

Interview with Featured Book Artist Haley Nagy

Posted by [Julie Hunt](#) -- 11/2/2010 -- [Discussion \(0\)](#)

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Book and paper artist [Haley Nagy](#), whose artwork is currently featured in our site's banner, was recently kind enough to sit down with us for an interview about herself and her work.

Q: When did you begin making artwork? Has it been a recent development or has it been a lifelong practice?

A: “I’ve been making art for as long as I can remember, and have been calling myself an artist since the time I could talk. However, my current artist practice really developed in the past five years, beginning when I started to network with local artist communities in Texas and culminating most recently in my decision to pursue an MFA.”

Q: What attracted you to working with paper?

A: “My attraction to paper grew out of my love of books and my interests in collage/ mixed-media work. As soon as I discovered hand papermaking, I embraced the idea that there are ways to embed meaning within paper itself. I no longer see paper as merely a substrate for my work, but as a starting point for the containment and transmission of my ideas.”

Q: You are a student at Columbia College Chicago. What degree are you pursuing, and how do you like Columbia?

A: “I am a second year student in the Interdisciplinary Book and Paper Arts MFA program, which means that I am studying hand papermaking, bookbinding and letterpress. One of the great things about this program is that you are given the freedom to explore works in any medium and are encouraged to work between disciplines. The professors are incredibly encouraging of my work and are really forcing me to try new things and think outside the box.”

Q: What was the inspiration behind Illuminations, which is the project we are featuring on Chicago Publishes?

A: “*Illuminations* was inspired by my interest in interactive books and was a natural progression from a series of works I created, called the Concealment Series. I reformatted these handmade paper works into a very popular book form called the “flag book” in an effort to allow more light to penetrate the paper. I was pleasantly surprised to discover that, due to the strength of my handmade paper, this book could hold many different forms and shapes and be “read” in ways that moved beyond the traditional flag book structure.”

Q: How intense of a project was it—how long did it take to complete?

A: “*Illuminations* was a very time consuming piece. All the pages are handmade paper laminations embedded with encaustic paint shavings. In other words, I sandwiched wax paint shavings in between two layers of handmade paper, which I then fused (melted) in order to create a stained glass window effect. Making the paper laminations alone took about 12 hours in the paper studio. Measuring and cutting the paper afterward was an additional challenge because the paper density wasn’t uniform and then the wax edges would stick to themselves after cutting. By far, the most difficult part was lining up the paper flags, but I’ve learned to create a jig that will help with this in the future. All in all, I estimate it took me about a month to finish the original book.”

Q: What are you working on now? What's up-and-coming for you?

A: “I’m currently working on an artist book and performance piece titled *Exclusions*. The book itself is a collection of medical exclusions extracted from various health care policies offered by the Catholic Church in the United States and it will be read aloud as a sort of bridal monologue. I’m also co-writing a book about contemporary paper and encaustic with artist Catherine Nash. This summer I’ll also be traveling to Caracas for a bookbinding and papermaking fellowship.”

And finally, a few of the questions we ask all interviewees:

Q: What is your all-time, favorite book or publication?

A: “*Ender’s Game* by Orson Scott Card.”

Q: What was the last book that you read?

A: “*The 10th Parallel* by Eliza Griswold.”

Q: What one word do you love?

A: “Connotation.”

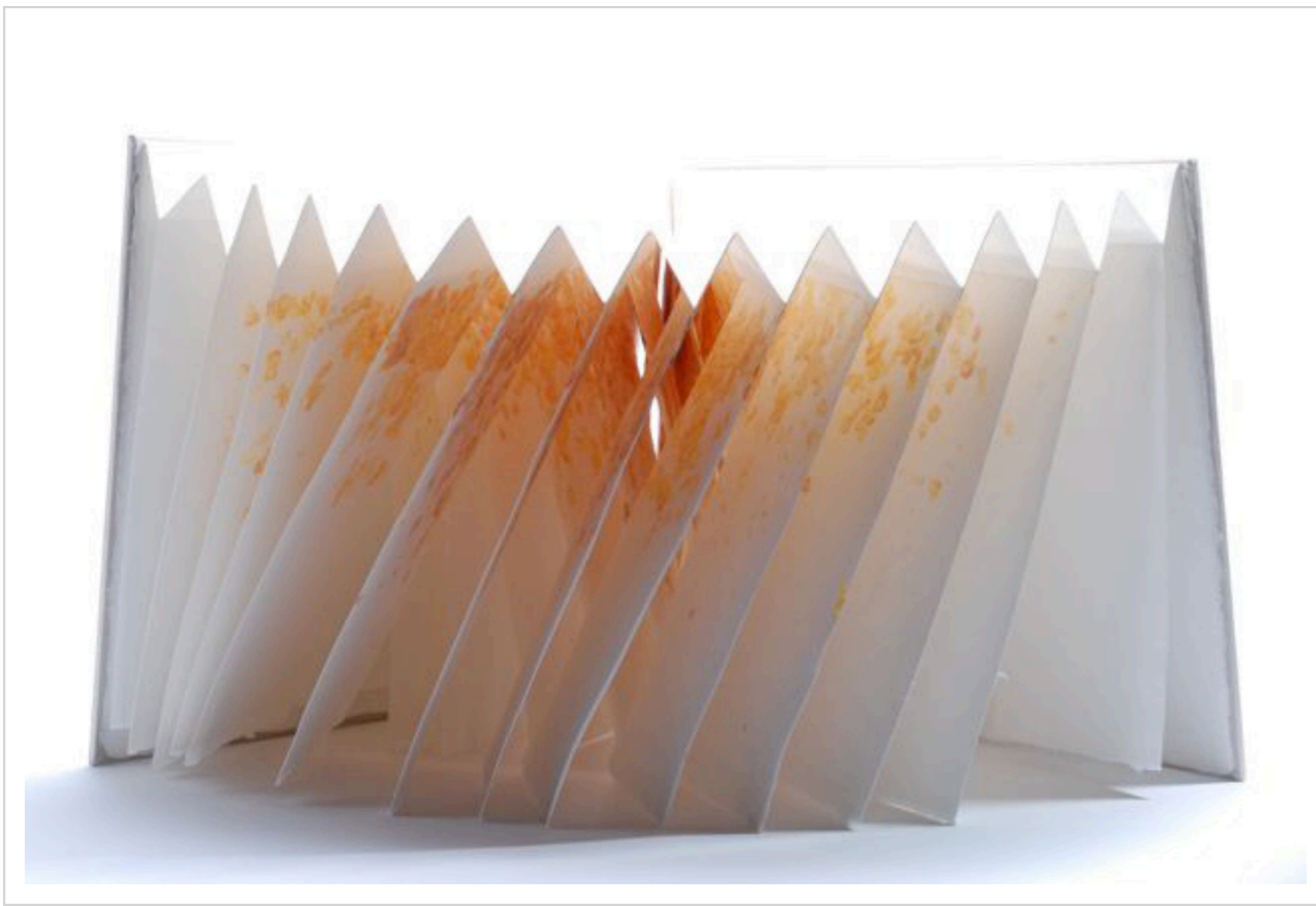
Q: What one word do you despise?

A: “Friend as a verb.”

Q: Often, when crafting a piece of work, artists and writers strive to please or impress a very specific one-person audience, be it their mother, their spouse, or a high school teacher. Who were you thinking of in this way when you were working on Illuminations?

A: “I’m fairly certain in the case of *Illuminations* that I was trying to impress my Artist Book teacher!”

Wonderful. Thank you so much, Haley.



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