

PRECREASE & COLLAPSE

S01E01, Gachepapier - Transcript

Stéphane There is a saying that behind every great man is a great woman. But, as for today's guest, I dare say that behind him were, once, three little girls. Without them, he might not have emerged as the successful artist we know. So, if you wanna know how Gachepapier's origami path started, stay with me.

Welcome to Precrease & Collapse.

[Theme]

Stéphane Today, I'm honored to receive Gachepapier, a Belgian artist living in Germany. You've probably already seen his work on Instagram. His portraits are really astonishing as he succeeds to bring life in his paper in a unique way. Halfway between folding and sculpting, his style is immediately recognizable. It means a lot to me to have him here, for this first episode. We met a few years ago, I guess it was in Lyon. Since then, each time we both attended the convention, I was able to admire his work and its evolution.

Hence, having him here will allow me to explore his inspiration and the way he considers origami.

So, welcome Gachepapier, and thank you for accepting my invitation.

Gachepapier Oh whoa, thank you Stéphane the pleasure is really mine. I'm really very very honored to be your guest today.

Stéphane If I believe your blog, you started origami at 34. Is that right?

Gachepapier That must be about right, yes. I've been telling mostly the truth on my blog [laughs]

Stéphane That's great. And do you remember in what context you discovered origami?

Gachepapier OK. So, my first real encounter with origami is really an accident. We were wondering what to do with the girls... I have three daughters. And one idea was to have them kept busy with some handcrafts of any sort and I looked for a book and I came upon an origami book. I had no idea there was such things. So I bought it and there we went, my five-year old finding the second model too difficult and me doing it in her stead.

Stéphane And then, was it the first time you tried folding paper?

Gachepapier Well... Not counting the planes that every kid was doing at school, yes. Absolutely! [laughs]

Stéphane Aside from what you folded with your daughters, how did you follow up with more complex models?

Gachepapier Well, herm... Things started out very slowly from that first book. I found that the models were interesting. If I recall correctly it must have been a book by either Robert Lang or

John Montroll. Perhaps even the two of them, in combination. But one book led to another, and then to another, and then to too many. After a while I thought "maybe there's even more out there on the Internet". I was on the French forum very quickly, first lurking, not saying anything, and then taking part more actively. I think it led to a couple of thousands posts over the years.

Stéphane I didn't count them all but yes, you're very busy there! It has always been a great place to exchange about origami.

Gachepapier Yes, absolutely. And it was also a very good way to virtually meet people who share that interest because even though I do like folding alone, at the end of the day you cannot progress much if you're entirely isolated from others' ideas and constructive criticism for example. So yes, it was a fabulous opportunity to find people who were like-minded.

Stéphane And then, quite quickly, you began to fold your own models. How did you started creating those models?

Gachepapier OK... That's a very good question. Actually, my approach to origami design was first "this is something impossible that people who write books do, and that will never happen to me". But slowly... Actually quite quickly, to be honest, I stumbled upon my own limitations and found out that the most complex models that I was eventually interested in were simply too complex and too difficult for me to fold. And I had almost completely lost interest in folding by then. And then, not entirely per chance, but still unexpectedly, for me in

the way it has a strong impact, I visited the famous Origami House in Tokyo, where several models, by notably Eric Joisel but also by some very very famous people like Satoshi Kamiya and so on, were on display. And to see those, I was simply swept away. And that showed me there is more than just what's found in books, and if people can make such beautiful sculptures, I wanna be trying that. So, that was what actually gave it a second life for me. And that's one which is still enduring, well, almost ten years onward. Actually ten years onwards! It's been precisely ten years ago since I visited that place, the Origami House.

Stéphane That is really a great trip! And to see all those models for real, it must have been a bliss.

