

TWO-DIMENSIONAL DESIGN  
20357 ART-106 Section A  
FALL 2014  
Instructor: Joe Kievitt

#### ASSIGNMENT 4: FIGURE/GROUND RELATIONSHIPS

figure: An image that appears to be somewhat closer to the viewer than the background against which it is presented; also referred to as a positive shape. The relationship between figure and background is referred to as "figure/ground", and "positive/negative space."

ground: The initial surface of a 2-d design. The area that appears to be farthest from the viewer; also called "background" or "field"

figure-ground: The relationship of the positive object or form within its background or surrounding space.

figure-ground reversal: A composition in which it is difficult to tell what is figure and what is background because the design can be seen either way.

#### FIGURE/GROUND RELATIONSHIPS PART 1:

Create Six 6" x 6" compositions using black dots of cut paper on white ground

Goal:

Make 6 compositions which make effective use of figure/ground relationships, asymmetrical balance, and figure/ground reversal and by using black dots in a white square.

Two compositions using few dots, two compositions using many dots, and two compositions in between.

Procedure:

Lightly draw (with pencil) 6"x6" fields on 6 sheets of 8.5" x 11" white cardstock, centered top/bottom & left/right.

Cut lots of dots of various sizes from black paper taking care that the edges of the dots are clean circles. Cut big dots as well as tiny.

Move black dots around the white squares until you find 2 compositions where the black dots are the figure and 4 compositions in which the white ground becomes the figure. NO DOTS MAY TOUCH (they can touch the edge of the field, they may be cropped by the

edge of the field, but they may not touch each other)  
When you find one composition, put it aside and continue with the others. Return to earlier compositions to make changes as you learn from experience. Cycle through all six compositions several times. Use studio tac only so you can revise your decisions easily.

Each composition must be very different from the other. When you are finished crop/cut out the 6"x6" compositions  
Good craft is very important.

## FIGURE/GROUND RELATIONSHIPS PART 2:

### Implied Shapes: Layered Black And White Cut Circles

#### Goal:

To make a composition with layered black and white dots.

#### Procedure:

Choose the weakest 3 compositions from Part 1 to create new compositions.

Cut circles in white paper of various sizes and use existing black circles from Part 1. Cut more if needed.

Place white dots on top of black until you have a composition in which the single layer of dots has been transformed into several layers of white and black dots.

-Think about creating a dynamic and illusionistic space (through layering).

-Think about creating a composition that is asymmetrically balanced, with no dead space or overactive space.

-Softly outline and cut away shape of overlapping white dots from black paper dot so there is only one layer of black paper on the cardstock. Use a fresh blade and several light scores rather than a single score to cut edge of white dot out of black.

-At this point you may add black dots on top of the white dots to further develop the composition.

-When finished, mount the 6" x 6" compositions on 8.5 x 11 cardstock, centered top & bottom, left & right.