



Karen Trask and Paul Litherland in front of Produit Rien, July 2022.



View of Karen Trask installing papers on the building, August 2025.

MEET THE MAKER

Paper Installation: The Shadow of the Earth

In this recurring feature, Karen Trask shares her words on an outdoor paper installation piece. Despite harsh weather, the installation remains largely intact and continues to evolve.

Through sun, rain, sleet, and now snow, almost nine months later, the handmade papers on the façade of Produit Rien, a small arts studio building in Montreal, Canada are holding strong with little sign of letting go any time soon. This installation, entitled *The Shadow of the Earth*, was presented in Fall 2025 in the project space of Produit Rien as part of a community project about the neighbourhood.

In 2019, my partner Paul Litherland and I bought a small industrial building, formerly housing PRODUITS ALIMENTAIRES ORIENTAL(E) S, the first tofu manufacturer in Montreal. Looking for a name for our new studio, we removed some letters from the sign above the door of the building to read: PRODUIT RIEN in French, with the approximate meaning in English—make nothing. The vinyl adhesive letters of that original sign are slowly fading and have shrunk almost to nothing! The building is home to our two studios and a project space for artists to rent. Since opening its doors in April 2020 in the midst of COVID, Produit Rien has presented over eighty different projects including visual arts, experimental music, performance, poetry readings, dance, book launches, films, and community initiatives. Notably, the group exhibition “Voisiner / Neighbouring” featured seventy-five works by fifty professional and amateur artists living within a 400-meter radius of the space.

I am a visual artist working primarily in sculpture, performance, and video. Always imagining novel ways to explore the potential of paper, covering the façade of our small, functional, one-story, white-brick studio building with paper seemed like a challenge worth taking on.

In early June 2025, I began testing various paper types and pigments. I tried couching brick-sized papers directly onto the white-glazed, brick surfaces and others I attached with rice glue. After a few weeks and some serious rain storms, I was convinced of the durability of the papers and the feasibility of my project: to cover each brick of the building with pigmented papers in a gradient of colours ranging from dark grey through pink, yellow, white, and blue. This outdoor paper installation would be part of the project *Taking Alexandra Marconi*, an exploration by artists in the community about the neighbourhood.

The Shadow of the Earth is a representation of a real phenomenon also known as an umbra. On a cloudless day, when the sun is below the horizon, either just before rising or just after setting, it will briefly project a shadow of the earth on the opposite horizon. Recognizing the fact that Produit Rien is located in a mixed residential and industrial zone in the middle of Montreal, Paul and I decided to use the façade of the building as a canvas to reflect the sky and the horizon, something too often lost behind the high walls of a city.

I always have a reserve of leftover bits of handmade papers from previous projects. The majority of the fibers I used for *The Shadow of the Earth* were a mix of abaca, gampi, cotton, and flax. Each day involved testing colours, counting the number of bricks and making the papers needed to cover the specified rows of bricks. Each brick was covered with a thin sheet of handmade pigmented paper made to measure. I started on ground level with the blue-grey shadow colours and slowly worked my way up, making the papers and rice glue as needed. A synthetic sizing was added during the making of the papers and was also applied externally to the finished papers on the bricks. Halfway through the project, considering the logistics of ladders and not wanting to damage papers already installed, I decided to work from the top down with the sky-blue colour. The making of the installation took almost two months—the better part of the summer.

There are only two bricks in the entranceway of the building that seem to systematically reject its paper face. I have reglued and replaced one of the papers twice, but half curls up and the other half remains stubbornly holding on. Some of the white cotton-based papers are showing signs of wear along the top edges, as well as the grey ones on ground level, but otherwise all remains pretty much intact! Paul thought it would last maybe a couple of months, but now he's rethinking that *The Shadow of the Earth* could be with us for a few years yet!

We watch and wonder how this work evolves with weather and time.

— Karen Trask

Karen Trask is a multidisciplinary artist based in Montreal. She holds a fine arts degree from the University of Waterloo and a master's in sculpture/fibres from Concordia University, Montreal, Canada. With her partner Paul Litherland, Trask co-directs the project space Produit Rien. Her work has been presented internationally in exhibitions and film festivals, including the International Short Film Festival Oberhausen and venues in Canada and Japan. Her paper sculptures have twice received the paper prize at the Biennale du dessin, de l'estampe et du papier in Alma, Quebec. Instagram: karenltrask



Lucy Gill glueing paper to the end of a brick, July 2025.



View of the one paper that refused to be completely glued, December 2025.



Winter view of *The Shadow of the Earth*, January, 2026.

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Dear Valued Hand Papermaking Subscriber,

As we approach the 40th anniversary of Hand Papermaking, we are excited to share a new chapter for the magazine, which is one that broadens access while staying grounded in the material experience of papermaking.

Beginning in Summer 2026, we will introduce a digital edition of Hand Papermaking as part of our print subscription. This new offering is designed to complement, not replace, the print magazine. While the digital edition will increase accessibility and allow for greater reach and engagement, we firmly believe that the print version remains the fullest expression of the magazine, especially through its distinctive handmade paper samples, which cannot be replicated on a screen.

This addition reflects several of our core values as an organization which includes adapting to how research and reading take place today, improving accessibility and interactivity to make our content more widely usable, and broadening the reach of papermaking knowledge to support scholarship and shared learning.

Starting June 2026, your subscription will include, as always, two print issues and four quarterly digital newsletters, plus access to the digital edition of the magazine.

Now for the practical reality of our news: to reflect the continuing increases in shipping and printing costs, we will be adjusting our rates for the first time in four years. For our international subscribers, we have been absorbing skyrocketing shipping charges and costs of re-deliveries due to struggling postal infrastructure everywhere; to ensure continued access, we will begin offering a "digital-only" option to our international, individual subscribers.

Our new rates (in US\$) as of June 1, 2026 will be:

- Print + Digital (US) - 1 year: \$78; 2 years: \$140
- Print + Digital (International) - 1 year: \$125; 2 years: \$225
- Print + Digital (Institutional) - US: \$105/year; International: \$142/year
- Digital-Only (International, Individual Subscribers) - \$65/year
- Single Issue Print - US: \$50; International: \$75
- Hand Papermaking Newsletter (standalone, quarterly) - Digital: \$15/year; Print: \$35/year

All pricing includes shipping and handling

We see these changes as an exciting step forward, and one that allows us to share the richness of hand papermaking with a broader audience while continuing to produce the thoughtful, tactile publication you know and value.

—Gretchen Schermerhorn
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