Gachepapier Yes, it was absolutely fabulous! What astonished me most was to see that those pieces of paper were not just beautiful from one point of view, such as pretty much what I was folding from books, but from a whole range of different directions and orientations. They were truly sculptures. To me, that was unthinkable. And yes, so, there I went. I left that place with the idea that yes, this is something that need to be looked into more precisely, not just looking for complexity, but looking for things that are simply beautiful to look at. Finally, I actually met Mr Satoshi Kamiya in the store, in the Origami House, but I had no idea who it was. It was only when I recalled it on my little visit on the French forum that Eric Joisel explained "Oh, you have actually met Satoshi Kamiya!" So, there was my encounter with a master.

Stéphane You didn't ask him for an autograph, that's too bad!

Gachepapier I had no idea who he was! We were buying books from him!

Stéphane So, now, you're creating your own models. Could you tell us how an idea takes form in your mind, and then in your hands?

Gachepapier Oh, that's very different from one model to the next. There are... Sometimes, it's a technique, sometimes it's an expression, sometimes it's a joke. For example, if I start folding a mask, then I will suddenly be after an expression more than after, let's say, a particular base for folding that expression. If I fold something more technical, like my little watchtower, then that's essentially being pre-computed, and then precreased, and then folded. And there is pretty much everything in between as well. My favorite mix is when I have an idea which does require a little bit off technique so I start of with, for example, a simple base, and then I can take it further without having to compute everything. Computing, even though it's quite interesting mathematically, to me in the end, it's rather boring. What I do like is the possibility of having enough experience to build upon that first idea of a base, without having to think too much of the technical details and being free to explore what expressions for example I can bring in the model.

Stéphane When I look at your models, I see you use various techniques, like wetfolding or crumpling, for instance. How does the model dictate the best technique you use?

Gachepapier Sometimes, it just doesn't work, sometimes it doesn't want to work. And then you have to come back to it, or what I do, typically, I put things in a box and dig them up after some weeks, months, sometimes even years. And then, in the meantime, I may have learn something or simply give it a fresh new look. And then things start working again.

Stéphane And in the end, when do you consider a model is complete?

Gachepapier Ha ha! You could almost say... When I'm about to damage the paper. I tend to have to force myself to stop. It's very, very tempting to keep on fiddling and fiddling and fiddling. Sometimes, to the point that was too much and then I have to throw away the sheet and redo things and stop earlier. But the idea would be, if they are no more significant details that you can add of course, or when you have found an expression which surprises you, or which... It also depends on what you're setting out to do. Sometimes you just doodle and then whatever comes out... is a gift, it's a boon. But sometimes you have something precise in mind and either you manage to translate that mental image into an object -of course that's a huge success- or you don't, but you find something else in the process, which is also interesting and it's onright, which is a little bit unsatisfactory, because that's not what you were after. But then, on the other hand, who's gonna complain if they found an interesting model in the meantime.

Stéphane When you start a model, are you looking for feedbacks, especially when you post or share pictures of it?

Gachepapier Yes, that's one of the big ideas, of course, of having a blog and this online presence in general. Unfortunately, people tend to be mostly just very nice -which of course is a good thing !- but sometimes they see something, and they would be able to teach you that very something, and they just don't say it because they're afraid they're gonna hurt you. Or they're afraid, I don't know, of starting a flame or whatever. It's generally difficult to get feedback which makes you progress. It's easy to get... in a way, it's easy to get praised. And the only indirect information you get is whether there is a lot of it or not. But a model shouldn't be judged by a popularity contest. Some subjects would be more popular than others, no matter how well they are realized or not. So that's not a very good measure. But yes, I definitely look for feedback by posting things. And the other thing that I look for when I post things is "Am I going to like this in a week? Or in a month? Or in a year if I look at it again?" Since my models are rather big and since they are all over the place, as it is, a lot of them end up in boxes. And so you don't keep looking at those all the time. But if you see a picture that still works for you a year after, or two, then perhaps you're onto something and perhaps the model has actually some qualities in its own right.

Stéphane So, they live their lives online and you keep an eye on them as time passes by...

Gachepapier Yeah, here and there, I have a look. It's kinda... Also, it's kind of an archive. If the house burns down, probably the Internet is still going to be there.

