

# THE FIRST CUT

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PAPER AT THE  
CUTTING EDGE



## Foreword

Dr Maria Balshaw, Director Manchester City Galleries and Whitworth Art Gallery

At the height of the Industrial Revolution the North West of England was a pioneering force in the industrialisation of the papermaking process, even exporting products and expertise to those countries where paper had originated, such as Japan. It is still one of the most important regions for the industry: it is home to the UK's largest paper mill, employs around one quarter of the UK's paper workforce and the paper industry in the North West is one of the most forward thinking industries in terms of recycling, energy conservation and the environment.

The 31 artists in *The First Cut* invite the viewer to radically re-think the possibilities of this basic material. Some hand-make their own paper from material such as seaweed and textile fibres, others use the detritus of the fast food industry, second hand books, vintage maps, currencies, basic office paper and, at the other end of the scale, high grade artist paper. In the hands of the artists this fragile material becomes a powerful means to articulate ideas and concepts that tackle issues as varied as globalisation, consumerism, geopolitical boundaries, the environment and race, as well as more personal concerns referencing depictions of the body, childhood and memory.

Truly global in reach, this exhibition features artists from America, Australia, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Sweden, Taiwan and the U.K., all working with paper in unique ways. We are delighted to be showing such a large body of new work, including seven large-scale new commissions and a number of other new artworks that have been created especially for *The First Cut*. Some artists have made work in response to the spaces at Manchester Art Gallery, which will be re-worked for our touring partner venues, Djanogly Art Gallery, Nottingham and Sea City Museum and Southampton City Art Gallery.

We have also included works that resonate with historic works from the Gallery's permanent collections: Susan Stockwell's interest in Imperial Britain is embodied



opportunity to see their work realised as a nationally available greetings card and are generously donating proceeds raised from a set of specially commissioned artist cards to Manchester Art Gallery's Trust. We have the perfect partnership with GF Smith, one of the world's leading suppliers of specialist papers, who have provided the beautiful papers used in this publication, as well as for our promotional print, public workshops and selected artwork in the exhibition.

There are also a number of individuals and galleries whose advice and support has been invaluable during the research and production stage of this exhibition and we'd like to thank Dena Bagi and Kate Day at the Manchester Craft and Design Centre, Ana Cristea Gallery, Jane Crowther and Mark Jesset at GF Smith, Daniel Cutmore, Cindy Daignault, Mark Doyle at The Contemporary Art Society, Jane England of England & Co Gallery, Bruce Ferguson, Scott Fitzgerald, Ai Hayatsu, Caroline Hession at MSD Capital, L.P., Juan Hinojosa, Pippy Houldsworth Gallery, David Hoyland at Seventeen Gallery, Irene Langford at The Granada Foundation, Dan Matthews at Southampton Museum and Galleries, Robert Moss at DAC Beachcroft, Manabi Murata, Hazel Nichols, Alice O'Connor at The Henry Moore Foundation, Lora Reynolds Gallery, Kathy Richmond, Scai the Bathouse, Poppy Sebire Gallery, Alison and Tim Solnick and Jenni Barnet at Roger la Borde, TAG Fine Arts, Junko Takekawa at The Japan Foundation, Alan Ward, Neil Walker at Djanogly Art Gallery and Jessica Wild.

We are also indebted to the private and institutional lenders who have generously agreed to lend works from their collections, including Bob and Vicky Angus, Glenn and Amanda Fuhrman and FLAG Art Foundation, Jason and Sophia Hirsch, The Brontë Parsonage, Patrick Heide Contemporary Art, Tate and the Victoria & Albert Museum.



