

FROM FORMLESS TO FORM

Design Exploratory Seminar

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GUIDE

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Mythological Element : SWAN

About the Swan

Swans are gracefully long-necked, heavy-bodied, big-footed birds that glide majestically when swimming and fly with slow wingbeats and with necks outstretched. They migrate in diagonal formation or V-formation at great heights, and no other waterfowl moves as fast on the water or in the air. Male swans are called as cobs and females are called as pens look alike.

Swans are sociable except in breeding season. They mate for life. Courtship involves mutual bill dipping or head-to-head posturing.

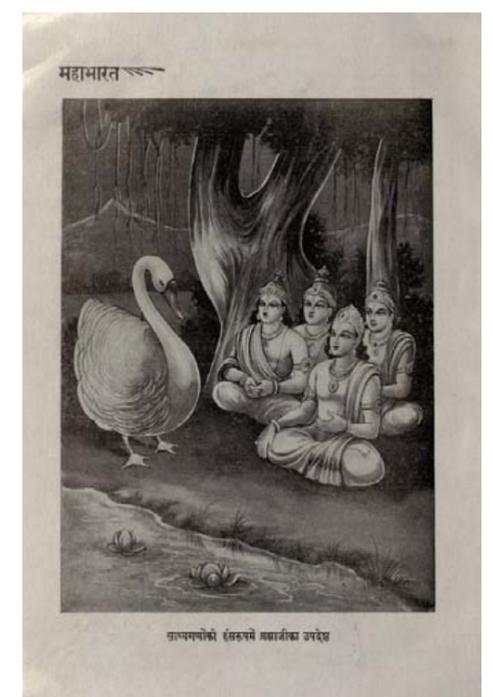
The Northern Hemisphere species of swan have pure white feather but the Southern Hemisphere species are mixed black and white. The Australian swan is completely black except for the white flight feathers on its wings.



Swan or Hamsa

The hamsa is an aquatic bird of passage which various scholars have interpreted as the goose, swan or even the flamingo. Its icon is used in Indian and Southeast Asian culture as a spiritual symbol and a decorative element. It is believed by Hindus to be the vahana (or vehicle) of Brahma, Gayatri, Saraswati, and Vishvakarma.

In Indian philosophical literature, hamsa represents the individual soul or spirit (typified by the pure sunlight-white like color of a goose or swan), or the "Universal Soul or Supreme Spirit". Some Sanskrit texts, states Dave, distinguish between Hamsa and Kadamb, the former being swan and latter a bar-headed goose



The beliefs related to Swan

Hamsah shwetah, bakah shwetah, kah bhedah hamsa bakayo?
Neeraksheera viveketu, Hamsah hamsah, bakah bakah!

हंसः श्वेतः बकः श्वेतः को भेदः बकहंसयोः
नीरक्षीरविवेके तु हंसो हंसः बको बकः

A swan is white, a stork is white. What's the difference between the swan and the stork? When it comes to the knowledge of water and milk, a swan is a swan and a stork is a stork.

Allegory says that, a swan has the capability of separating milk from water. If a bowl of milk and water is offered, it is supposed to have the ability to take only the milk particles and leave behind, the water! The stork obviously doesn't possess this skill. He might look like a swan, be with a swan, fly, walk or act like a swan. But it doesn't make him a swan.

It is mentioned several times in the Vedic literature, and persons who have attained great spiritual capabilities are sometimes called Paramahansa ("Supreme Swan") on account of their spiritual grace and ability to travel between various spiritual worlds. In the Vedas, swans are said to reside in the summer on Lake Manasarovar and migrate to Indian lakes for the winter. They're believed to possess some powers such as the ability to eat pearls.

Swan Symbolism

The Swan is a symbol of purity, beauty, grace, love and elegance, but it can also symbolize divination and balance.

- Knowledge
- Discernment
- Grace
- Intellect
- Elegance
- Higher self
- Simplicity
- Wisdom
- Divine
- Supreme

Swan In Mythology and It's Cultural Meaning

Hinduism

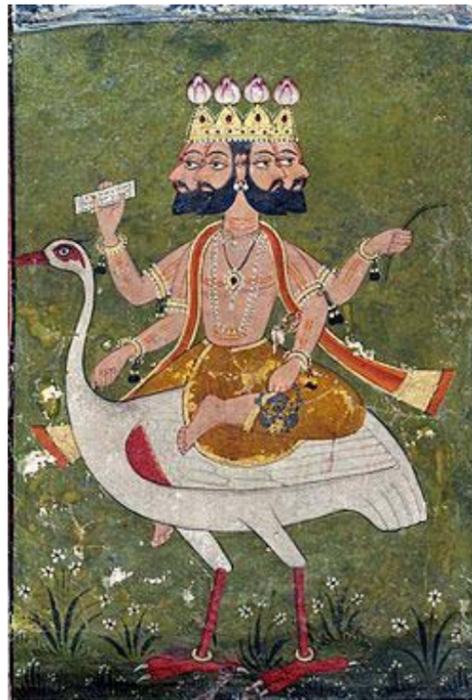
Swans are compared to saintly persons whose chief characteristic is to be in the world without getting attached to it, just as a swan's feather does not get wet although it is in water. The Sanskrit word for swan is hamsa or hansa, and it is the vehicle of many deities like the goddess Saraswati.

Godess saraswati is the spouse of Brahma. As per Hindu tradition, it's a bird which can figuratively sift the pure from the impure, like it sieves milk from water. Sometimes, Brahma is shown riding seven swans.

The flight of the hamsa symbolizes moksha, the release from the cycle of samsara. Lake Manasarovar in Hindu mythology, is seen as the summer abode of the hamsa. They are mentioned in the Hindu Epic, the Ramayana. [Hamsa, the swan, is part of the mythical love story of Nala and Damayanti.



pic source: google



Buddhism

The hamsa was also used extensively in the art of Gandhara, in conjunction with images of the Shakyamuni Buddha. It is also deemed sacred in the Buddhadharm.

Greek Mythology

Leda and the Swan is a story and subject in art from Greek mythology in which the god Zeus, in the form of a swan, seduces (or in some versions, rapes) Leda. In some versions, she laid two eggs from which the children hatched. The split is almost always half mortal, half divine, although the pairings do not always reflect the children's heritage pairings.

Apollo and the Swans In one tale Zeus, the supreme god of Ancient Greece had a love affair with Leto. Leto became pregnant. Hera, who was the wife of Zeus found out what had happened and went into a jealous rage.

Leto had a hard time getting away from the furious wife. Eventually she found refuge on the island of Delos. She had a difficult delivery. Leto gave birth to the twins named Artemis and Apollo.

On the day Apollo was born seven sacred swans flew seven times around the island. Swans are associated with the sun as well as music. Apollo became a major god. He was god of the sun, arts and especially music, and fortune-telling. The swan was sacred to Apollo



pic source: google

Mongolian mythology

In Mongolia there is an old legend about a hero named *Khori Tumed*. On one of his walks by Lake Baikal he witnessed an extraordinary sight. He saw nine swans land on the island of Oikhon. The nine swans took off their feather coats and revealed that they were gorgeous women in disguise. Next the nine beautiful women went to take a bath in the lake.

They were naked. Khori Tumed could not help himself. He sneaked up to the feather coats and stole one of them. The women busy enjoying their baths had not been aware of what was happening.

After their bath the women went to put their feathers back on. One feather coat was missing. Without the feathers they could not fly away as swans. Eight of them flew away and one woman was left behind.

Khori Tumed was overjoyed. He proposed to the woman. Surprisingly she accepted and they were married. Their marriage was a happy one for quite some time. They had eleven children.

Even though her husband had been good to her, the swan woman longed for her true calling of flying free as a swan. She begged her husband to give back her feathers.

Her husband refused fearing she might fly away and leave him forever. The swan woman became desperate and promised her husband she would not fly away. She only wanted to hold her feathers again. He finally agreed.

Immediately after he had given his wife her feather coat, she put it on and flew towards the window. Khori Tumed knew then he could no longer keep her captive.

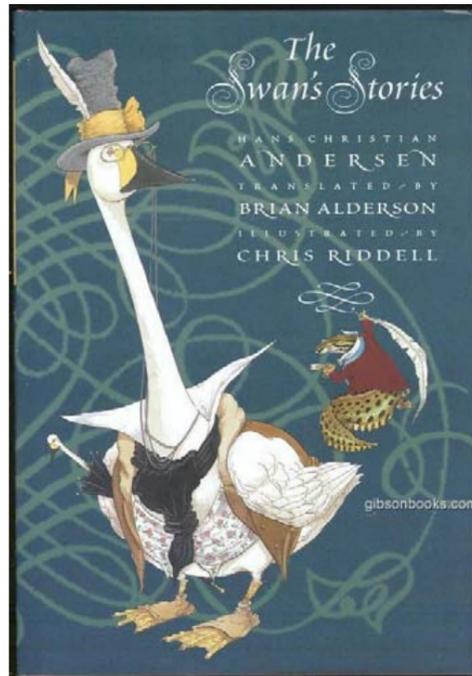
Before she left Khori Tumed asked his swan bride to bless their eleven sons. She not only named and blessed her sons; she flew over the tents and showered blessing and good fortune on all of the tribe.

Then she was gone. She was free again. The tribe knew they were very fortunate to have received the blessings and protection of the swan woman.

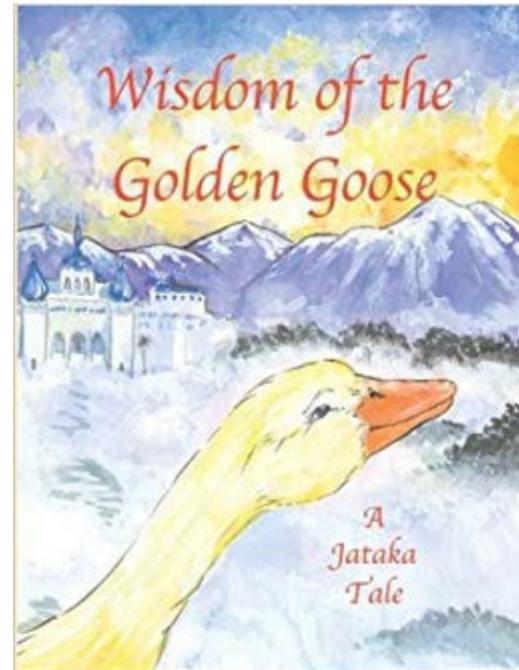


pic source: google

Swan In Stories



pic source: google



pic source: google

Stories are one of the main ways that human understands the natural world. Giving human attributes to animals is by no means a recent phenomenon; ancient gods were often hybridized human-like animals.

In literature and myth, the swan symbolizes light, purity, transformation, intuition, grace. In Ancient Greece the swan stood for the soul and was linked to Apollo, the god of the Sun, whereas in other religions, the swan became a feminine symbol of the moon. In Celtic myth, a pair of swans steered the Sun boat across the heavens. In alchemy, the swan was neither feminine or masculine, marrying the opposites of fire and water. In Hinduism, the swan could bridge sky and water, heavenly and earthly energies. In Shamanism, swans had the unusual ability of being able to travel to the Otherworld.

Several animals have been used in Indian stories throughout the history showcasing the stories through their personalities. one of them is Swan which have been depicted in various stories portraying his beauty, knowledge and feminism.

Panchatantra an ancient Indian collection of interrelated animal fables in Sanskrit verse and prose, arranged within a frame story. The Panchatantra stories have regaled children and adults alike with a moral at the end of every story. They also encourage the children to bond with nature.

Swans in Fables, moral based stories.

Swans movements are also used in dance form as Ballet. Swan lake is a popular German fairy tale.

Swan In Paintings

In Raja Ravi verma's Painting



pic source: google



pic source: google

Leda and the Swan
Painted after 1530 in the style of Michaelangelo, and possibly a copy of the master's work, this painting shows the coupling of Queen Leda with Zeus disguised as a swan.



Swan Czarevna. 1900
Swan Czarevna is a creature of dual nature: she epitomises two elements: the dark, cold element of water, and at the same time the heavenward, airy, celestial one.

The famous story of Nala Damyanti

Princess Damayanthi talking with Royal Swan about Nalan. The painting indicates the Swayamwara of the beautiful princess Damayanthi and her conversation with Nalan in the disguise of a swan. Is an exquisite oil study of a gorgeous Indian woman by the great artist Raja Ravi Varma.

Swan Form Studies

To start with, the focus was to understand the difference between Icon, Index and Symbol- three categories of sign: Signs can take many forms. They can be words, numbers, sounds, photographs, paintings and road signs and more. However, while signs can be many things, they can be categorized as one of a few types.

As signs as the basic unit of meaning and are defined in two parts.

