

ADVERTISEMENT

Samantha Fish • Rebirth Brass Band • Kenny Neal
 Cowboy Mouth • Bonerama
 Rockin' Dopsie Jr & The Zydeco Twisters
 The Rumble featuring Chief Joseph Boudreaux Jr.
 Anthony Morgan's Inspirational Choir of Harlem

CLICK TO BUY DAY AND CAMPING TICKETS
 3 DAY LOUISIANA AND NEW ORLEANS STYLE
 MUSIC, FOOD, AND CAMPING FESTIVAL

MICHAEL ANNONE'S
 THIRTY-THIRD ANNUAL
CRAWFISH FEST
 SINCE 1989
MAY 29-31, 2026
www.crawfishfest.com

From Good Homes • John Papa Gros
 Amanda Shaw & The Cute Guys
 Honey Island Swamp Band
 The Nth Power • Joe Krown Trio +1 Papa Mali
 Johnny Sansone • The Soul Project Nola
 Ocean Avenue Stompers • Yarn

SUSSEX COUNTY FAIRGROUNDS
 AUGUSTA • NEW JERSEY



NJArts.net

All Arts, All Jersey



HOME NEW ON-SALES EVENTS TICKET GIVEAWAYS ADVERTISE CONTACT

NJArts.net
 All Arts, All Jersey

ADVERTISEMENT

Henri Matisse
 BEYOND COLOR

On view April 12 through August 9, 2026

Morris Museum
 FOR MORE INFO: www.morrismuseum.org

ADVERTISEMENT

Haleyson
 MONTOCLAIR

PRESENTS
 DINNER & LIVE JAZZ
 TUESDAYS

CLICK HERE FOR MORE INFORMATION

ADVERTISEMENT

Air Supply
 50TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

MAY 29, 2026
AIR SUPPLY
 50TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

URSB CARTERET
 PERFORMING ARTS & EVENTS CENTER

VISUAL ARTS

Hunterdon Art Museum exhibition explores the wonder of ... paper

Written By TRIS McCALL • July 1, 2025

SHARE



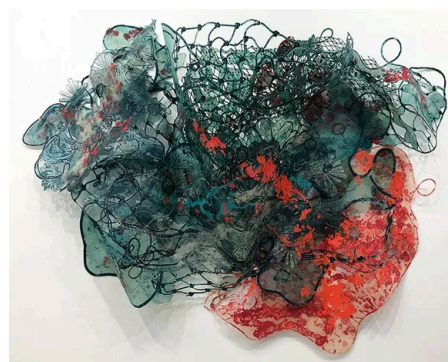
COURTESY OF MICHELLE SAMOUR

Michelle Samour's "Life Inside the Mountain III" is part of the "Pulp: The Fluid and the Concrete" exhibition at The Hunterdon Art Museum in Clinton.

Few products in the art supply store are as protean as paper. Depending on its thickness, it can be as supple and leathery as elephant hide or as diaphanous as stained glass. It can fray like a textile, or hold as rigid as canvas, or bend like skin. Lay it flat and you can write on it; feed it into a machine and you can print on it. Wad it up and it communicates in three dimensions like a sculpture. Bind it in sheets and it becomes a book.

Despite all that, paper doesn't always get respect. It lacks the reputation for gravity that canvas, wood and stone enjoy. Collectors and gallery-goers sometimes need to be reminded that paper art can be just as exciting and just as valuable as work done in more traditional media. If that sounds like a job for the Hunterdon Art Museum — defenders of craft and conscientious objectors to the tyranny of painting — rest assured that our provocative friends in Clinton have not let us down.

"Pulp: The Fluid and the Concrete," a 26-artist group show that presently occupies the building's entire second floor, attempts to do for handmade paper what previous Hunterdon Art Museum shows did for **basket-making, doll-making, quilt-making, needlepoint and experimental ceramics**. Curators Gail Deery and Cynthia Nourse Thompson aim to show paper-makers as earth-shakers. If this exhibition doesn't feel quite as surprising as some of its immediate predecessors at the Museum, maybe that is because paper, mutable as it is, is already pretty radical.



