

DYNAMIC COMPOSITION

Lesson Outline

INTRODUCTION:

Myron Barnstone taught that art is not about the appearance of those objects the artist draws. The artist chooses a motif and a subject. From it he selects what interests him then exaggerates it, refines it, distorts it, formalizes it, and organizes it on a system of design.

If his tool chest is full of enough devices and systems, he and whoever is sitting beside him drawing the same thing will choose different systems, devices, and approaches based on his appetites and desires. As a result, no two artists will work similarly. But culturally, they will have a lot in common. There is no way that you can mistake an 18th Century Chinese painting for an 18th Century French painting, but they will have used the same systems to accomplish their purposes.

We inherit certain traditions, movements, philosophies, etc. African artists are using the same systems that Westerners are using (i.e., the Golden Proportion, etc.), but their purposes are different.

The Alphabet of art:

Drawing is a **Mark Making Code**. Musical notation is a mark making code. Sports coaches use a similar mark making code.

Let's look at the limited alphabet of marks artists use. There are essentially five:

The "Dot"



The "Horizontal Line"



The "Vertical Line"



The "Diagonal Line"



The "Arch or Curve"



Only two of these marks are found in nature, the **Dot**, and the **Curve**. There are no straight lines in nature. Artists use straight lines more often than they use curves.

Each mark represents a "Mood or Theme."

If your dominant theme is **horizontal**, it will be "calm," "relaxed," "quiet."

The **diagonal** is "masculine," "charging with a lance," "aggressive," indicative of "movement", and more "powerful" than the vertical and horizontal theme.

The **vertical** is *not as stable* as the horizontal. It is *balanced, ordered, upright, reaching*, and often indicative of *growth*. A "God in his glory" is vertical! Portraits are often painted in a vertical format.

The **curve/arch** is an *enclosure*, it *cups*, it *holds*, it *relates*.

If we create a design based on one of these directional themes, we can say that the relationship between each of the other elements within the drawing are of the same family. They are organic.

When introducing some other element, we must be careful not to disturb the "major mood" established by the horizontal, vertical, diagonal, or the arch/curve.

We can strengthen a line by introducing a perpendicular. But we must not lose the intended dominant.

Here, **Two dots** introduce the horizontal.

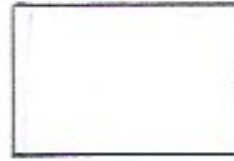
We don't need the line between them! We've been "connecting the dots" since childhood. Consider the "Big Dipper."



The beginning and end of a line is more important than the line connecting it.

*** Each of these directional marks/lines can be transformed into a **two-dimensional figure**. ***

The **Square/Rectangle**



The **Triangle**

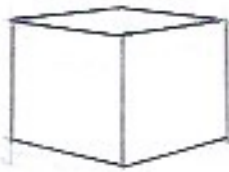


The **Circle**

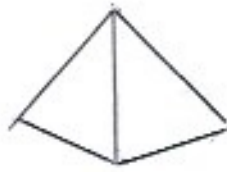


*** Each of these figures can be transformed into a **three-dimensional figure**. ***

The **Cube/Box**



The **Cone or Pyramid**



The **Sphere**

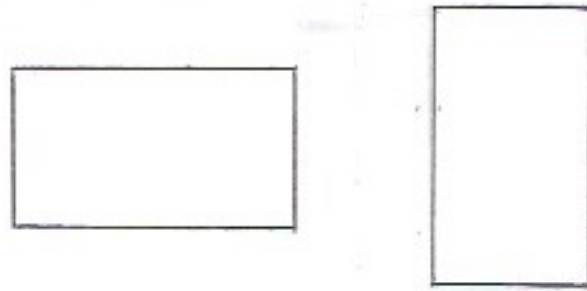


THAT'S IT!!!!!!

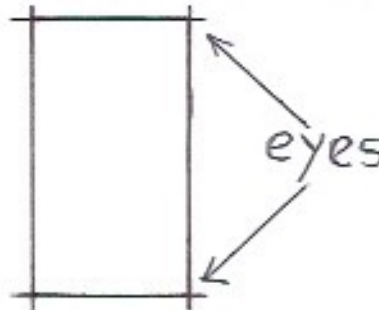
THAT'S OUR ALPHABET!!!!!!

The only thing left to consider is **LIGHT AND DARK VALUES!**

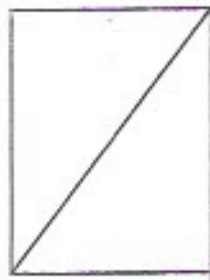
We place figures and design within a shape/format. This is typically a rectangle.