- Signifier — The form of a sign. The form might be a sound, a word, a photograph, a facial expression, a painting of a pipe, etc.
- Signified — The concept or object that's represented. The concept or object might be an actual pipe, the command to stop, a warning of radioactivity.

There are 3 Types of Signifiers — The Categories of Signs

Icon

An icon is meant as a direct imitation of the object or concept. Icons bear a physical resemblance to what's being represented. A photograph is an example of an icon. Take a picture of a tree and the resulting image will look like that tree. It certainly resembles whatever it depicts.

Index

An index is a sign that shows evidence of the concept or object being represented. An index doesn't resemble the object or concept being represented. Instead it resembles something that implies the object or concept.

For example smoke is an index of fire. Dark clouds are an index of rain. A footprint is an index of a foot.

Symbol

Symbols are at the opposite end from icons. There's no logical connection between a symbol and what it represents.

The connection must be learned and it usually becomes associated with the concept it represents over time.

Again language and numbers are symbols. Traffic lights are symbols. Flags are symbols. What's being communicated, must be learned.

An example might one day be the hamburger icon. There's nothing about three lines that automatically suggests menu, but if designers consistently use the hamburger icon, the connection will eventually be learned.



pic source: google

Further more the iconic representation was divided into two categories:

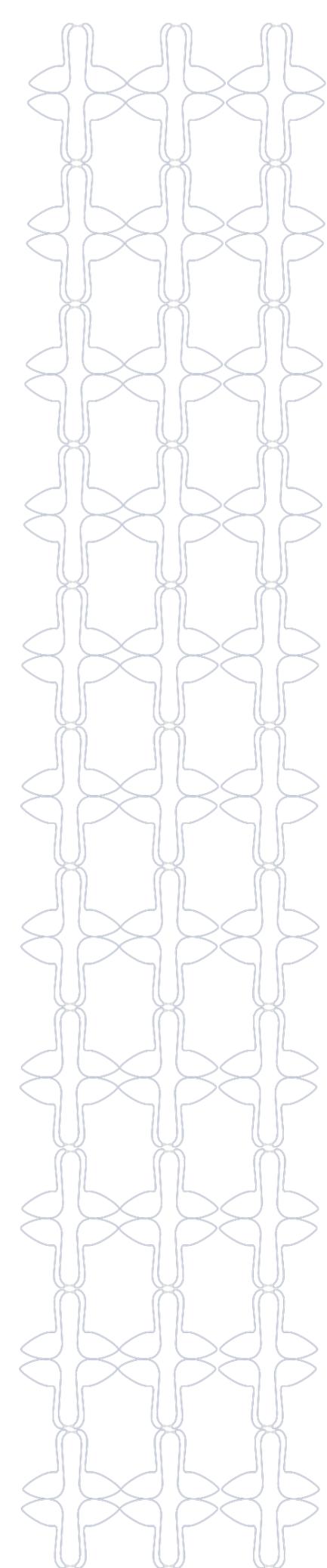
- Symbolic icons convey a concept at a higher level of abstraction than the object depicted.
- Arbitrary icons have no relationship to an object or concept and their association must be learned. (computer on/off power button).

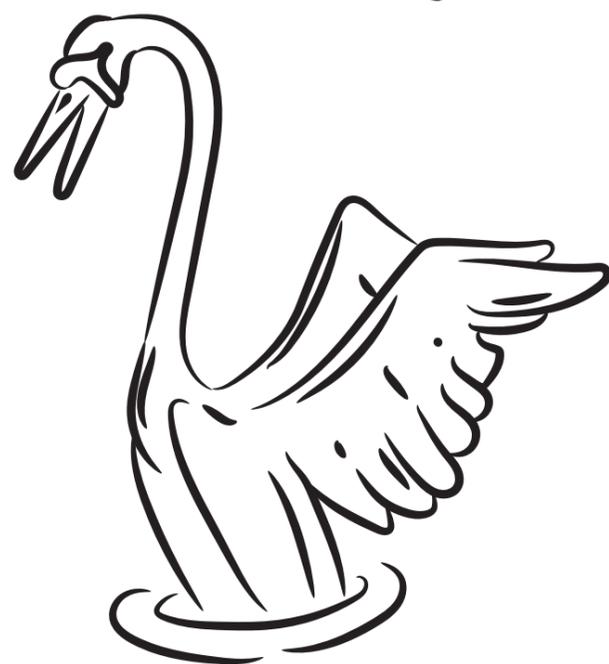
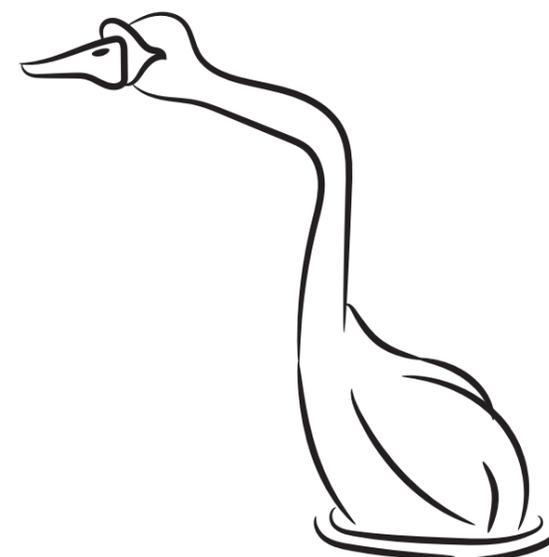
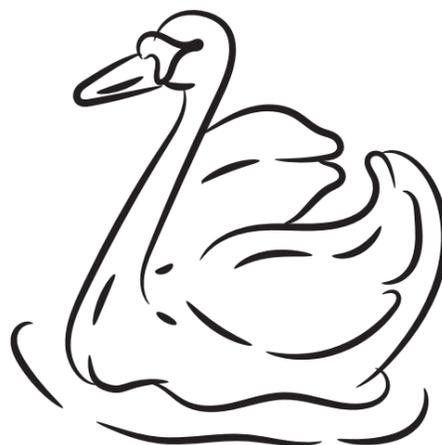
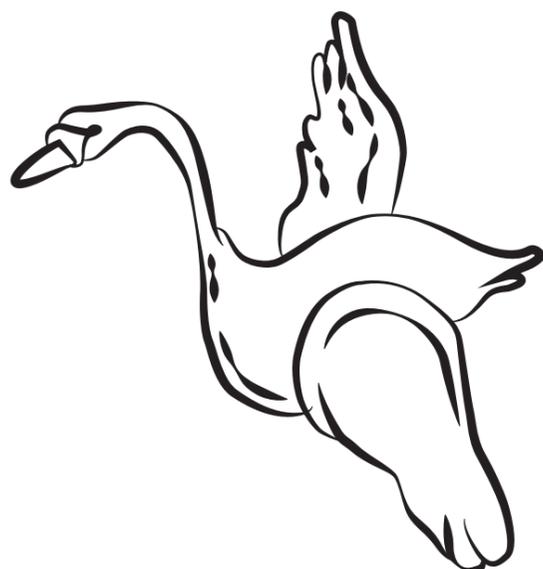
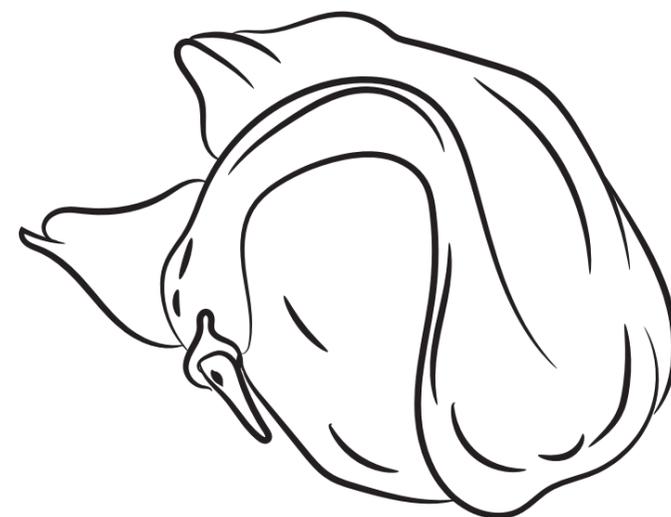
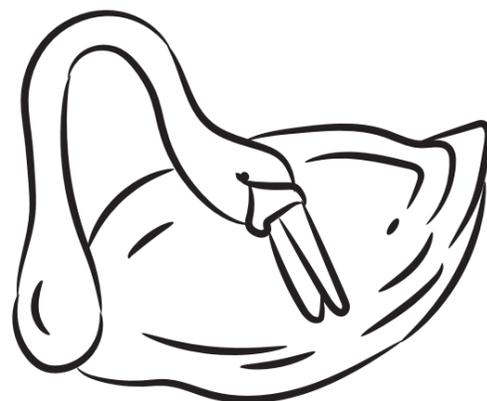
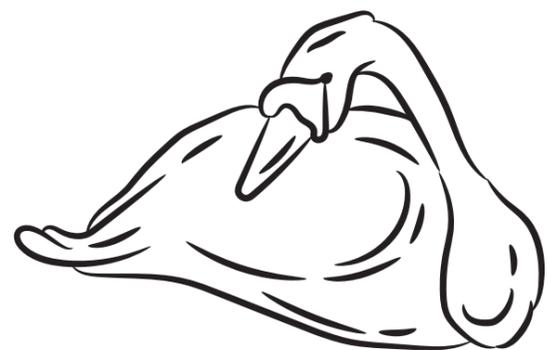
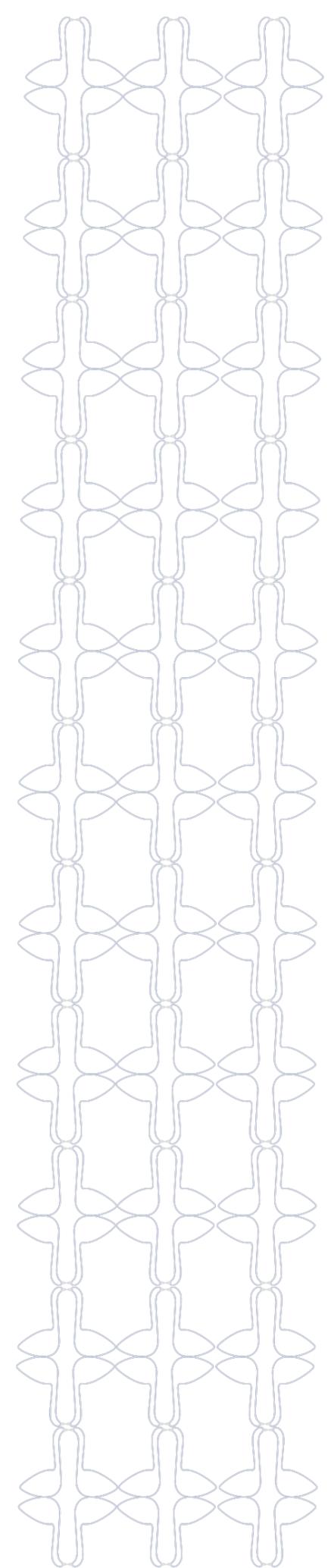
Swan Form Studies

