

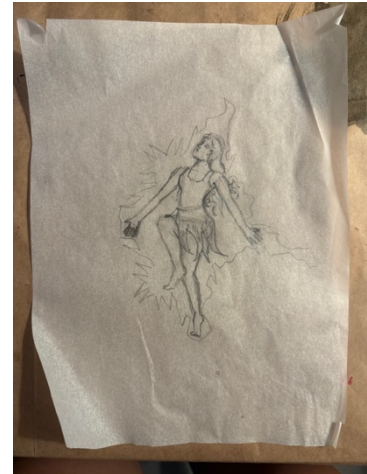
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Assignment W5 - Fairies

When I was a child, fairies were everywhere. Not “real” fairies, as far as I know. But I read lots of books about them, owned fairy-themed games and toys, drew and painted pictures of fairies, and played “let’s pretend” as fairies with my backyard neighbor. So, I decided that I wanted to focus on some aspect of childhood for this fairy assignment and settled on the idea of paper snowflakes. I enjoyed cutting out snowflakes during all seasons as a child, and it almost felt like magic when I unfurled the snipped up, folded up paper to reveal a beautiful geometric shape. Moreover, fairies in stories were often connected to some element of the natural world, such as seasonal or weather phenomena like snowflakes.

Originally, I planned to use the fold-and-cut paper snowflake technique to create wings for my fairies. However, when I snipped apart pieces of my snowflakes and lined them up on the page like wings, the shape appeared too symmetrical to stimulate visual interest. I experimented further with the paper cutting and discovered that if I cut two sheets of tissue paper at once, I could create the same shape in analogous colors, which provided variation and layering while sharing a geometric pattern. When I arranged these pieces of paper on the page, I noticed that the shape they created could provide a space for a figure. I began to think about the tissue paper snowflake pieces as representing a fairy’s power, emanating out from all sides, instead of just her wings. This image alludes to not only the magical power of a supernatural being but also the powers of youth, creativity, and imagination, which paper snowflakes represent for me.

Using the negative space in between the tissue paper and this power of imagination, I pictured in my mind what sort of figure or body position could fit into each space. I experimented again with a freehand approach to figure drawing, and I actually used no reference material at all, except for sometimes glancing at my own hands or other body parts – a first for me. This technique demonstrates a continuation of the spontaneity I had employed while cutting out the snowflakes themselves, without a real plan for how they should look. To avoid marking the paper with pencil lines, I used tracing paper to approximate the negative space and first drew my figure there, before transferring the fairies in ink to my final drawings (see right). Then, I shaded my figures with colored pencil and watercolor pencil and added tissue-paper dresses over the top to establish a connection with the paper snowflakes surrounding them, because the two components of the composition had felt disconnected.



The creative process for this piece involved quite a bit of trial and error. I did a lot of exploratory work, even though exploratory figures were not a specific part of the assignment. I cut out way more snowflakes than I used, which did annoy me a little bit, but also showed me



that not everything that I create in process must be a part of the final product. I had tried to fill the entire background with snowflake cutouts, but this composition was both too busy and lessened the thematic impact of the snowflakes representing magical power (see left). Although the additional snowflakes were not the right solution, I still felt that my pieces looked empty and unfinished. I was also a bit displeased with how some of the colors in my tissue paper had

run when I had adhered it to the paper with acrylic matte medium and how my fairy figures seemed detached from the snowflakes surrounding them. Thus, I decided to push the “collage” element of this assignment further and cut out my figures, in order to mount them on a new background. To reinforce the outward motion of the snowflakes, I stretched watercolor paper and swirled pigment onto it while still wet (see right).

I then glued my figure and snowflake silhouettes on top, allowing them to go off the page to increase the sense of explosive energy in the piece even more.



My final figures ended up far from my initial vision for this project, but I am satisfied with the result. This assignment showed me how much of artmaking is a process of discovery, as I incorporated ideas into my final piece that had not even occurred to me in the beginning. Sometimes – like magic – mistakes or dissatisfaction can lead to the greatest moments of artistic growth.