

We have both studied this collection of adult Mosaic responses and note that the most striking characteristic of the whole collection is the high degree of similarity between the Mosaic responses of all the subjects. Certain elements seem to stand out. We list these below, together with brief comments on our understanding of their meaning of some of them.

[Example images referenced can be found at the end of this document.]

1. There is a total absence of abstract patterns, which in all other collections we know form the largest single category.
2. Perhaps most striking of all is the fact that common to every Mosaic in this collection is a unique style of handling the Mosaic pieces. This can best be described as “the weaving mode”. The clearest example of this in the collection is 6F. This process is described by Dr Metraux as the interlocking of the principles of symmetry and complementarity.

We see the “weaving mode” as being perseverative and non-adaptive and while accounting in part for the strength of the continuity of this culture, it may be an obstacle to finding new patterns of thinking which are necessary for a successful move into the modern world.

Besides this mode of handling the Mosaics, there are actual Mosaics designated as “weaving patterns”. The designs are often called “belem” or basket-weaving. Examples are 1M I & II, 8M I & II, 18M I. All the designs made by the women with the sole exception of 4F can be placed in this category

3. Nowhere in the collection are any human figures represented.
4. Movement as we understand it from Western collections of Mosaics does not appear at all in this collection. We will define movement here as being clear directional lines, i.e., outward-pointing movements, inward-pointing movements, conflicting directions of movement, or circular movement. These designs are all static.
5. A large number of designs are conceived of in linear terms. Examples: 1M I (either horizontally or vertically); 1M II, 2M (horizontally); 4M, 9M (vertically); 10M (diagonally).
6. Certain recurring representational subjects, e.g., the legendary crocodiles, are designed in identical ways. Examples: 19M and 21M I. Despite the different pieces being used and different colour organization, the crocodile is constructed with identical details in each of these two Mosaics, namely the two eyes, the nose, forefeet, back feet and tail.
7. There were design elements in individual Mosaics which were striking in their originality. These forms are very rarely encountered elsewhere, yet in this collection there were striking similarities from one design to another where these elements occur. Examples: 5M, 16M and 24M.

8. Hollow Centres and Central Columns: one or other of these two features occurs in many of the designs. Hollow centres occur in the “drawing material” responses listed at the end of paragraph 11. Central columns occur in 1F, 4F I & II, 7M, 12M, to some extent in 13M, in 17M I & II, 18M I & II, 21M II, 23M II and 25M. We feel that these two features are saying something quite important about the self-image and how the body is perceived and used by at least a portion of the sample represented in this collection.

9. Choice of colour for the first piece: Seventeen of the designs begin with a white first piece and seventeen begin with a red one. Three begin with blue, two each with black and yellow and one with green.

We wonder if white and red should perhaps be seen as equivalent – that is to say that they are both conceived of as brilliant, strong colours rather than white being conceived of, as is usual in the West, as the absence of colour. Such extensive use of white would, in Western cultures, have a significance which we feel is not applicable to these Mosaics.

(The totals of the first pieces used or the colours used for the first piece do not correspond with the total number of Mosaics because certain Mosaics have started in two different ways and two different shapes or colours are recorded as being the first piece.)

10. Use of colour. Although in individual Mosaics there are blocks of colour, throughout the collection as a whole the most striking way in which colour is used indicates that the maker was concerned more to juxtapose colours to. Produce contrast. We looked to see if there was any preference for any individual colour or group of colours and in particular to see if there was any difference in the way that the traditional colours, which are white, red, black, yellow, were used in contradistinction to the newer colours which are blue and to a lesser extent green. We were unable to find anything along these lines. Only one person (18M) uses colour symmetry combined with form symmetry. Something similar can be seen in 12M but it is unsuccessful.

11. Categorization. When we came to allocate the Mosaics into categories we found that the standard procedure outlined by Dr Lowenfeld in her book was not applicable. Instead we find that the Mosaics fall naturally into two categories only:

- a. Representational -a total of 34 Mosaics including the “belem” designs; and
- b. Child-like responses, e.g., pre-fundamentals, fundamentals and linear responses. Into this category come Mosaics 1M I, 2M, 3M I, 4M, 5M, 6M, 11M and 14M I.

We noted the much greater numbers of collective patterns than one would have expected in a Western collection of similar size.

We noted certain features within the large group of representational Mosaics:

- a) Many of them are unrecognizable as the object named by the maker. Some designs, e.g., 9M, 10M and 13M, approach the category described by Dr Lowenfeld as “delusional dissociated reactions”.
- b) We noted specifically the absence of any representations of means of transport. We would have expected something to do with boats and canoes to be represented by a river people, especially as items of transport figure largely in all our collections which contain representational Mosaics.
- c) Among the representational Mosaics there are four where the materials have been used in a linear way which is akin to the categorization “drawing material reaction”. These are Mosaics 15M, 20M II, 22M and 23M I.

General Interpretation

The points that we have considered above add up in our minds to a pattern we think we can now say something more about.

We have reflected on the absence of abstract patterns and considered the implications. Could it be that this culture does not promote abstract thought in the way Western culture does? These people do not seem to see objects as existing and relating to each other except in their own cultural terms. There is virtually no discovery of or exploitation of the geometric inter-relationships of the pieces. What little of this there is in the collection rarely exceeds a 4-year-old level. (e.g., 2F, 2F II, 5M, 11M, 14M) if they were done by members of a European culture. There is often a striking gap between the simplicity of the actual structure of the item in a Mosaic and the complexity of the significance it is given by the maker. We think that, like what happens in young children’s drawings, what is being represented is the “essence” of the object, but unlike children’s drawings, here the “essence” being represented is of a vastly more complex nature. For instance, we suspect that “fish” or “star” are not simply objects in the world of nature, but refer rather to the totemic significance of a fish or a star and all that this implies about the individual’s relation to himself, others and the natural universe as mediated by his culture.

The thumb-nail sketches attached to the protocols suggest that a considerable number of people in this sample have difficulty in heterosexual relationships, though they have ease in relationships with members of the same sex. We note Dr G. Bateson’s description of the difference in ethos between the sexes in the old traditional culture but we have no Mosaic evidence of this. We can, however, say more about the men than about the women.

We learn from Dr Bateson’s “Naven” that the traditional culture had no formal status-structure, which necessitated continual self-assertiveness by each man. He describes a male ethos which values two kinds of behaviour:

- a) The violently boastful and
- b) The discreetly erudite;

They both express a prodigious pride in the totemic ancestors of the clan, and pride in themselves.

We see the Mosaic evidence for this in the frequent occurrence of the central column and in the equally frequent occurrence of the “totemic names” in the designs (e.g., star, bird, fish, animals).

We link this with the absence of human figures and transport items, and the converse emphasis on totemic named objects, mythological figures and masks to suggest that for the men life is lived mainly with minimal reference to what we would call everyday reality. Instead, it is far more concerned with an inner reality which relates to the totemic system and in which melodramatic and often violent self-assertion is a feature.

We wonder if the repeated presence of the central column in the Mosaics signifies the importance of self-assertiveness and display, and also signifies a certain physical and mental rigidity.

Successful and Unsuccessful attempts to make the transition from traditional towards modern culture.

De Metraux drew our attention specifically to the presence in the collection of one man, the maker of Mosaic 12M, whom she recognized as being disturbed and whom the community also recognized as being disturbed. Dr Metraux has described this design as “the most balanced, best organized, and most original design by child or adult so far”. When one examines this Mosaic in detail one can see that he began by attempting to channel his originality through the traditional mode, i.e. what we have called “the weaving mode”. It is extremely difficult to create a representational design in this way because of the need to alternate symmetry and complementarity. We find it very difficult imaginatively to reconstruct the process for ourselves and to understand how we ourselves would ever be able to achieve a representational design through this mode.

However, he has successfully utilized this mode up to move no.25. After that the principle breaks down and the last moves include the two feet of the heron which are steps 26, 27, 28 and 29. After that he has to return to the red square (no. 30) at the bottom of the design to close the gap. When one analyses the shape-and-colour symmetry of this design one can see that he is mixed between attempting to do Western-type colour-and-shape symmetry and latmul-type symmetry-complementarity interlocking. The process breaks down at move no. 18 and after that he seems to lose control of the process, both in terms of shape, colour and “weaving mode” organization and it may in part explain some of the aberrant behaviour for which he is noted. The next person is the one who made Mosaics 23M I and 23M II. He is described by Dr Metraux as the most highly-educated of the adult sample, and the one who speaks good English which he prefers to conversing in pidgin English. He has also successfully made some transition towards the technological society. Like the maker of Mosaic 12M he is also in his mid-twenties. His first Mosaic (23M I) is a very successful representation of a house.

It is large and covers virtually the entire area of the tray. However we notice certain very specific features about it. The first and most striking one is that the central column is here, but instead of being made out of pieces it is a white space in the design. The house itself is almost a “drawing response” because the pieces are used to outline hollow spaces. The roof is really quite precarious. The house is presented as being on stilts (which is how houses are in this village), white equilateral triangles being used for them. If this were a real house on such stilts, it would be extremely precarious. We feel that the lack of security of the whole house is saying something quite specific – that the foundations of this structure are just not firm. We read this as meaning that his successful adaptation to Western modes is not firmly based on his traditional way of thinking and apprehending the world. Though this young man has made an apparently successful transition to more modern ways, we would feel that he is somewhat at risk.