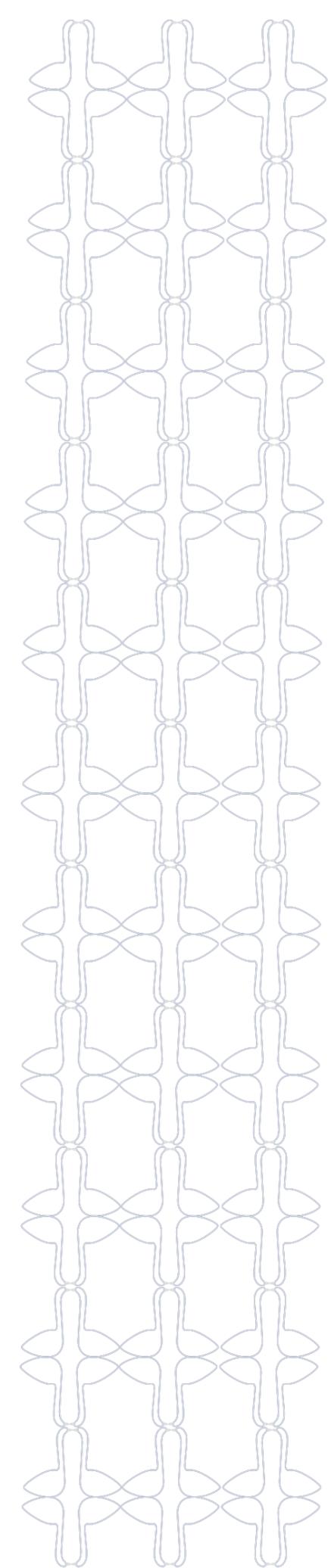
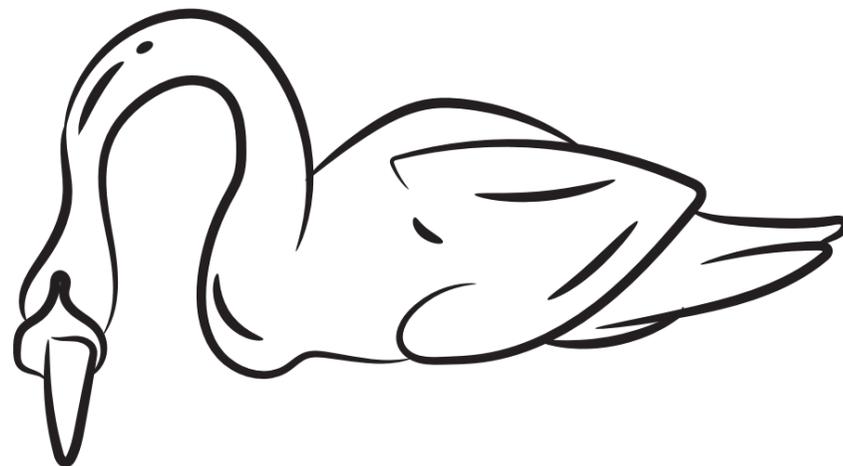
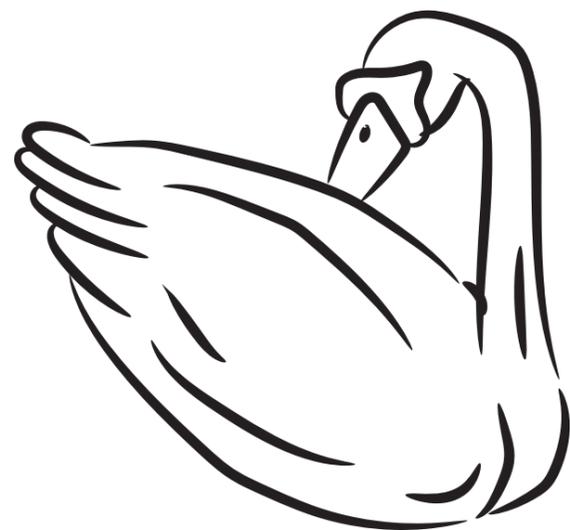
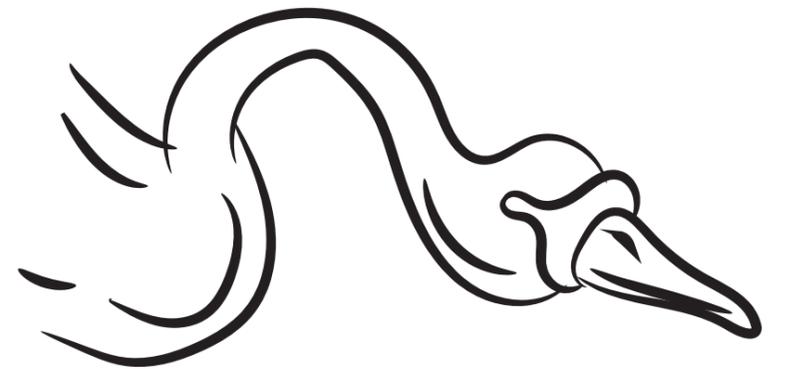
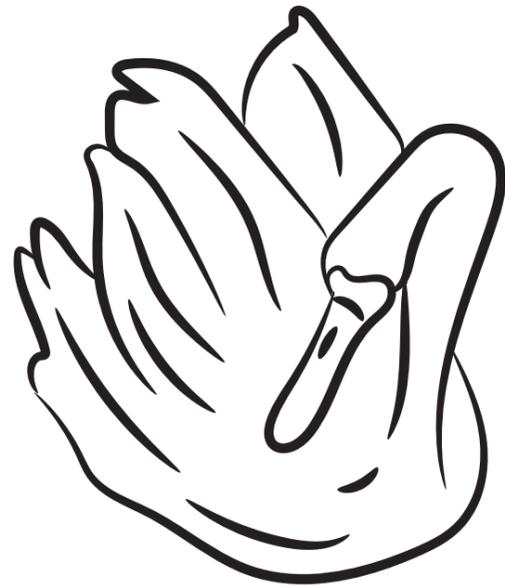
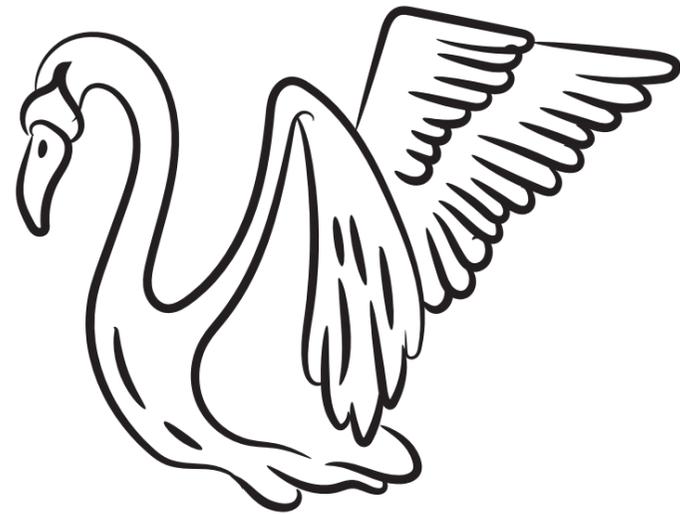
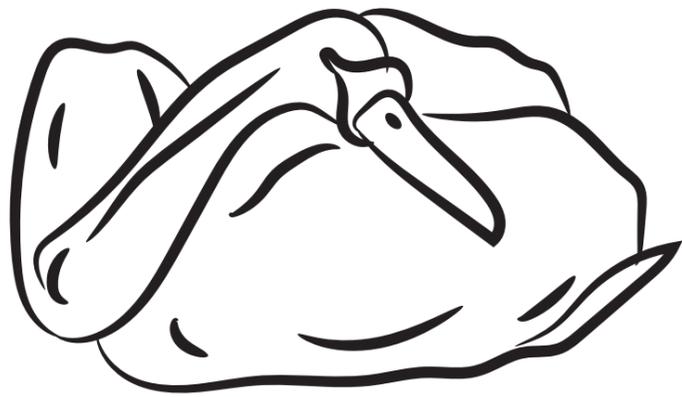
In initial phase the exploration started with some direct observation and anatomical study of swan's body language, posture, flight and various movements. This helped in learning the profile and attributes of swans.

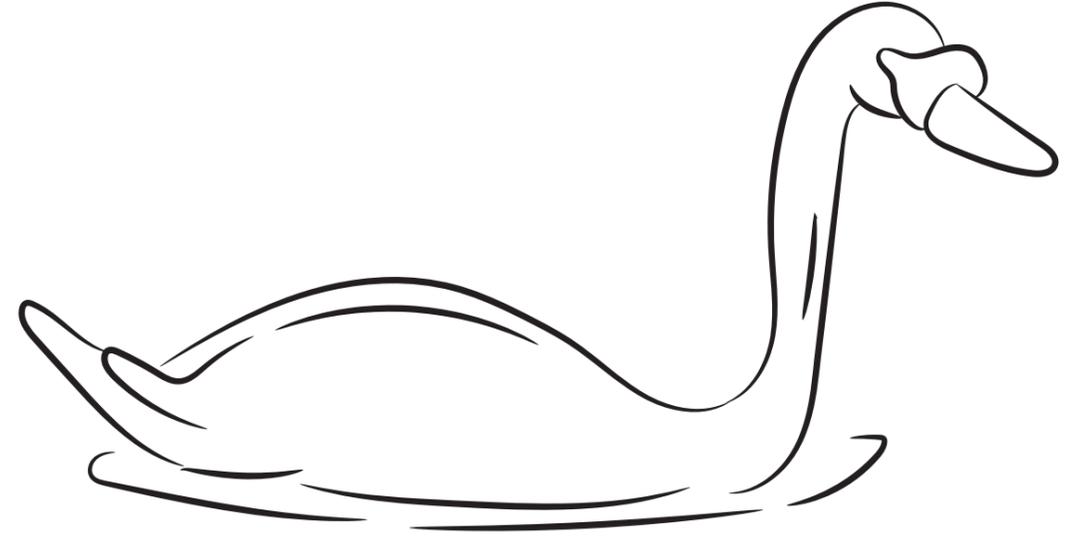
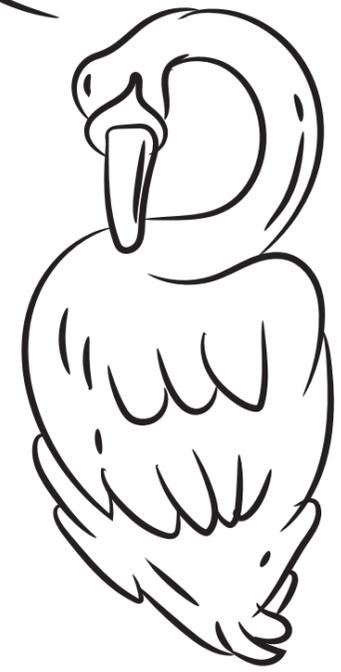
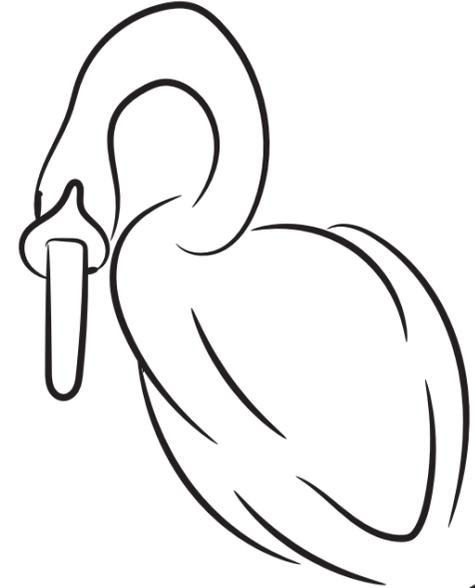
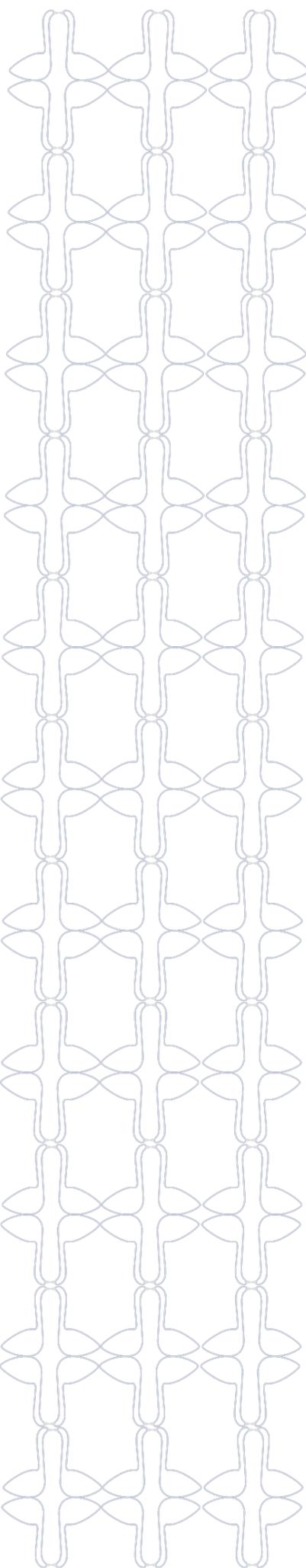


pic source: google



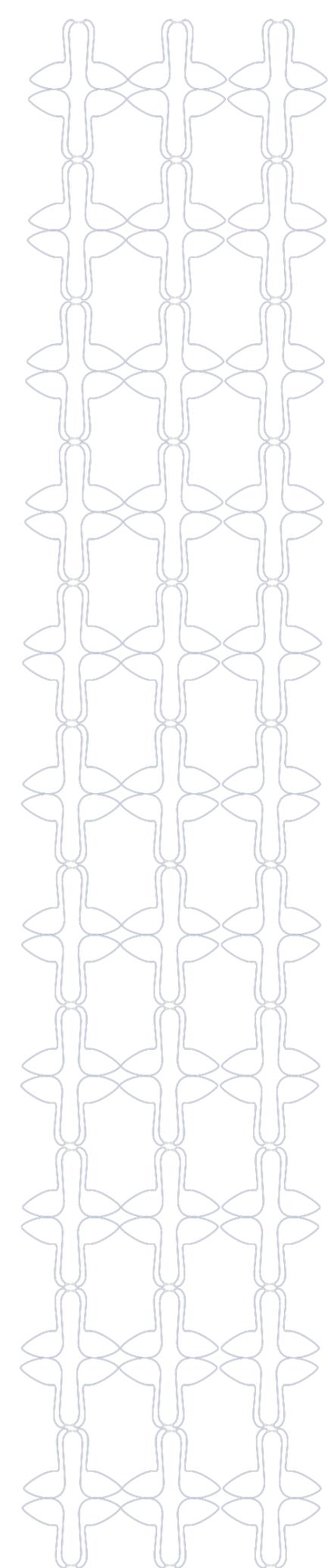
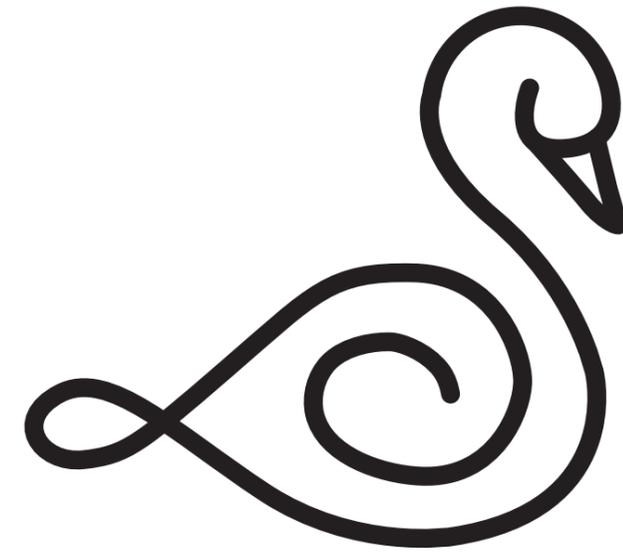


