



Notan Symmetry

Art 3 John Watrous

Background

A poem, attributed to Lao Tse, was written about 2,000 years ago in China. It is a poem about Notan, the basis of all design. Before Notan or the meaning of the poem can be understood, it must be experienced. And the experience of Notan is what this project is all about. The experience is basic to visual literacy.

By eliminating color during this project, we can concentrate on some important principles running through all art and design.

Dictionary definitions:

Notan: The Japanese word for black and white design coming from the word meaning dark-light

Symmetry: Balanced proportions: the beauty from balanced proportions

Anthropomorphic: Ascribing human characteristics to non-human forms

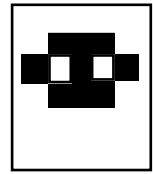
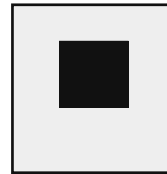
Materials

materials:

14 X 17" white Bristol paper

Black construction paper

pencil, scissors, xacto knife, glue, compass, ruler



Project 1

Cutout at least 6 @ 5" squares from the black construction paper.

The manipulated black squares will be glued to the 14 X 17" bristol paper when completed.

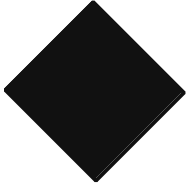
With the first square: **each cutout must be used and folded/hinged only once!**

1. Fold black paper square in half once—center to center, not corner to corner.
2. Limit yourself to only **straight line cuts** which can only be folded out once
3. Create an interesting, bilaterally symmetrical organization emphasizing a variety of shapes.
4. Make **one complex** and the **second one as simple** as you can, yet interesting

Project 2

Using another 5" square:

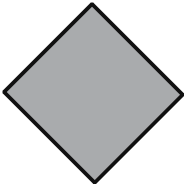
1. Fold black paper square
2. Limit yourself to **curved cuts**
3. Create an interesting, bilaterally symmetrical organization emphasizing a variety of shapes.
4. Make **one complex** and the **second one as simple** as you can, yet interesting



Project 3

Using another 5" square, but turning it 45 degrees to form a diamond shape:

1. Fold black paper from **corner to corner**
2. Use both curved cuts and straight cuts, but only fold/hinge and use all pieces
3. Create an interesting, bilaterally symmetrical organization emphasizing a variety of shapes.
4. Make **one Anthropomorphic Mask with limited, single color substitution**



Project 4

3D Notan Mask

1. Cut a perfect square of cardboard, about 12—14" square
2. Score and fold this square from corner to corner
3. Using ideas, simplified from your work above, but without such tight limits, make an **Anthropomorphic Mask with some movable parts.**

Due Date:_____

Lao Tse

We put thirty spokes together and call it a wheel;
But it is on the space where there is nothing that
the utility of the wheel depends.

We turn clay to make a vessel;
But it is on the space where there is nothing that
the utility of the vessel depends.

We pierce doors and windows to make a house;
and it is on these spaces where there is nothing that
the utility of the house depends.

Therefore, just as we take advantage of what is, we should
recognize the utility of what is not

Notan, The Dark-Light Principle of Design,

Dorr Bothwell and Marlys Mayfield, Dover, isbn 0-486-26856-x, \$6.95