COURTESY OF JOAN HALL

Joan Hall's "Red Tide Returning."

Or maybe the harmonious feel of "Pulp" has something to do with the museum's location, and the lovely, bucolic sight that is visible from the second story windows. The red mill and the river that are essential features of the Clinton townscape are a reminder of the relationship between fiber processing and water. Deery, Thompson and the artists they are showing see handmade paper as a substance in a transitory state — a solid material that wants to be a liquid, or even a gas. It is featherweight, windswept and woven, full of threads that twist like rivulets, and curves that swirl and buckle like air currents.

Some pieces in this exhibition look like astonishing objects fished right out of the Raritan River. Joan Hall's "Red Tide Returning," for instance, is all undulations and sea foam: a large handmade paper assemblage of netting, ink-saturated loops, fields of color as translucent as the skin of a jellyfish, and impressions of trash retrieved from the water. The curators have mounted it on the wall and invited visitors to snorkel their way past it.

"Pulp" gifts an entire side room to Michelle Samour, who has honeycombed the walls with heaps of brightly colored paper rings, each decorated with tiny staring eyes. "Life Inside the Mountain" (see *photo at top*) is suggestive of coral growth. But it is also reminiscent of the plastic connectors that hold together six-packs, if they had somehow become sentient. Samour saved her best work for the middle of the room: "Eye Aggregation No. 1," thousands of sheets of abacá hemp paper, cut in small circles, stained gray-green, stacked in a loose cone and allowed to twist and droop until the whole column takes on the quality of billowing smoke.

Even the heftier pieces have a whiff of the marine realm about them. Marc Rosenquist's "Event," a thick corkscrew of beige flax paper pulp affixed to the wall like a serpentine scone, looks like a geoduck that has slipped free of its shell. The untitled pieces of John Shorb are waterslides of color and grainy pigment on handmade cotton paper. Though they are flat as can be, they look as sedimentary as sandstone.

Leo Zhao makes the relationship between paper and the sea concrete in "Printmaker's Aquarium," an oceanic menagerie of circular images of fish as if seen through a submersible's porthole. No matter what printmaking technique he uses to render his scaly subjects (he packs several into the same piece), they all look quite alien, and quite hungry.

The ghostly, blurry, yolk-runny way in which ink takes to handmade paper amplifies the show's aqueous quality. In Jill Adler's emotional "Reaching Out for a Hand I Will Never Hold Again" series, negative images of fists and open palms appear as white shadows on sheets stained the color of coffee. It is a visual metaphor for loss and fading memory, especially since the fingers of these hands seem to be ebbing away.

While there is no water imagery in Annelies van Dommelen's beautiful "Untitled," there is a similar kind of blurriness, as colors, patterns and superimpositions fade into each other and bleed from one part of the cotton paper to the next. Here, as elsewhere in "Pulp," the fibers act as little capillaries for pigment, carrying them from one color field to its neighbors, washing over the viewer, tickling the piece from corner to corner like shallow surf teases the toes of beachcombers.

That same dynamic is at work in the many bound pieces in "Pulp." (These present as books, but since you can't leaf through them – they are mostly inside cases – they are probably best understood as sculptures. This is a paper show, but it's not one you can read your way through.) In Melanie Mauro's "Decorum," a sea-spray of blue pigment surrounds an ornate half-circle design that occupies a single page; on the adjacent page, it continues, in its inverse, as a white doily-like pattern on a large blue arc. The tiny words dropped into the middle of this circle are like pebbles cast into a well.

Similar ripples grace the paper surface of the pages in Michele Oka Doner's "What Is White," a thin book marked with milky prints of concentric arcs. Stephanie Slate's cyanotype book "Reverie" is practically doused in dark blue and dotted with white bubbles. If a lake could be contained in a volume, it might look like this.