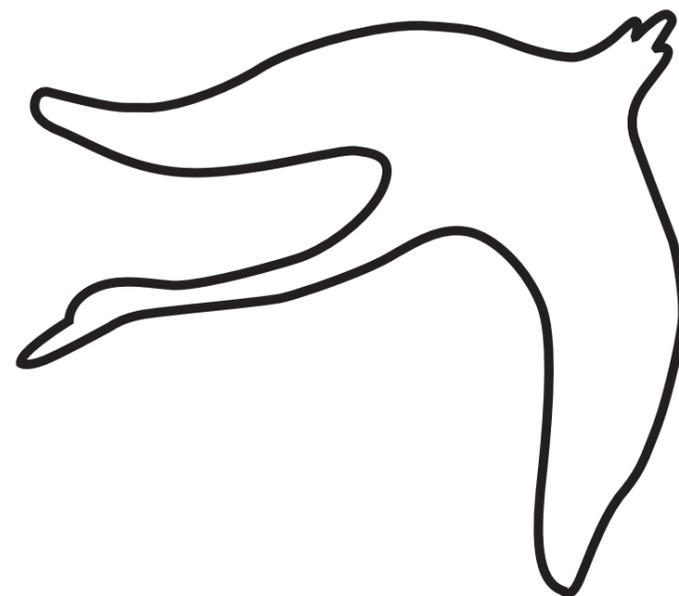
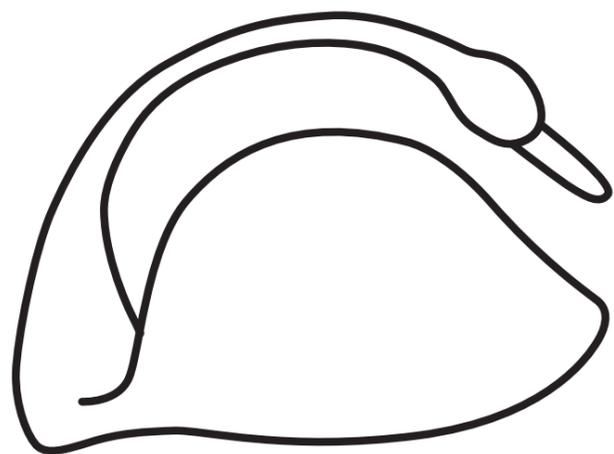
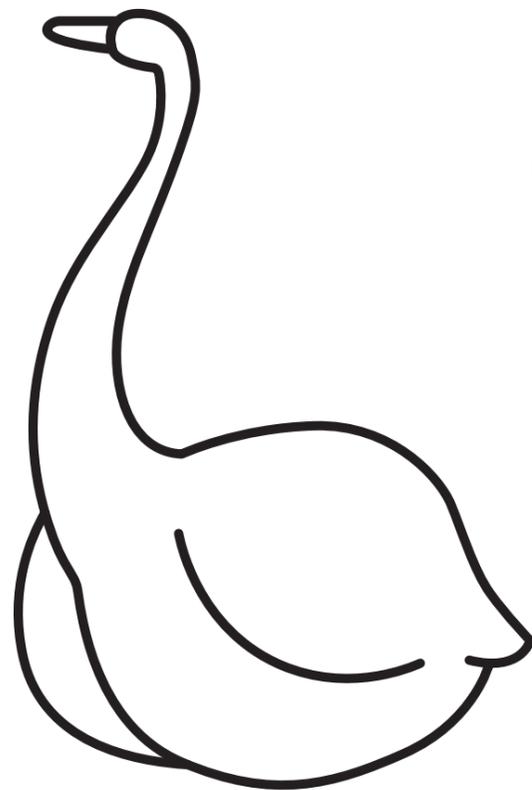
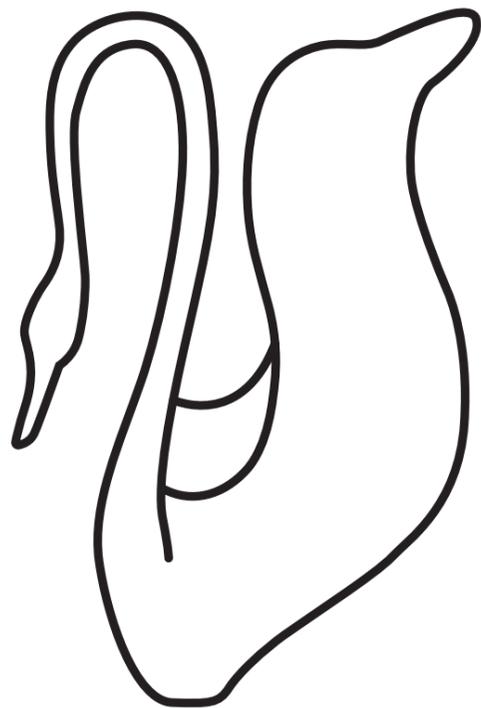
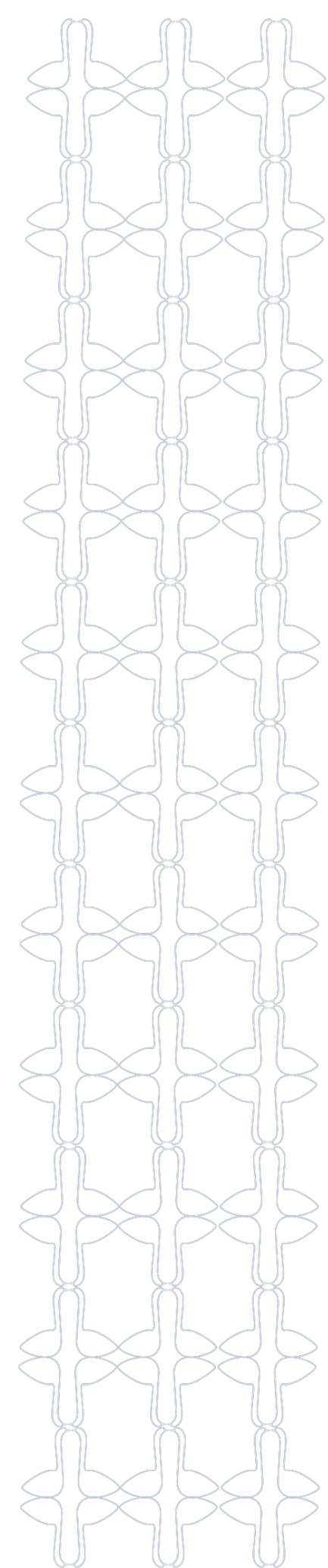