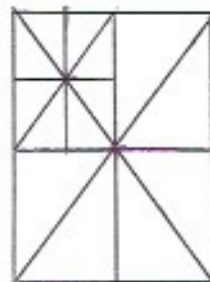
This shape is defined by two vertical and two horizontal sides. The intersections are called Eyes.



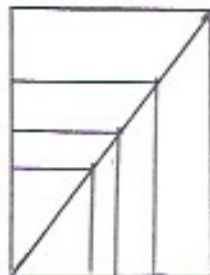
Each shape has an inherent architecture. The Eyes relate horizontally, vertically, and diagonally.



On the diagonal, they divide the rectangle in half.



All shapes sharing the same diagonal are the same shape and proportion as the "Mother Shape."

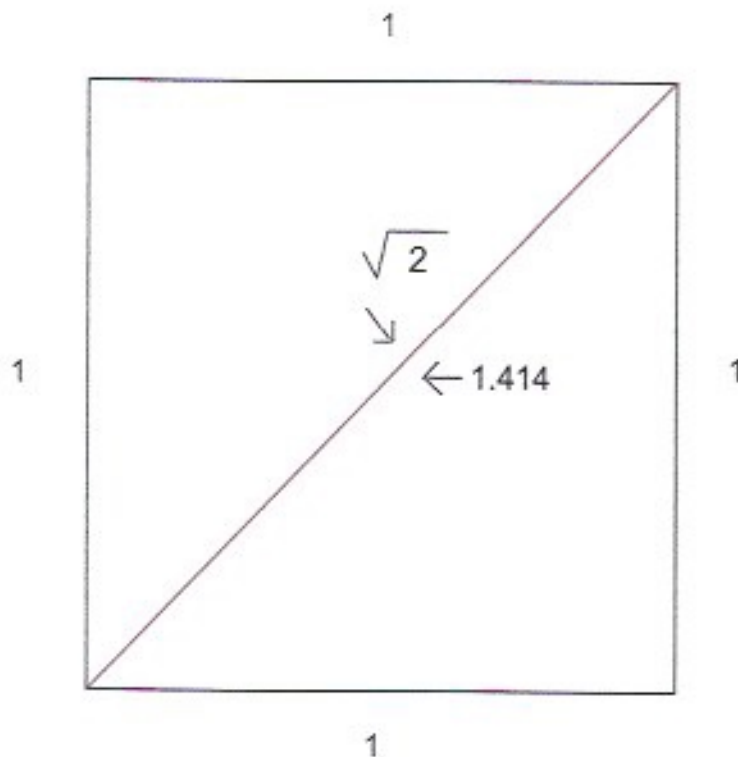


The Root Rectangle System of Composition

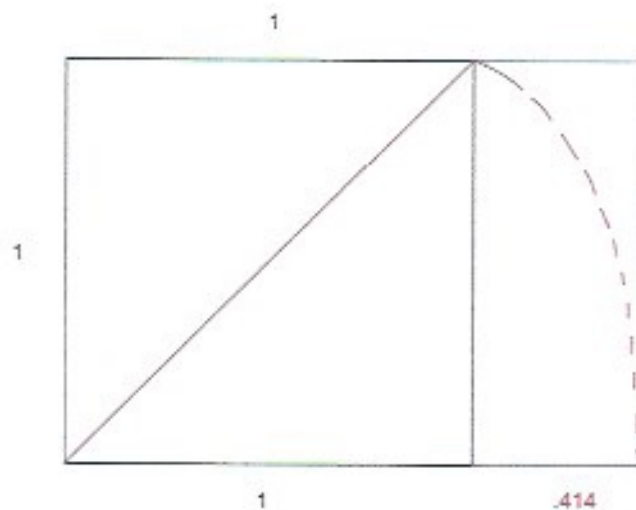
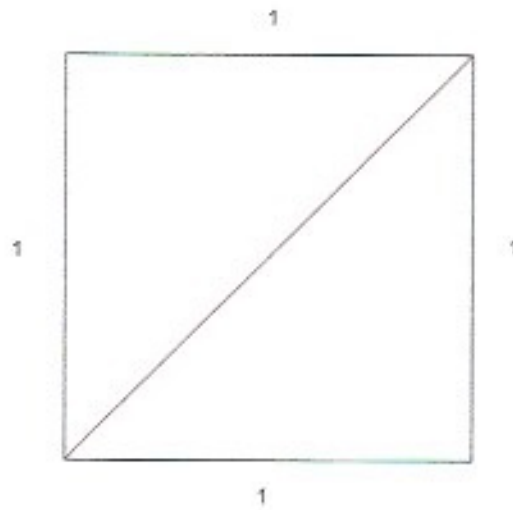
What exactly is a root rectangle and how is it used to compose masterful works of art? It is really very simple, and it requires no math.

