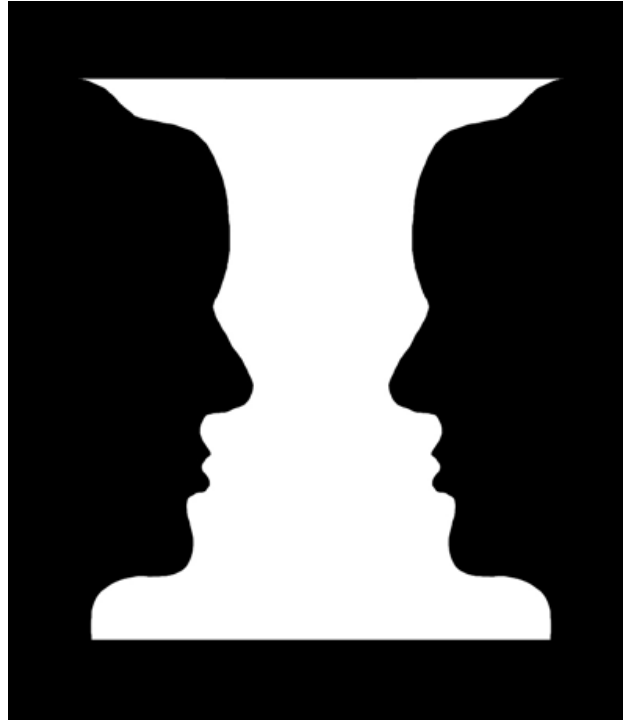


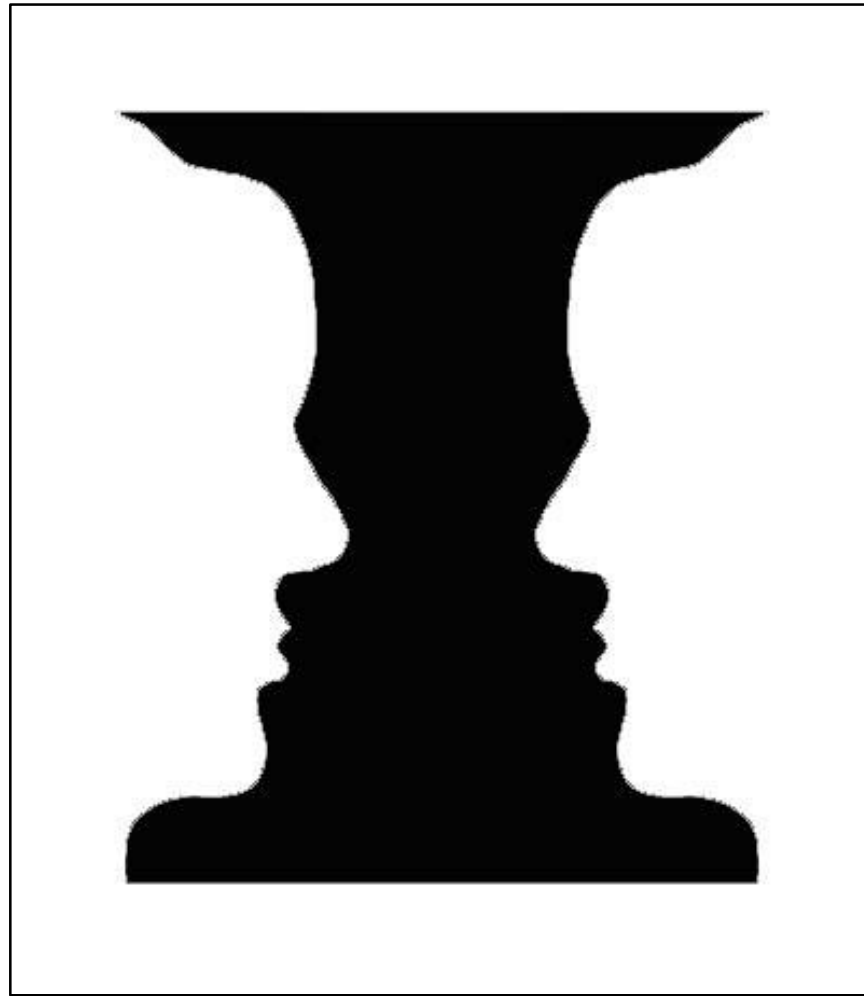
NEGATIVE SPACE

What is Positive and Negative Space?

