

# Paper & Pattern

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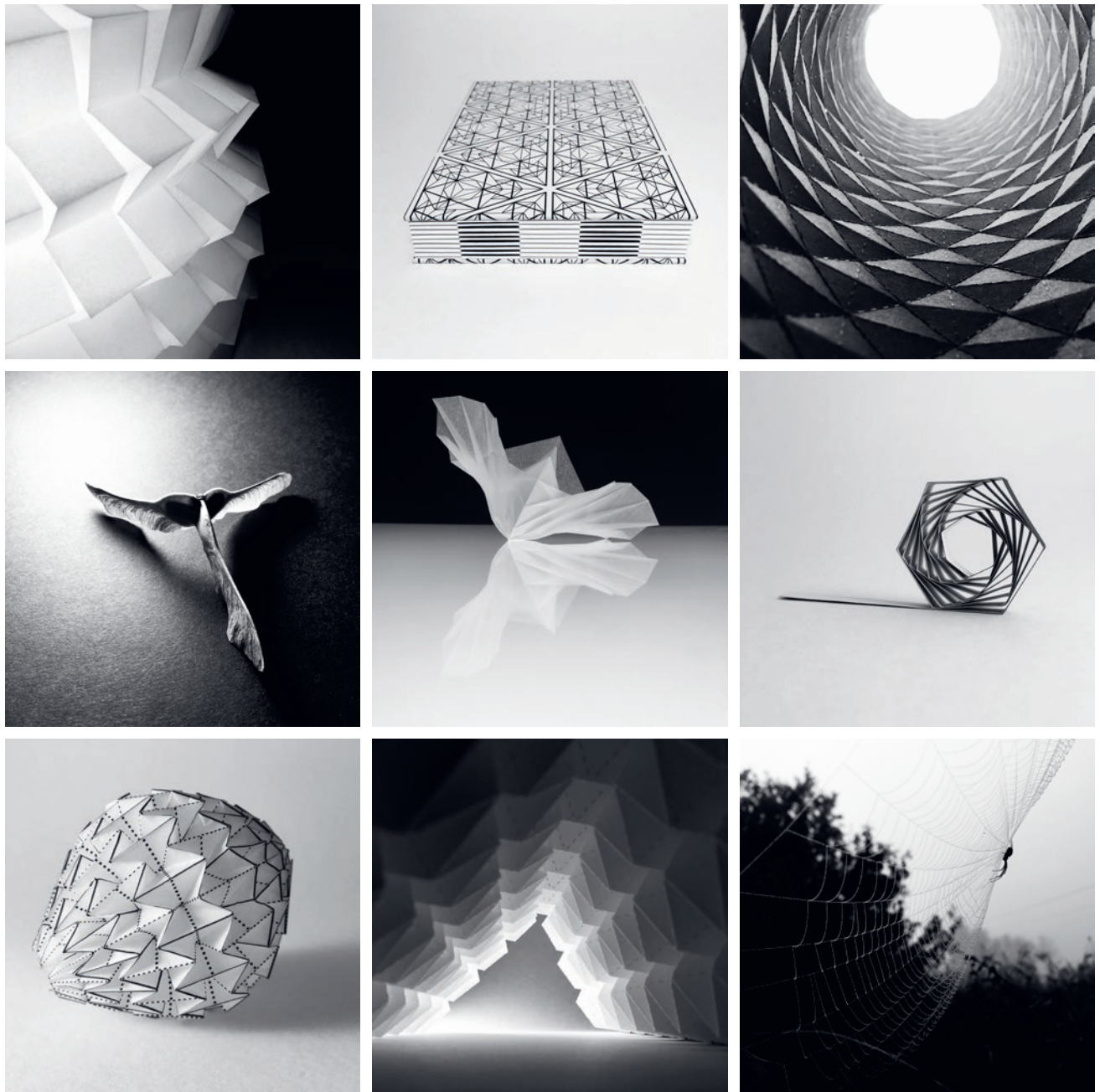


Fig. 1 Instagram @buchundpapier.

**Paper has fascinated me enormously** since I was a child. At my Grandma's house, when I was six, I discovered my first *origami* book and I was so incredibly fascinated. Using only the language of diagrams I was able to fold as shown. Today, I still feel the same fascination for the art of folding paper and my papercraft and bookbinding developed from this early experience.

My passion for bookbinding in some ways was a result of boredom. I grew up in a village and my school was in the next town a few kilometres away. The school bus only ran once in the morning and once in the afternoon, so I had to spend a lot of free periods in the school. When I was twelve, I made my first book in a bookbinding class.

