

One Orinda Student's Passion for Paper

By Diane Claytor



Alex Meckes' origami sculptures fill up the family dining room table. Photos Diane Claytor

single flat sheet of paper into a finished sculpture using only folding and sculpting techniques. Meckes found that not only did he really like this art form, he was really good at it. His mom, Wendy Meckes, described her son as "always being very focused. He's like a builder and once he finds something that captures his interest, he sticks with it."

"I started out making very simple origami objects and then this happened," Meckes exclaimed as he pointed to a dining room table covered in a myriad of geometrical shapes in varying sizes and colors, or, as he called them, platonic solids. According to the precocious Meckes, "geometers have studied the mathematical beauty and symmetry of the platonic solids for thousands of years."

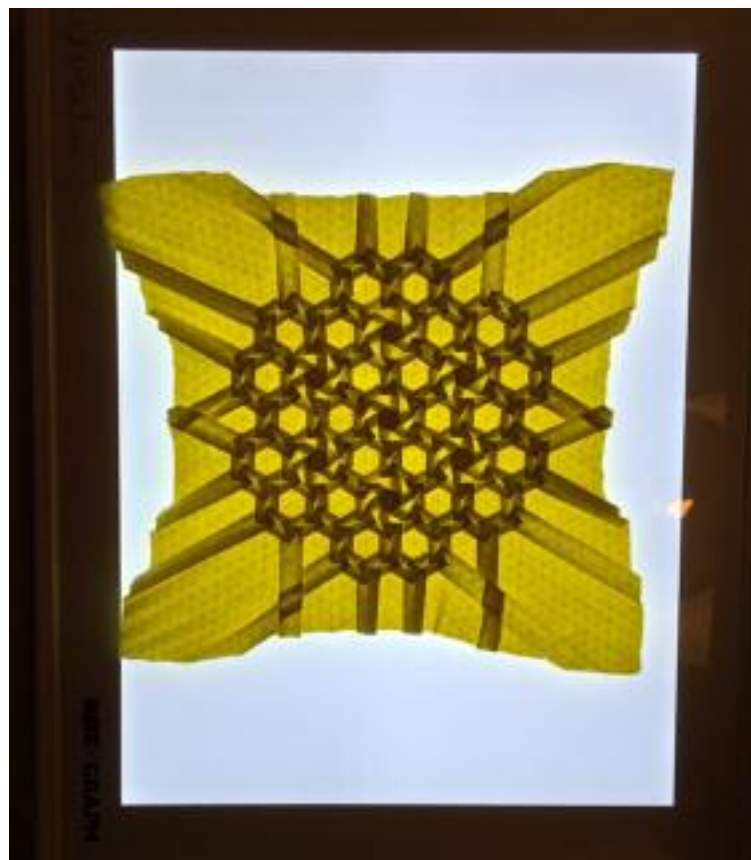
In addition to platonic solids, Meckes' makes tessellations (also called tilings) – shapes that are arranged side by side to produce a pattern with no gaps in between. An origami tessellation is made from one piece of paper that is folded over and over until it has a tessellated pattern. When Meckes begins folding his small sheet of paper, he typically has only a vague idea of what the finished pattern may look like. ... continued on page B2

Repeatedly folding small squares of paper hour after hour may not sound like a good time for most pre-teens. But for 12-year-old Alex Meckes, it is a great way to spend an afternoon.

A recent Nielsen study reported that middle school boys spend an average of 6.3 hours per week playing video games. While that may, indeed, be the case, it is doubtful that Meckes spends anywhere near that amount of time. Although he admits to liking video games, the Orinda Intermediate School seventh-grader doesn't have that many hours to spend in front of the computer; he is way too busy practicing his origami skills. And considering that his second Orinda Library origami exhibit closed at the end of December, his skills are obviously excellent.

Always an avid reader, Meckes made regular trips to local libraries. He remembered as a second grader walking around the Wagner Ranch School Library. "I was getting bored with the books I'd been reading. I wanted something different. I saw a book on origami and thought, 'cool, I'm going to take this home

and try it,'" he said. Origami is the art of paper folding. Its goal is to transform a



One of Alex Meckes' tessellations placed on a light board, showing all the different shapes and patterns that come from the art of origami.

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