Simply put, positive space is best described as the areas in a work of art that are the subjects, or areas of interest. Negative space is area around the subjects, or areas of interest. However positive/negative can be



If you are seeing a vase, then you are seeing the white area as the positive space. The black areas become the negative space. If you are seeing faces, then you are seeing the black areas as the positive space, and the white area as the negative space.

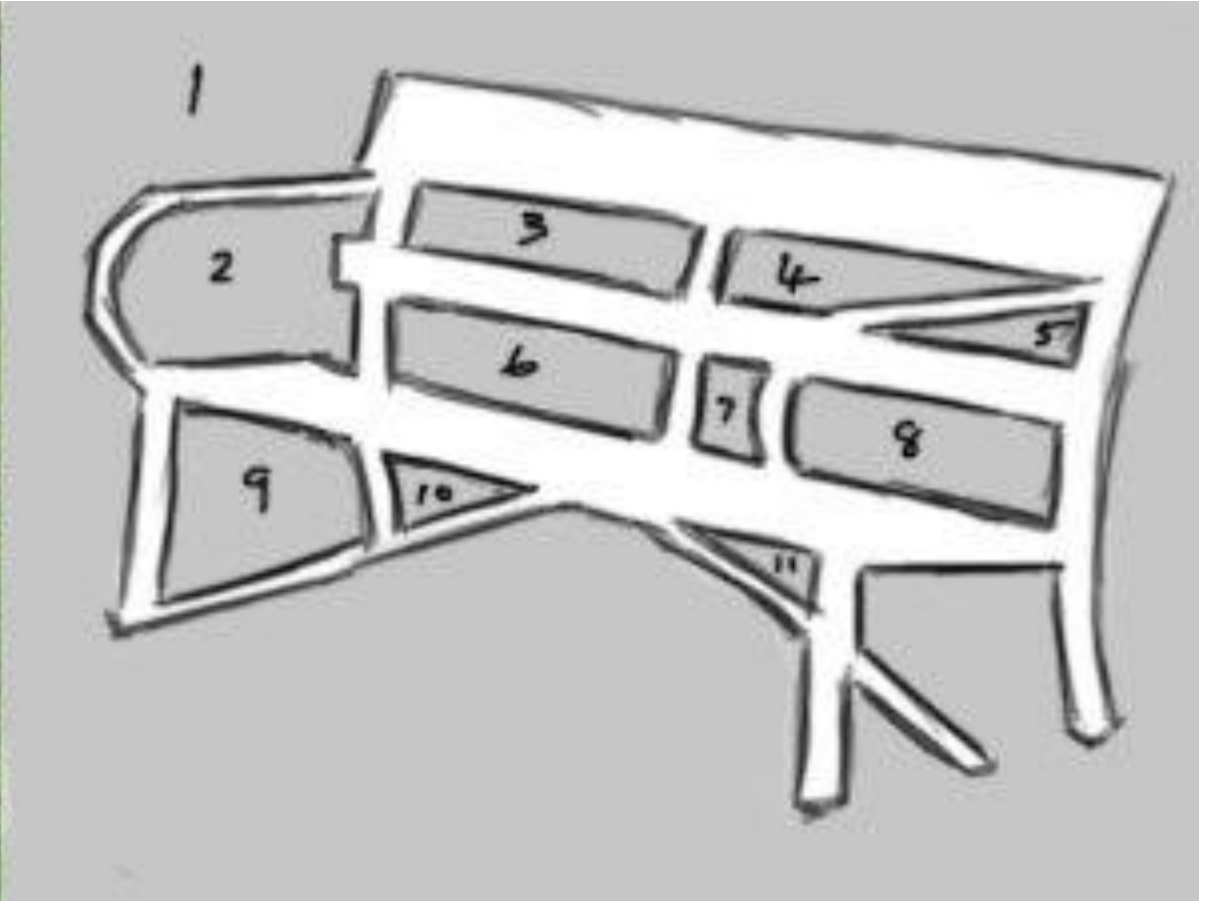


if you see the vase it becomes a positive space in this example, but if you see the faces you see the white area as the positive space. In my vision they keep flipping back and forth, as a graphic illusion of space manipulation. Graphic artists use these tricks all the time. In painting it becomes more subtle.

TRAIN YOURSELF TO LOOK AT NEGATIVE SPACE

