

Experiment with Construction Paper Photograms



Like a photograph, a photogram is an image created on a light-sensitive material. However, to make a photogram, you don't need a camera; you just need to place objects on special paper and expose your design to light. The Japanese artist Saburo Hasegawa (1906–1957) created photograms as a way to “paint on photographic paper.”¹ Look at this set of Hasegawa's photograms — how might they remind you of ink paintings? What objects do you think he used to create these images?

You might have created photograms before by using cyanotype (“sunprint”) paper. In this activity, you will simply use black construction paper, sunlight, and everyday objects from your house or yard.

DURATION

3–4 hours

MATERIALS

- Black construction paper
- Any objects from your house or yard that might make interesting shapes or patterns
- Sunlight

¹ Saburo Hasegawa, “New Photography and Painting” (1953), quoted in Hart, D. and Johnson, M. D. *Changing and Unchanging Things: Noguchi and Hasegawa in Postwar Japan*. Oakland: University of California Press. 157.

PROCEDURE



Arrange your chosen objects on sheets of black construction paper. Leave your designs in a sunny spot. If it's a windy day, you might want to place rocks or pebbles on your objects to keep them from moving or blowing off your "canvas."



After 3–4 hours, remove the objects from the paper. You should see "shadows" of the objects on the paper. Can you figure out how this happened? (The parts of the paper covered by the objects stayed black, while the parts that were exposed got bleached by the sun.) Look at the image created here — what does it look like? If you were to give this artwork a title, what would it be?

Here are some other examples of photograms.



Experiment with different objects to create a range of photograms. Your images can be framed and put on the wall or shared as gifts. Or they can be folded and turned into stationery cards; just paste paper inside the cards so you can write a message. Have fun making these easy, eye-catching artworks!