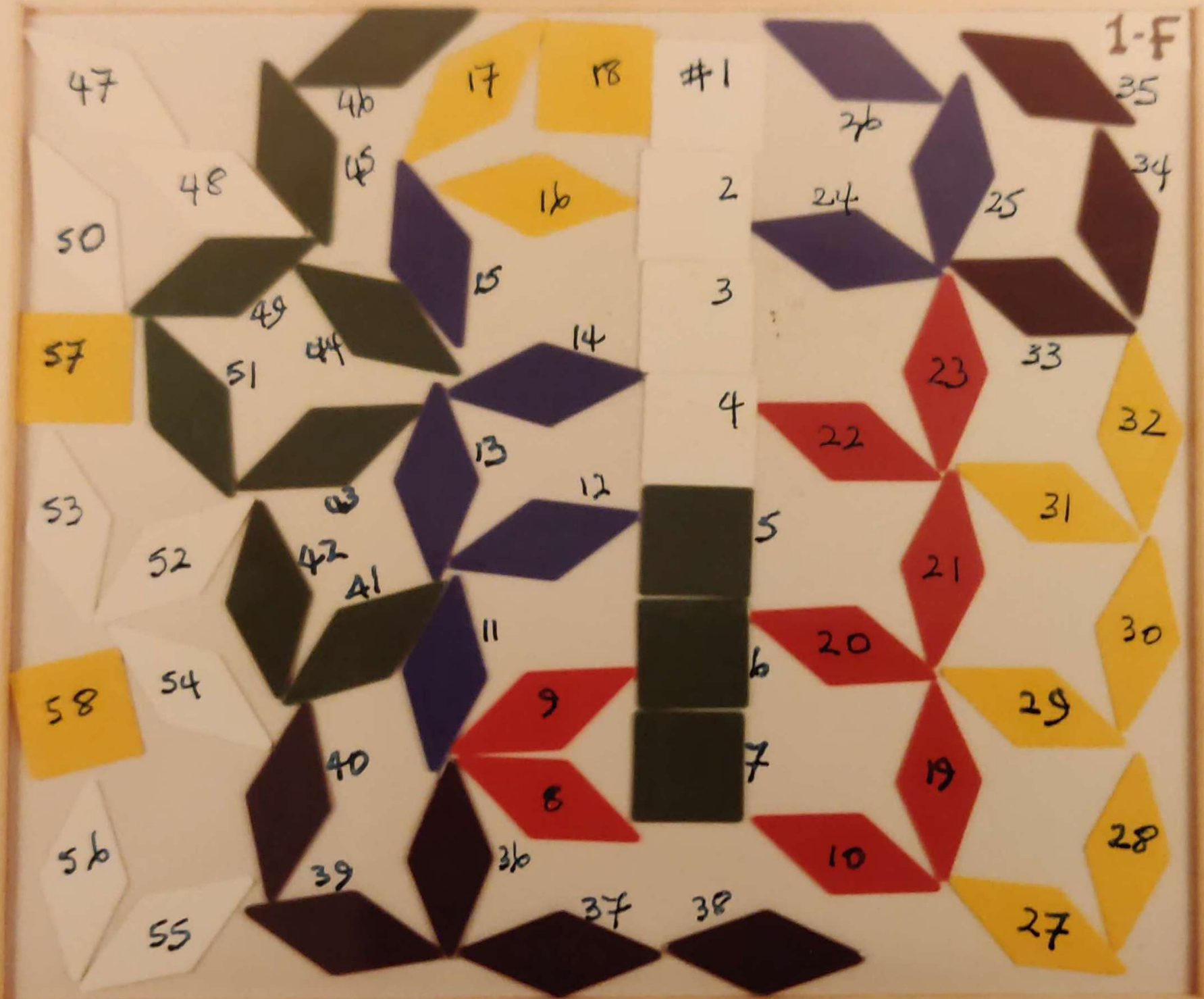
By way of cross-referencing we would like to draw your attention to the two Mosaics made by the subject 4F, in particular to the second Mosaic which is a very similar structure to Mosaic 23M II, and also stands on a white base. She has many other similarities with the young man, No. 23M, in that she is identified as being very much in trouble in her attempts to use her midwifery skills in this community, and is described as being a generally intrusive, aggressive, rather difficult person for anybody to deal with.

The third person in this group is subject 14M, who is described as a very successful artist who is selling his work extensively abroad and commanding very good prices for it. It is his second Mosaic that we wish to comment on. From what we have been able so far to understand about the people in this village there is a considerable tradition of engaging in various kinds of what we would broadly call artistic endeavour. Carving is widespread among the men. Our reading of this is that it is very culture-bound and the forms are traditional and prescribed by tradition. There is little individual creativity and variability, though obviously some must exist. Therefore, we feel that this particular subject is perhaps better described as a craftsman than an artist, since for us the word “artist” has strong connotations of individuality and originality, both of which traits we feel are underdeveloped in this culture; it seems to us that these people have a limited and culturally-determined repertoire of responses which leaves little room for individual expression. We see this man also as somebody who is making a successful integration of old and new, but within a rather limited framework. We may well be doing him an injustice by calling him a craftsman rather than an artist since he is described as understanding the nature of the artistic process better than most of the other subjects of this study.

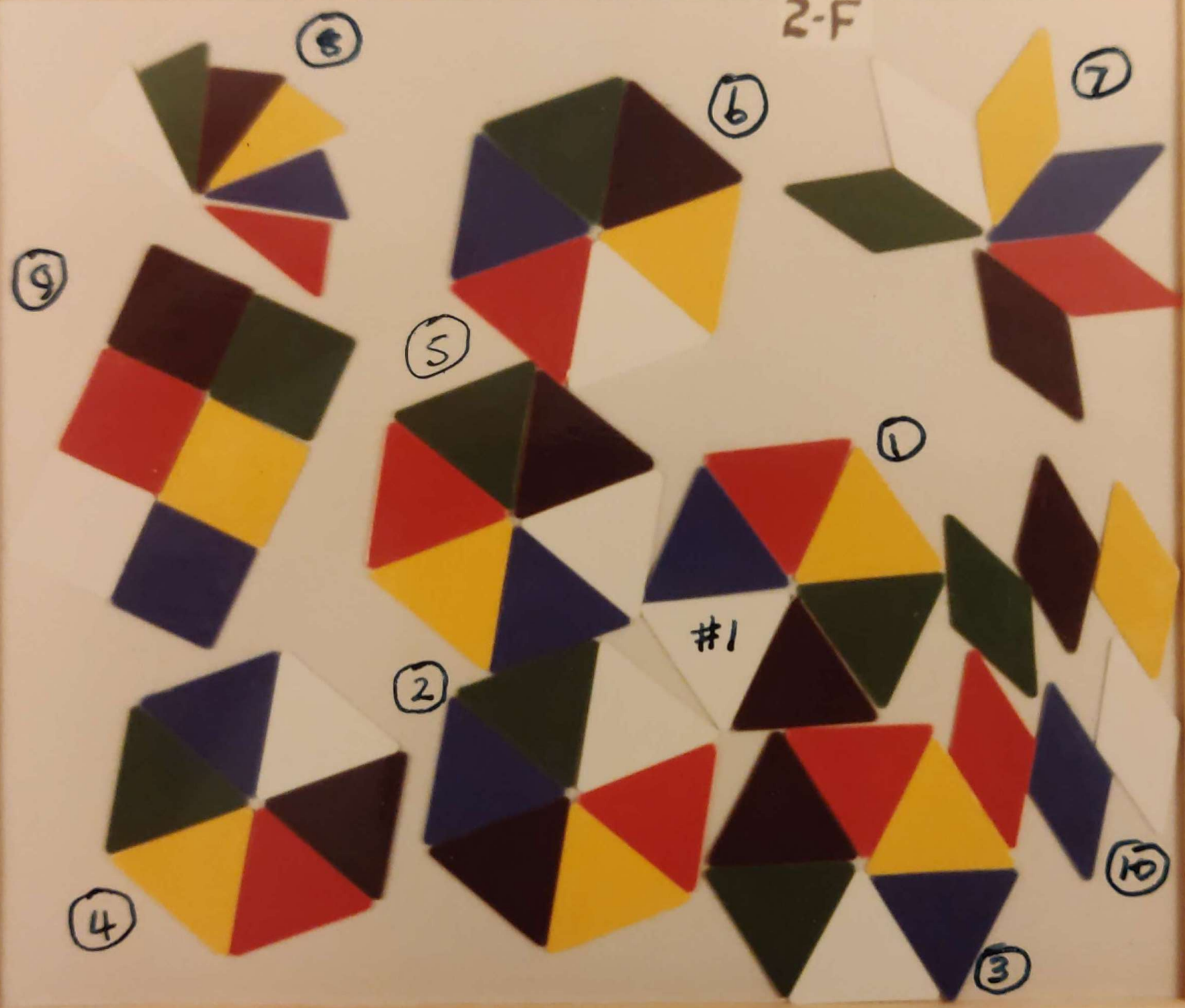
What we notice is that he seems to be the kind of person who can spot the advantages of another way of working and adapt towards it. There is no internal evidence in the Mosaic to suggest that he is genuinely original and creative. Thus it is that we think that he has made a limited, but successful, transition from the traditional world towards the modern, and it is because he is so firmly based within his own culture that he is able to do this.

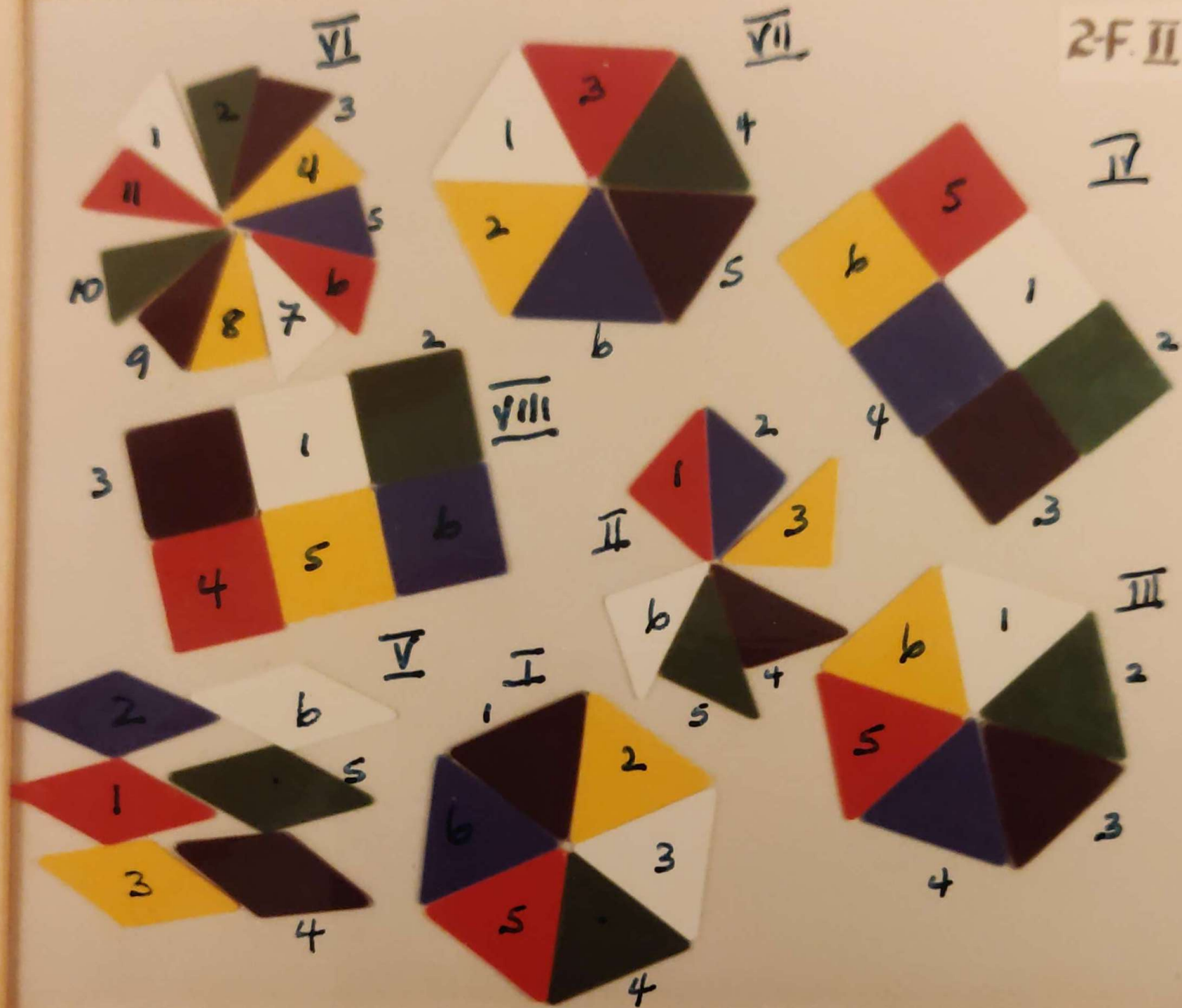
We would emphasize that he has ordered the material extremely well. He has used three different shapes in order to make three different things. These are the diamonds for the cloud, the equilateral triangles in the form of a hexagon to represent the moon and the isosceles triangles to create a star. The content of what he has made is replicated in a lot of designs within this collection; what is different is the successful organization into a coherent scene, which is unique in this collection. It is worth noting that he has used the pieces in the traditional colour-contrast mode, and has not attempted to create blocks of colour, nor to create colour symmetry.

