



Unmasking the mask tradition

Exploring traditional Sri lankan mask forms
using paper manipulation

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Sri Lankan masks tradition

- well established tradition, developed from pre- Buddhist period
- well known in south western coastal areas of Sri Lanka – Ambalangoda
- believed that demons cause sicknesses and masks performance to drive away the demons





Mask performances

- performed in an open area in the village and traditionally last from sunset until dawn
- before the performances, the area is decorated and a structure made of freshly cut natural materials such as banana tree trunks, coconut fronds and areca nut flowers is built





- masks are carved with bulging eyes, tusks, and gaping mouths to grab the attention
- successful in evoking fear and curiosity in the observer
- Sri Lankan masks performances can be divided into two main categories namely;
 - Kolam Natima
 - Sanni yakuma

Kolam Natima

- about the daily lives of ordinary people and related to fertility
- depicted the characters from daily life such as; the village headman, the drummer and the soldier
- full of exaggeration and comic dialogues



Sanni Yakuma

- deals with healing rituals and ailments are specifically personified
- divided into two parts
 - 12 paliya
Comes first and prepare the ritual area
 - 18 sanni demons
follow the invitation of paliya
represent specific afflictions
- Three main ritual steps
 - Demons are called to the ritual space
 - Demons are given offerings
 - Demons are politely sent away



Twelve Paliya

- Come before the sannu demons
- Clean the place
- Prepare the offerings for the sannu demons
- Each bring different artifacts



Pandam Paliya



Dunu Paliya



Kendi Paliya



Dalu muru Paliya



Anguru Dummala Paliya



Kalas Paliya



Kukulu Paliya



Thambili Paliya



Muguru Paliya



Salu Paliya



Athu Paliya



Kadu Paliya

Twelve Paliya

- | | |
|--------------------------|---|
| 1. Pandam paliya | - torches to lighten up the place |
| 2. Dunu paliya | - a bow and arrow and chases away demons |
| 3. Kendi paliya | - holy water in a pot to purify the ritual area |
| 4. Dalu muru paliya | - a gift of betel to pay respect to the demons |
| 5. Anguru dummala paliya | - resin powder and burning charcoal |
| 6. Kalas paliya | - a pot with coconut flowers as an offering to the Gods |
| 7. Kukulu paliya | - a cock as an offering to the Sanni demons |
| 8. Thambili paliya | - a king coconut and purifies the place |
| 9. Muguru paliya | - a club to expel the demons |
| 10. Salu paliya | - the sacred shawl of Goddess Patthini |
| 11. Athu paliya | - branches of a tree to sweep away defilements |
| 12. Kadu paliya | - a sword to cut the remaining defilements |