COURTESY OF MARK ROSENQUIST

Marc Rosenquist's "Event."



COURTESY OF ANNELIES VAN DOMMELEN

Annelies van Dommelen's "Untitled."

Those watermarked paper pages flow between the covers that feel considerably more solid. "Decorum," for instance, fits Mauro's small sentences and big Delft-blue rings into a thick yellow hardcover. Jane Hammond's "Be Zany, Poised Harpists, Be Blue, Little Sparrows" folds its fragile pages folio-style, but protects them in a white sheath that comes complete with a pocket for stuffing charms and trinkets. Anne Vilsbøll and Susan Gosin slip the pages of "Khela" into a sturdy box with a decorative grill pattern redolent of Islamic art; Lesley Dill's "I Had a Blueprint of History," a fiery grimoire of ragged orange pages and big, bossy letters, sits atop another book with a marigold spine. This contrast between airy handmade paper and firmer stuff continues on the wall, where Evgeniy Pantev matches the pulpy stuff to linoleum. He has cut it in the shape of a tote and, in so doing, given a whole new meaning to the paper bag.



COURTESY OF SUE GOSIN

Michele Oka Doner's "What Is White."

The overtones of containment that run through this show testify to the volatility of handmade paper: its fragility, its softness, and its association with the water necessary to make pulp coalesce into something that might later be bound in a book. Even after they are pressed and processed, the pages we turn still hint of the reed pond. Much like prior Hunterdon Art Museum shows that defamiliarized pottery, baskets, dolls and other craft materials by concentrating on their essence, "Pulp: The Fluid and the Concrete" liberates paper from the utilitarian expectations we have of it by reminding us of its source.

Deery and Thompson want to make sure that visitors never look at a sheaf of paper the same way again. They mean to get us in touch with the meaning of the materials we use every day, and open our minds to their possibilities. The next time we hold sheets of 8.5 x 11, we may just hear the lap of the waves.

The Hunterdon Art Museum in Clinton will show "Pulp: The Fluid and the Concrete" through Aug. 31; visit hunterdonartmuseum.org.



NEWS ON THE GO! ANYTIME, ANYWHERE

DOWNLOAD OUR MOBILE APP



CONTRIBUTE TO NJARTS.NET

Since launching in September 2014, NJArts.net, a 501(c)(3) organization, has become one of the most important media outlets for the Garden State arts scene. And it has always offered its content without a subscription fee, or a paywall. Its continued existence depends on support from members of that scene,

and the state's arts lovers. **Please consider making a contribution of any amount to NJArts.net via PayPal, or by sending a check made out to NJArts.net to 11 Skytop Terrace, Montclair, NJ 07043.**

\$ 20.00

Custom Amount

Personal Info

First Name *

Last Name

Email Address *

Leave a comment

Donation Total: \$20.00

DONATE NOW

Leave A Comment

Your Comment

Name*

Email*

SIGN ME UP FOR THE NEWSLETTER!

SUBMIT

Explore more articles:

POP-ROCK

Crawfish Fest will feature Ocean Avenue Stompers, Jersey Shore band with a New Orleans sound

May 26, 2026

MUSIC

Shemekia Copeland, Gary U.S. Bonds, Booker T. Jones and more at free Atlantic City concert series

May 24, 2026

POP-ROCK

Richard Barone, Glenn Mercer & co. pay tribute to the artists who inspired them with Hazy Cosmic Jive

May 24, 2026

THEATER

A day after CBS show ends, Stephen Colbert resurfaces ... on public access TV (WATCH HERE)

May 23, 2026

POP-ROCK

Low Cut Connie fills shows, and new 'Livin in the USA' protest album, with revolutionary joy

May 22, 2026

POP-ROCK

Shadow of the City fest is postponed; Bleachers will perform inside Stone Pony on May 23

May 21, 2026

Clinton

Hunterdon Art Museum

NJArts.net

All Arts, All Jersey



SIGN UP FOR OUR NEWSLETTER

SIGN UP