It is very important in drawing. Negative space will tell you how to draw the positive space. Look at what is “not”, and you can easily see your mistakes in what “is”. The Zen of drawing!

It can also be used as a design element in a painting. Many artists have used the negative/positive to arrive at a compelling composition.

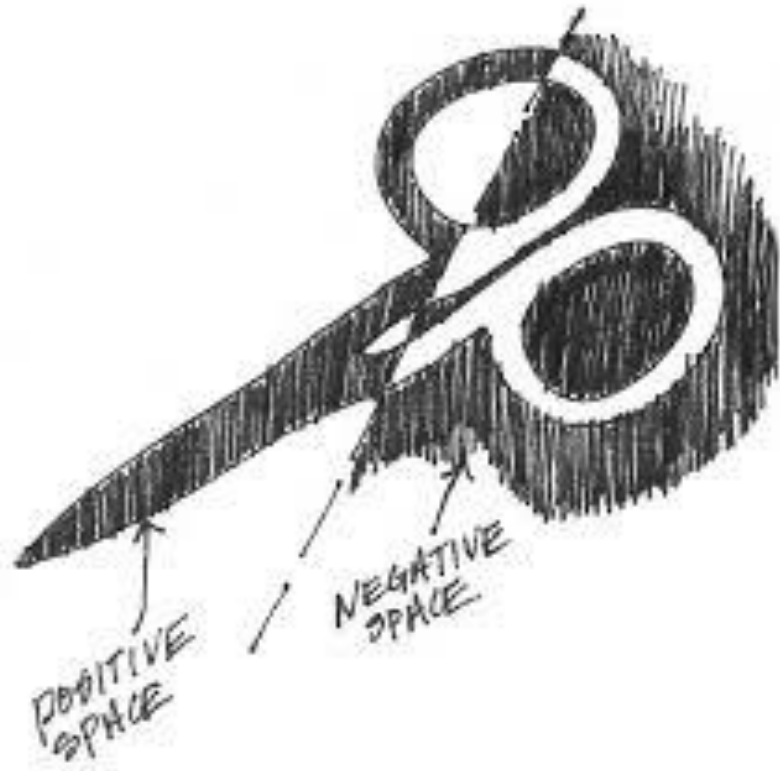


By drawing the 11 abstract shapes (in grey on the right), we have also drawn the main structure of the bench

How Do You Draw an Eye? Simple, You Don't!

A common question I'm asked by beginner artists is 'how do I draw eyes?', 'how do I draw faces?', 'how do I draw XYZ?'

The best answer I can give, other than 'just draw what you see' (not helpful), is don't draw eyes, faces or whatever, but draw the negative spaces. In effect, draw everything you see *except for* the thing you're trying to draw, and you will find it magically appears, looking more convincing than you believed possible!