Pandam Paliya performance



Salu Paliya performance

The project

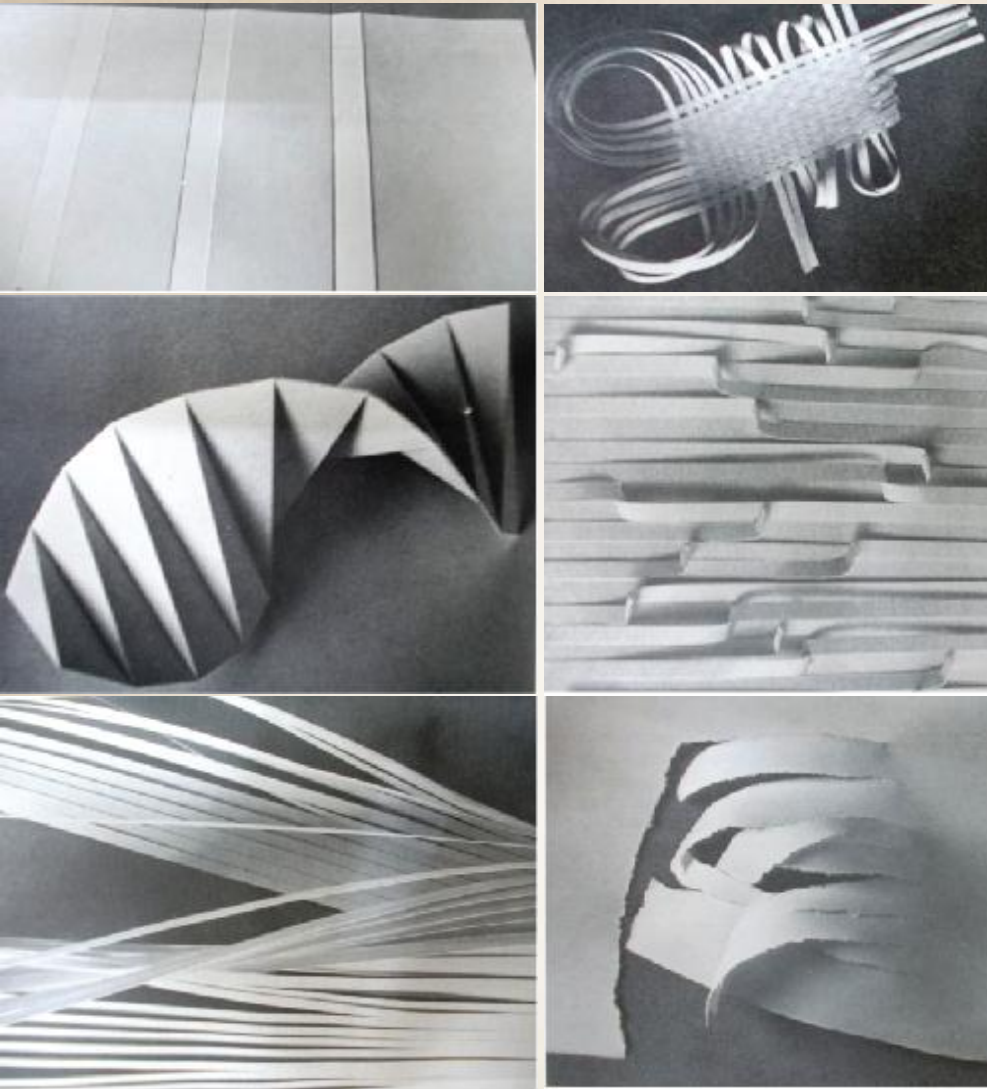
- depict the essence of selected traditional Sri Lankan masks through paper manipulation
- creating a novel visual experience for children

Aims of the project

- Study forms, expressions and colours of traditional Sri Lankan masks
- Explore three dimensional representation techniques
- Experimenting with paper manipulation techniques

Process

- Studying the forms and structure of the masks
- Exploring forms through paper manipulation
- Illustrating the selected masks
- Doing optical corrections
- Making the pop up masks
- Making layouts for the book
- Combining all the pop up masks into a book

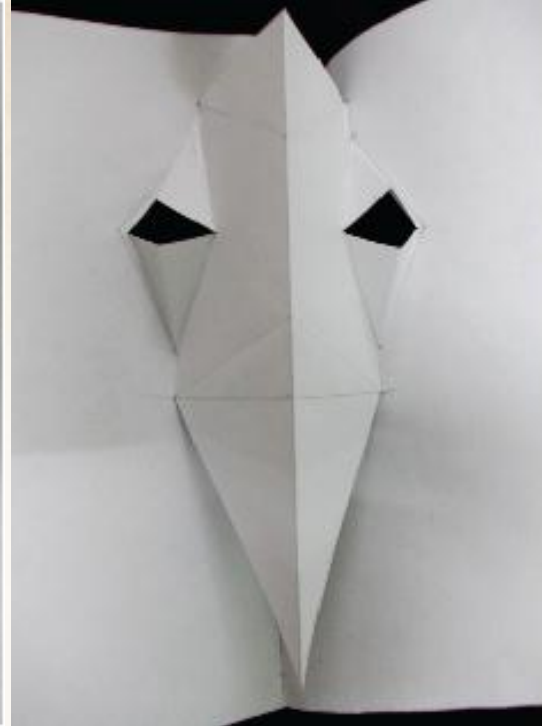


Paper manipulating techniques

- Cutting
- Folding
- Pasting
- Inter weaving, Pleating
- Twisting
- Puncturing
- Tearing
- Creasing and scoring
- Bending and rolling
- Crushing