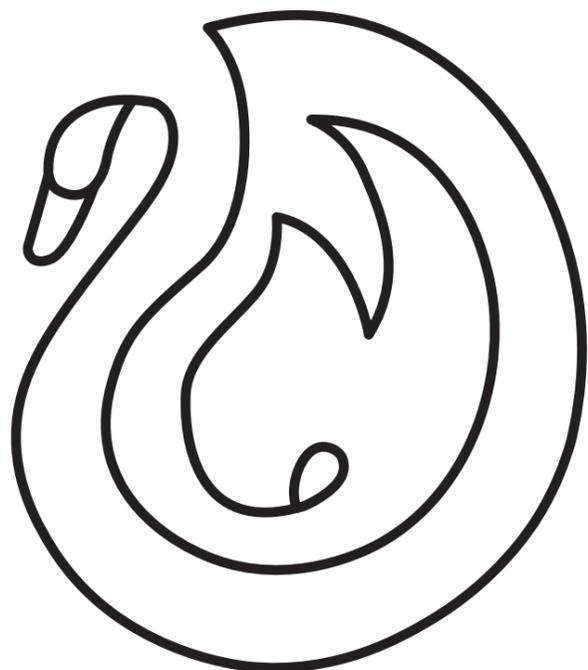
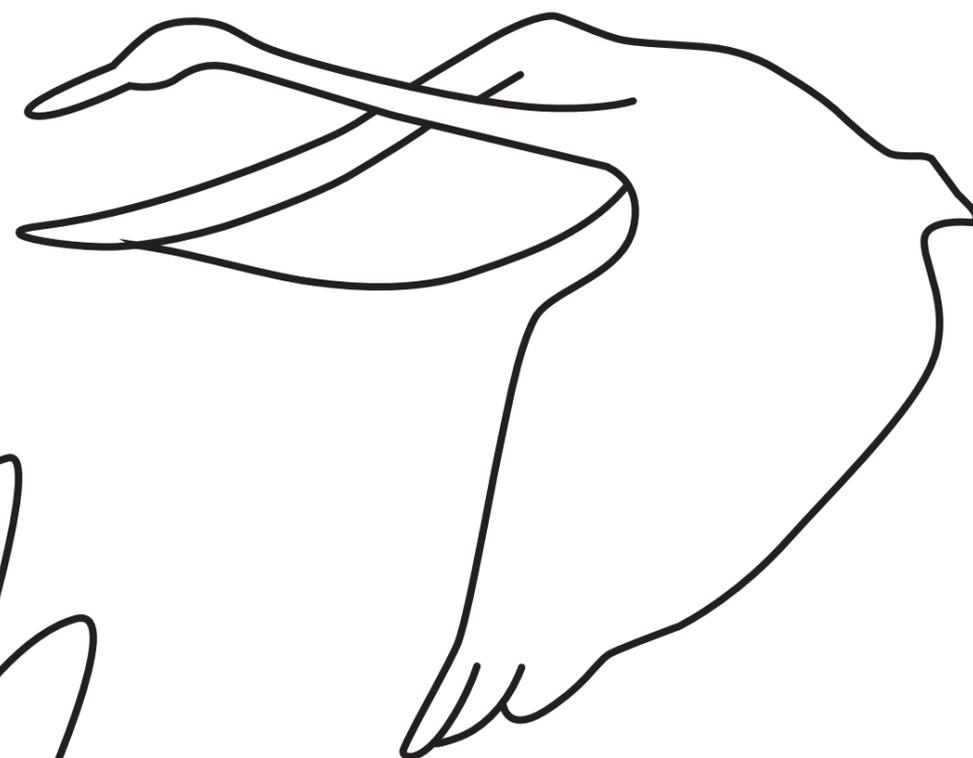
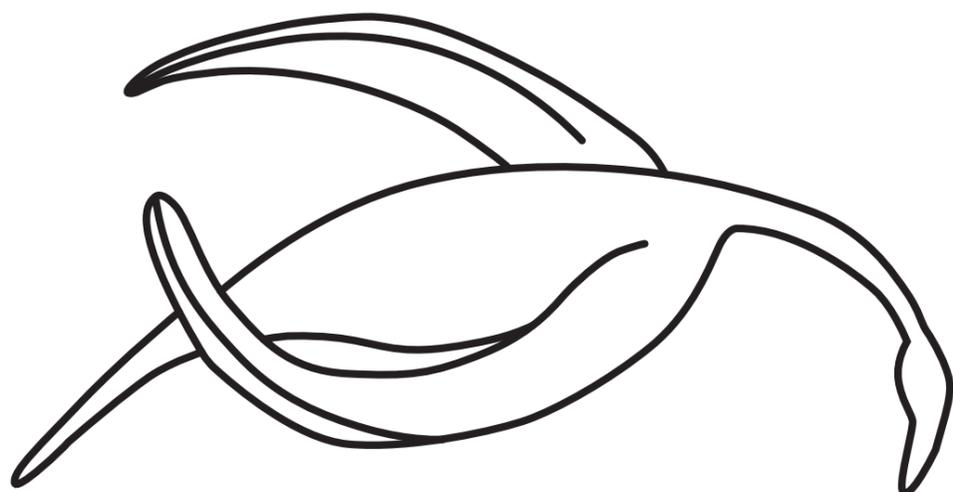
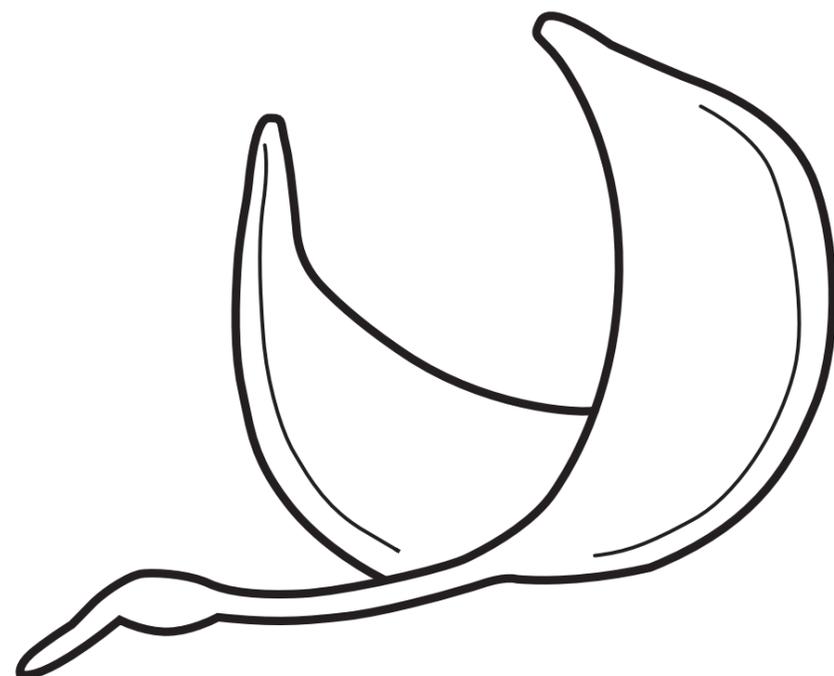
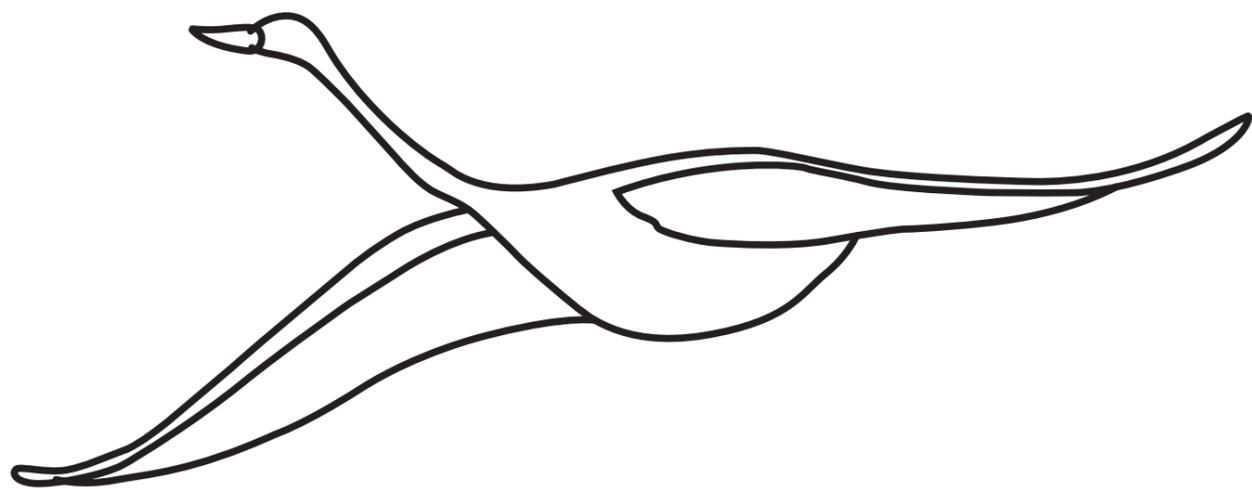
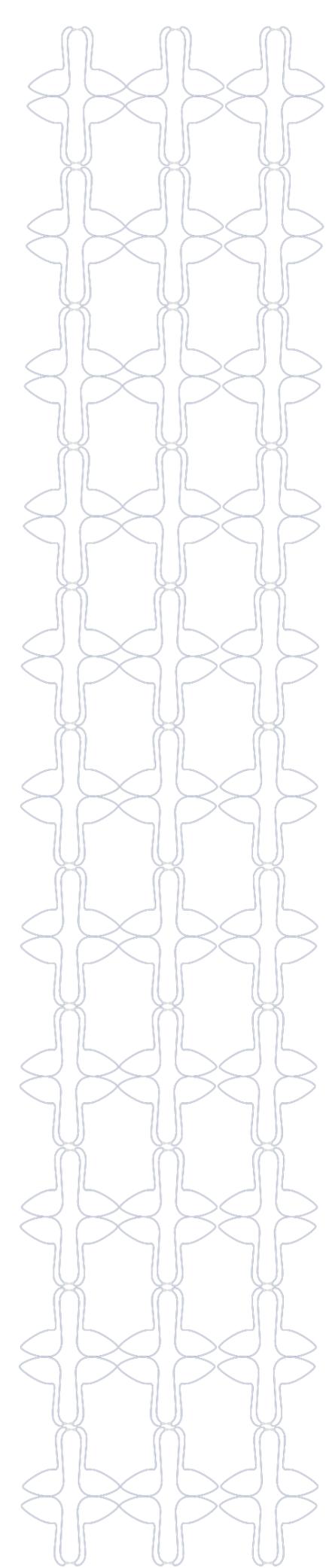


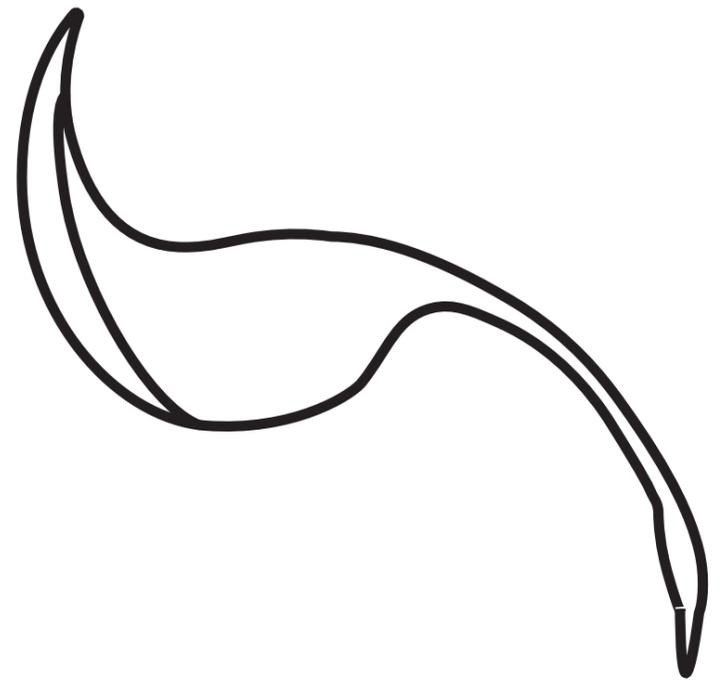
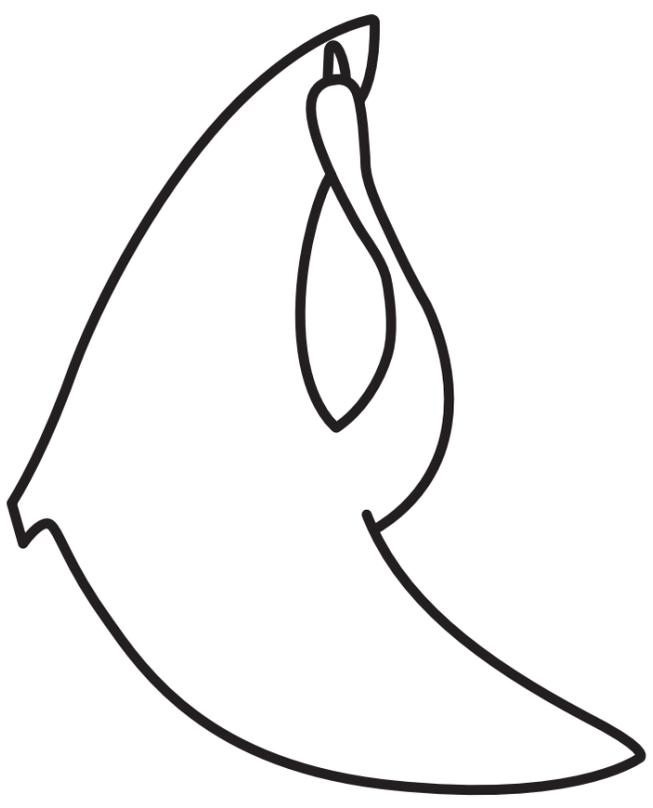
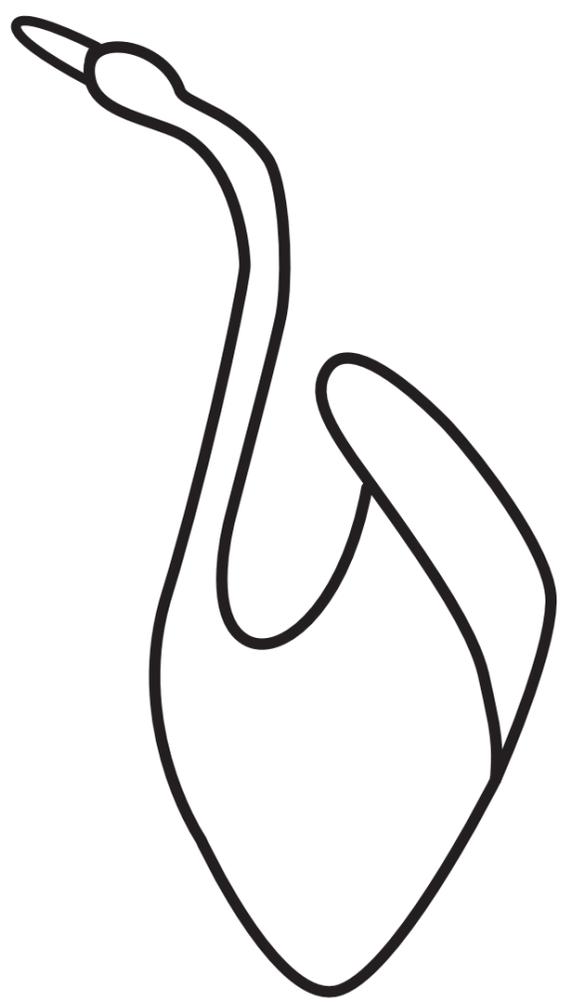
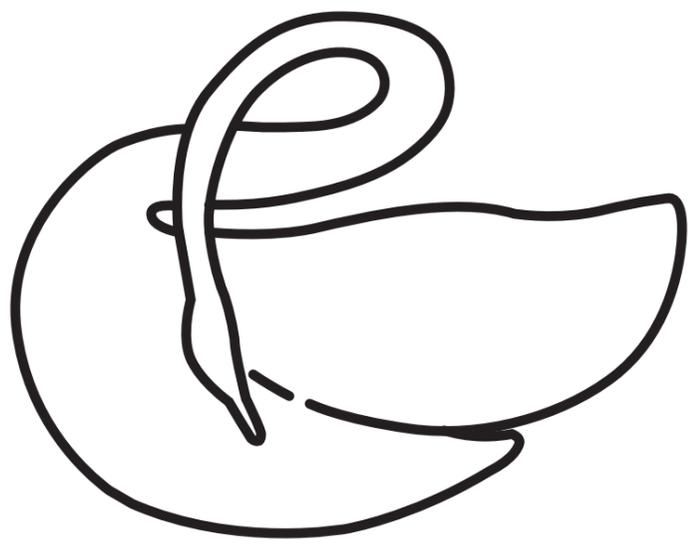
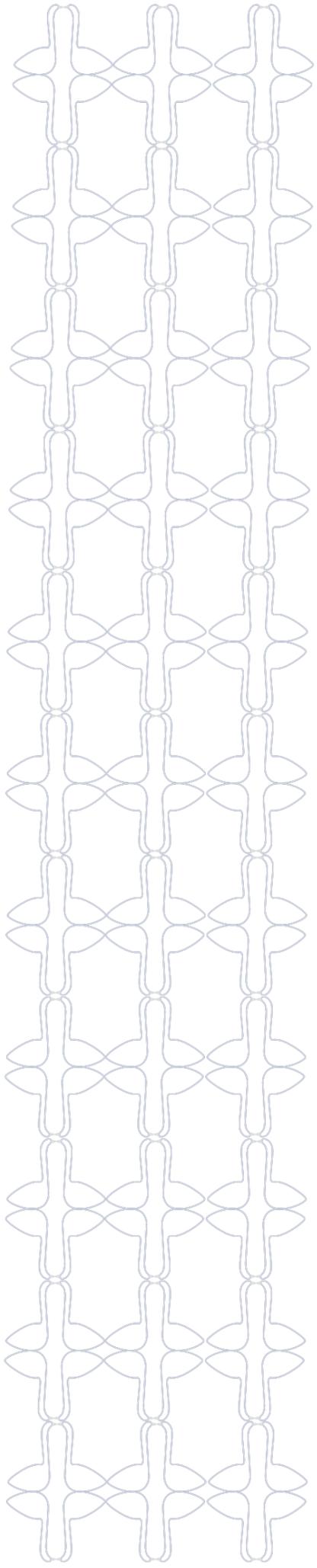
Stage 2: Signs Exploration

In this stage, we focused how to depict the form into icons. The shape of the object has to be retained by simplifying the form and keeping each icon minimal yet understandable.



