

The Alphabet of Northwest Coast Art

The art of the Northwest Coast Native People is very distinct in its style. It contains a collection of basic components including the Ovoid, U Form, Split U Form, and S Form that once learned, become the "alphabet" for creating any image desired.

OVOID

- Rounded rectangle
- May be small and solid, or nearly solid
- Often represents an eyeball



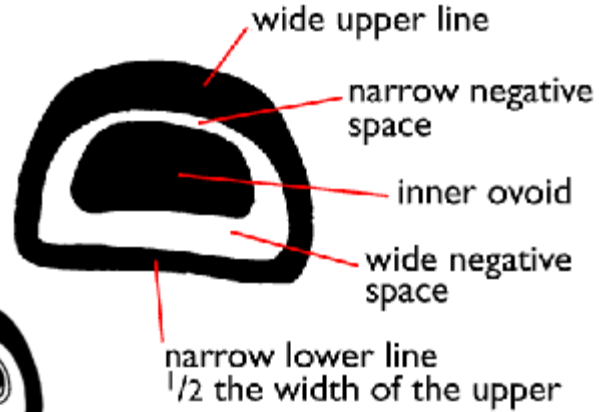
nearly solid ovoid



double-eye motif



salmon-trout head motif



U FORM

- Large "U" often helps form contour of a bird or animal body or body parts.
- Smaller "U" serves to fill in open spaces and represents small feathers.



SPLIT U FORM

- Seen in ears, tails and many open spaces
- Usually used with the "U" form



S FORM

- Created when two halves of a "U" form are joined in opposite directions.
- Used as a connecting element as part of an arm or a leg.
- A series of "S" forms within a body cavity of a creature represents its rib cage.