As a contrast to him, we have Subject 18M, who is similar in age, namely in his forties. It is his second Mosaic (18M II) which we would like to comment on – a very successful representation of a water bird. This is essentially linear in construction, and while it is made almost entirely in diamonds, it has perfect colour symmetry, which is quite an unusual feature. It has been constructed using the “weaving mode” which we have already commented on as being something which is extraordinarily difficult to use to create a representational design. The only piece which is not a diamond is the small scalene used to represent the head, and we wonder if this tiny head reflects the subject’s wish to “say” something here about the difficulties of thinking in this strongly traditional mode, which we have commented on earlier. In a less obvious way than usual this design also shows the central column, and because of the colour symmetry we note a cruciform element in it, with its connotation of conflict. He is described in terms which make him sound like a somewhat childish character. He has had some measure of success and recognition within the community. We tend to see him as somehow the acme of the old tradition and as somebody who has extremely limited ambitions to move into the new. He is in fact functioning very well as a representative of the older culture patterns in this community.



2-F

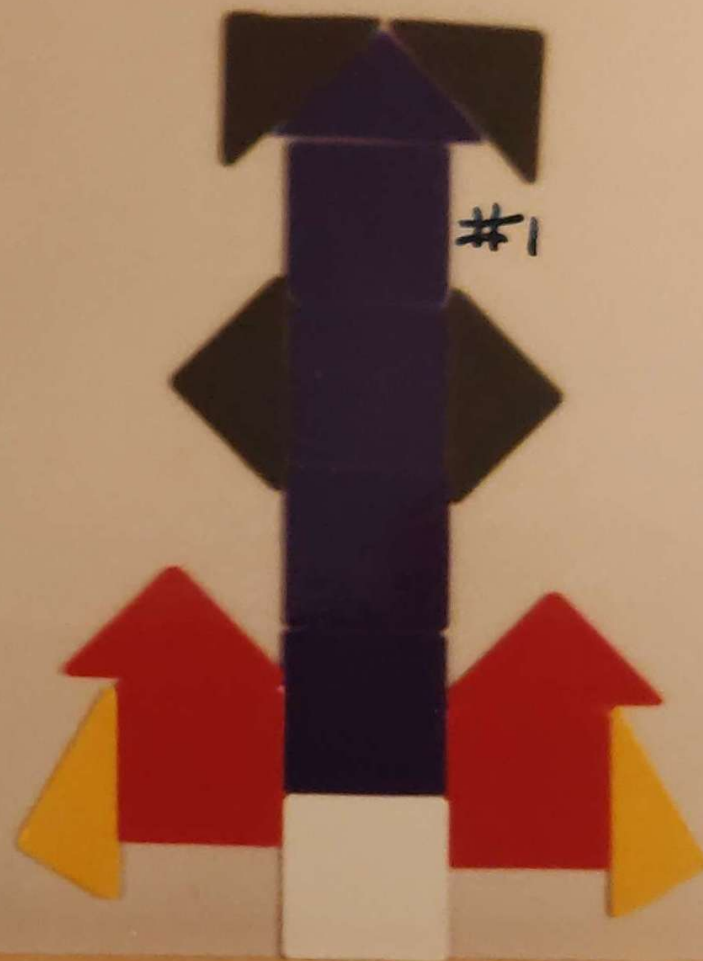




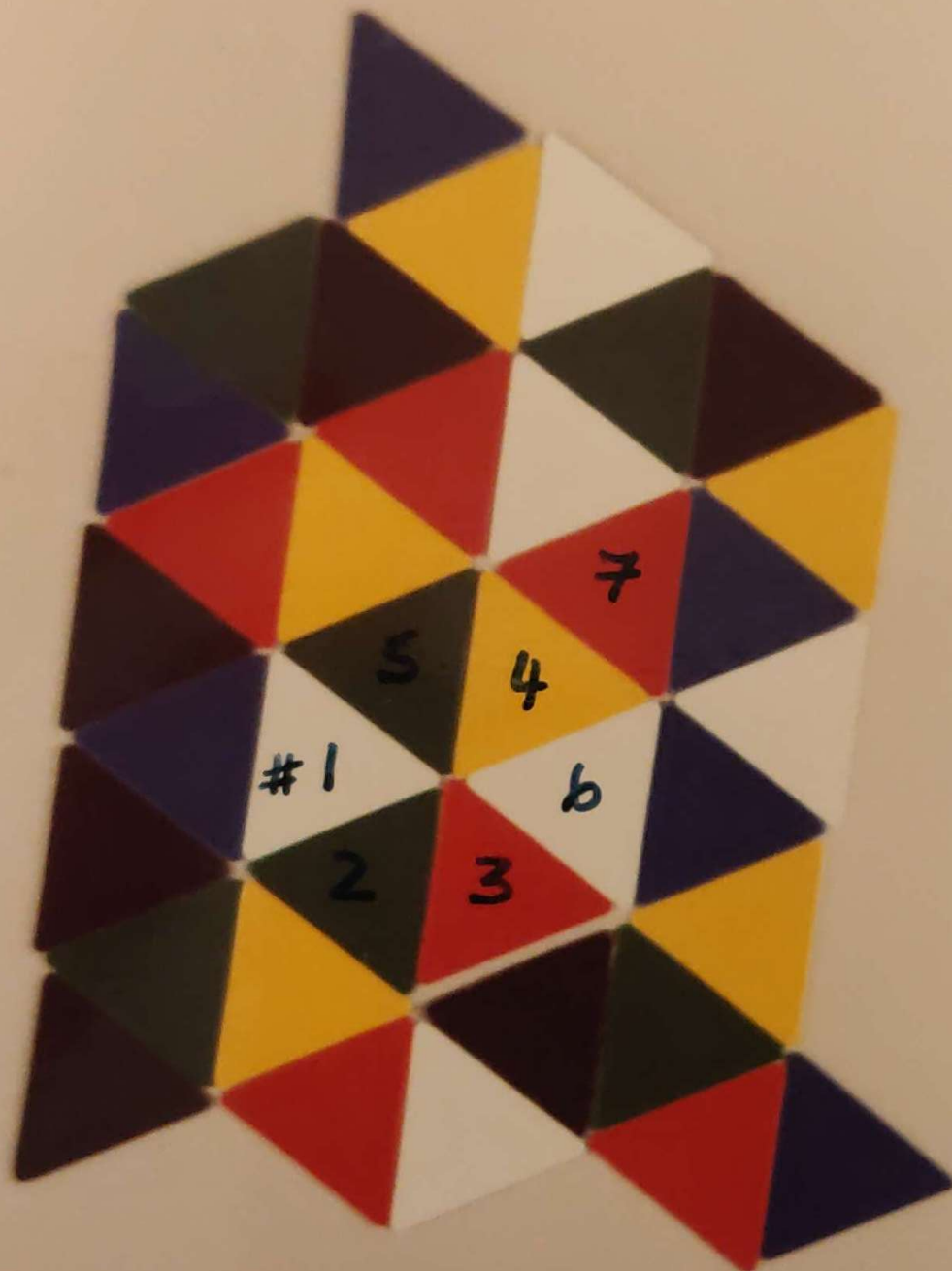
3F



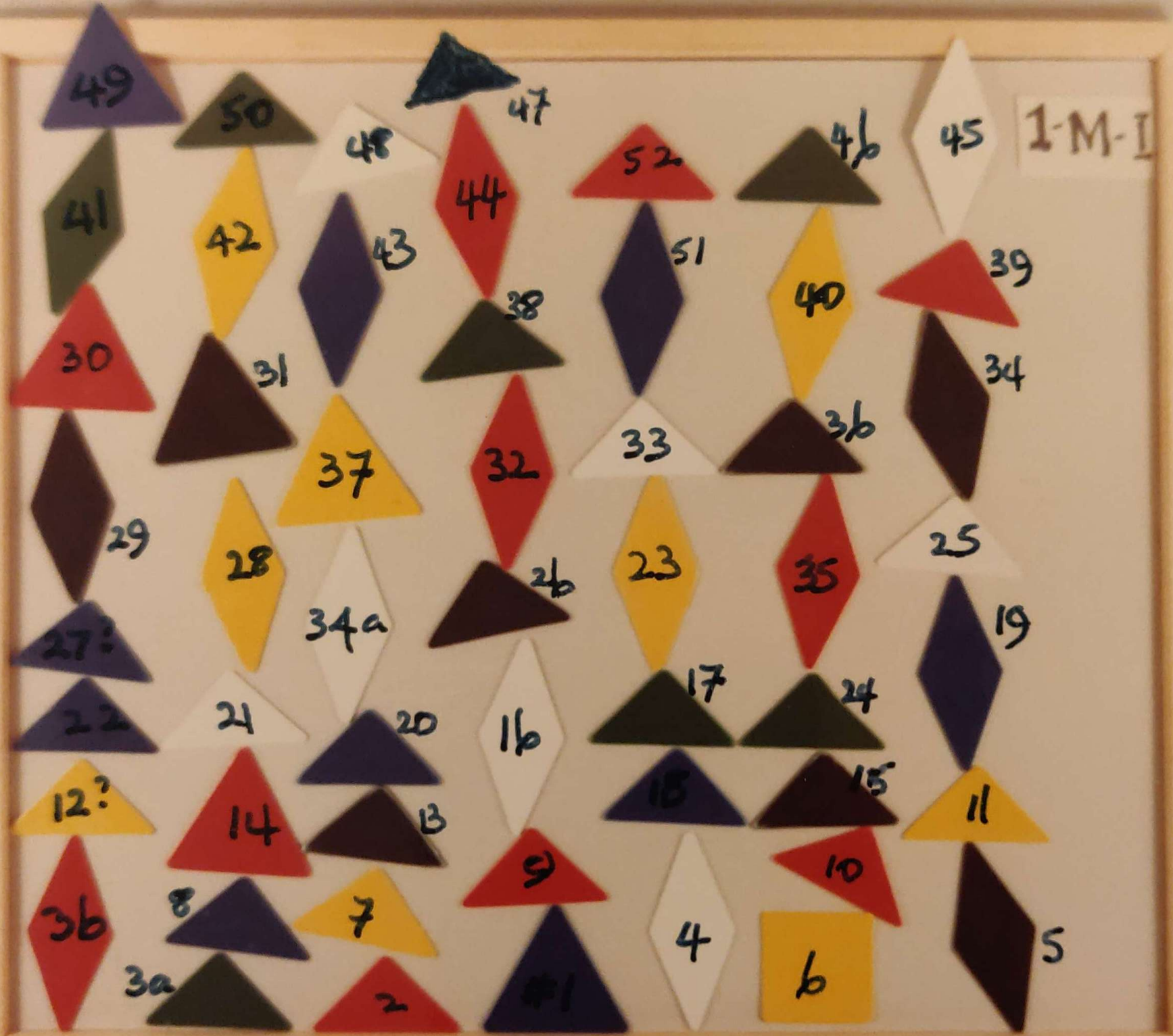
4·f II



S.F



1-M-I



IM-II





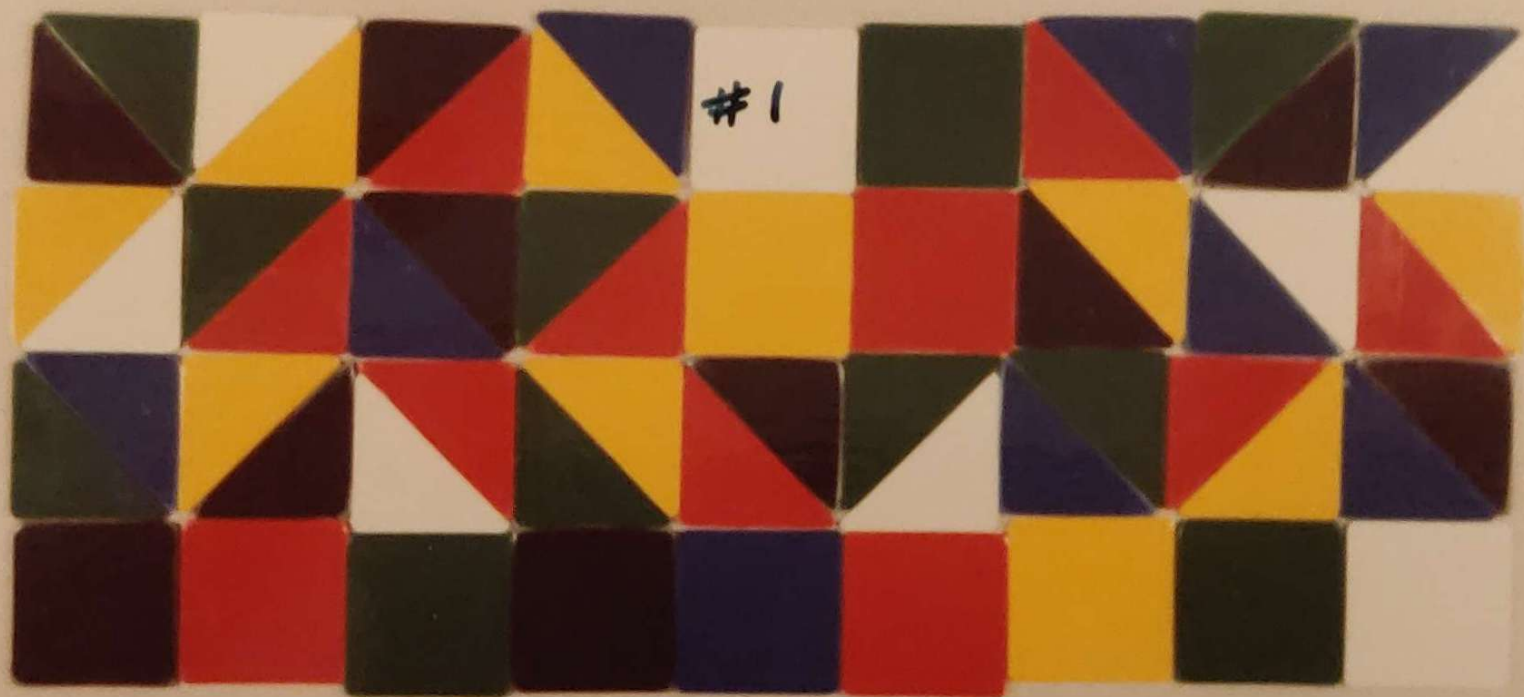
2-M



3-M-I



3-M. II



Y on W

R on Bk

4-M

Gr

W on B

G on Bk

G on R

G on R

B on Y

G on Bk

Bk on W

B on R

R on Y

Y on W

Y on B

G on R on Y

Y on R

5-M

⑧



②



③



⑥



⑦



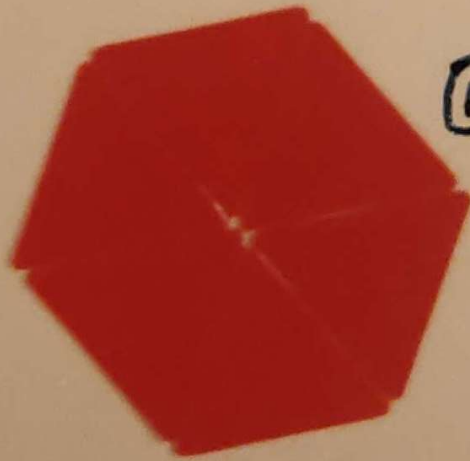
⑨



④



①



⑤



⑩



6 M



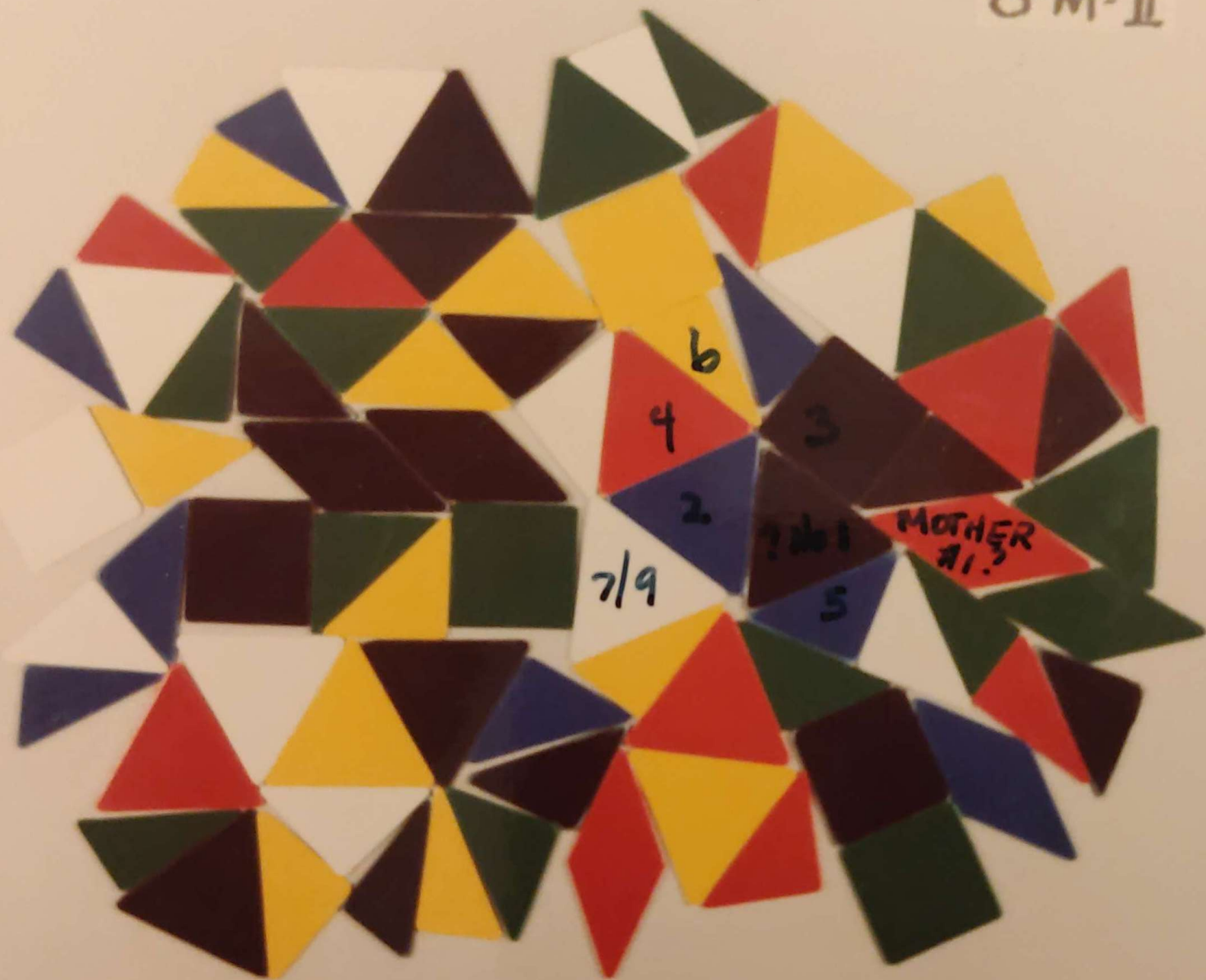
↑ 6 M

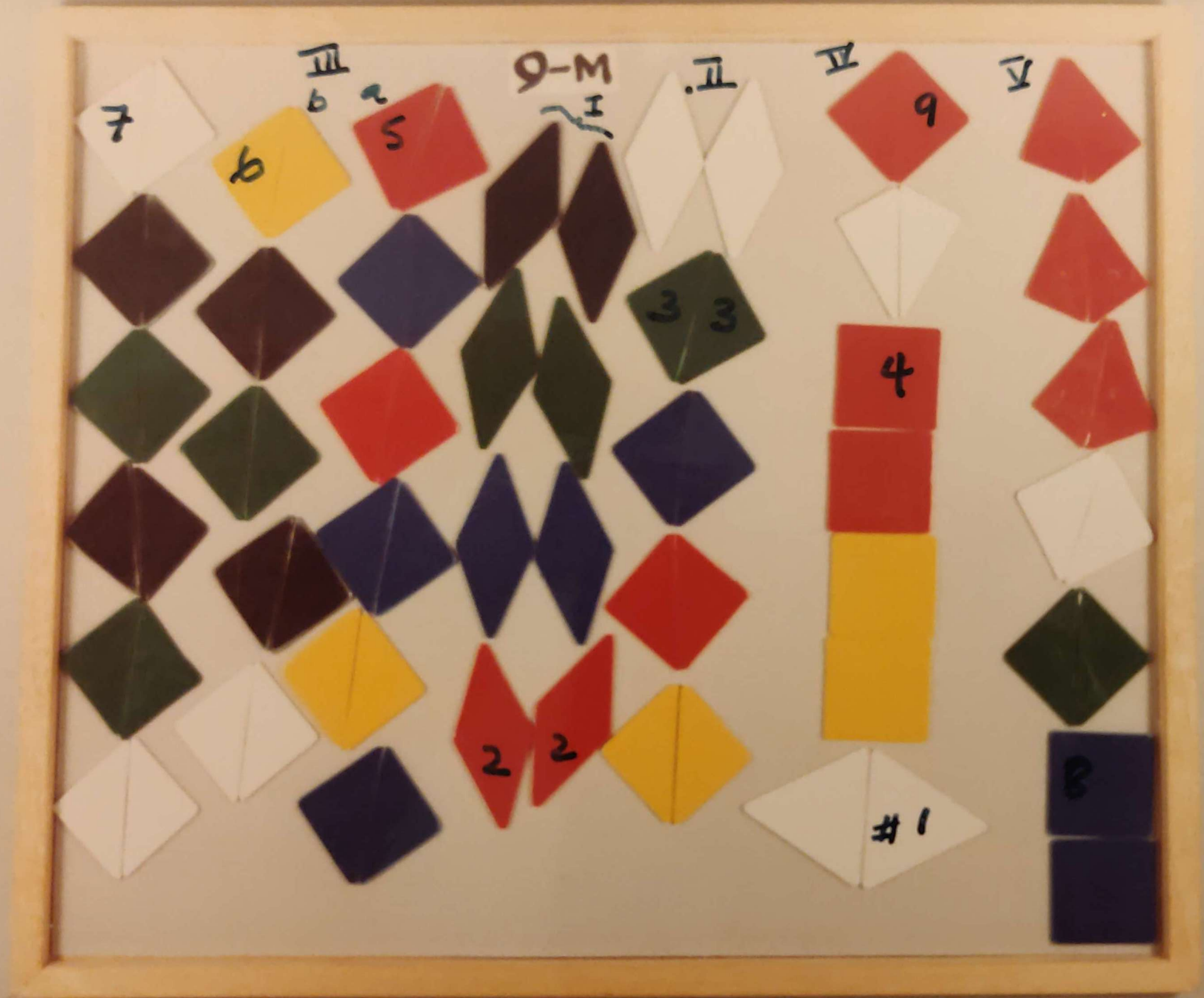


8-M-I

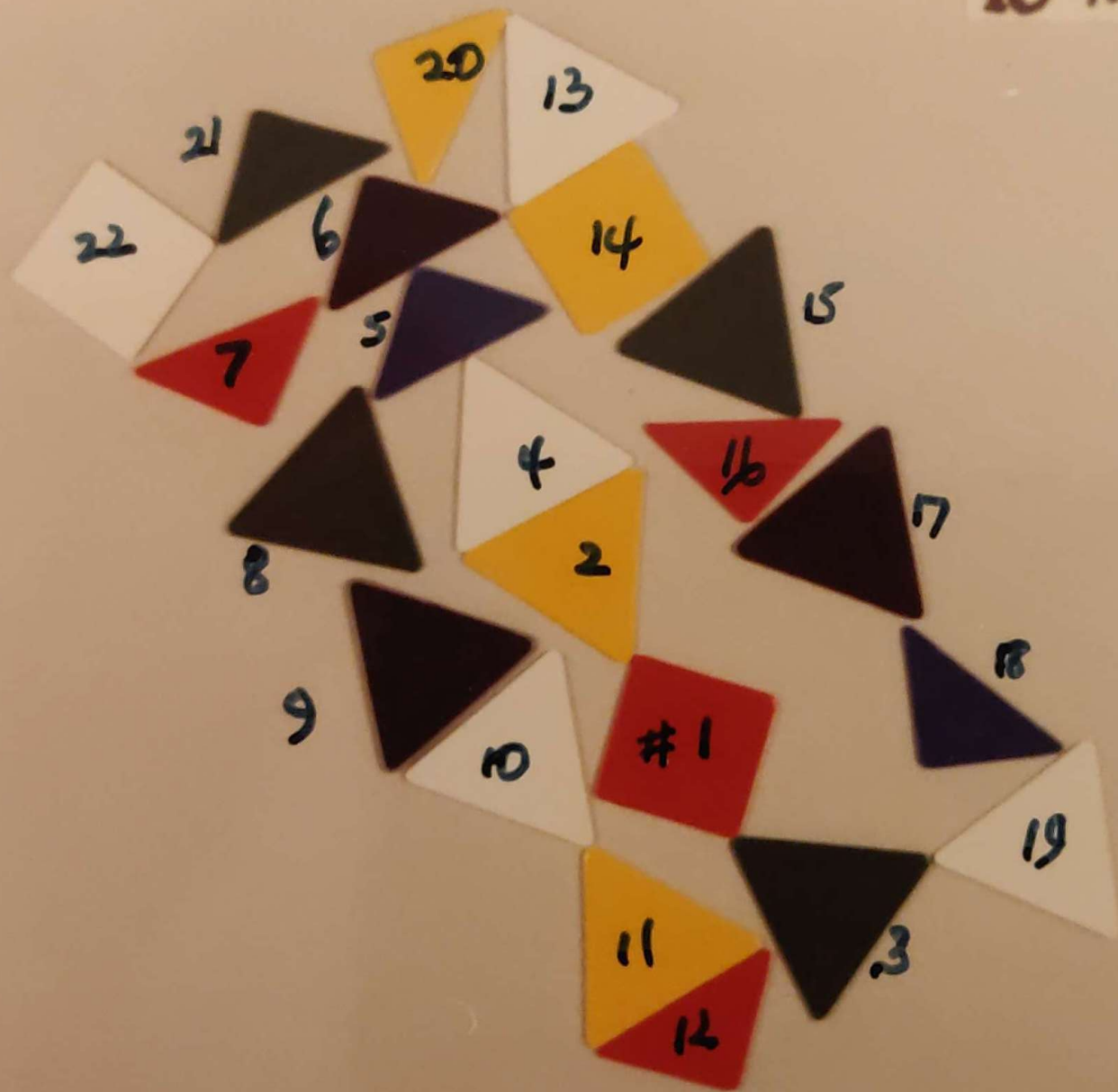


8-M-II





10-M



11-M



12-M - "HERON"

