

Jelani Ells received her BFA at Virginia Commonwealth University where she studied illustration. Since graduating, her practice has grown to incorporate papermaking. Her paper is created through play and experimentation where she explores the potential of materials and methods to make paper pulp, often focusing on repurposing foraged materials and paper junk destined for the trash and how these materials affect the “identity of a sheet of paper. In this artistic shift, she is strengthening her voice and practice through residencies with Public Functionary, Minnesota Center for Book Arts/Jerome and the Highpoint Printmaking Center.

In a paper mache sculpture depicting the classic chase between fox and rabbit, the artist utilizes handmade sheets of paper, sculpted paper clay and natural dyes to characterize the individuals. In using foraged and discarded materials, the artist seeks to glorify overlooked materials and practices as sustainable and accessible tools.