The **Square and its Diagonal** (from corner to corner) furnish the series of **Root Rectangles**.

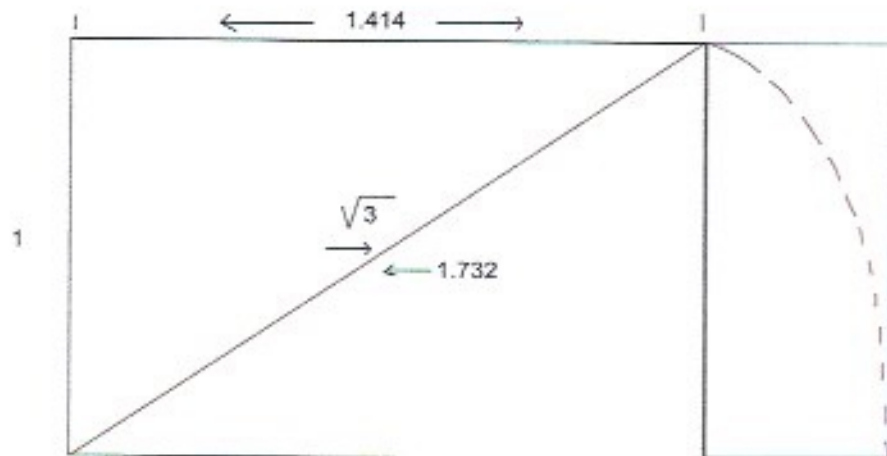
If we consider the side of a square as having a dimension of "1," it is a curious reality that the length of the diagonal of any square will always measure "1.414" in proportion to the side. This length is also the "square root of 2."



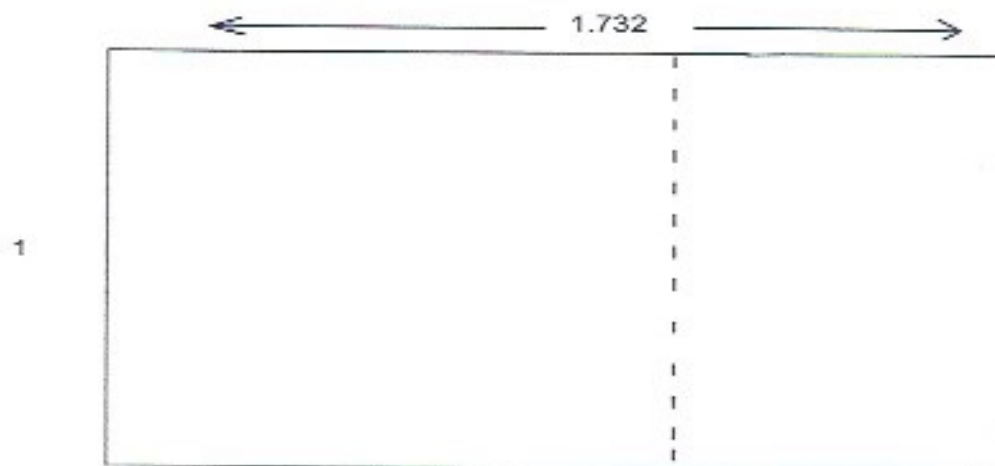
If the length of the diagonal of a square is used as the length of the base (and its parallel side) of a new rectangle, the proportion will be "1" (the short side) to "1.414" (the long side). So, the **square and its diagonal** naturally give birth to a whole new shape, now known as a **Root Two ($\sqrt{2}$) Rectangle**.



Taking the **Root Two rectangle**, draw its diagonal from corner to corner. This diagonal will always measure, in proportion to its short side, "1.732," which is the **square root of 3** ($\sqrt{3}$). Again, using this length as the base, and its parallel side, of a new rectangle, the proportion of the short to the long sides will be "1" to "1.732."