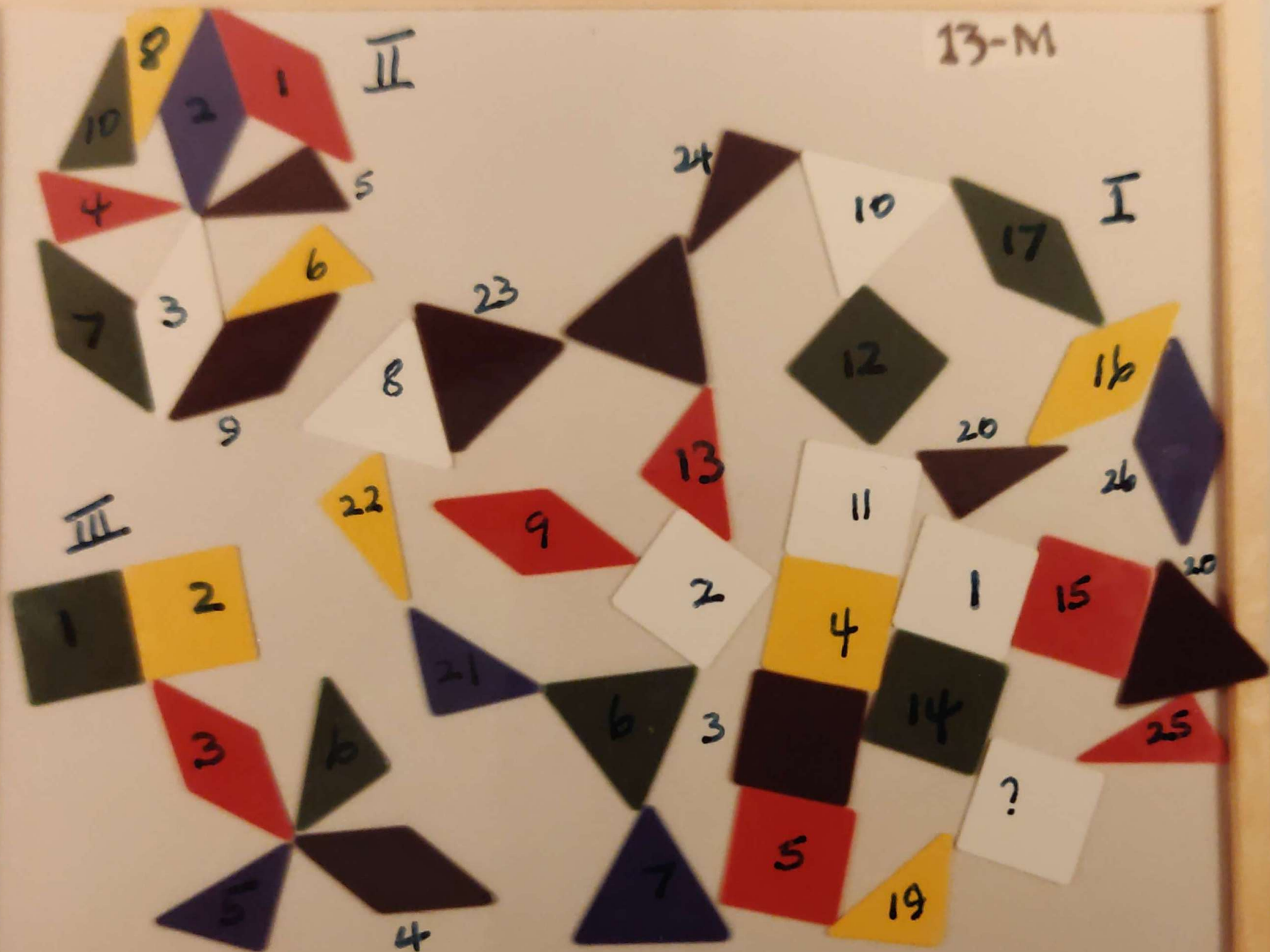


13-M

II

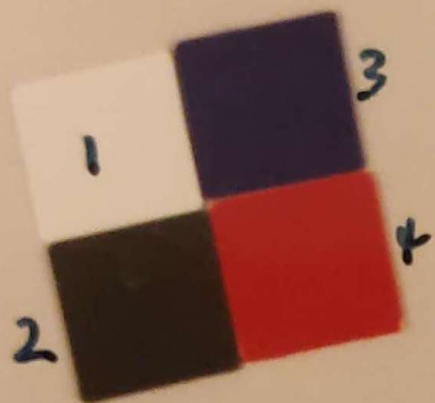
I

III



14-M

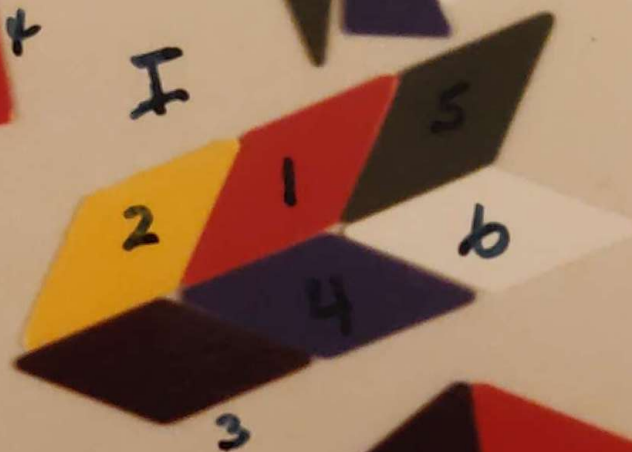
VII



IV



I



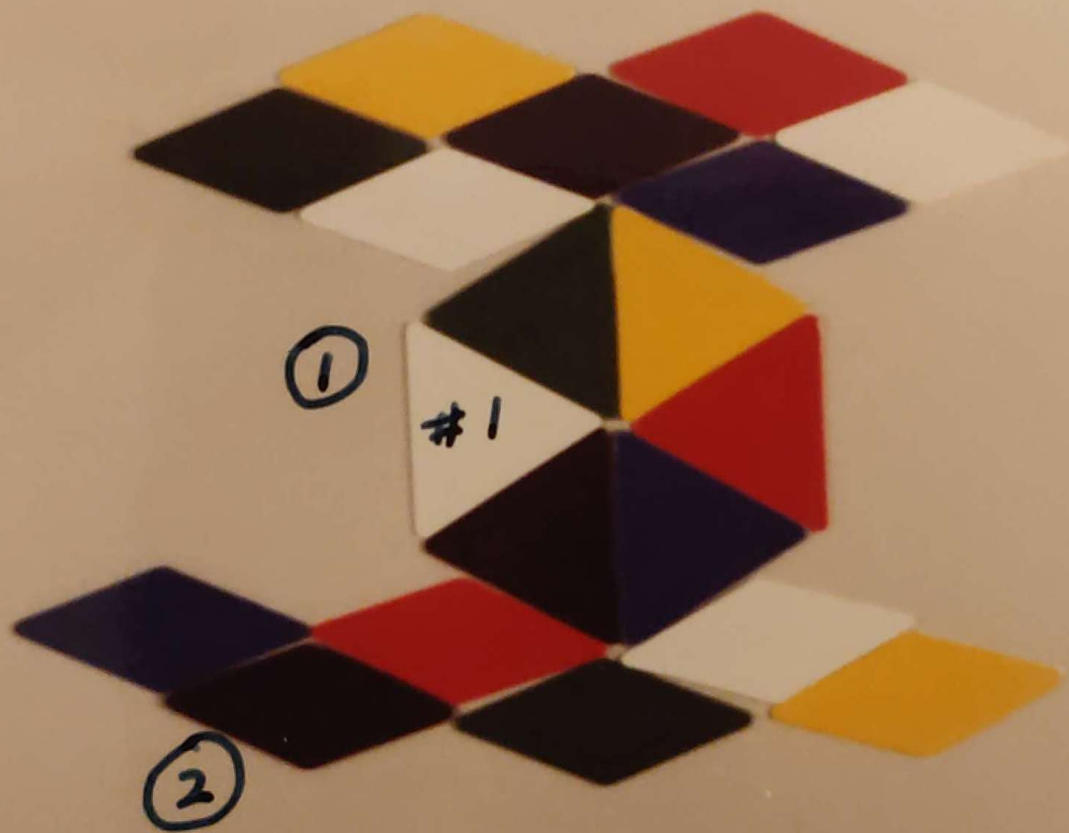
I



II



14.M.II



15-M



2R



2G



2G



2W



2W

2B



2Y



2R

16-M



⑥



①



④



⑤



②

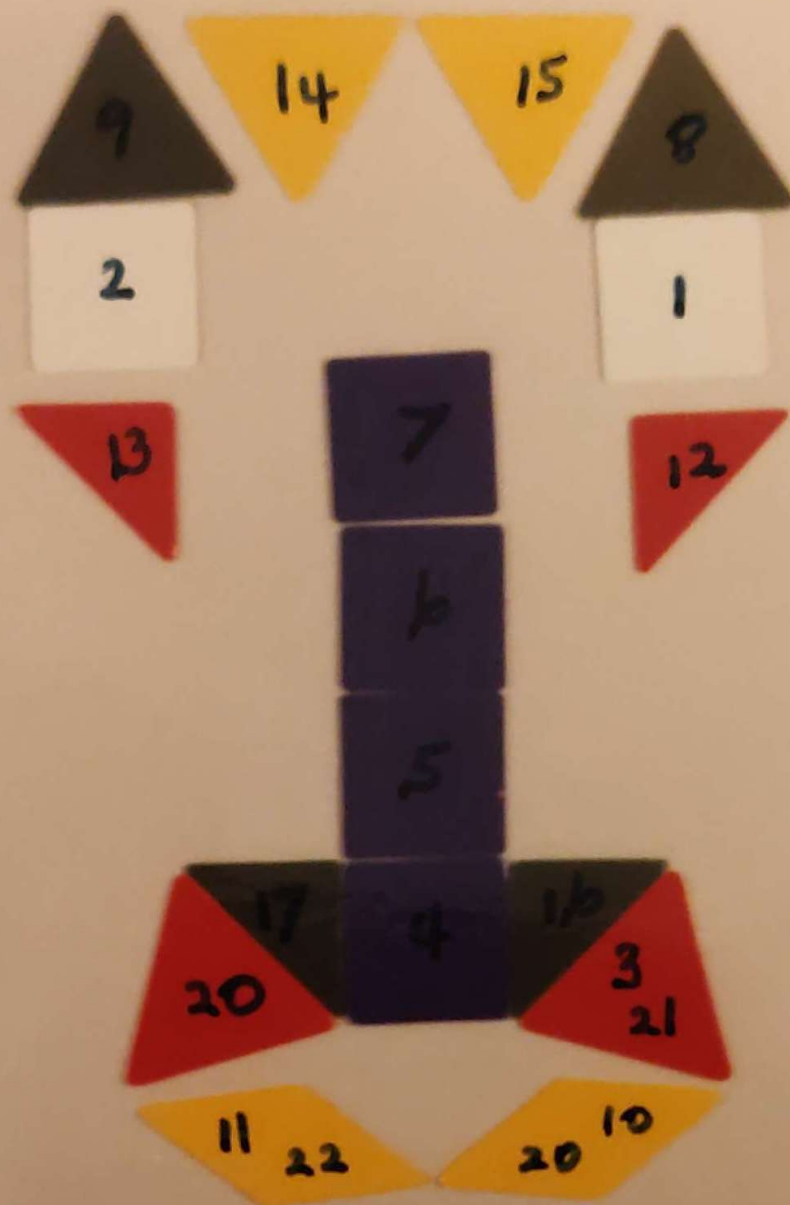
wing



③

