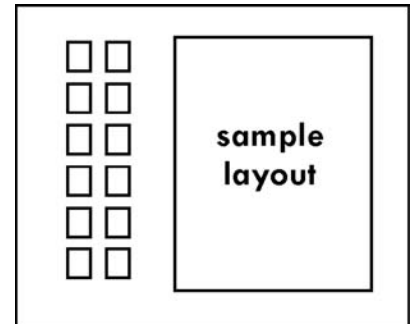


## Take a Letter

**Directions:** Design an alphabet letter with a compelling composition.

Begin by making 12 thumbnail sketches in pencil to work out a design. Use a format of 1" x 1¼". Choose the best thumbnail to translate into a larger format. The large-scale alphabet letter must be done in gouache. Both the thumbnails and the painted composition must be presented on 14" x 17" Bristol paper with a layout of your choosing. Sign your name in the bottom right hand corner and tape the assignment directions to the back of the page. The design criteria are as follows:



- \* The large-scale letter must fit a rectangular or square format measuring between 8" and 12" on each side.
- \* The letter must touch all four sides of the picture plane and occupy 50% of the space in the composition.
- \* The letter must be easily recognized. Any style of upper or lower case letter may be used.
- \* Only two colors may be used: one for the figure and one for the ground. These colors should have high contrast. Avoid using the primary color tubes for now because we will have future exercises with those paints.
- \* The large-scale letter must be painted in flat-looking gouache, with no streaking. Consider making two coats of paint. Either paint the two colors directly onto the Bristol sheet like a painting, or make cut shapes of painted paper and glue them onto a painted ground. Neatness counts.



### Design Tips:

**Strokes:** Some letters use only one width stroke (gothic letters) but most use strokes of different widths. The wider strokes are usually vertical with the horizontal strokes thinner. The wide strokes give the form stability and are critical in the recognition of the letter.



On letters with curves, especially script letters, the transition in stroke width is smooth and gradual. The gracefulness of a letter is greatly influenced by where and how this transition is accomplished.



**Waist:** The visual center of a letter is its waist. This is where the center of B, K and R, and the horizontal stroke of E and F are located. The waist is usually above the measured center giving the letter more weight on the bottom for stability. The lower areas are usually wider than the tops for the same reason. Some letter styles violate this with very high (or rarer still, very low) waists-- but be cautious of this idea.

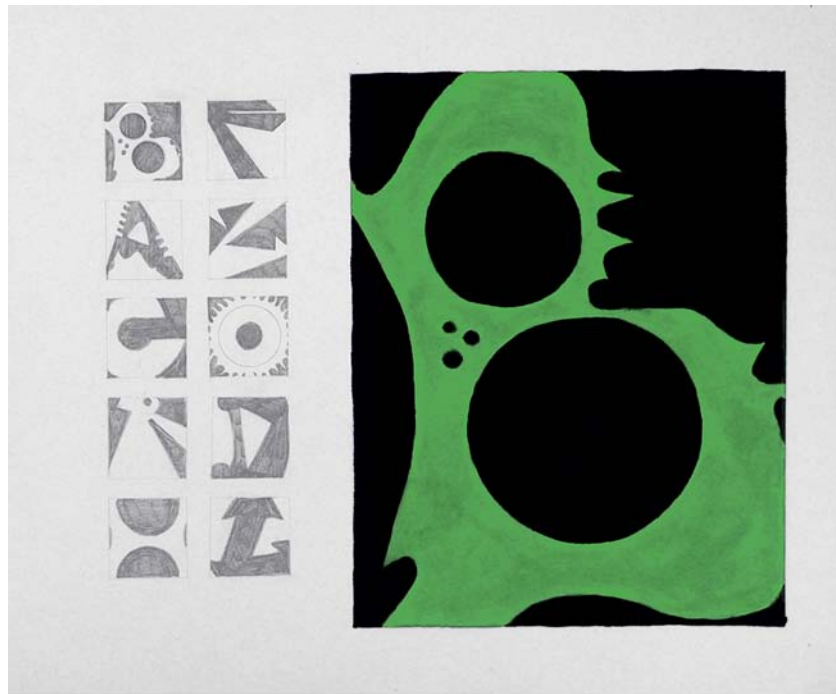


**Consistency:** Unity is the goal of all designers. Various parts of the letter, especially the decorative strokes (serifs), should be the same or compatible in style.

**Figure/Ground Relationship:** Pay close attention to the negative shapes in the design. The ground in the composition has much potential for adding interest.

**Optional Project:** Try making a monogram using your initials. Apply it onto clothing, accessories, stationery, etc.

Student example  
of "A" work



Noah Bearden / Fall 2006

Student example  
of "C" work

