Origami â€“ an art of making sculptures using paper!

By Samantha Kirk

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All of us have at least one childhood memory of someone making a paper boat and floating them on pools of water during rainy season... In school, many of us would have made quite a lot of paper sculptures to play with our friends. Thus, many of us are accustomed to origami without even realizing it. So what is origami and where did it originate from? It is an art of paper folding which originated in Japan around the 17th century and gained popularity around the world in the 1900â€™s. The word in itself has the meaning and it is folding paper (â€œoriâ€• means folding and â€œgamiâ€• mean paper). Though it was just simple folding designs initially, it has developed in to one of the most interesting modern art forms. The main theme of this art is to turn a flat sheet of paper to sculpture by using folding and sculpting techniques. When gums and cuts are used, it is not considered origami. It is a totally different form of paper art known as kirigami.

One cannot point out the exact origination of origami, though Japan seems to be the place origami seems to have the most history, the art paper folding art has been in China, Germany, Italy among other countries. Since origami is paper folding, preserving it was very difficult in those days and there are not many origami art to give solid evidence on its origination. Chinese used to have a tradition of burning folded papers shaped in the form of dishes, boats and hats during the funerals. There is also evidence of possible origami around the European countries in the late 1400â€™s. Akira Yoshizawa is considered the father of origami as he is one of the key people who developed origami in to what it is today.

To attain a good and detailed origami, many techniques are being used. The most basic techniques are the mountain and valley folds. The mountain fold is a technique that looks like a mountain ridge when the paper is folded. A valley fold is a technique that looks like a river bottom when creased or when the paper is folded. They are the upside down version of the mountain fold. These techniques are the basic steps followed to make an origami. There are other techniques like pleats (consecutive mountain and valley folds), reverse folds, squash folds, sinks, etc. many techniques emerged as origami evolved.

There are not many tools used for origami. It is more of an art made using techniques rather than tools as such. Though it is just folding of a flat sheet of paper, a lot of work goes into making one and giving more life to an origami. Though traditional origami used to be made without the use of many tools, a couple of them can be used to give more character to an origami. For example, there is something called bone folder which can be used to make sharp and pointed creases. Tweezers are another handy tool which can be used for making minute folds. Scales or rulers can also be used to make creases. Though these tools donâ€™t have any exclusive use, they can be used for making an origami with more depth and a better shape. They can reduce the time taken for making an origami which otherwise takes a lot of time in making a complex origami.

There are so many websites available even on a cheap internet that teaches basic origami. Once the basics are learnt, then origami can be done creatively without much guidance from professional origami makers. There are also so many shows that show different tricks and techniques that can be used for origami.

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