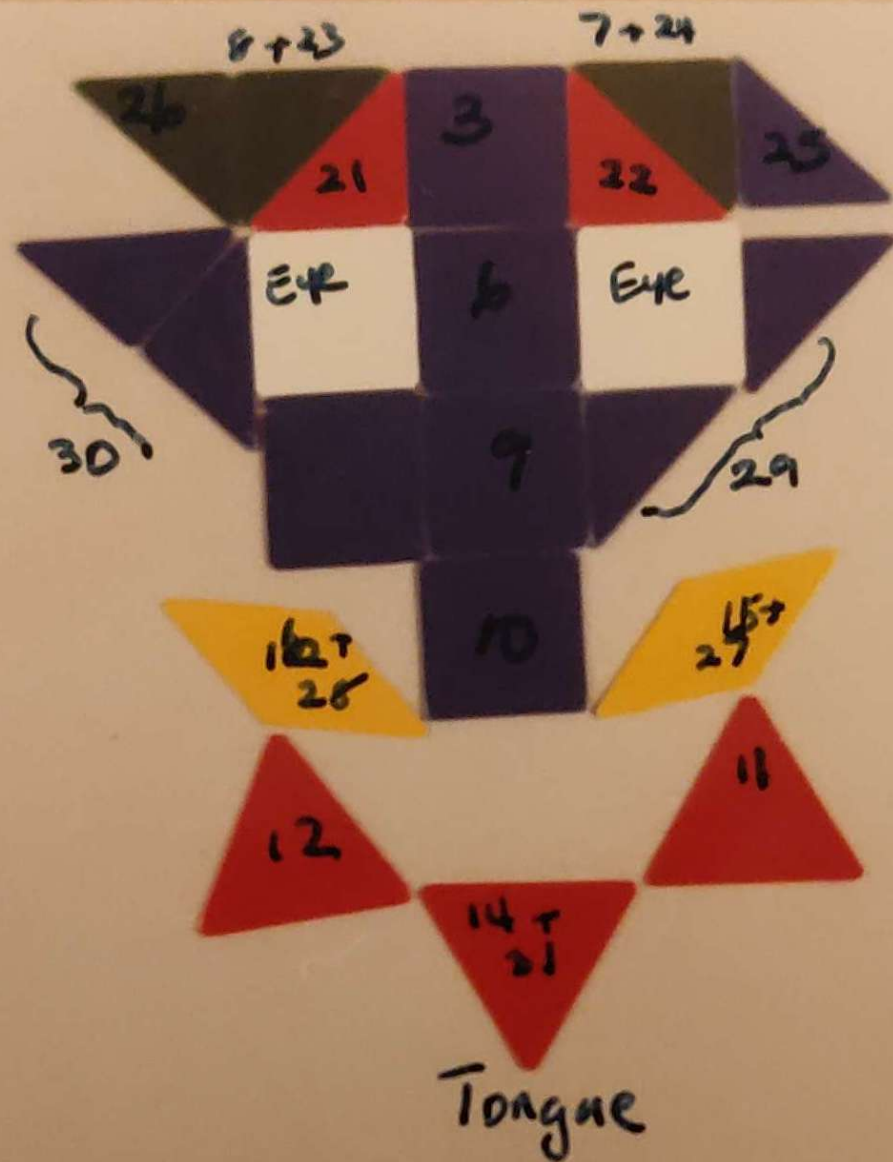
wing

17-M-I

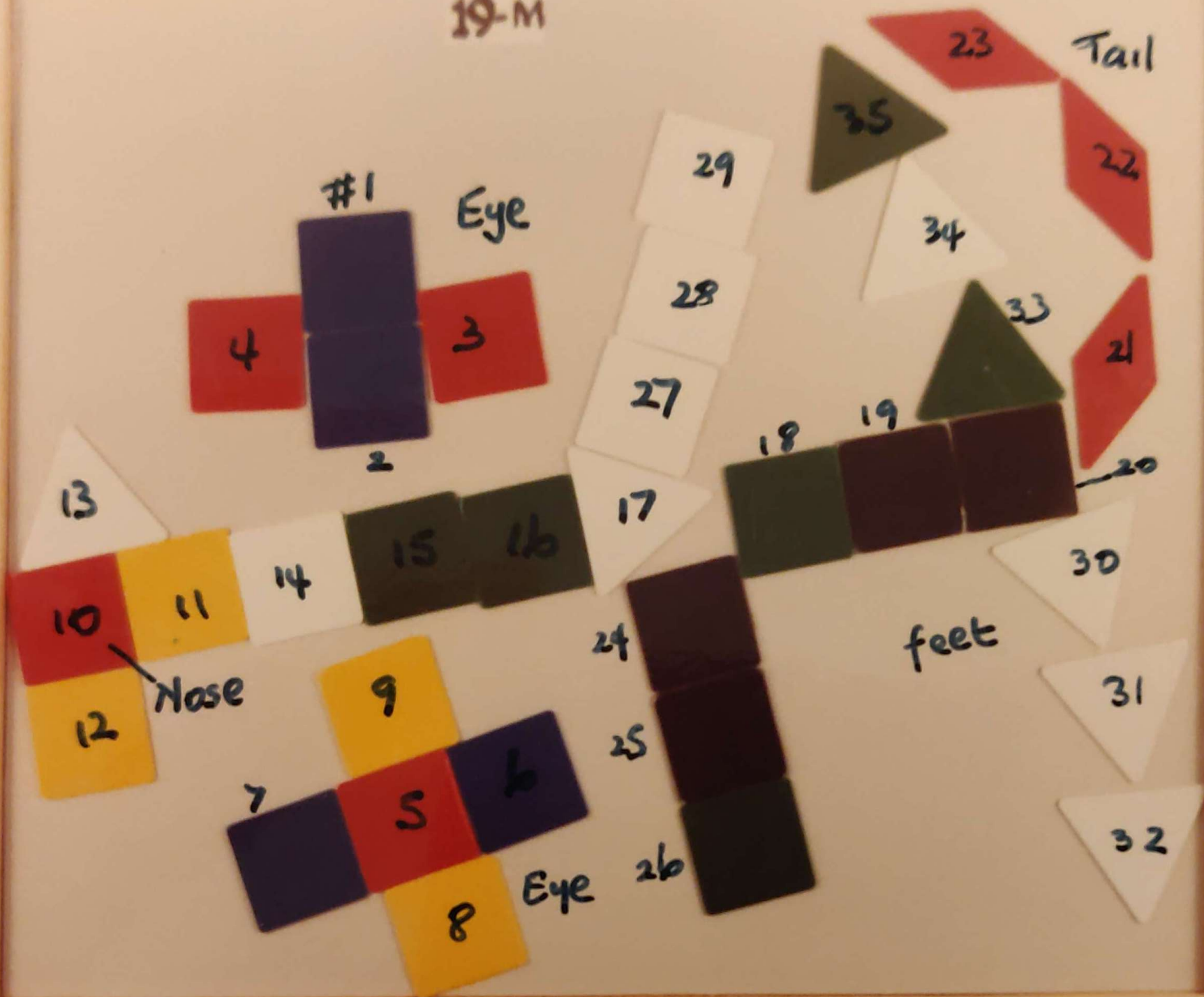


3 = red ET
18-19 white ET

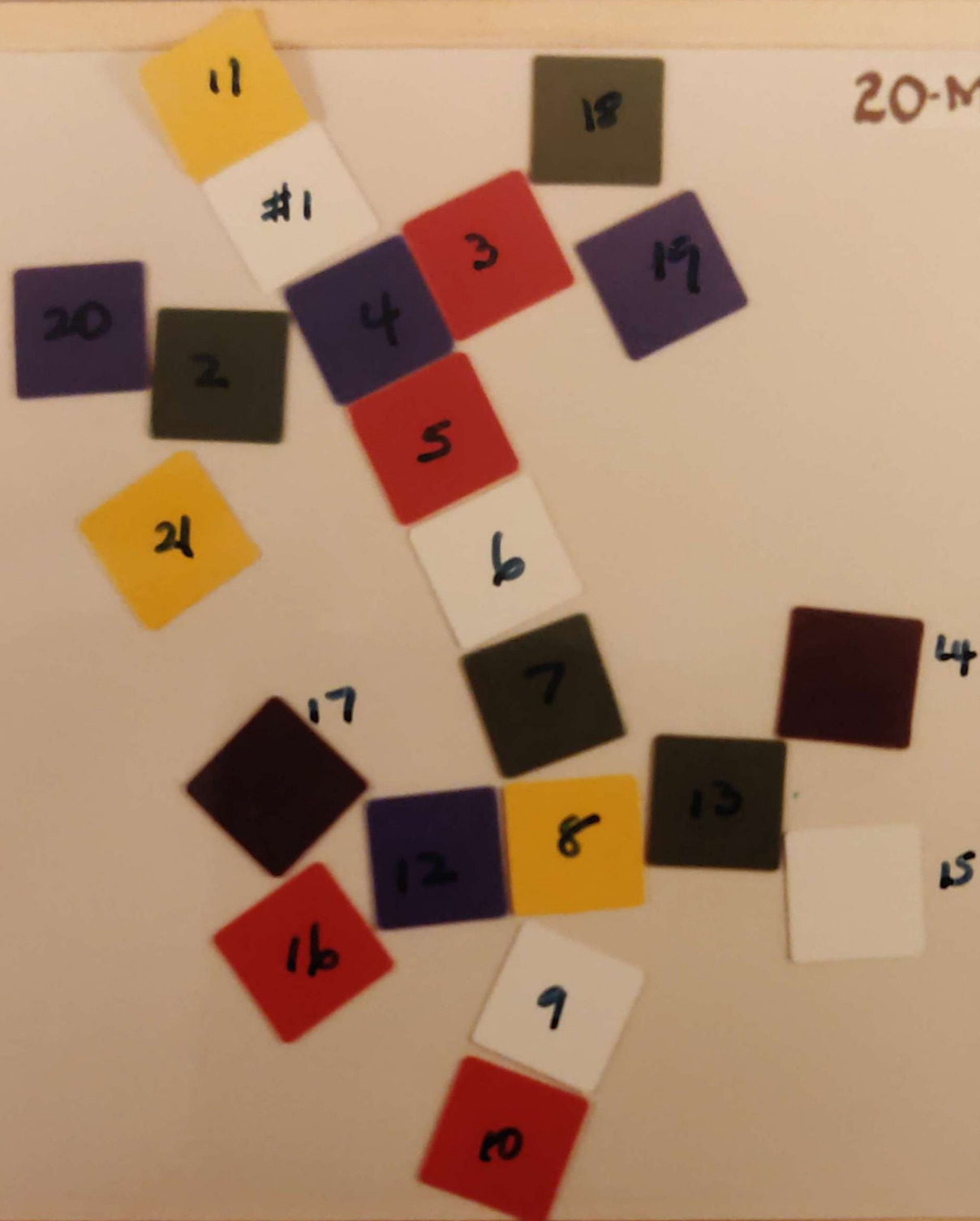
17-M-II



19-M



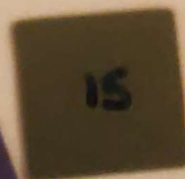
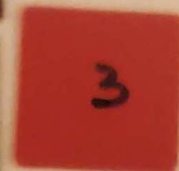
20-M



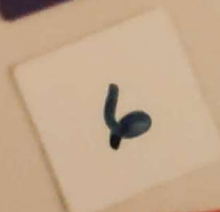
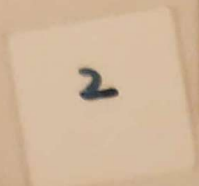
20-M-II