Stéphane You are very optimistic!

Gachepapier Yes, exactly!

Stéphane And how do you choose your paper, to create and to fold a model? I guess you don't use the same paper to work on a first draft, but how do you pick the one you really want, you really need?

Gachepapier Well, it's usually dictated by technique. Now, when you say I usually don't use the same for drafting, actually, it's quite the opposite. A lot of models I end up liking are the very first shots that I had at the subject. That's also why there are many of them unfinished and unsuccessful models in my litter bin. But it's mostly going to be dictated by which technique, of course. You cannot wetfold with the same paper that you use for crumpling, or for a very geometric model, for example. So yes, the choice of the paper is going to be always the very first consideration when, in practice, for any model that I fold. But the only times I really repeatedly fold the same model is when I know I'm going to have to teach it or if I want it to be diagrammed, for example. Then, that's different.

Stéphane Talking about diagrams, I know you're working on a book now, with Dáša Ševerová.

Gachepapier That's correct.

Stéphane Could you please tell me more?

Gachepapier That's quite a huge thing. It's very... It feels impossible ! Such a huge amount of work ! On the other hand, it's absolutely fabulous that we get to collaborate on something like that. We had the idea of publishing a book on origami now for a few years, but it didn't seem like it was something that would have happened simply because of the amount of work and my, let's be honest, inability of producing good diagrams on my own. But yes, having seen Dáša's first book published last year, I was really very strongly impressed by her way of diagramming. And since we met at several conventions, we got into talking and she accepted to collaborate with me on a book with my models. So it's really a huge thing for me. What's quite interesting is how differently I have to think of my own models in order to make them clear enough for her to do the diagrams. We have radically different folding styles, that people who know our work will be very aware of. But it's a good thing, because by the time I have explained my models in a way that is clear enough, maybe even learned something about it myself. So we're very complementary. The idea of the book is to present some of my models with their folding techniques, which I would generally describe as more about shaping paper than folding it. Which is incidentally the working title of the book, so there's a good chance that when it's done, it's still called *Shaping paper*. I also want to show in the book how I prepare my sheets because yes that would

definitely have a strong impact on how the model would look good or not. And I will also try to make it a bit of a coffee table book, so that people would leave rather the book on their coffee table than in their shelf. That would be the hope.

Stéphane Do you already have an idea of when it will be published?

Gachepapier We're shooting for this year, but that would be really end of the year. And whether we succeed, that's really a question I cannot answer today, but we're working hard on it. I'm spending a lot of time on it, as is Dáša. Her way of diagramming is quite incredible, but is also coming at a price which is that it's extremely time consuming. So, it's not like we can produce a diagram a week. In practice that just doesn't work. We both have a real life to cater to in the meantime.

Stéphane I'm very excited about this book, I know I'm looking forward for it!

Gachepapier Thanks, me too!

Stéphane I really hope we will get it for Christmas!

Gachepapier That would be wonderful. Actually, it would be the best timing. I think the biggest gift would be to myself, to be honest.

Stéphane I'm sure it will be a great book. It will show your work in a very good way.

Gachepapier We're working hard on that. We're working hard on showing things. Not just as a serie of steps to follow, but in terms of moves to understand, because I think that's one of the things I learned from better folder than me is that a good model is not simply something that you can reproduce on a basis of a clear diagram. It's something you can enhance and appropriate yourself, if you have the moves. So, hopefully, that will get through.

Stéphane I'm sure of it. I saw the reactions on the internet. A lot of people are waiting for it too.

Gachepapier Don't hold your breath!

Stéphane Speaking about internet... You talked about your blog. You used to publish pictures on your website. Now, you moved to Instagram. What motivated you to switch like this?