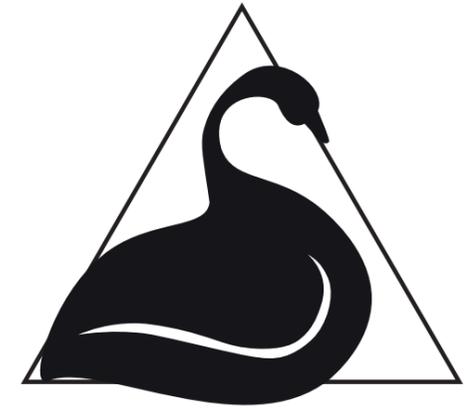


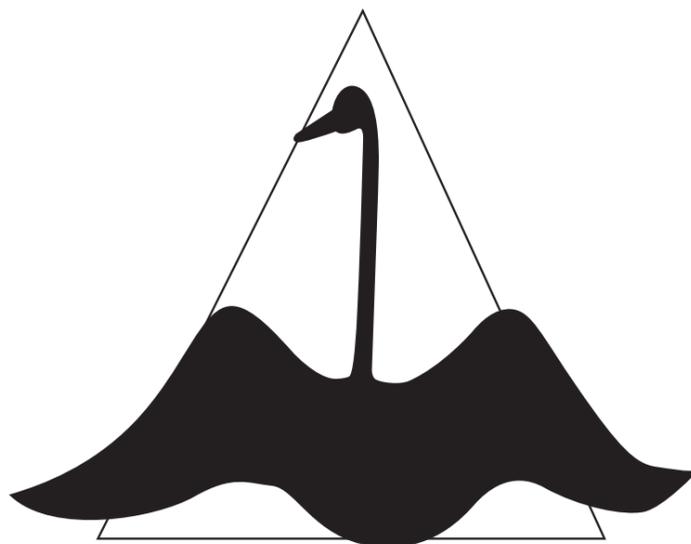
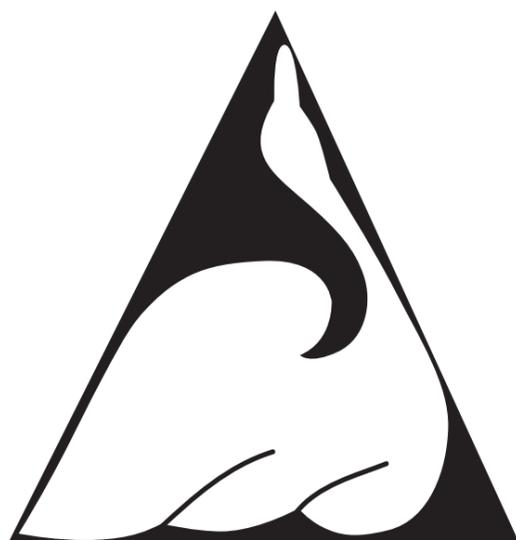
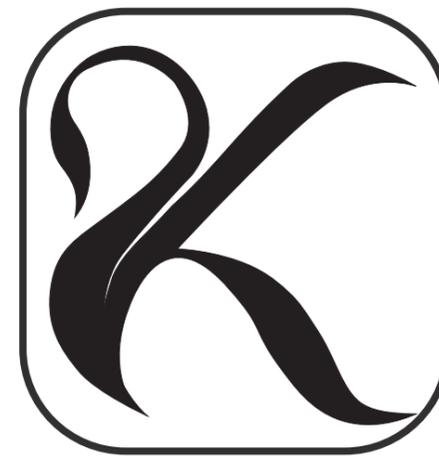
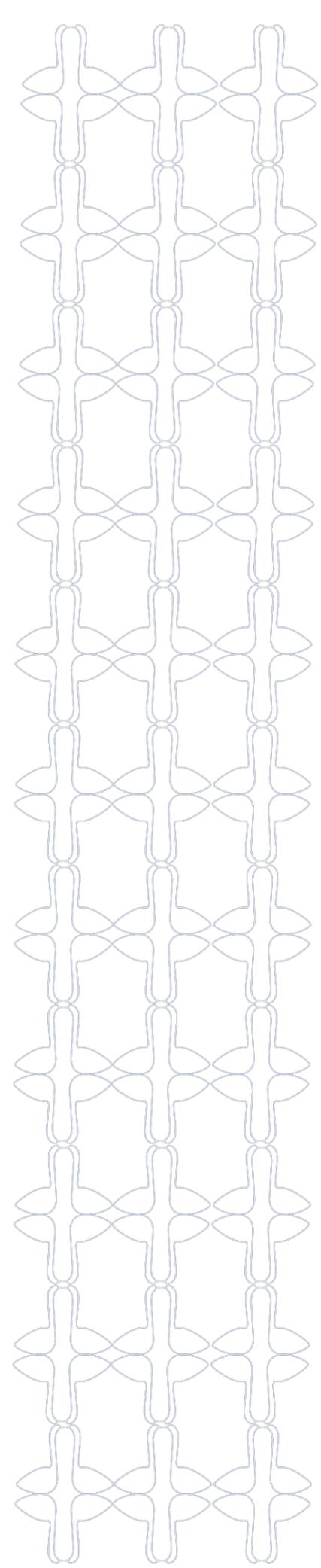




Stage 2: Signs Exploration (in shapes)

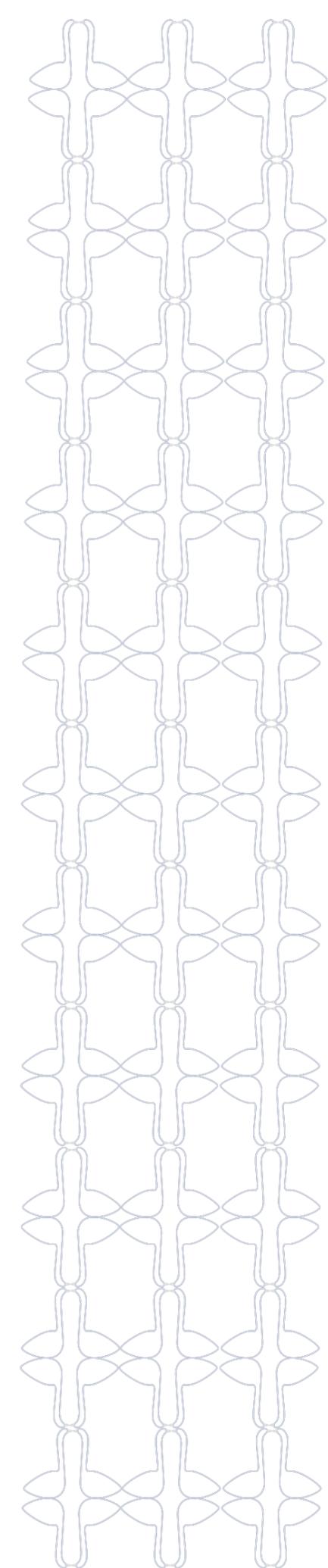
In the stage, while keeping the icons minimal the objective is to try fit the elements in geometric shapes and explore more possibilities.

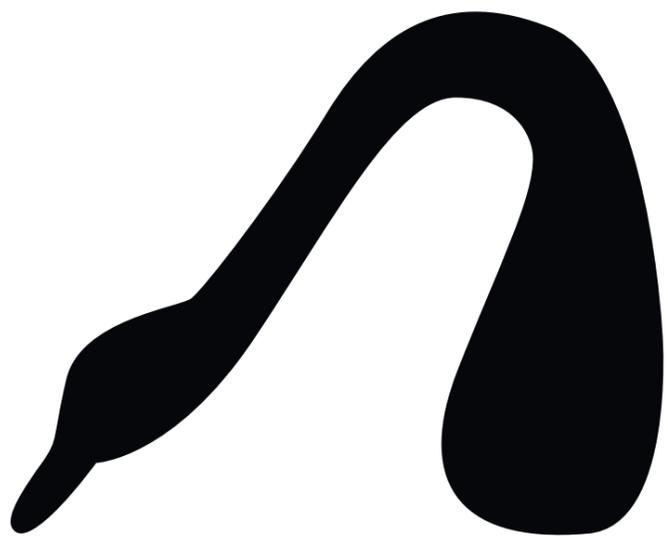
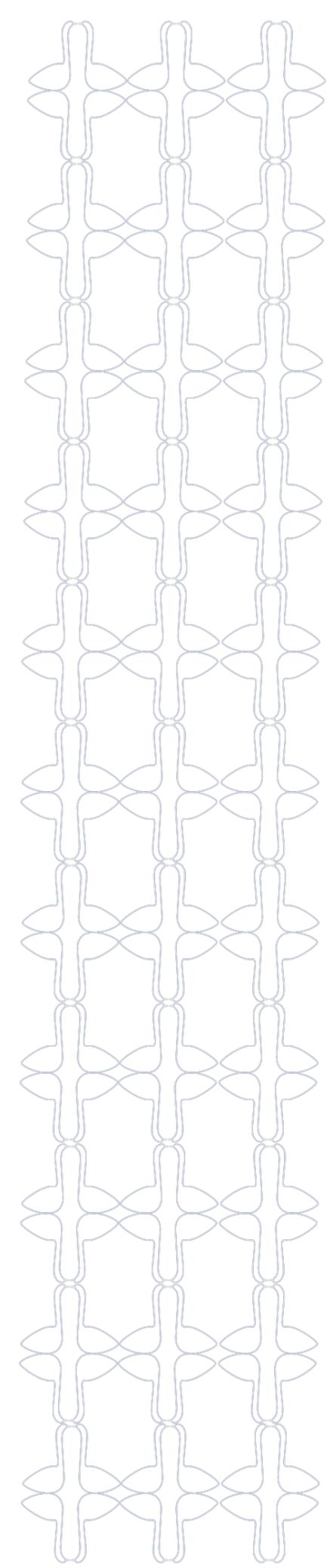


