

Exercise walk-through

2.6

Toned Grounds and Subtractive Drawing

AP Drawing

Notan – the design of light and dark

Notan is the design of light and dark **shapes**. A drawing works or fails at **thumbnail size**, before any detail exists.

Reduce the scene to **2–3 flat values**. If the pattern still reads, the composition is strong.

Planning the value design before you commit

thumbnail sketches

5–8 cm – they let you **test several value plans in minutes**

why so small

at that size you cannot draw detail, so you can only decide the *shapes*

group your values

many small lights scattered everywhere feel noisy; connected value shapes feel designed

the hierarchy

one dominant value, one secondary, one accent organises the whole page

notan

reduce the scene to two or three flat values and check the design still reads

a toned ground

start from a mid value and work in both directions – adding dark *and* lifting light

The composition is decided in the thumbnail, not on the final sheet. Five minutes of thumbnails saves a drawing that cannot be rescued later.

Notan – the design of light and dark, in detail

Connected values Scattered values



one linked shape many separate spots: reads as noise

notan: design with light vs dark shapes ·
abstract structure before detail

connected shapes read; scattered spots are noise

A drawing works or fails at **thumbnail size**, before any detail exists.

Toned grounds and subtractive drawing

A **toned ground** lets you draw in **both directions**: darker with media, lighter with an eraser.

- cover the paper with an even tone, then **lift out** the lights
- **subtractive drawing** treats the eraser as a **drawing tool**
- a **kneaded eraser** moulds to any shape; a hard eraser cuts **crisp** lights

The mid-tone start **forces value decisions early** – nothing can hide behind white paper.

This process is visible **experimentation** with materials – **exactly** what the CED asks you to document.

Worked example – why a white-object study scores

Include one white-object study in your practice images

Eggs, cups, folded cloth – all white. There is **no local colour to hide behind**, so every value in the drawing comes **only** from light. That makes it **unmistakable visual evidence** of the *light and shade* skill the rubric names.

Photograph dark drawings **carefully**: charcoal darks crush to a black mush in bad light. Recheck the value range **on screen** before submitting.

Exercises 2.1·2.2

2.1 On a toned ground, the ground itself usually acts as the

[1]



A highlight

B halftone

C cast shadow

D frame

2.2 What is subtractive drawing? Give one tool used for it.

[2]

Exercises 2.1-2.2

2.1 On a toned ground, the ground itself usually acts as the

[1]



A highlight

B halftone

C cast shadow

D frame

2.1 B

- the ground is the ready-made mid-value

2.2 What is subtractive drawing? Give one tool used for it.

[2]

2.2

- drawing by removing material / lifting light out of dark; a kneaded or hard eraser

Exercise 2.3

2.3 Why does a toned ground force value decisions early? [1]

3 Studio & portfolio tasks

3.1 Make a **subtractive study** on a toned ground.

(a) Tone a page evenly, then draw a lit object using darks and lifted lights. [4]

(b) Use both dabbed (soft) and cut (crisp) eraser lights. [1]

3.2

() Photograph or note the stages as process/experimentation evidence. [2]

Exercise 2.3

2.3 Why does a toned ground force value decisions early? [1]

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3.1 Make a **subtractive study** on a toned ground.

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Full solution 2.3

2.3

- nothing can hide behind white paper – you must place darks and lights from the start

3.1

- an even toned ground; form built with added darks and lifted lights; both soft and crisp eraser marks; the object reads as lit and solid

3.2

- at least two documented stages; a note on what the material let you do