

## The Shapes Project

Working over the past few years, I've designed a new system to produce unique two-dimensional "shapes." This system allows me to make enough unique shapes for every person on the planet to have one of their own. It also allows me to keep track of the shapes, so as to insure that no two will ever be alike.

Following the present rate of birth, it is generally estimated that the world population will "peak" sometime during the middle of the present century, and then possibly begin to decline. How many people will be alive at this peak are estimated at between 8 billion and 20 billion people, depending upon what factors are considered and who is doing the considering. The most recent estimate published by the United Nations puts the figure at around 9.1 billion in the year 2050.

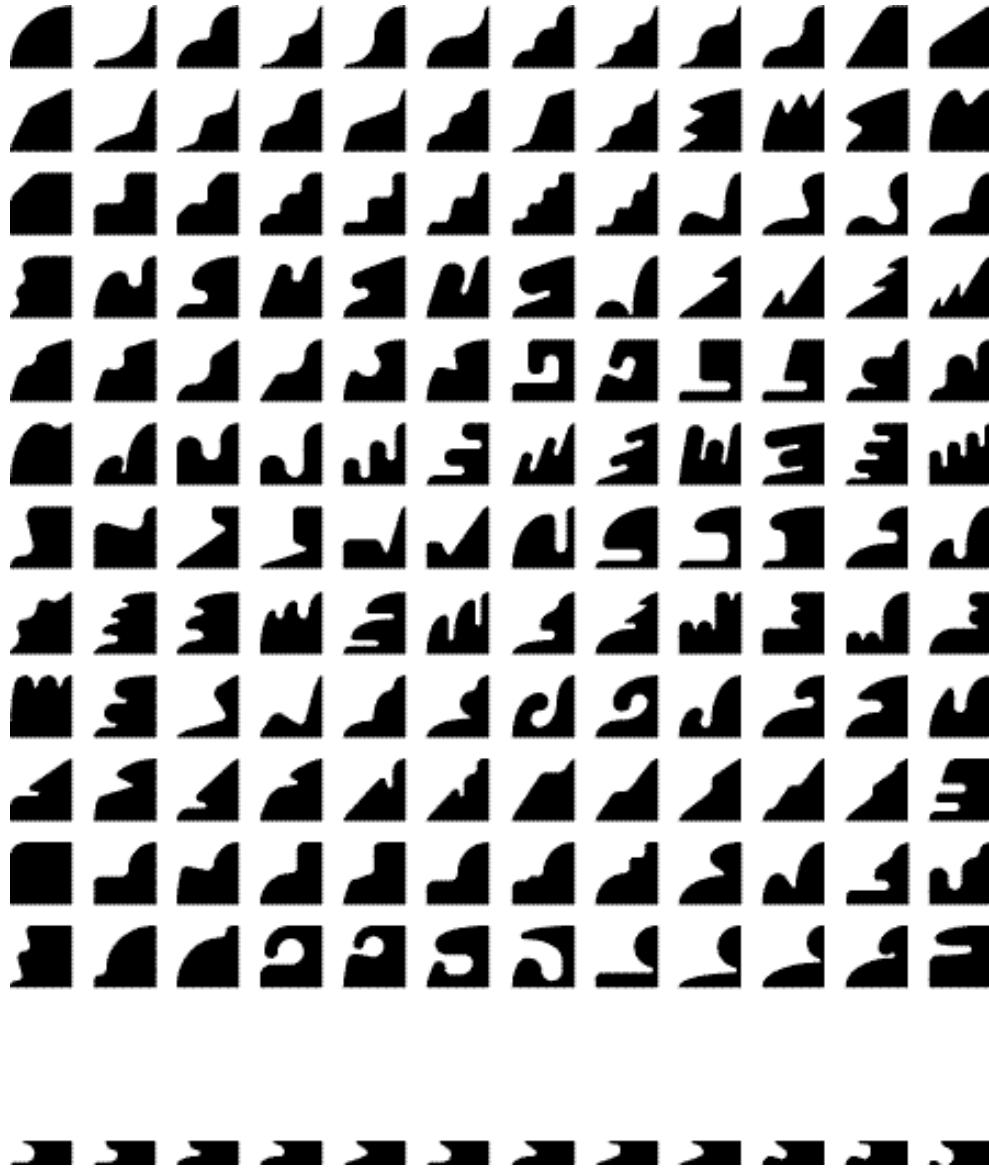
To make certain that my system will be able to accommodate everyone, I have organized it to produce over 31,000,000,000 different shapes, which is more than the highest population estimates might require.

For the time being, around 214,000,000 of the shapes have been set aside for creative experimentation. These can be used for many different purposes — not only for fine art and design projects, but also for various social practices: as gifts, awards, identity markers, emblems, insignias, logos, toys, souvenirs, educational tools, and so forth.

I'm presently using my home computer to construct Adobe Illustrator 'vector' files that allow the shapes to be produced in many possible ways. The shapes can be printed graphically as silhouettes or outlines, in any size, color or texture, using all varieties of graphics software; or, the files can be used by rapid prototyping machines and computer-numerically-controlled (CNC) equipment — such as routers, laser and waterjet cutters — to build, carve, or cut the shapes from wood, plastic, metal, stone, and other materials.