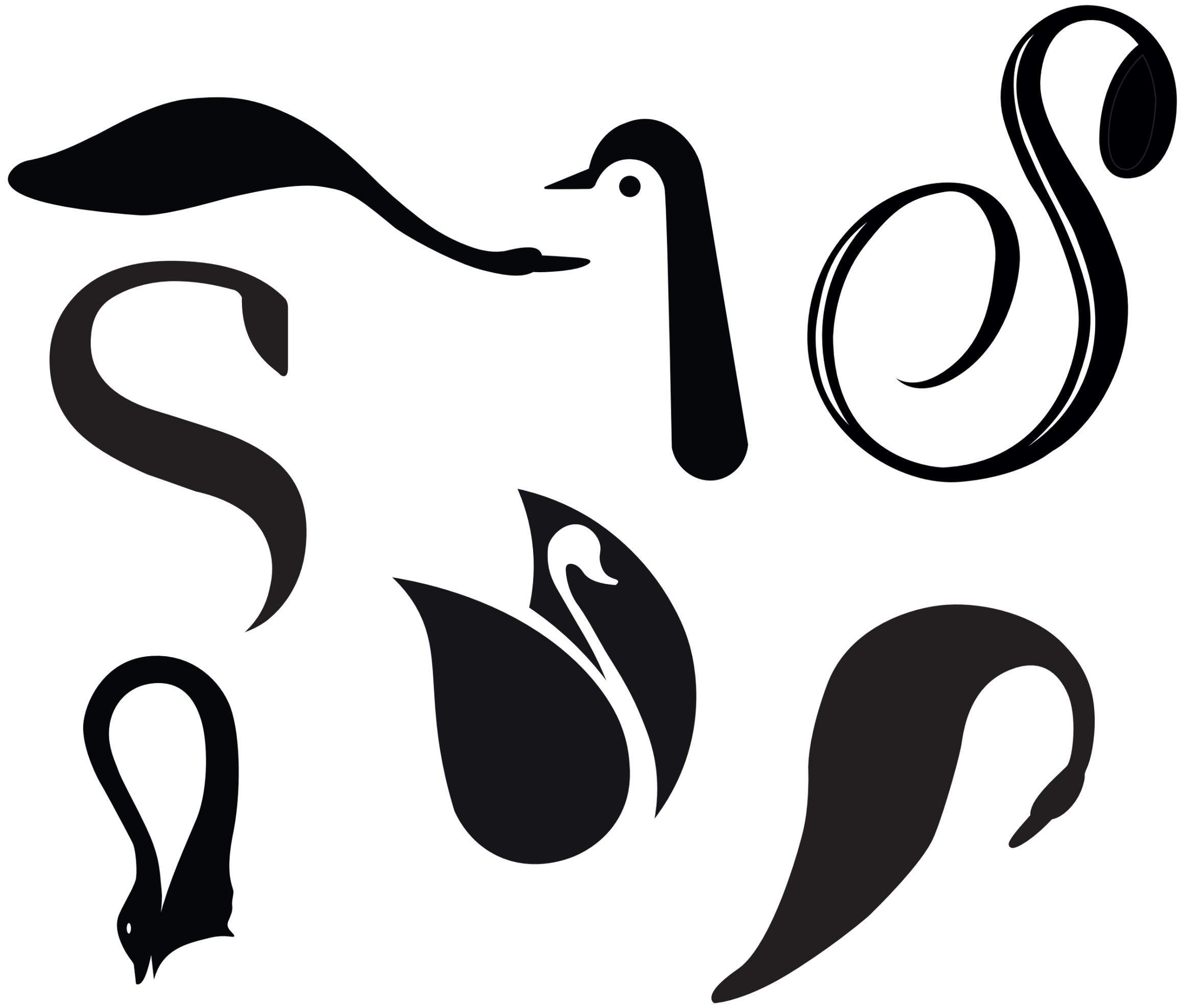


Stage 3: Index Exploration

In this stage, from the whole element we have to choose a particular part of it. for the case of swan i picked up the delicate posture of the swan “The Neck”. To explore the whole body by a particular part yet demystifying the whole element.







Stage 4: Symbolic Exploration

In the stage, we focused more on the symbolic side where we took two forms one a object that has existing shape , style and has it owns structure, and another one is an abstract object or an element, that do not have a particular shape.The abstract shape is more like a concept or idea.

- Lilly Flower as object form.
- Freedom as abstract form.

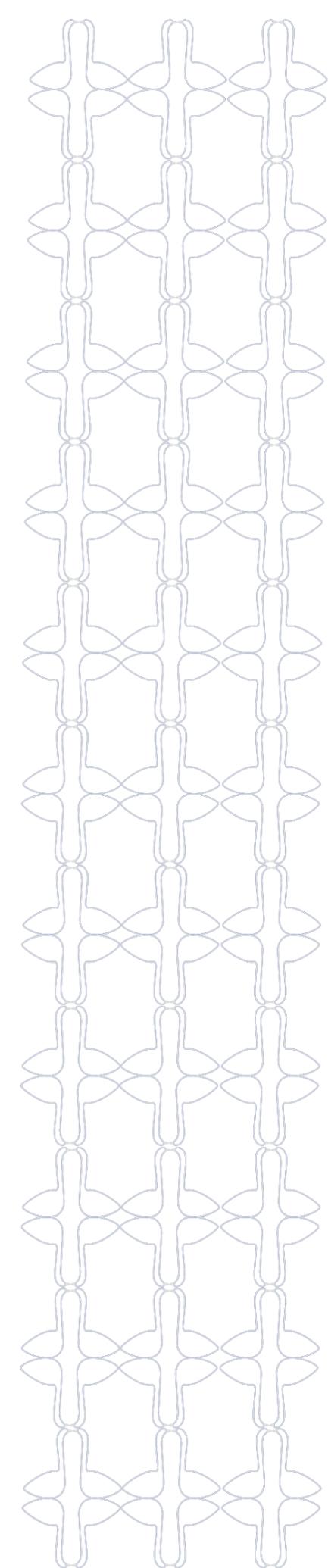
before the exploration a moodboard is created related to the object or keywords that can define the form.

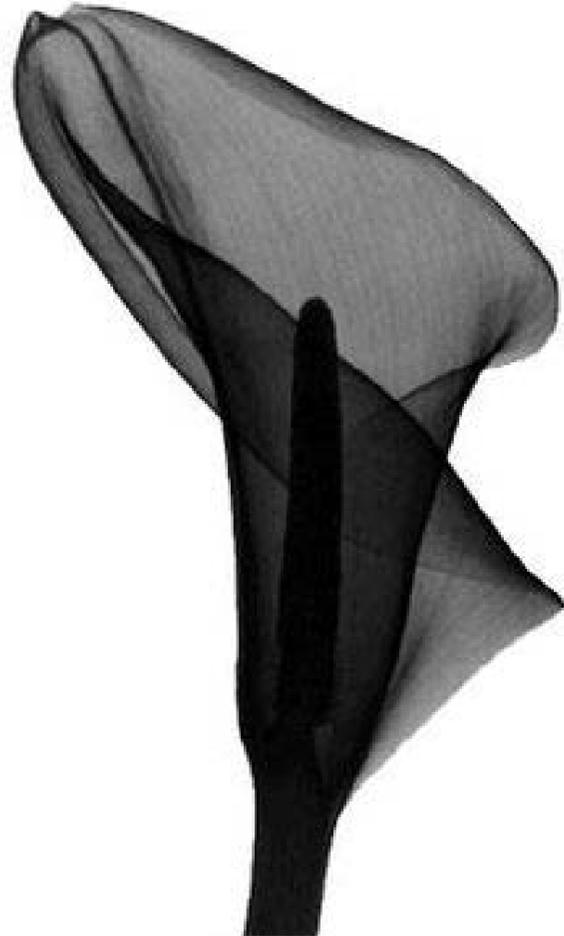
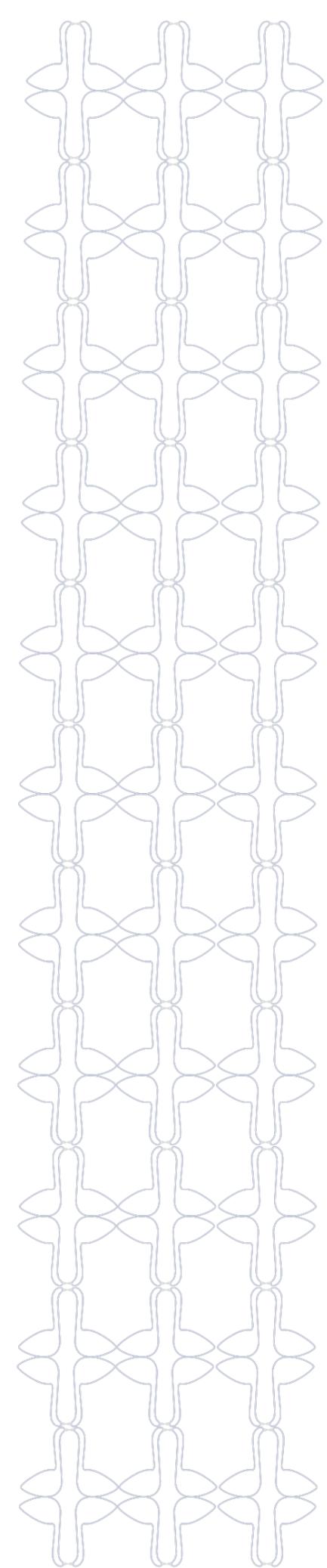


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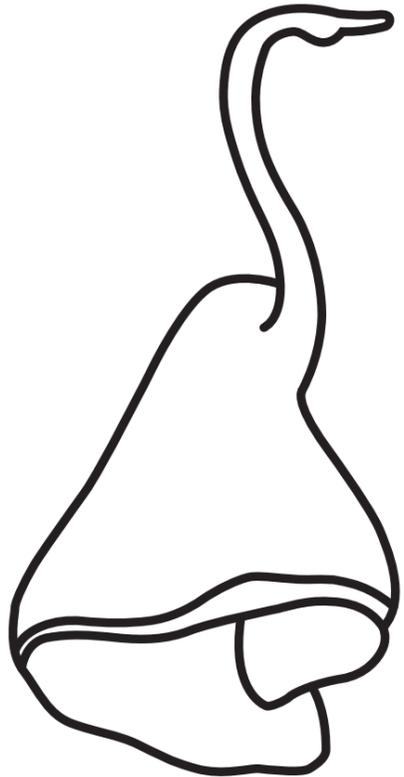
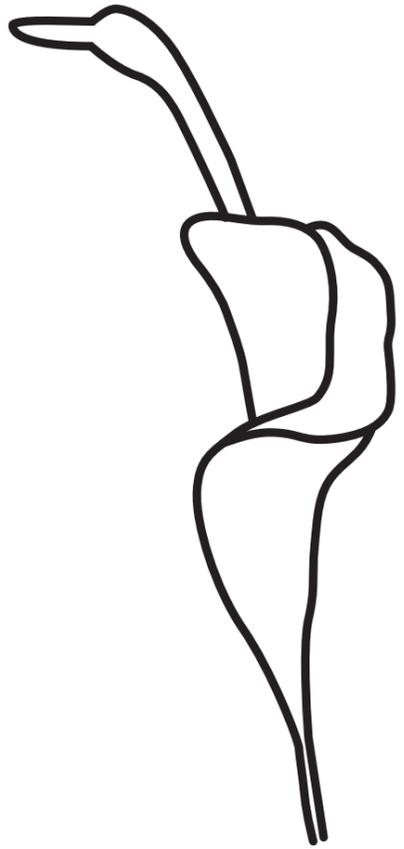
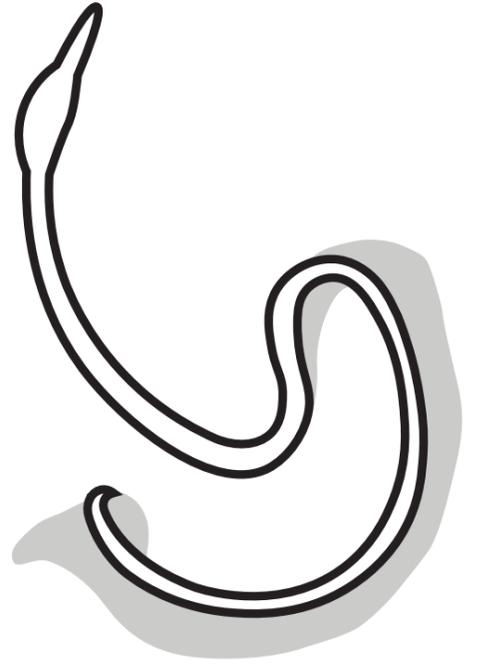
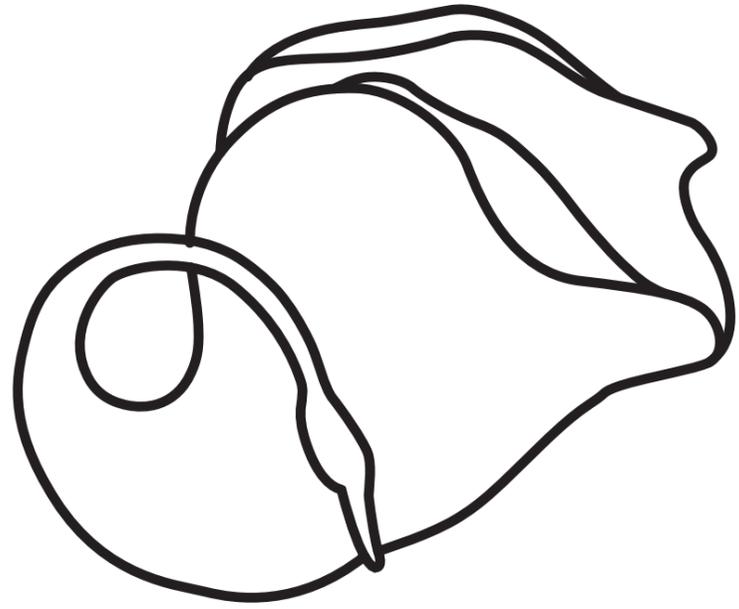
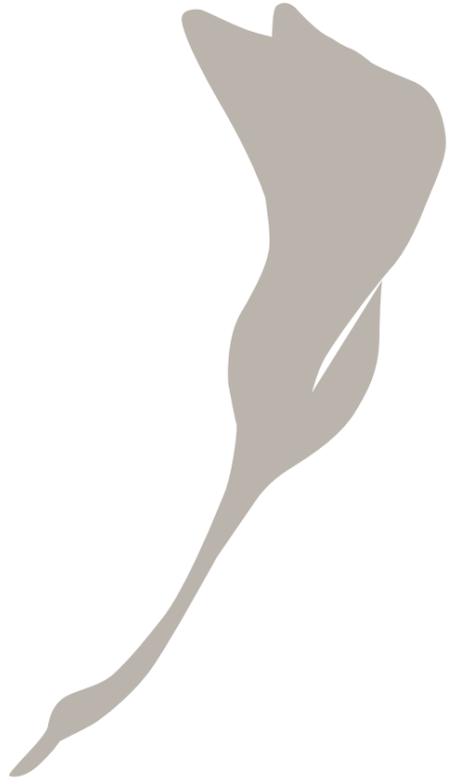
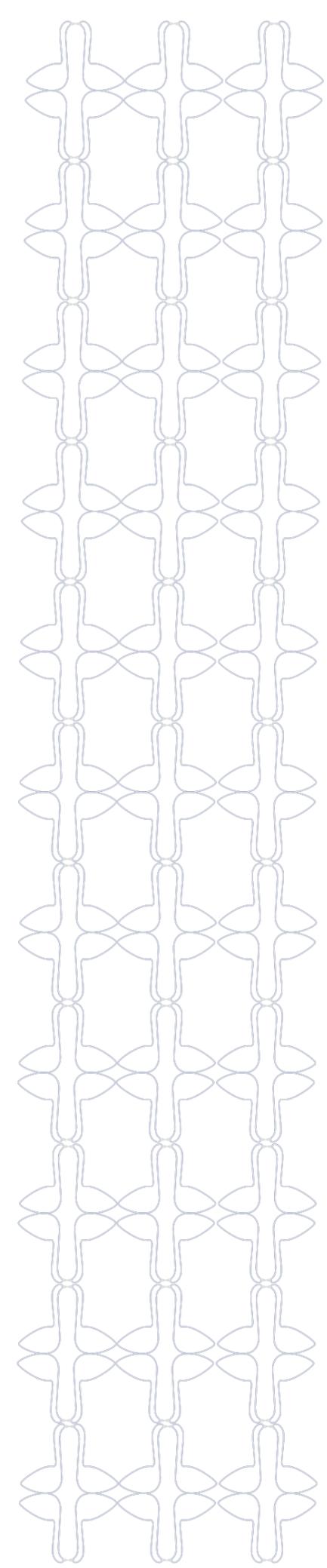


