

# THE RIBBON OF NATURE

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## The Territory-Book

*Aljibe de Papel*



*Freshly made paper drying in the garden at Aljibe de Papel, Huétor Vega, Granada.*

*A practice of making paper from the land, printing with what the land offers, and binding the whole into a book that remembers where it came from.*

At Aljibe de Papel, paper is not a surface you write on. It is a substance that remembers. Made from natural fibres grown in their own garden — flax, cotton, hemp, local plants — each sheet carries the material trace of a specific place and season. In the context of The Ribbon of Nature, this logic extends to the landscape itself: the territory becomes the medium.

#### AT A GLANCE

<b>Target group</b>	Adult learners, teacher students, educators, artists, makers
<b>Duration</b>	Full week (two workshop days + intermediate drying process)
<b>Setting</b>	Workshop space with water access; outdoor landscape nearby
<b>Themes</b>	Handcraft as pedagogy, material memory, territory, botanical printing, artist's book
<b>Materials</b>	Natural fibres, mould & deckle, water vat, acrylic medium, pressed plants, binding thread & needle, bookboard

#### THE GUIDING QUESTION

*What does this landscape become when we make paper from it — and what does that paper hold?*

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## Part 1. Creating the Support — The Paper Itself

### HANDCRAFT AS THE FIRST FORM OF ATTENTION

The week begins not with writing or walking, but with making the very ground on which the work will rest. On the first workshop day, participants make paper by hand.

Natural fibres — prepared in advance at the workshop — are beaten into pulp and floated in a large water vat. Participants use a mould and deckle to lift a thin layer of fibre from the water, forming a sheet. The gesture is slow and requires attention: too fast and the sheet tears; too slow and it settles unevenly. The body learns the right pressure before the mind does.



*Handmade paper sheets drying on the rack — each one a different weight, texture, thickness.*

This is not a craft demonstration. It is an introduction to a way of working that will run through the entire week: slowness, material resistance, the knowledge that lives in the hands.

#### REFLECTION PROMPTS DURING PAPERMAKING

- What does this material know that you don't?
- What changes in you when you must wait for something to dry?
- What would it mean for your teaching practice to work at this pace?
- What does it feel like to make the surface before you know what you'll put on it?

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## Part 2. The Intermediate Stage — Waiting as Practice

### THE PEDAGOGY OF PATIENCE

Between the first and second workshop days, the sheets pass through an intermediate process: treated with acrylic medium for structural strength, then left to dry and press. Participants do not touch them during this time.

This pause is intentional. In a world oriented toward immediacy, the experience of genuine waiting — of trusting a process that is continuing without you — is itself a form of learning. The paper is not inert during this time. It is consolidating.

*The support is built, transformed, and patiently awaited.*

The landscape walks and other activities during this period are not separate from the papermaking process — they are continuous with it. Participants are accumulating experience that will later be pressed into the paper.

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## Part 3. The Walk — Collecting with Eyes and Hands

### WHAT THE LANDSCAPE OFFERS

Between the two workshop days, participants walk in the surrounding landscape. They collect — not as botanists or foragers, but as future printers. What interests them is not the name of a plant but its impression: the shape a leaf makes when pressed under ink, the texture a stem leaves on a damp surface, the smell that rises when something is crushed between fingers.

### GUIDING THE ATTENTION

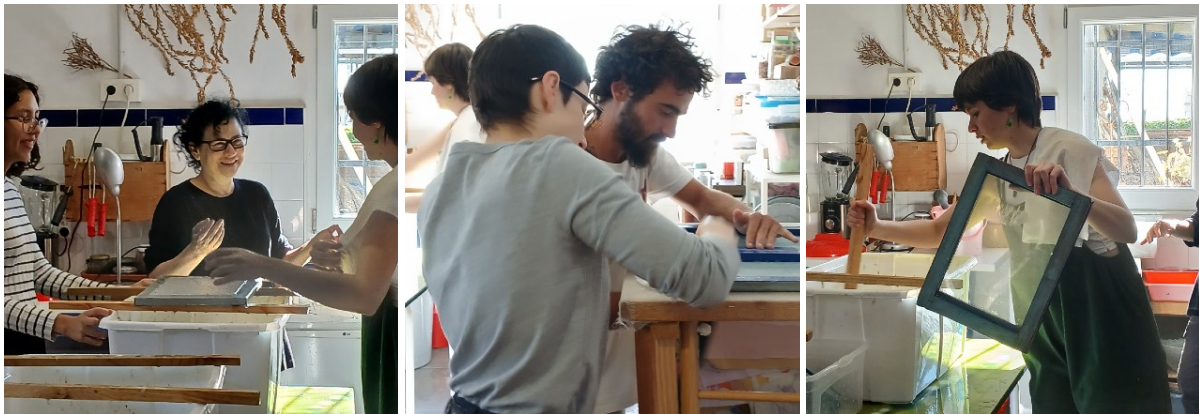
- What does this plant offer — its form, its texture, its colour, its smell?
- What would this leave behind if you pressed it?
- Is there something here that is too delicate to take? How do you honour that?
- What is the difference between collecting and extracting?

