

# Notans & The Art of Balance

## **A Story of Notan:**

*In the west we use separate terms such as positive space and negative space, dividing the idea of light-dark into separate components. On paper it is easy to see that dark shapes cannot exist without a surrounding area of white. White shapes cannot exist without dark to define it. The two elements are really one. This is an eastern concept of yin-yang that each is what the other is not.*

*All art is based on light and dark even when color is involved... Simple elements of light and dark can be expressive. When limited to the basic characteristics of black and white on a two dimensional plane, design still can express tension, movement and balance. Edges between light and dark catch our attention and we unconsciously follow them with our eyes. A gently curving edge is followed slowly by our eyes and a more sharply curved edge is passed over quickly, giving a subconscious sense of movement. Edges that are overly complex can suggest texture or just be confusing.*

(Taken from: *Notan: Design in Light and Dark* by Sharon Himes)

**Notan-** A term used by the Japanese to express “light-dark” as an element of design.

**Positive Space-** The space in an artwork that is occupied by something (lines, color, shapes, patterns, designs)

**Negative Space-**Empty space in an artwork

**Balance-** The equilibrium of various elements in the work of art

- **Symmetrical (formal balance)-** Equal balance on each side of an imaginary middle line
- **Asymmetrical (informal balance)-** Balance achieved through unequal distribution on each side of an imaginary middle line

**Directions:**

You will be creating an "Expansion of the Square" to study the Notan and the interaction of positive and negative spaces. The goal is to see how one space as equally important as the other space in your design.

1. You will create 1 complex Notan Design by cutting and expanding a black square of paper.
2. Your Notan may have symmetrical or asymmetrical balance... or elements of both!
3. Plan your design in your sketchbook before cutting
4. Remember only to cut over a cutting board. Also, it is very important to keep track of your ziplock bag with your name on it, along with all of your small cut-out pieces. If you misplace these, you will have to start over.

**Notan (25 POSSIBLE POINTS)**

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Objectives</b></p> <p><i>Your Grade for this project is based on how well you meet each of the below objectives. You can earn 0-5 points for each objective, totaling 25 maximum possible points.</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>0-2= Unsatisfactory</b> <i>No evidence, incomplete and/or ineffective attempt to meet objective</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>3= Satisfactory</b> <i>Some room for improvement</i>  <i>Moderately effective overall</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>4= Good</b> <i>Minor room for improvement</i>  <i>Mostly effective overall</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>5= Excellent</b> <i>Highly Effective &amp; Successful overall</i></p>
Design achieves symmetrical, asymmetrical, and/or radial balance in regards to light and dark				
Design demonstrates complexity and is not overly simplistic				
Design demonstrates originality and creativity				
Thoughtful <b>and</b> effective visual communication of chosen word				
Craftsmanship --neatness and care in work				
<b>ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:</b>			<b>TOTAL:</b>	