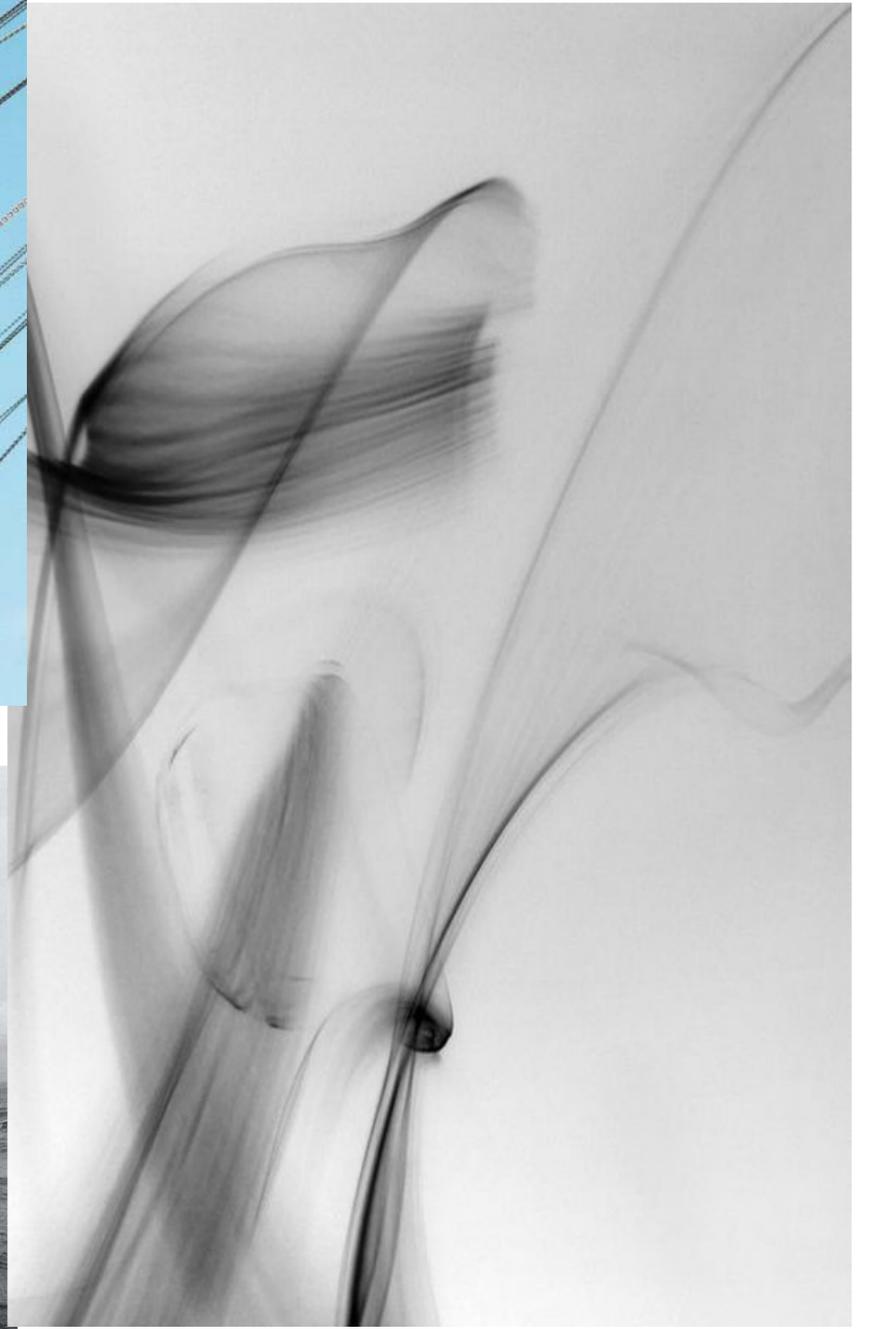
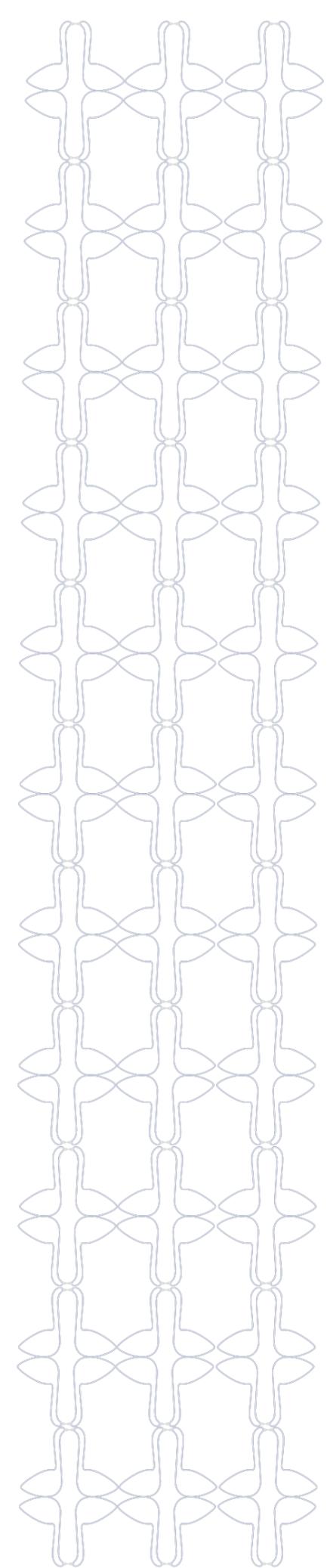
pic source: google



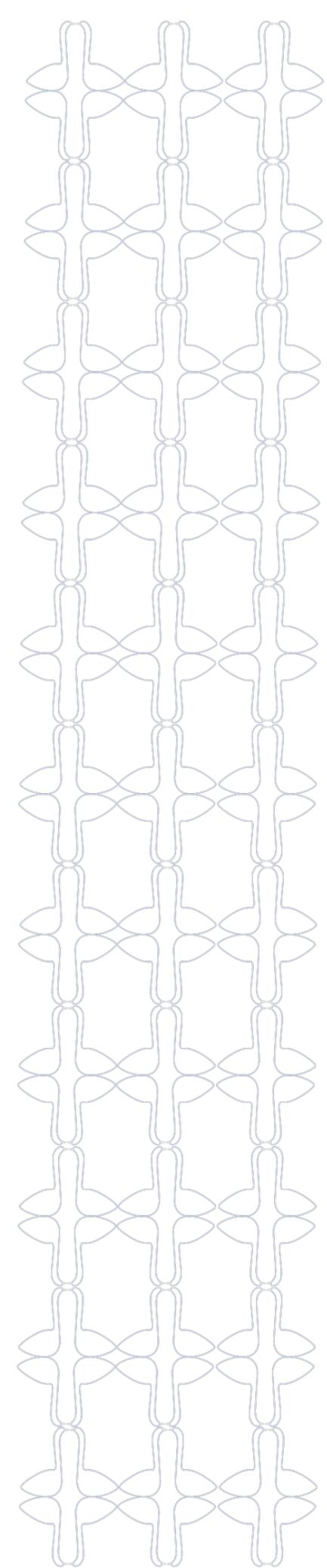


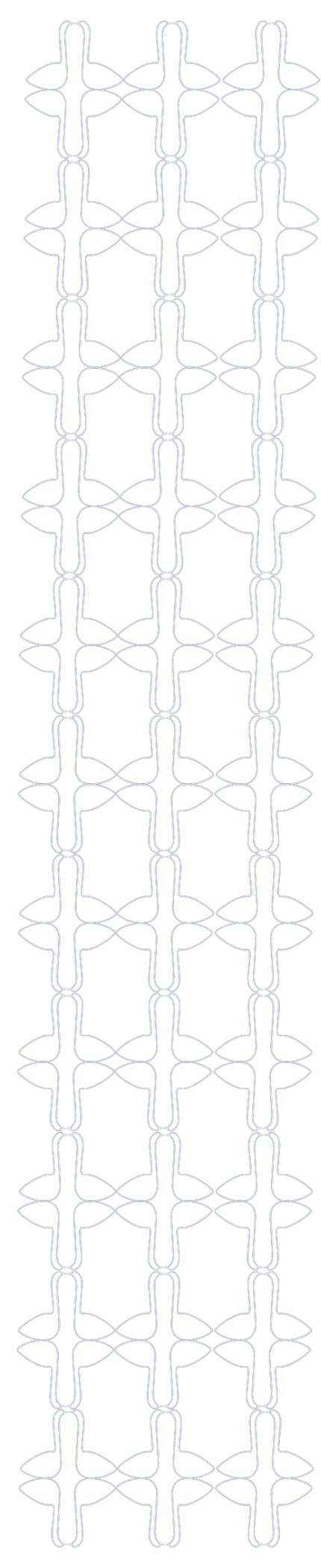
Moodboard For lillies





Moodboard For Freedom





Conclusion

Icons and symbols are every where around us. It helps visually communicate the meaning of concepts, words, object and sounds. It supplement us with information. It communicates globally and create a identification.

I choose “From Formless to Form” as my DES to understand this semiotic part which helps communicate effectively.

Further in this explorative study I got an opportunity to explore the process of making Icons like undstanding the elements’ background, study its physical form, its deeper and conceptual meaning., and its real nature.

And various design explorations done categorically over the time in a defined order which helped in understanding the technicalities, details, context and then constructively represent the idea.

This project gave me the broader idea of this small unit and its limitless possibilities to communicate in multiple ways