



White Magic: The Age of Paper

Lothar Müller

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Examining the history, function, and impact of paper on society, Müller reveals how the age of books and the age of the Internet are connected, not in opposition.

Lothar Müller's *White Magic* presents the evolution of paper from its probable roots in China to the present and reveals not only the steps in its development, production, and uses, but also its role in both documenting and shaping the way of life of peoples and cultures worldwide. Especially engaging is Müller's coupling of the history of paper with the development of literature and the human intellect, in which paper, often as beautiful as it was useful, carried and inspired transformative words and images.

Müller meticulously traces the development of paper through the ages by exploring its physical, material form as a product of technology; by examining its function as a medium for storing and circulating words, images, and numbers; and lastly, through an inward, contemplative look at paper as metaphor.

Filled with surprising facts (including those related to the astounding degree to which the availability of paper has actually shaped civilization) and insightful connections that reveal paper's multifaceted influence on creativity and invention, Müller's book is at once erudite and entertaining, scholarly and poetic, and a fitting tribute to humble paper's role as the facilitator of communication, which gave rise to modern civilization.

As the world moves from the age of paper into the digital age, Müller gives those who love paper for its visual and tactile qualities, and for its resistance to having its inscriptions tampered with, hope that paper will not be lost. He gives denizens of this transitional age evidence that, rather than the "age of books" and the "age of the Internet" being in opposition to each other, they form a continuity. And even as "electronic paper" gets "better and better at mimicking its analog counterpart," great libraries of works, from medieval manuscripts to magazines, are being preserved in their original form—on paper.

Müller is editor of the features section of the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*. In 2013, he was awarded the Berlin Prize for Literary Criticism.

KRISTINE MORRIS (Spring 2015)

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