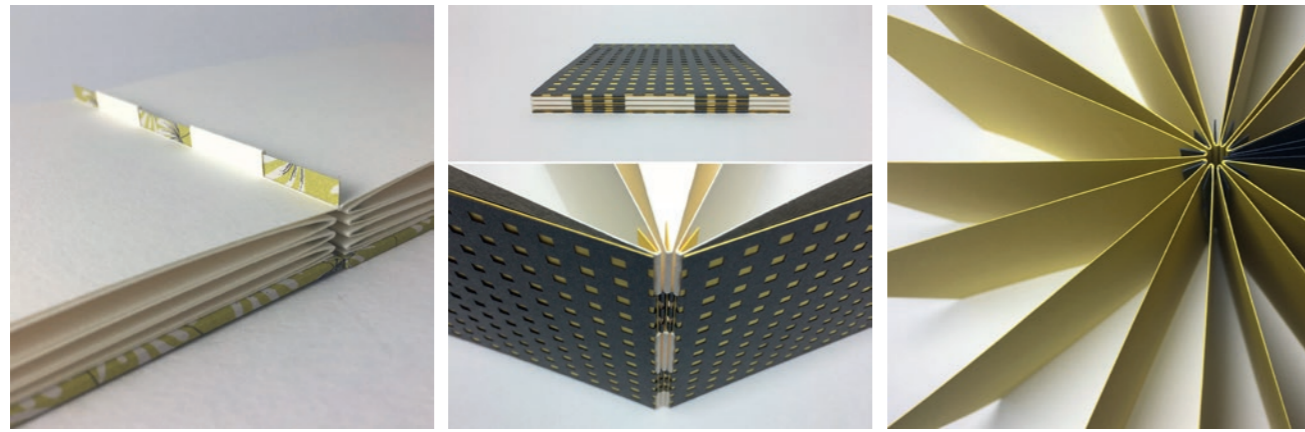


Fig. 2. Steckalburns (2019, 2018, & 2020) Instagram @buchundpapier.

After taking that class, we were able to use the workshop on our own and so that's where I went whenever I didn't have class or had to wait for the bus. During these many hours I designed and made my first books, portfolios, and boxes. Over the years I have worked as a self-employed book and paper designer and during this time I created the 'Steckalburn' which is a book structure developed from an adhesive-free binding technique I learned in New Zealand in 2004. The 'Steckalburn' uses an interlocking technique whereby the cover and the guard consist of one strip (patent-registered). The album can lie perfectly flat as well as giving you the option of changing the order of the internal double sheets. The result of this interlocking connection is an aesthetically pleasing back structure that can be emphasized by different colours [Fig. 2].

For the project *Flight Lines* [Fig. 3], I compiled a series of photographs, all of which were taken out of the window whilst I was sitting in a plane waiting on the

runway. For this collection I made a 'Steckalburn' because although I often work with varicoloured heavy paper sheets, this time I wanted to make the zebra crossing directly visible at the back.

Now I have been working as a bookbinder for nearly twenty years and paper is still my favourite material to work with, with all its diversity, ranging from delicately translucent and textured sheets to durable board. Through its tactile structure, paper can convey its own message independently of the text which might later be written on it. For many years I was working in product development for the Canadian publishers Hartley & Marks for the Paper-Oh series. For the series *Yuko-Ori* I got the chance to travel to Japan and to enjoy the special appreciation of paper inherent in Japanese culture. I visited the most beautiful paper stores and I bought the thinnest paper I had ever held in my hands, without knowing I would use them years later for my folding and paper art works.

Fig. 3. *Flight Lines* (2019) Instagram @buchundpapier.



Fig. 4. Instagram @buchundpapier (2019).

Firstly, my main field of work was bookbinding, but my passion for paper folding increased constantly. Many of my ideas are born while I am travelling. To make a book I need my workshop, but with paper, I can create incredible shapes wherever I am. The only tool I need for my folds are my hands. This immediacy has fascinated me from the very beginning and has definitely contributed to the fact, that adhesive-free bindings inspire me so much.

When I started to take photos of my books and paper folds for Instagram, my initial reason was to present my work to, and network more with, other bookbinders and paper artists at an international level. But unexpectedly, something very special came out of it for me. Staging and lighting my work for photographs has been inspiring and has opened up a very special artistic space for me. My photos emphasize the translucency and the folds of the paper in such a way that they often separate from the object and the photographs themselves become the creative work [Fig. 4].