Gachepapier Well, the biggest drive is that, simply to make a post, from a technical point of view, it's just so much easier than to compose on the Blogger platform, which has changed a little bit over the years. I had spent some time programming it, more or less. At the moment, it's kind of broken, because... I don't know, because something in the standards changed, and I would have to re-program things, and so on and so forth... So, instead of, now, spending maybe ten minutes when I do a post... Once I've taken my pictures, it's taking me ten minutes maybe to do a post on Instagram, where it has used to take me certainly the better part of an hour on

Blogger. So, that's the main drive for the change. Also, there is another good reason for being on Instagram. There is quite an active origami community on Instagram, which is something that you cannot achieve with one personal blog. That just doesn't work.

Stéphane In 2012, you've been invited to the Lyon Ultimate Origami Convention. Was it your first time, as a guest, in a convention?

Gachepapier Yes, absolutely. That was quite an amazing experience, of course. Meeting essentially folders who I was probably the biggest fan of myself, and they were guests as well... How amazing is that ? So, yes, that was a fantastic convention, meeting Stefan Weber there, and Quentin Trollip, and, if I recall correctly, Miyajima Noboru who was also guest there. All three of whom I knew of course, from their online presence, or from books. And the team in Lyon made this an absolutely fantastic experience. It's always the case actually in Lyon, which is why I tend to, if I can, return almost every year, something which I can recommend to anyone who's absolutely crazy for origami.

Stéphane What brings you to conventions, when you're not a guest?

Gachepapier Well, that has changed a little bit over time. Now, after some years attending conventions here and there -I've been in quite a few now- without necessarily being a guest, of course, what you tend to go back for is, at the end of the day... is, well, you've met friends there. The origami people

are quite an interesting and eclectic crowd. You meet people there that you probably just wouldn't meet anywhere else, simply because you need that sort of cement. Origami is very much something that you can bond over. So, nowadays, yes, I go back for people. I also go, of course, in order to learn stuff, because while I'm probably good at doing what I'm doing, there's plenty of things that I simply, absolutely, suck at. Like, for example, folding paper, I'm terrible. When it comes to folding an origami model, for example, in a clean manner, that's something I can learn at a convention. It's true ! So, and also, when you want to learn a new technique, like when you want to know about tessellations, when you want to know about crumpling, when you want to know about how you can treat your paper, how you can present your models in a way that they just don't look like a piece of paper that's just been left there by the cart but more like something which people are going to be looking at with interest and not disgust. So, that's all the things you can basically best learn at conventions.

Stéphane So I guess you would definitely recommend folders to go to conventions, to meet other people, to learn things?

Gachepapier Absolutely. I think that's the best way, because you can progress on your own, but the look on the face of the people who you talk too, you just can't replace that.

Stéphane Yes you're right, because it's good to talk online, but it's always better to see people in person.

Gachepapier Yes, absolutely. Another thing is, and I'm suddenly very much aware of that, is that whatever online presence you have, that is constrained by how good you are at taking pictures. Somebody who's taking good pictures of a medium model will probably make a stronger impression than somebody taking bad pictures of a good model. And that's quite normal of course, because the picture is essentially the window you give upon your work. But that's something that is just not a problem when you meet "live", when you meet people, when you can show them your models, if they can take them or look at them in a different light, and so on and so forth. So, you're not limited in that manner by the virtual world, when you meet like that. It's kind of obvious when you say it, but it's really making a huge difference.

Stéphane You've been in origami for a decade, now. How do you think people and techniques have evolved in ten years? Did you see some changes along the way?

Gachepapier Yes. I think in term of techniques, the evolution was relatively gradual. The big revolution we had, thanks to the discovery and understanding of new mathematical tools have been there for a couple of decades, maybe three even. I'm not the biggest origami historian, so I'm not sure exactly about the actual dates, but in the ten years that I've been essentially designing models, yes, people get better, people build upon each other ideas. But I think it's a slow thing. Not in a negative manner, but I haven't seen much of a paradigm shift. I've just seen people get better, gradually. As to the origami world, maybe that's actually changed a lot. For