## Papering the Body

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The final theme of the exhibition is *Papering the Body*. The Gallery of Costume, located in the 18th century Platt Hall, features artists who create dresses and shoes from paper. Susan Stockwell's dresses from maps and money are showcased here while Susan Cutts uses her own handmade paper to fashion her dancer's outfit. Violese Lunn reveals the traces of a spine or organs inside her crumpled and ethereal outfits, positioned in a stuccoed interior alongside historic portraits of women. These unwearable garments all explore identity in different ways. Unlike a protective carapace, they resemble a ghostly skin, leaving a strong echo of the absent female body.

The diversity of artworks in *The First Cut* showcases the versatility and unpredictability of paper. From large scale, show stopping installations to miniature sculptures, the 31 international artists are committed to taking paper beyond its natural boundaries. By transforming books, magazines and maps, using silhouettes, creating dresses, sculptures and installations, the artists demonstrate the huge potential and power of such a humble material.





**Money Dress** (detail) 2010  
Paper money notes, cotton thread, frame  
Courtesy the artist

Susan Stockwell was born in 1962 and lives and works in London. Stockwell originates from Manchester and studied at the Royal College of Art, London. She has exhibited in galleries and museums all over the world, including the V&A, London and The National Museum of China, Beijing. She has been awarded scholarships, grants and commissions such as a *Visiting Arts Taiwan-England Artists Fellowship*, an Arts and Humanities Research Council Grant and has recently completed a large public commission for the University of Bedfordshire. She has taken part in residencies and projects in Europe, America, Australia and Asia.



### Susan Stockwell

Susan Stockwell transforms everyday materials, the ephemeral material culture present in our daily lives. She is concerned with issues of ecology, geo-politics, mapping, trade and global commerce. Paper sculptures with their delicate, disposal and fragile nature, are an important element of her practice.

Stockwell's series of dresses fashioned from maps, money, rice paper and coffee filters, use paper which has had a significant past use and history. *Highland Dress* 2010 has been created from Ordnance Survey maps of the Scottish Highlands referencing the English occupation of Scotland for over 300 years. The juxtaposition of military maps with a woman's dress sends a powerful message of the gendered nature of war and politics being traditionally dominated by men. *Colonial Dress* 2008, made from world maps, with its bustle, collar, ruffs and rose detail, immediately transports us to an age of Empire and Britain's Imperial past. Colourful bank notes from all over the world are stitched together to form *Money Dress* 2010, based on the floor length and puff sleeved style of dress worn in the 1870s by British female explorers. Sited in the historic galleries at Manchester Art Gallery and the Gallery of Costume, Platt Hall, the dresses are in dialogue with the collection and architecture, cementing their relationship with history.

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**Highland Dress** 2010  
Paper maps  
Courtesy the artist

**Colonial Dress** (detail) 2008  
Maps, wire, glue  
Courtesy the artist

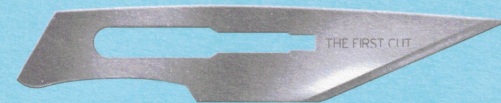


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*The First Cut* exhibition features work by 31 international contemporary artists who radically rethink the possibilities of working with paper. From large scale installations that explode from gallery walls to intricate, miniature worlds, the artists are committed to taking paper beyond its natural boundaries. By transforming books, magazines and maps, using silhouettes, creating dresses, sculptures and installations, the artists demonstrate the huge potential and power of such a humble material.

Noriko Ambe • Andersen M Studio  
James Aldridge • Su Blackwell • Claire Brewster  
Sarah Bridgland • Peter Callesen  
Long-Bin Chen • Laura Cooperman • Susan Cutts  
Béatrice Coron • Nicola Dale • Andrea Dezsö  
Tom Gallant • Manabu Hangai • Chris Jones  
Chris Kenny • Andreas Kocks • Elisabeth Lecourt  
Violese Lunn • Andrea Mastrovito  
Mia Pearlman • Abigail Reynolds  
Georgia Russell • Rob Ryan • Andrew Singleton  
Justine Smith • Susan Stockwell • Yuken Teruya  
Emma van Leest • Kara Walker



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Manchester Art Gallery