Sometimes I only begin to grasp a shape, a structure, or a figure when I have staged natural phenomena, materials, or plays of light, to capture them photographically. Sometimes, it is almost as if I have discovered the beauty and the structure within for the very first time, even when these things surround me on a daily basis. And so not only is my work inspiration for photographs, but also my photographs inspire new ideas to create something with paper [Fig. 5].

For a while I thought I had to make a choice: between books, folding, and photography. When does folding become an art? At what point does the photo become more important than the folding? When does the folding become an important element of the book? Finally I realized that for me, everything is related, complementary, and intertwined. And all three of my passions reflect the phenomena of nature: light and shadow, geometrical wonders that nature produces in free growth, influencing so many artistic works. In the end, I started showing all aspects of my creative practice in exhibitions.

Fig. 5. Instagram @buchundpapier (2020).

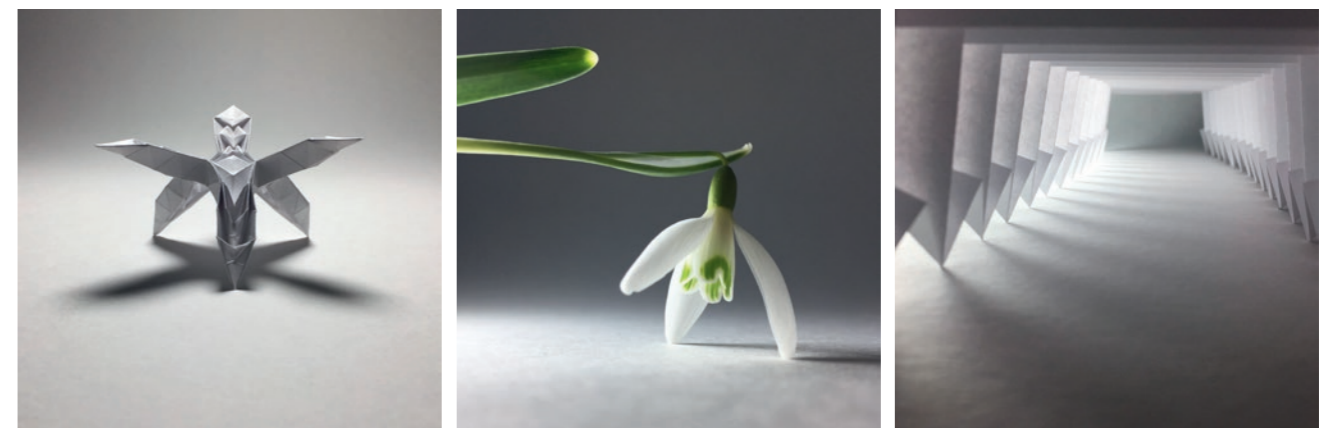




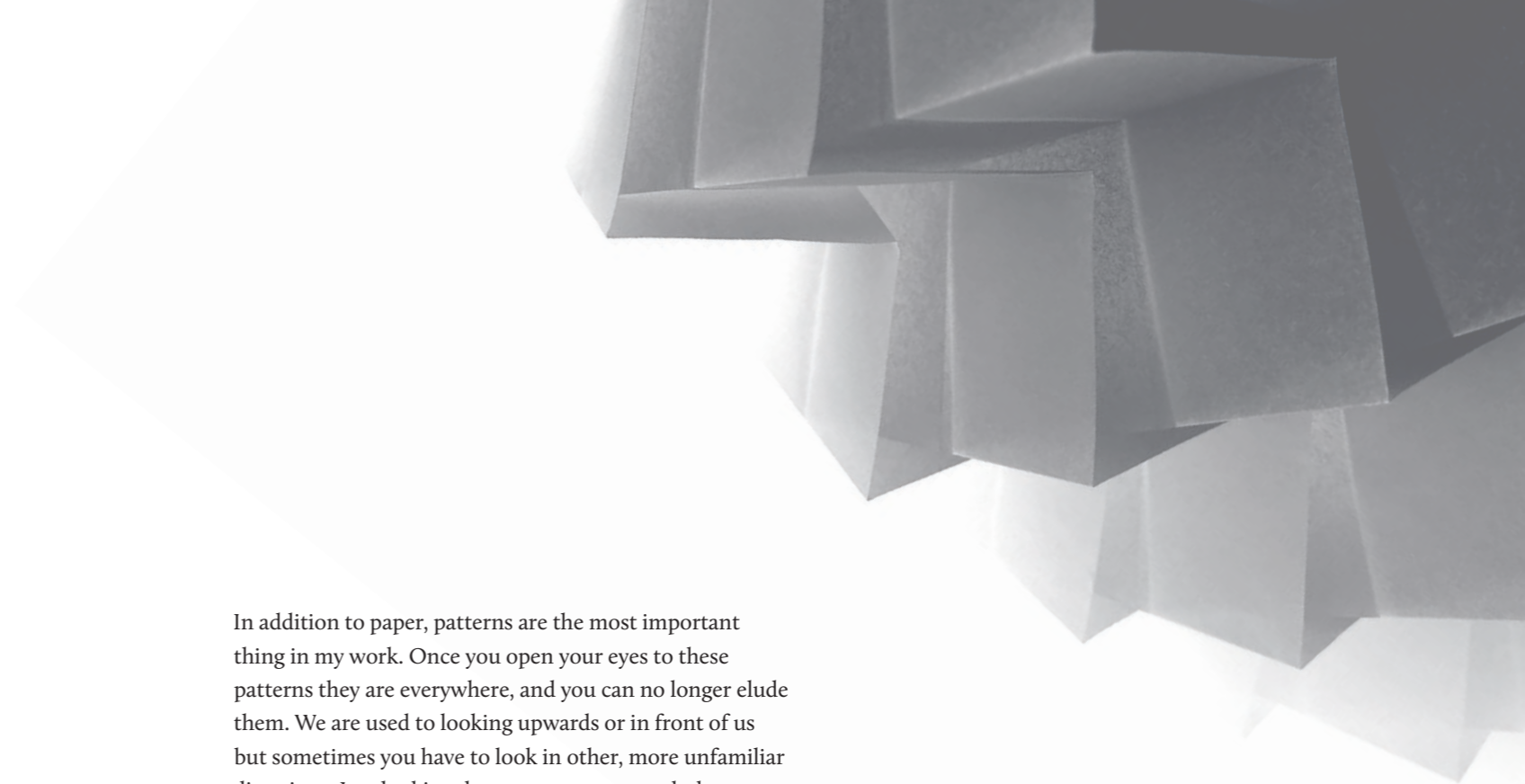
Fig. 6. Instagram @buchundpapier (2019, 2017, & 2020).



Fig. 7. Instagram @buchundpapier (2018).



Fig. 8. Instagram @buchundpapier (2019).



In addition to paper, patterns are the most important thing in my work. Once you open your eyes to these patterns they are everywhere, and you can no longer elude them. We are used to looking upwards or in front of us but sometimes you have to look in other, more unfamiliar directions. Just looking down can open up a whole new world. Lines, patterns, shapes, and the play of shadow and light inspire me and are a strong influence in my work. And conversely, I always discover structures of my work in these patterns. It is an everlasting interplay [Fig. 6].