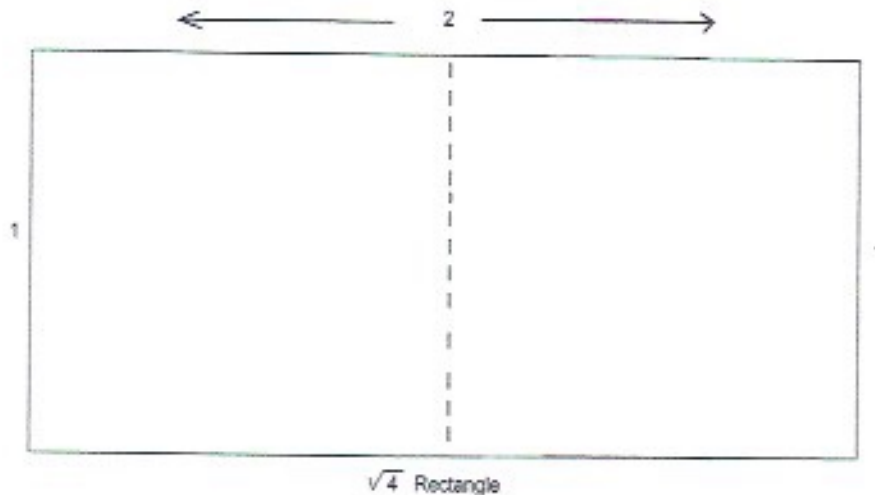
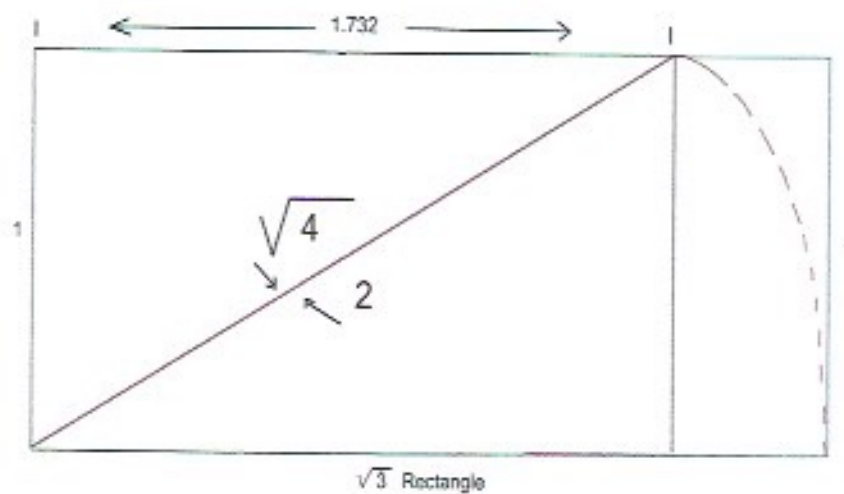
$\sqrt{2}$ Rectangle



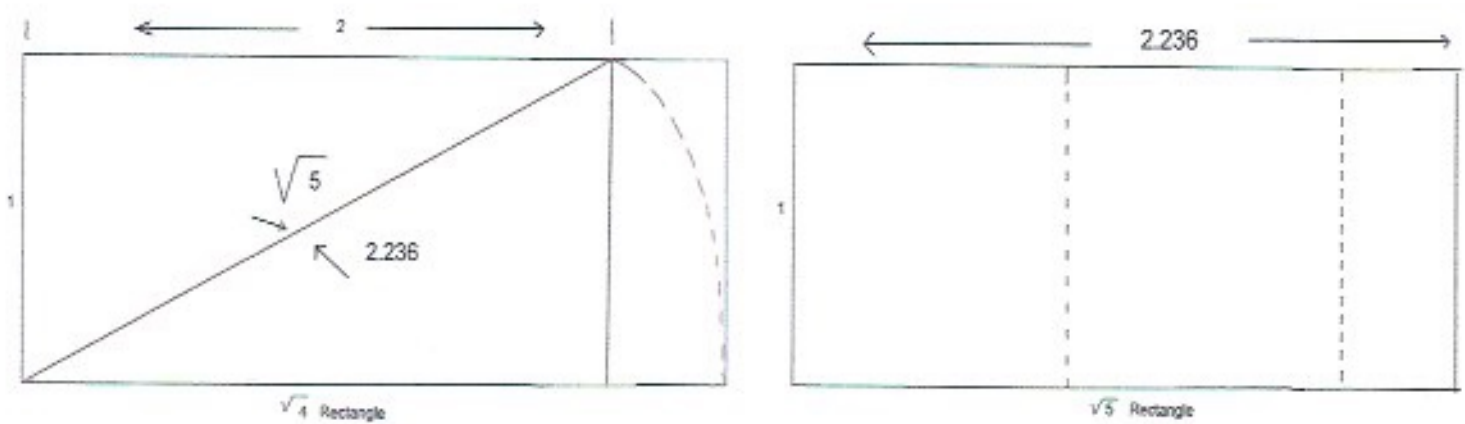
$\sqrt{3}$ Rectangle

As with the square, the **Root Two Rectangle and its diagonal** gave birth to a whole new shape, now known as a **Root Three** ($\sqrt{3}$) **Rectangle**.