Initial Experiments

- Preliminary paper experiments to create expressive faces through paper manipulation





- Implementing the preliminary paper manipulation experiments in creating traditional masks forms

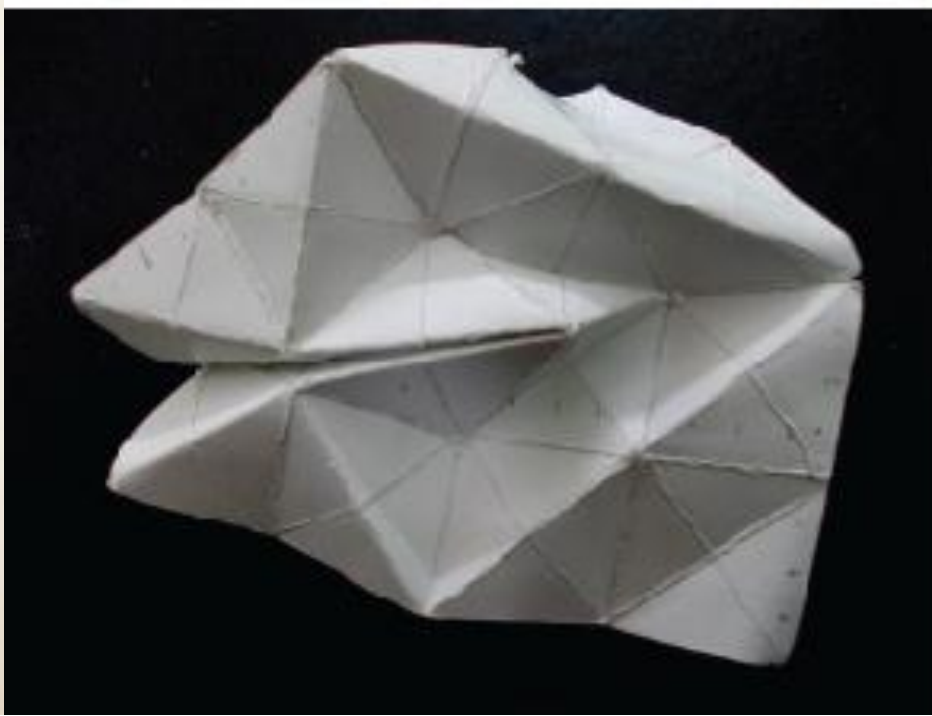
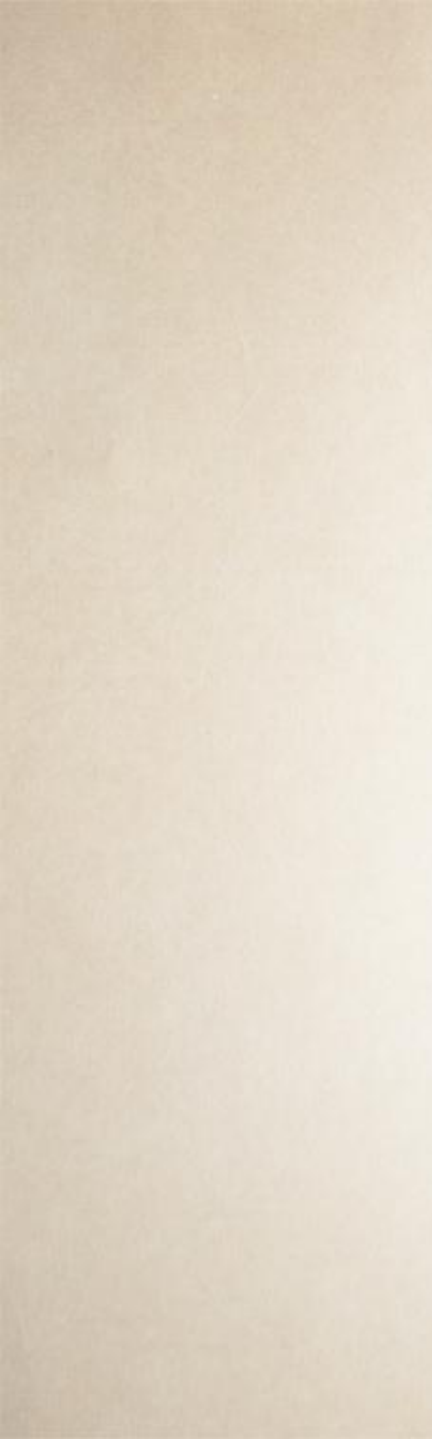






