Some thoughts about design #2
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Concept article only (not finished)
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A couple of *Name* issues ago, I wrote an article about
design. I would like to add to that article.
As I stated during the last article, my qualifications
are very limited when it comes to art. The majority of
this text comes from having a number of discussions
with other 'artist' blacksmiths. I would however like
to refer the reader to a text book that I have found very
helpful.

'Art Fundamentals; theory and practice'
Ocvirk, Stinson, Wigg, Bone and Cayton.

During the Seattle conference a number of friends
sat around the table and wanted to talk design. What
we wanted was a path that we, that is someone who
hadn't a lot of confidence in their design skills could
follow, gaining a lot of experience along the way.

We thought that a sculptural piece was perhaps the
best place to start as it is pure art and no function.

The first project was a wall sculpture, other topics
were a center piece for a table or garden art etc.

Here are the rules to our game. Break them as you see
fit and take as many tangents as you want. Anything
goes!

We broke the sculpture down into four steps.
Line, shape, form and value. That may need a little
definition. A line is a single or multiple line that does
not make a shape. A shape is a 2 dimensional creation
for example a square or a circle etc.
A form is a 3 dimensional shape, for example a cube
or a sphere.
Value is the texture or shading that you give your
creation. The first round of wall sculpture could be
straight bar or bars only. They cannot be arranged to
make a shape or a form.
The second round we thought could be curved lines
only, but only one curve per line, no 'S' bends.
The third round was any mixture of straight, curved or
'S' curved bars
The fourth round now included texture, value or

weight.
The next series was to form a shape only using the
same sort of rules. And so on through to form.

Offering assistance, we wanted an explanation of line
and what they mean.

Vertical lines evoke feelings or represent things such
as; regal, deliberate, stoic, support etc.
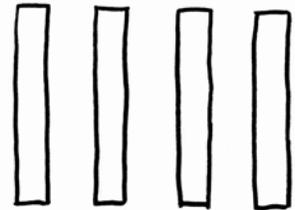
Horizontal lines represent things like; calm, finished,
at rest etc.

Diagonal lines represent things like chaos, action,
energy, movement etc
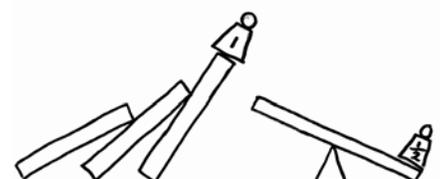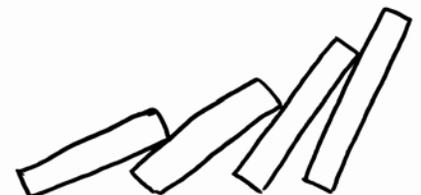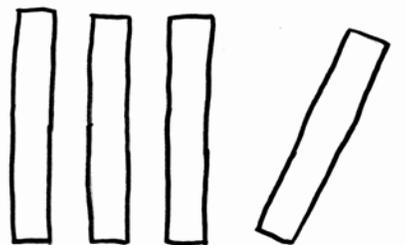
The weight or thickness of the line can create its value or importance or its height in the order of things, depth etc.
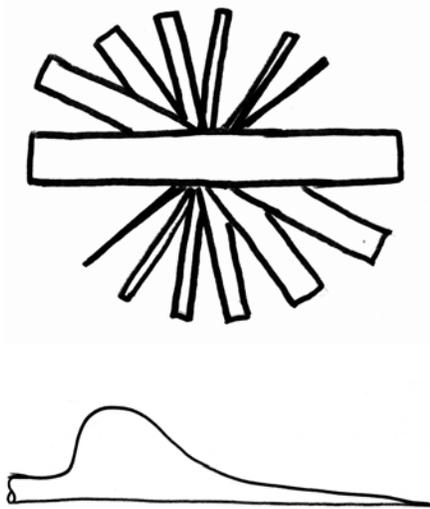
Moving on to shapes, looking at Michelangelo's 'ascent of man' where man is reaching out to God, hands almost touching..


It can be seen that a shape does not have to close. By leaving it open you can create tension or an implied closure giving the piece a little more interest. The hands above are set at an angle to give the frame some energy (diagonal line), they also conform to Hogarth's lines of beauty (last article) in that form an 'S' curve.

I covered proportion in my last article by looking at the golden mean or section as seen in a rectangle. That ratio can also be applied to a line.
If you draw a straight line and divide so that its proportions are pleasing to your eye, odds are that you divided the line very close to the golden mean ratio of 1:1.62.

As I was driving back from the Seattle conference along the West Coast I saw a mailbox on top of a Whales tail. I thought to myself that I have seen enough of these for them to be called cliche.
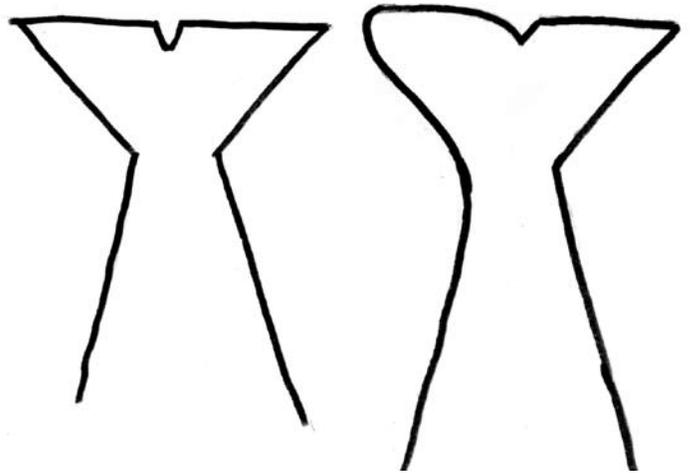
The above, left, drawing represents what i saw beneath the mailbox. The above right has one side changed to be less angular. Which do you prefer? The lefthand drawing below is changed again, drawing the lines according to W.Hogarth's lines of beauty. The right side has more body, but I have omitted drawing in some of the tail detail. Does it still work for you. Is it a whale or something else. Would you subtract more detail or would you add detail. Could I have produced the same piece using lots of small straight bars or does this have to be solid. Perhaps sheet for the body, drawn under the hammer for texture with bar-stock for the tail.