example, in term of visibility, the vision of origami itself, I think it has increased a lot. It's not only that we see a lot of origami in advertising and illustrations and so on but there have been some very very large exhibitions such as in New York, Taiwan or also in Israel, these last few years. Of course, there's also the Origami Museum in Zaragoza which is, in a way, a very important manner for creating visibility for origami. But also inside of origami there has been a shift. There are far many more women designers. Or at least they are more visible. Perhaps they were always there. But I think we've come to see more and more of them in the last few years, which is also a good thing, because that's probably a good chance for us to move away from folding all of these origami spiders and insects and coming, perhaps, to more interesting subjects. Another big thing that happened was the Convention for Creators. That was a huge thing in terms of bringing people together, who are, actually, trying to get not only better at folding, but who want to make the craft progress. So that was a big change, I think.

Stéphane And do you think these changes will keep on? It would be great for origami to get more visibility and recognition.

Gachepapier I'm not much of an oracle. But my hope would be yes. There's actually plenty of avenues for origami to develop. Of course, as a medium for expression, for art even, it has absolutely the potential to become recognized as such, if the visibility is there. And also, why not, in education, it could be a huge thing. Origami could be used in order to develop intuition for mathematical concepts, which are apparently not always

shown in the most alive manner to children. So, that would be an avenue also for origami, of course. And we know that there is some people that are developing origami in an engineering context. And there is definitely plenty of potential for that, as well.

Stéphane As for the present, how does origami interact with your daily life?

Gachepapier Well, it has changed a little over the last few months since I've started to work on the book more seriously. So, even though if I produce fewer new models the last, maybe, year, than the year before, for example, I've not been less involved. It's quite the opposite. But a lot of that work is just not something you can show until you have a book. But otherwise, impacting my life, there are models everywhere in this house. It's a frequent object of discussion... not to say friction... I also try and attend conventions frequently so, again, that's taking a lot of time. The travel is always disruptive of family life, but, it's generally always very pleasurable, so, yes, I try to keep that going.

Stéphane Well, Gachepapier, thank you so much for your time and your presence. It was a delight to have you here, and I hope we'll meet soon again, in real life this time!

Gachepapier It's been very pleasurable, thank you very much. I hope you'll have really interesting people for me to listen to in your next installments, because I kind of know what I'm going to say. But no, it was very enjoyable, thank you!

Stéphane Dear listener, remember, if you want to enjoy Gachepapier's work, follow him on Instagram, @gachepapier. Look out for his upcoming book, written with Dáša Ševerová. And check out also for conventions in your area, in case he's been invited or just visiting there.

And now it's time to pay a visit to the Great Origami Library.

[TV dialogue] [*Steven Universe*, S04E03]

Steven : BOOOKS !!!

Librarian : Sshh !

Steven : boooks...

Stéphane Each month, I will check this library to find out what's new in the origami world.

Today, I will review a book published in May 2019, *One water one world*, published by Nicolas Terry. It's a recollection of models and diagrams by the SAOC (as Spring and Autumn Origami Club), a group of Chinese artists. You might know them through the eBooks they publish on a regular basis, *Chinese New Year Origami* and *Origami Record*.

In this book, *One water one world*, they provide diagrams for water-related models, from rivers, ponds or sea. You will find thirty of them, mammals, fish, arthropods or else.

Let's take a look at the object itself. It's a solid and heavy paperback book, printed on glossy paper.

When you open it, you'll find, in the first place, pictures of all the models. There are two or three colorful pictures per page.

The models are so perfectly folded we don't need real-life pictures to recognize the animals. At this point in the book, you will already want to pick a piece of paper and start folding. Please note that the models backgrounds get darker as the depicted creature is to be found deeper in the water. By the way, this is how the models are displayed in the book. There are three sections, for three habitats: fresh water, shallow sea, deep sea. There is no indication for difficulty, but it seems there's a progression in each section.

So now, we should check the diagrams. First, some tips will help you choose the best suited paper. For each model, you will be given three or four choices, with the adequate dimensions. The thinner the smaller, the thicker the larger. There's also a crease pattern with the ratio between the starting square and the finished model.