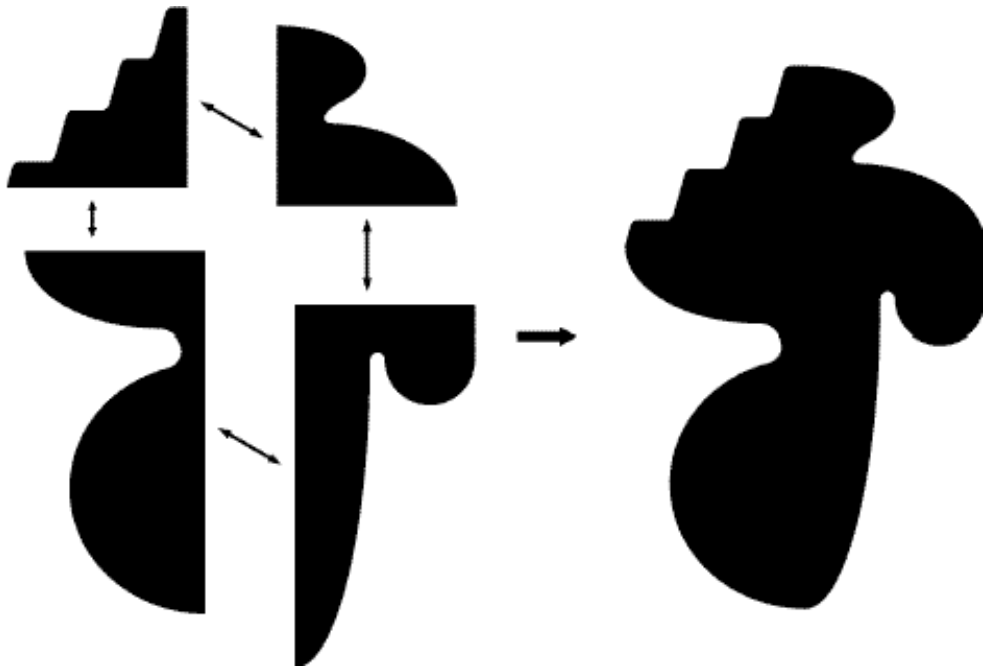
The basic system for making the shapes is now complete, but the project of actually constructing all of them is much too large for me to finish by myself, or in my own lifetime. For this reason I am organizing it in such a way that others may continue completing them in my absence. I am also making shapes available to others, with the hope that people will come up with many interesting ways to use them.

Allan McCollum  
2006

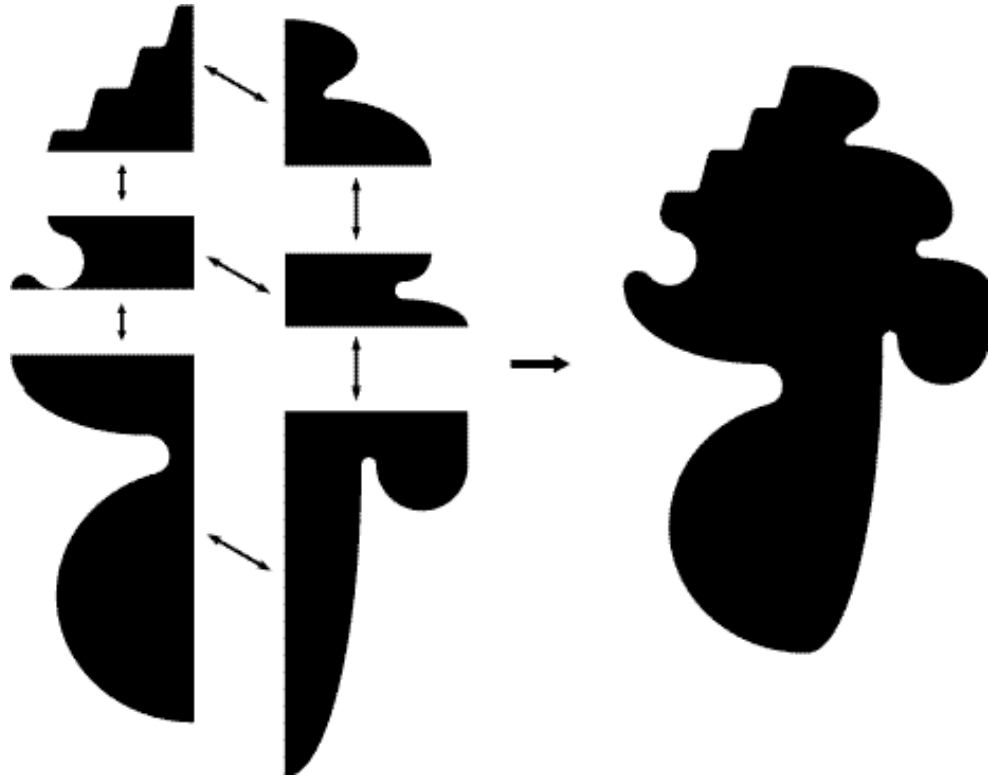


There are 300 parts used to construct the shapes





Some of the shapes are created by combining four parts



Some of the shapes are created by combining six parts



Some samples follow