Often the patterns I gather are tessellations – the tiling of a plane using one or more geometrical shapes with no overlaps and no gaps: for example, the marvellous geometrical designs on manhole covers. At some point I started collecting photos of these different covers from all over the world. Most of the time the surrounding of the covers is also exciting, for instance the structure of the pavement in which they are embedded. And when nature also makes a claim, it is especially exciting for me [Fig. 7]. An essential point in tessellations is repetition. To start an *origami* tessellation, the paper must be pre-creased, which can take several hours; a repetition through which the process of folding becomes a meditation for me. A while ago I got to know ProtoPaper<sup>1</sup> – sheets that are perforated with two different patterns. Without the laborious pre-folding, I can immediately start to tessellate and work in three-dimensions. Because of the perforation, the paper can be thicker, and the play of light is very different. Using this paper means less meditation time but more satisfaction in terms of testing new designs and producing objects.

You fold and fold with these patterns and at some point you get passionate about it. Then your own ideas and designs emerge, as in some of my paper sculptures, for

example. For these I have prepared the paper by blocking and stamping it with graphic ornaments. The ornaments are themed to highlight shapes, so if I fold the ProtoPaper with a square grid, I like to stamp circle ornaments or to add depth by stamping different triangle patterns on the triangle grid. Thus they develop into creative sculptures, which I also show in my exhibitions [Fig. 8].

*Origami* tessellations make very high demands on the paper. Sometimes it has to be very thin, transparent and long-fibred so that you can fold it several times. Then again, it is important to be able to see the pre-creased lines well, and in that case a softer, thicker paper is just right. Handmade paper can be very responsive to the needs of *origami* artists and it is always exciting to get to know new papers. Recently, I was able to test handmade paper by John Gerard<sup>2</sup> with geometrical patterns as watermarks. Now after years of folding and testing many, many different papers, I know which paper I can use to develop and express my ideas.