The diagrams are clear and precise. The steps are displayed in what I'd call the Western way, from left to right and top to bottom, with two to four steps a row, three to four rows a page. No sinuous path here. Both sides of the paper are shown, even for models with no color change. Another nice detail is the way folding lines along edges are drawn, with a little offset. These are very good diagrams, an immediate invitation to fold.

I would advise you to get a copy of this book, you won't be disappointed. It might be tricky for beginners, but it's worth the effort.

Should you be able to buy the digital version as well, don't hesitate. The pdf file is excellent and allows you to zoom in on difficult steps with no quality loss. Have fun folding all those strange creatures!

If you want to learn more about this book, please check the website origami-shop.com.

It's time to leave the library now. We'll come back next month, to check out another book.

You've already guessed we are here to entertain ourselves with origami. So, now, I'd like to show you how origami conquers the world.

[TV dialogue] [*Dead like me*, S02E04]

Ethan : So, I do origami. I really like craft so I had some extra time 'cause I work so quickly so I made you... I made you a swan.

Stéphane Today, let's listen to some music. I would like to introduce you to the work of Alex Cordo. He's a French guitarist. He released his first album, *Origami*, in 2016. Deeply influenced by Joe Satriani, Steve Vai and centuries of classical music, his style could be labelled as progressive hard rock. I was lucky enough to meet him a couple years back. I could ask him why he chose "Origami", as a title for his album. He explained me he was struggling to find a title and asked his wife for some advice. And she came with "Origami", as she felt his music was a complex work of architecture, precisely crafted, easy to read from the outside, but with lots of intricate layers inside. She was quite on spot, don't you think? Go make yourself an opinion on alexcordo.com.

This episode is almost over. But I won't leave you without a couple podcasts to listen to before our next episode.

[TV dialogue] [*The Good Place*, S03E06]

Michael : You want to listen to a podcast maybe?

Stéphane

Here are two, the first ones I listened to, the ones that get me hooked to the podcast world.

The first one is *Alice isn't dead*, an American production from Night Vale Presents, created by Joseph Fink. It's a thrilling road trip through the USA, where Keisha looks for her lost wife, Alice. On her quest, she will encounter horrors, mysteries and conspiracies. If you enjoyed Stephen King's novels, you'll love *Alice isn't dead*.

[Podcast] [*Alice isn't dead*, S01E01]

Keisha: I wanna start by saying that this is not a story. It's a road trip.

The second one is a French, non--fiction podcast. It's called *Un épisode et j'arrête*, and it's about TV shows. It's made by specialized journalists. Each week, they choose a show, a theme and debate about them. It's passionate and very well documented, you won't regret it.

[Podcast] [*Un épisode et j'arrête*]

Salut à tous et bienvenus dans ce nouvel épisode d'*Un épisode et j'arrête*, le podcast consacré aux séries de l'Association Française des Critiques de Séries.

So, dear listener, thank you for your attention.

You can subscribe to this podcast on Ausha, iTunes and about everywhere you find your podcasts. Follow me on Twitter and Instagram, @PrecreasePod, and visit my website, www.precreaseandcollapse.com. Among other things, you will find the transcript of this episode and a French translation. You can support me by sharing this podcast on your usual networks. Don't hesitate to recommend me to your origami friends, groups or organizations.

Recorded and edited by me, Stéphane Gérard.
The themes' song is *Slottskogen Disc Golf Club* by Wintergatan. Go and listen to them on Bandcamp.

Next month, I will have the pleasure to receive a French artist, whose work can be defined by a subtle alchemy between shapes and colors.

Until then...

Special guest On va faire de l'origami!

[Theme]

Stéphane What suits you the best, the precreasing or the collapsing ?

Gachepapier I absolutely hate precreasing ! I really hate it ! Horrible !
Collapsing, please, any time ! And that's something that I have experienced on a few of my own models. Some of which absolutely require precreasing, because otherwise there is

actually no way to fold them properly. But I suffer... I truly suffer for those hours I have to spend precreasing.