We seem to have a pattern developing. Do you see it? Within the **Root Three Rectangle**, draw its diagonal from corner to corner. What do you think it will measure? If you said the **square root of 4**, which is **"2,"** you are absolutely correct! And, if you use that length as the base and its parallel side to create a new rectangle, the proportion of the short to the long sides will be **"1" to "2."** It is called a **Root Four ($\sqrt{4}$) Rectangle**. Notice that this measures as two squares, side by side.

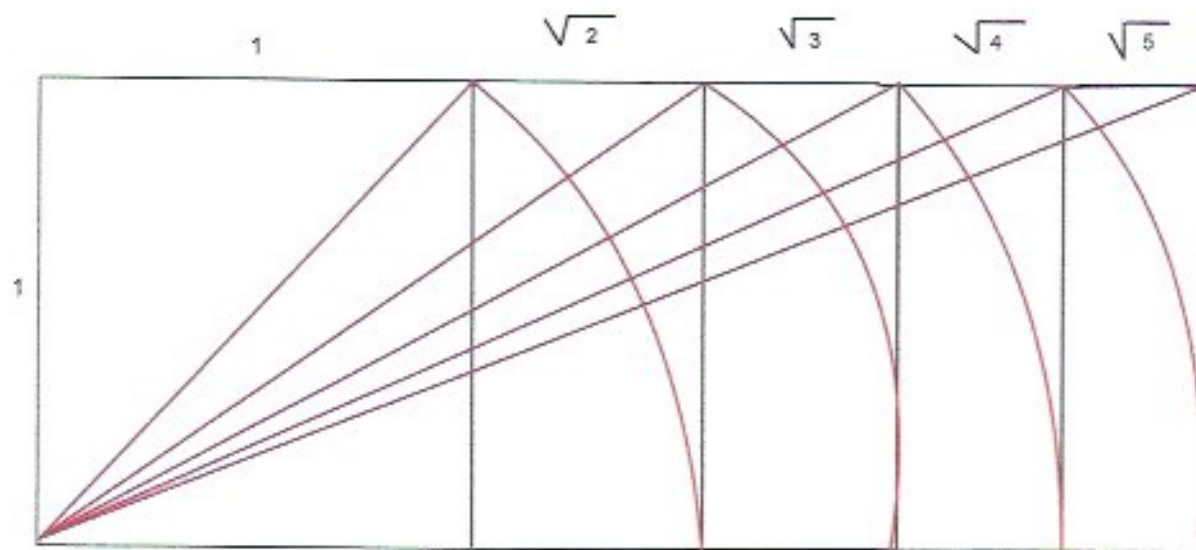


From corner to corner within the **Root Four Rectangle**, draw its diagonal. The length of that diagonal will be "2.236," compared to the short side of the rectangle, or the **square root of 5** ($\sqrt{5}$). Using that dimension as the length of the base and its parallel side of a new rectangle, the proportion of the short to the long sides will be "1" to "2.236," and it will be called a **Root Five** ($\sqrt{5}$) **Rectangle**.



This process will continue indefinitely. Notice that in all instances, beginning with the square, each new rectangle is born from its parent and preceding shape.

As this process occurs, each shape is naturally endowed with the qualities, characteristics, and symmetry of its predecessor, culminating, for our purposes, in the **Root Five Rectangle**.



The **Root Five Rectangle** is the basic shape of vegetable and animal architecture and is the form which has solved the mystery of the perfection of classical Greek art.

Classical Greek art was designed in conformity with the principles of symmetry derived from the human figure.

It is unique among the Dynamic Root Rectangle shapes in that it produces a number of other shapes which are measurable in area with themselves and with the parent shape.

The principle one of these is called the "Golden Rectangle," the "Golden Mean Rectangle," the "Rectangle of the Whirling Squares," or the "Phi Rectangle" (Φ or Phi = 1.618).

This amazing and unique shape is constructed by drawing a diagonal, not from corner to corner, but from **the center of the bottom edge** of a square to one of its upper corners.

By swinging the diagonal from the upper corner to the baseline of the square, this becomes the length of a new rectangle, the **Golden Rectangle**. You will see that this rectangle is composed of a square and a smaller, vertical, golden rectangle on its end.