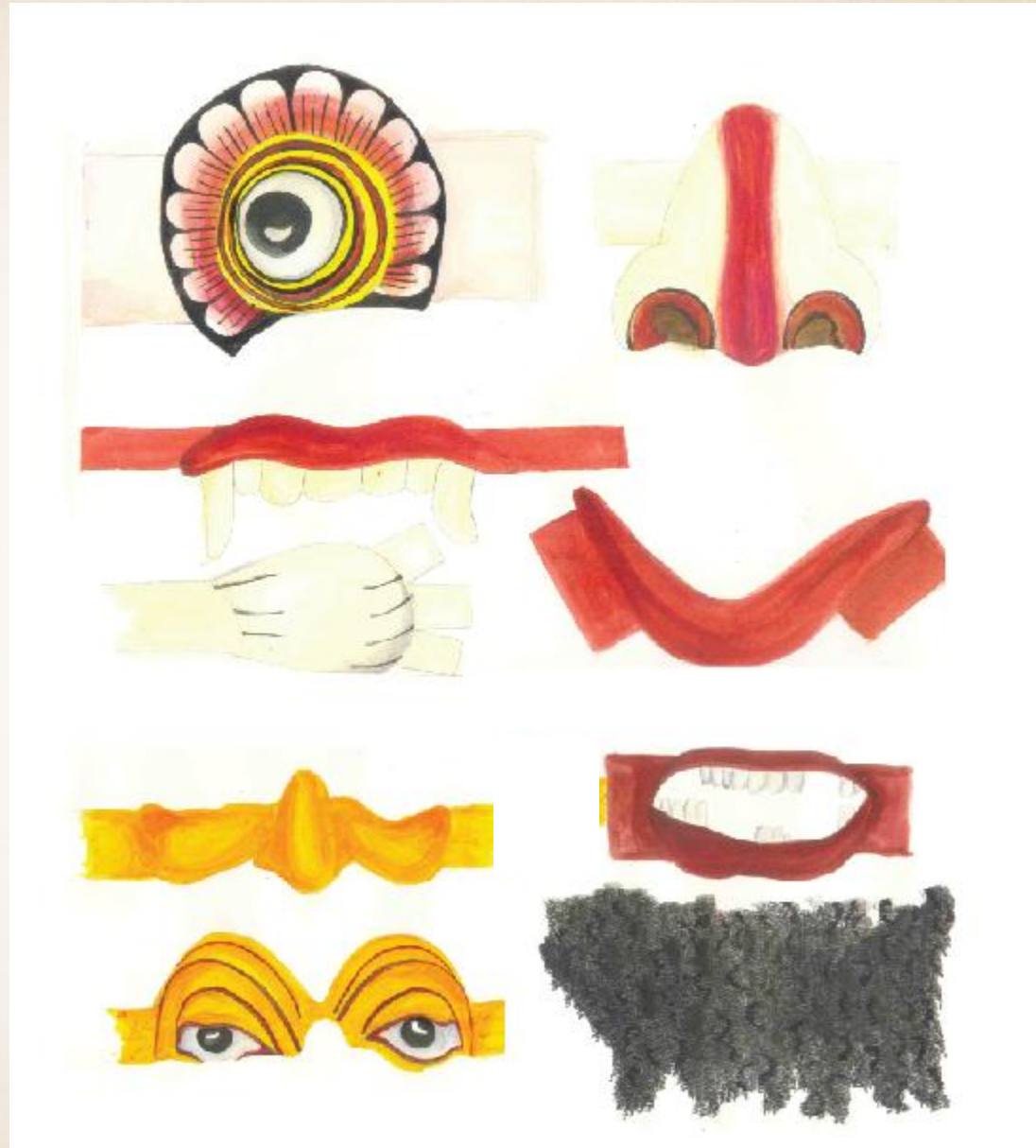
- Different techniques were tried and tried to incorporate in enhancing the visual experience