My home and my workshop are in the countryside and I am convinced that my work would be completely different if I lived in the city. Where I live and work, I am always closely linked to nature and it is the strongest source of inspiration for me. Every day I discover the incredible forms nature creates and I especially love the play of light and shadow, which is also reflected in my photos [Fig. 9].



Fig. 9. Instagram @buchundpapier.

Most of my works are inseparably connected with the patterns and structures of natural forms. When I noticed, for example, the perfectly shaped leaf of a Robinia tree, Hedi Kyle's fishbone binding immediately came to my mind. To preserve the beautiful leaves with their various shades of colour, I slightly refined the folding of the translucent glassine paper and added pockets. This adds a functional component to the aesthetic - as in classic product design. I am not only a bookbinder, but also a product designer. To me it is not only what a book looks like, but also how we use it [Fig. 10].

Leaves have a special fascination for me – literally and pattern-wise. I started to use them as material for my folds some time ago. This was a completely new experience for me. My hands are very familiar with paper and by now, I usually know how it will react when I fold it. But with leaves I have the feeling of working with a living, unpredictable material. I cannot avoid entering into a dialogue with them. Working with leaves only succeeds when the leaf and I collaborate. I have to empathize with the leaf and its structure, and I am always curious to

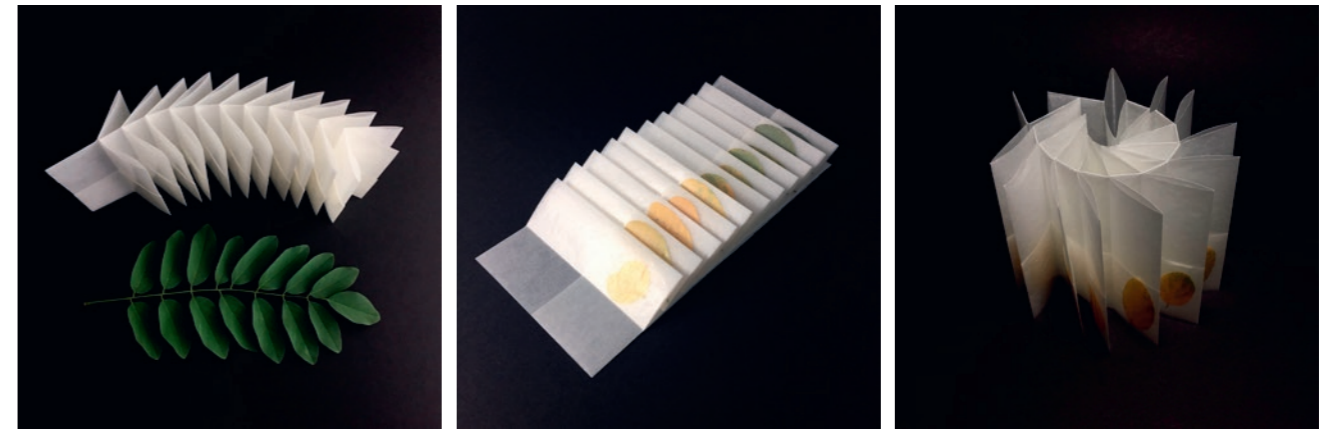


Fig. 10. Instagram @buchundpapier (2019).



Fig. 11. Instagram @buchundpapier (2019).

see how it responds in my hands and how it reacts to my folds. Since I can only work with fresh leaves and this work therefore depends on the seasons, I feel the connection of my work with nature is especially strong here [Fig. 11].

Why do I like pattern and translucency? To be honest there is often chaos in my head and on my desk. Clear structures, minimal design, and order in nature help me to focus, and this is then reflected in my work; even the grid structure of Instagram helps in putting the pieces together.

And when all comes together, I am excited and calm at the same time.

#### NOTES

1. Protopaper is a technical geometric paper used to design, create, and visualize 3D prototypes from its triangular mesh. Each sheet has a perforated grid made from equilateral triangles or quarter square triangles. [www.protopaperlab.com/protopaper](http://www.protopaperlab.com/protopaper)
2. Gerard Paperworks was founded in 1985 and is one of the few workshops in Germany that produce paper made by hand. They specialize in producing small numbers of sheets and working directly with artists who work with paper. [www.gerard-paperworks.com](http://www.gerard-paperworks.com)