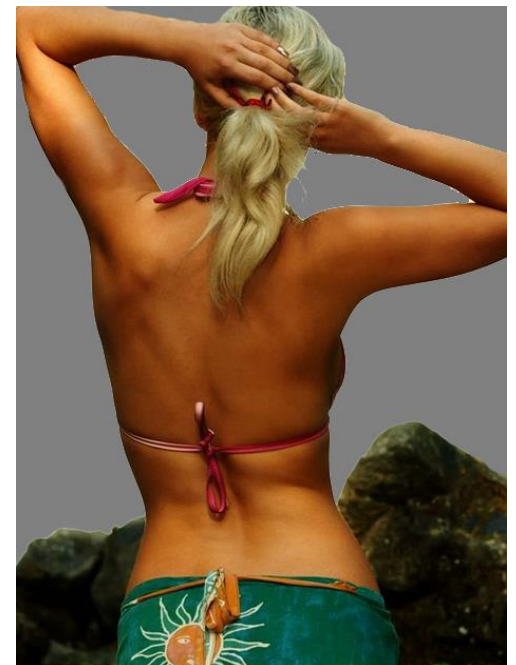
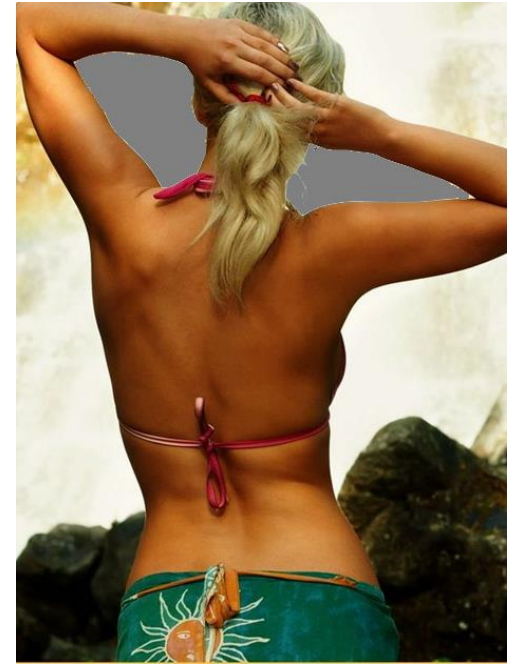


It is so much easier to draw an abstract shape. When you think of “an eye” a “pair of scissors” or “my mother’s face” we get tense and the art demon in all of us says “forgetabout it”, you can’t manage that. But when we start to take apart those complex images and literally “forgetabout” struggling to make that eye look like an eye we have much more success in our drawings and paintings. Look at shape and then value. Color is relatively unimportant in the scheme of things in painting. Focus on Shape and Value and you getaboutit!



If you were drawing this figure it is much easier to get the arms right by looking at the negative space that is illustrated in the graphic to the left.

And then I would use the rest of the negative spaces to help me get the rest of the figure right. If the negative space doesn't look right it is not drawn correctly!





<http://linesandcolors.com/2006/06/18/katsushika-hokusai/>

In the Hollow of a Wave is such a remarkable image that it has become an icon, like the Mona Lisa or Van Gogh's self portraits, at once familiar and still unknown. Often incorrectly thought to represent a tsunami, it is actually a scene of fishermen encountering one of the dangers of their profession, large offshore waves called okinami.

A wave yes, but more than that, Hokusai's wave is alive, it's foamy crest breaking into grasping fingers, its troughs and crests swelling and falling as if the sea was breathing, and the sea spray flying like clouds of fireflies.

The image is even more remarkable for its composition. Hokusai was a master of "negative space", the areas of an image where the objects are not. This was a characteristic that particularly enthralled the impressionists.



The sky is the negative space here, and it is a remarkable echo of the shape of the wave, as you can see if you look at the image upside-down (left) and look at the shape of the sky as a wave.

Beyond that, many have pointed out that the two waves together, the one that is "there" and the one that is "not there" form a pattern uncannily like a Taijitu, or "Yin Yang symbol", the ancient Chinese icon representing the balance and blending of the duality of light/dark, positive/negative and masculine/feminine believed to form the foundation of existence.



This is one of my paintings

Inspiration

oil on linen 30 x 48

I did have in mind the Yin/Yang symbol with it's lovely twist on negative spaces, but until I read Charley Parker's article on Hokusai's "Wave" I had not thought to turn my painting upside down!