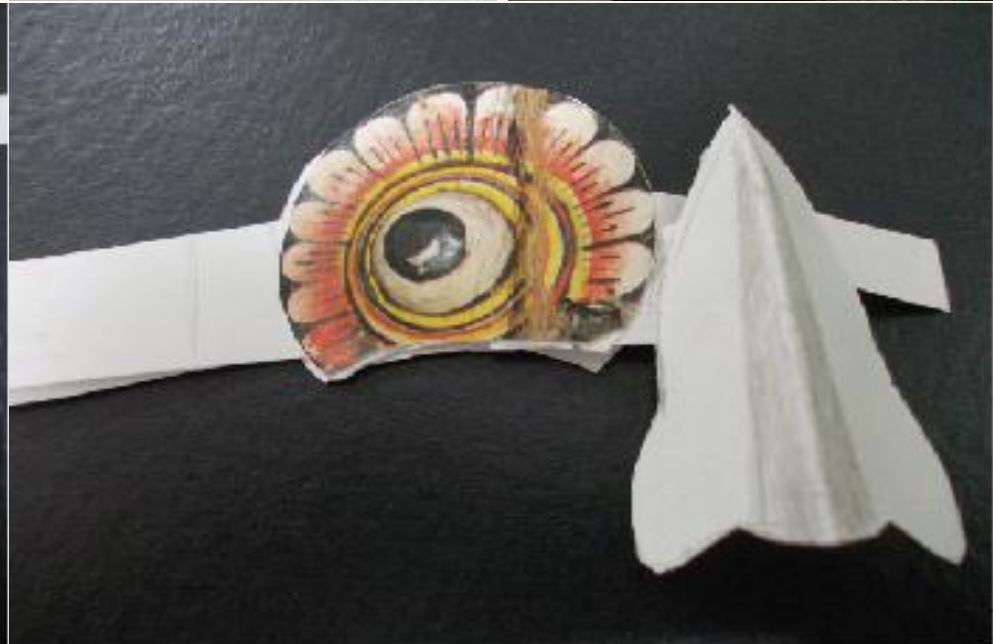
Mask illustrations

- All selected masks were illustrated and optically corrected manually to avoid distortion





- Separate elements were put together in order to create three dimensional aspects





- Each mask were developed separately with lot of paper manipulation experiments



- tried to bring out dancing movements through paper manipulation in addition to masks





- More pop ups were tried to add variety and make the book interesting





Initial layouts for the book

- After coming up with the separate pop up masks, it was important to make it presentable and book format was selected



- After doing several layouts dummy book was made in order to see for further improvements before going for final print







Its protruding eyes make the
body this particular mask out
enables its given green colour
its function of clearing the
branches of trees.





Thank you...