

Understanding
POSITIVE &

NEGATIVE

Space with Notan

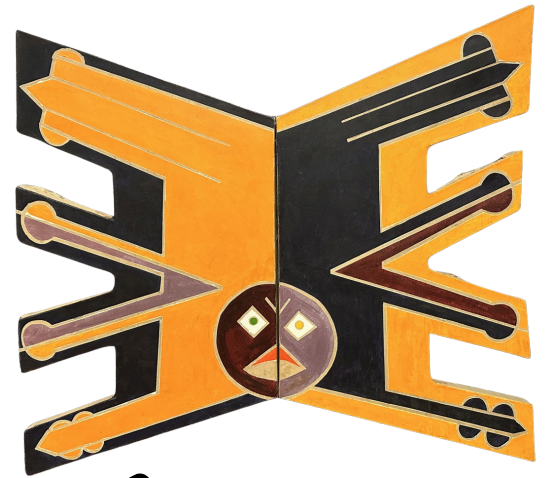


MISSISSIPPI
MUSEUM OF
ART

What is Positive & Negative Space?



Joe Overstreet, Justice, Faith, Hope, and Peace, 1968, Acrylic on shaped canvas, 90 x 193 x 2 3/4 in., Estate of the artist, Courtesy of Eric Firestone Gallery, New York



Joe Overstreet, Crawling, 1968, Acrylic on shaped canvas, 51 1/4 x 58 x 2 1/4 in., Neil Lane Collection

Where do you see contrast in these works?

POSITIVE

is the area inside of an object.

NEGATIVE

is the area outside of an object.

CONTRAST

(in art) is arranging opposite elements together in a composition: light & dark, small & large, rough & smooth.

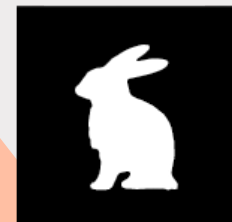
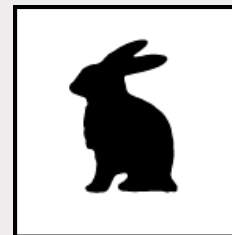
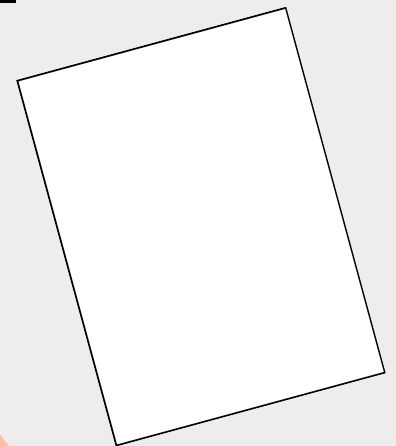
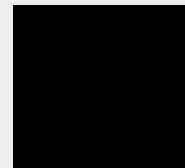
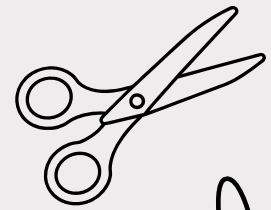
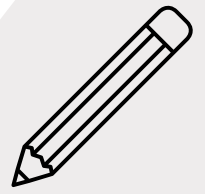


Image credit: mscoclass.info

NOTAN combines positive space, negative space, and contrast in one design.

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

To create your own Notan design, gather these materials:



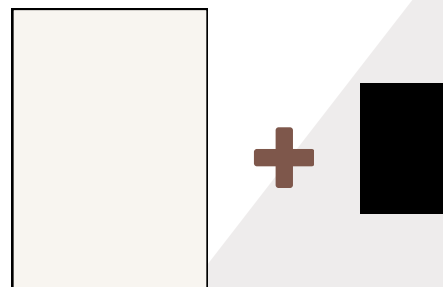
Sheet of white copy paper
Small piece of black paper
(any other non-white solid color will also work)

Pencil
Scissors
Glue

TO CREATE YOUR NOTAN:

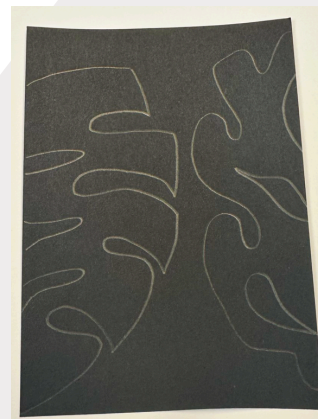
1

Make sure your non-white paper is approximately $\frac{1}{4}$ the size of your white paper.



2

On your smaller paper, draw a design where your line begins and ends on the same edge of the paper. Now cut directly on your pencil lines.



3

Once you've cut out your design, flip your cut shapes to create the inverse of your original drawn design. Onto your white paper, glue down the non-white paper you just cut from. Align the inverse shapes you just cut out and glue them down along the invisible vertical line.

