thing

as death instead

an infinite blink

see, they speak of us
in circles you and I
dwellers of the dark zone

is the blindness
still
a fault of mine, even if
I was never meant
to see beneath

your body
nearly barely
glimpsed
half-light

through the hole in the pink room's floor
I could have watched you
as you died

you like a telescope
slinking up off
you go

through the rafters
in to the land of moon-milk
no more birthdays

I once thought
there would be fireflies
here, a dream held
more or less permanent

now I can ask
which came first

the loneliness
the ditch
this thickening fear of air

no longer remembered

only, they speak of you
in circles

you refused to cling

to their loving terrace

you reached

escape velocity instead

catapulted into that life

perpetual darkness

how quietly up perished

once met, with joy

by curtains

desert sunlight

“Seven Observations”

My universe itself must have been

created by a moon’s falling body.

It happened in a tunnel, underwater,

conditional love is no brighter at noon

than midnight.

I once thought there’d be fireflies here,

a dream held more or less permanent

The deep light of total darkness, like me,
splendid and obliterated.

The brightening point, like me,
just beyond destruction.

I must remember, often,
that the fault lines crack
only in their search for sunlight.

The sky will never leave me.

Here, the ground is
black earth,
water beneath glass bottom.
Here, my world is
pieced and real, still
no evidence of displacement.

“Shallowed Dwelling”

to exist even / there is a sky / strange world
here, we face a horizon of a different kind

I move slowly* along the old floor -

I could be like you / a fall of earth

*I mean the length of a drip

how does the ground feel on frayed knees

I am barely open

to enter knowing/ there is no snaking back/ absolute darkness

a cavity, so I speak

your absence or presence the same

by or, I mean both

absolutely, at once

what could be my exceptional circumstance

even my softest movements cause fissures

to exist only/the raspy echo/no reply

daylight

I prefer to say you do not exist

omission

a slight,

hollow exertion

what is a shadow cast of (f)

I am never seen

to exit knowing/there will be no autopsy

we are unsuited for permanence

I am sorry and admit

birth for you was just another kind of ending

to succumb to estrangement -

I am in the thick of it now.