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## Part 4. Intervention and Botanical Printing

### THE LANDSCAPE PRINTS ITSELF

On the second workshop day, the dry, pressed sheets return to the table. Now participants work with what they have collected: leaves, stems, flowers, bark, seed casings. Using botanical printing techniques, they press, arrange, and fix these materials onto the surface of the handmade paper.

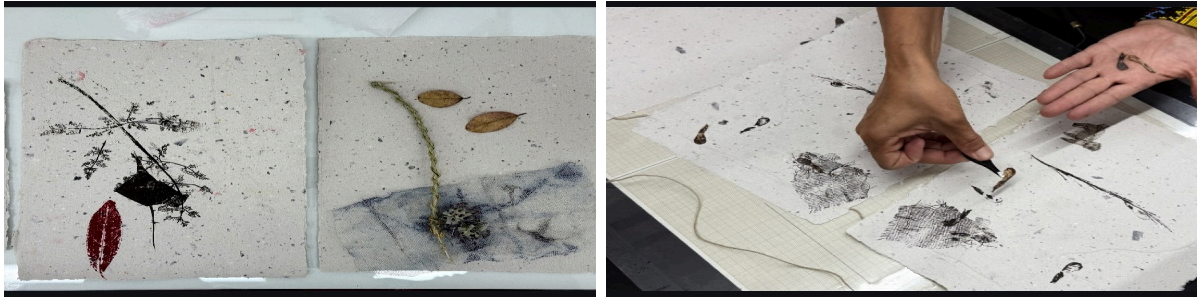


*Participants at work in the Aljibe de Papel studio — papermaking, printing, and bookbinding.*

Botanical printing is not illustration. It is not making a picture of a plant. It is the plant itself leaving a record of its form — the actual surface of the leaf in direct contact with the paper fibres. The result is an impression, not a representation.

*The result is a territory-book: an object that brings together material, experience, and memory.*

This step completes a loop that began with the papermaking: the landscape was dissolved into fibre to make the paper, and now the landscape prints itself onto the paper's surface. The book holds both.



*Finished territory-books — botanical impressions on handmade paper, bound by hand.*

#### REFLECTION PROMPTS DURING PRINTING

- What survives the pressing? What is lost?
- Does the print belong to you, or to the plant?
- What is the difference between a record and a representation?
- What would it mean to teach from a surface that was made by the landscape?

## Part 5. Bookbinding and Exhibition

### CLOSING THE PROCESS

The final stage is binding: gathering the printed sheets, adding covers, and sewing the book together by hand. The act of binding is not administrative — it is a final, slow passage through everything that has happened. Each page turned while binding is a page that was once pulp in water, once a drying sheet on a line, once pressed against a leaf collected in the field.

The bound books are gathered for a brief shared exhibition at the close of the seminar. Participants look at each other's books. This is not a critique. It is a recognition — of what each person made, of the common ground (literally) from which all the books came.

### COLLECTIVE REFLECTION

- What does your book know that you don't?
- What would happen if a student came to your class with this book instead of a notebook?
- What did the landscape put into the paper that you didn't?
- What could not be bound?



"Cuaderno de Campo" — Field Notebook. Hand-stamped cover of the finished territory-book.

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## The A/r/tographic Approach

### WHY THIS IS RESEARCH, NOT JUST A MAKING ACTIVITY

The territory-book is an a/r/tographic object: it holds within a single artifact the traces of the artist, the researcher, and the teacher. As artists, participants create a unique handmade object that does not separate form from content. As researchers, they investigate the relationship between landscape, material process, embodied knowledge and memory. As teachers and learners, they experience what it means to know something through making rather than through analysis.

The book does not represent this experience. It is this experience; made legible in a form you can hold.

## Pedagogical Background

### THREE IDEAS UNDERNEATH THE EXERCISE

#### Nature as medium, not subject

In most educational contexts, nature is what you study. Here, it is what you work with. The landscape provides the fibre, the pressing water, the printing materials, the rhythm of drying and waiting. This reorients the relationship between learner and environment at the most material level.

#### Slowness as a pedagogical stance

The papermaking process cannot be hurried. Neither can the drying, the pressing, the botanical impression. Each stage requires patience, attention, and trust in a process the practitioner cannot fully control. This is what Aljibe de Papel calls the 'embodied experience of learning': knowledge that arrives through time and hands.

#### The process-based dimension of knowledge

The finished book is not the point — the sequence of stages is. What participants learn is not how to make a book, but what it means to know something through making. This has direct implications for teaching: it asks what it would mean to structure a course, a lesson, or a learning relationship around process rather than product.