

“Notan”

Notan is a Japanese word that means “light and dark harmony”. Notans are typically made using shapes cut from black paper; then reflected and pasted onto a white page to create an interesting composition. Notans can be quite simple, using only one basic shape, or they can get quite complex. *Activity: Look at pictures of “Notans” online. Talk about how you think each was made.*



Here are some Notans that I've created. My first few Notans were very simple, using abstract shapes. I did not try to make a recognizable picture until my fifth or sixth design. The desert scene that you see here was my first attempt at a landscape type scene. As you can see, things got progressively more intricate from there!

Supplies:

- glue stick
- construction paper or cardstock - 1 sheet of black and 1 sheet of white
 - *one sheet should be cut into quarters
- pencil
- scissors
- exacto knife

Step 1:

Having your design in mind, draw a rough sketch of what you want your finished Notan to look like. Think about how shapes will look when cut, reflected, and glued symmetrically. Creating a rough sketch of your Notan helps eliminate unwanted surprises later on. **Keep your first design simple!**



Step 2:

Using pencil, sketch the lines that you are going to cut on your quarter or half sheet of paper. If you are making an abstract Notan or just experimenting, you might decide to skip this step.

Step 3:

Lay your cut shapes on your full sheet of paper, placing what is left of your quarter sheet

down first. It will probably go in the center of your paper, but some designs might require you to turn it diagonally or off to one side so it can fit on the page. Put your shapes back together like a puzzle, then 'reflect' your shapes by opening them outward like a door.

Step 4:

Glue down your shapes, starting with your quarter sheet. You need to glue that piece down first and the smaller shapes around it. If you glue the smaller outlying shapes down first, you will probably find that your largest shape doesn't fit anymore.

Step 5: Review your work.

What do you like about your Notan, and what worked well?

What surprises did you discover as you were working?

What would you change if you were making this project again? What will you do differently on your next Notan?

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