Head

14

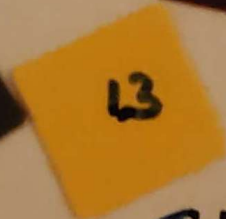


#1



foot

11



Tail

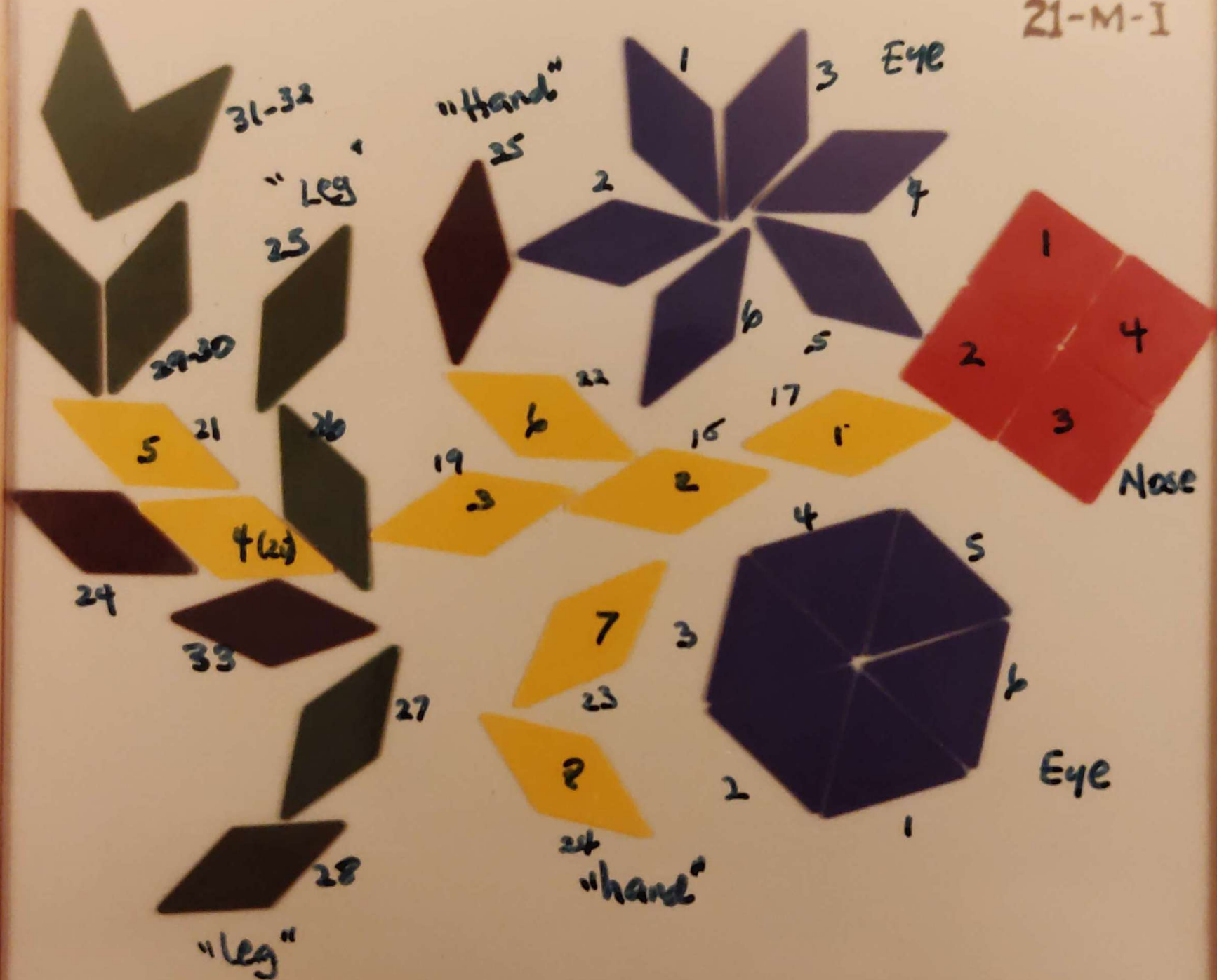


leg

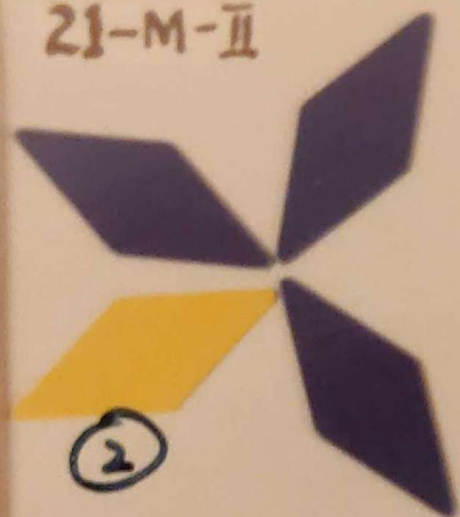


foot

21-M-I



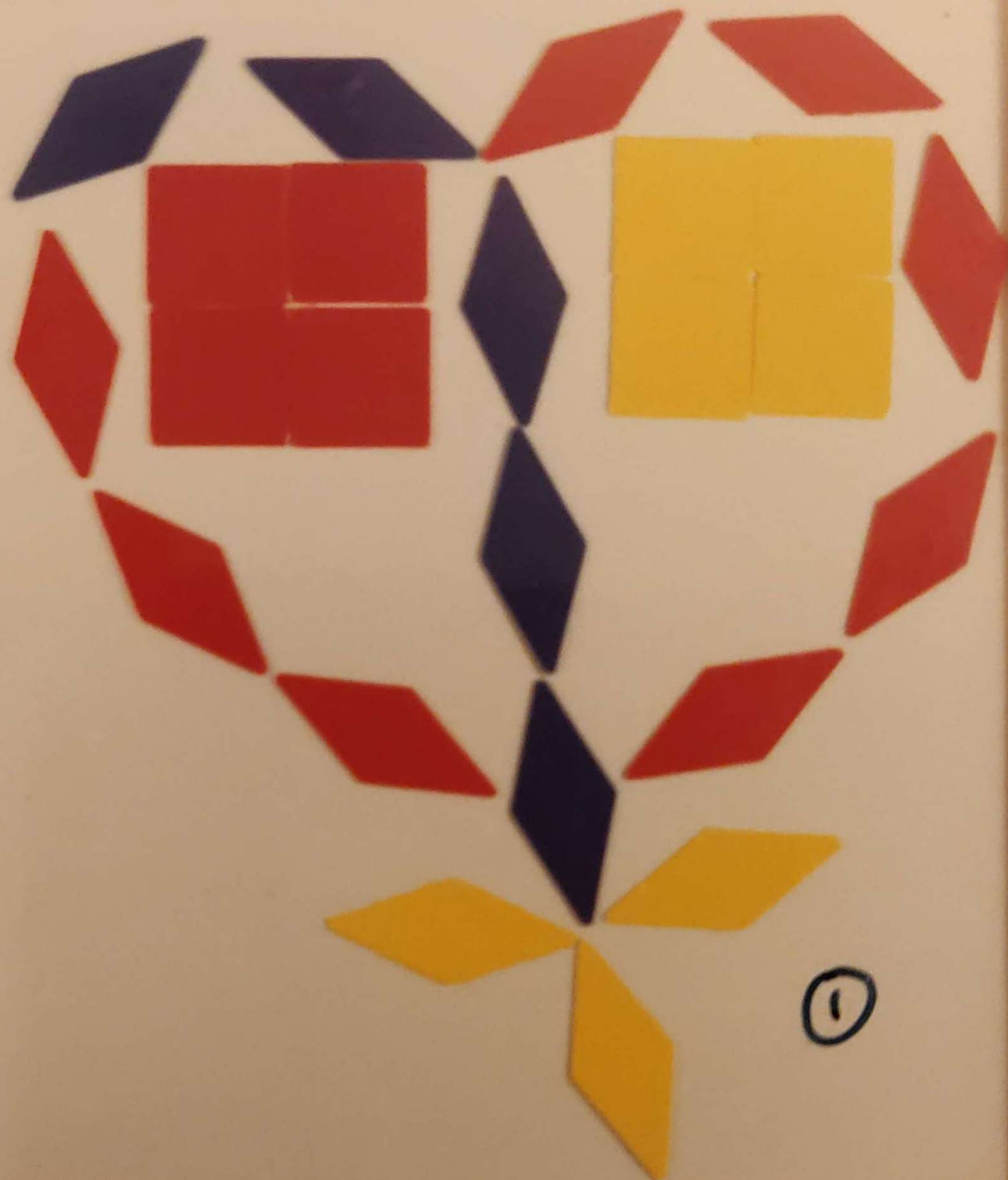
21-M-II



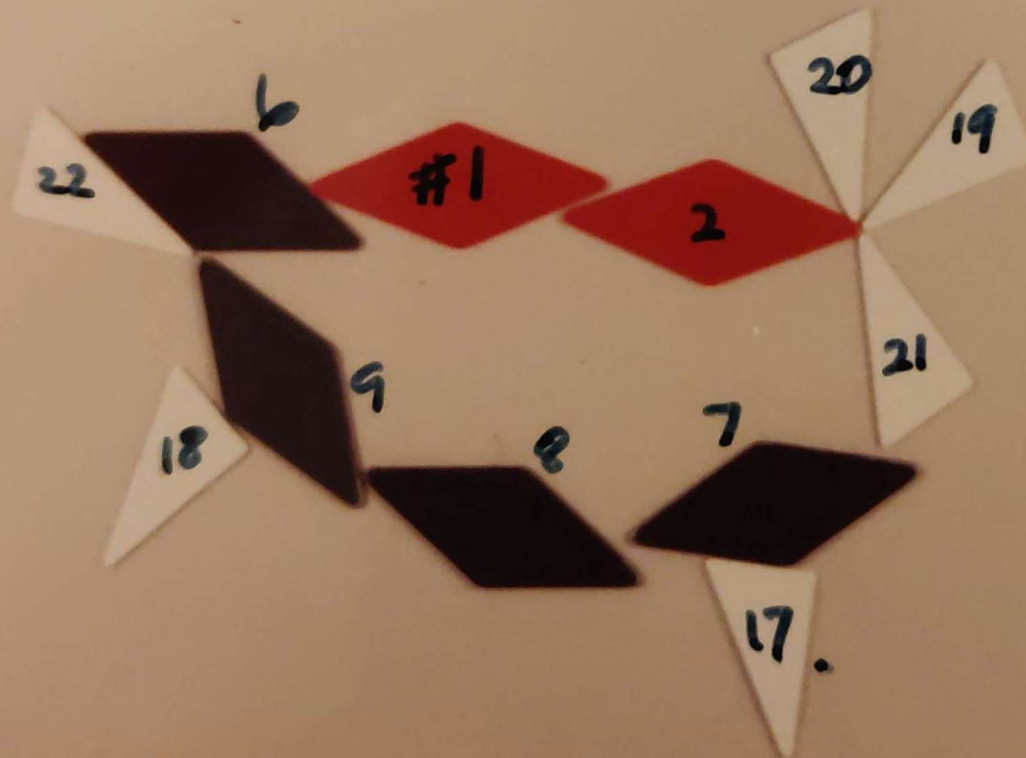
③

+

④



22-M



23-M-1

steeple

roof

Roof

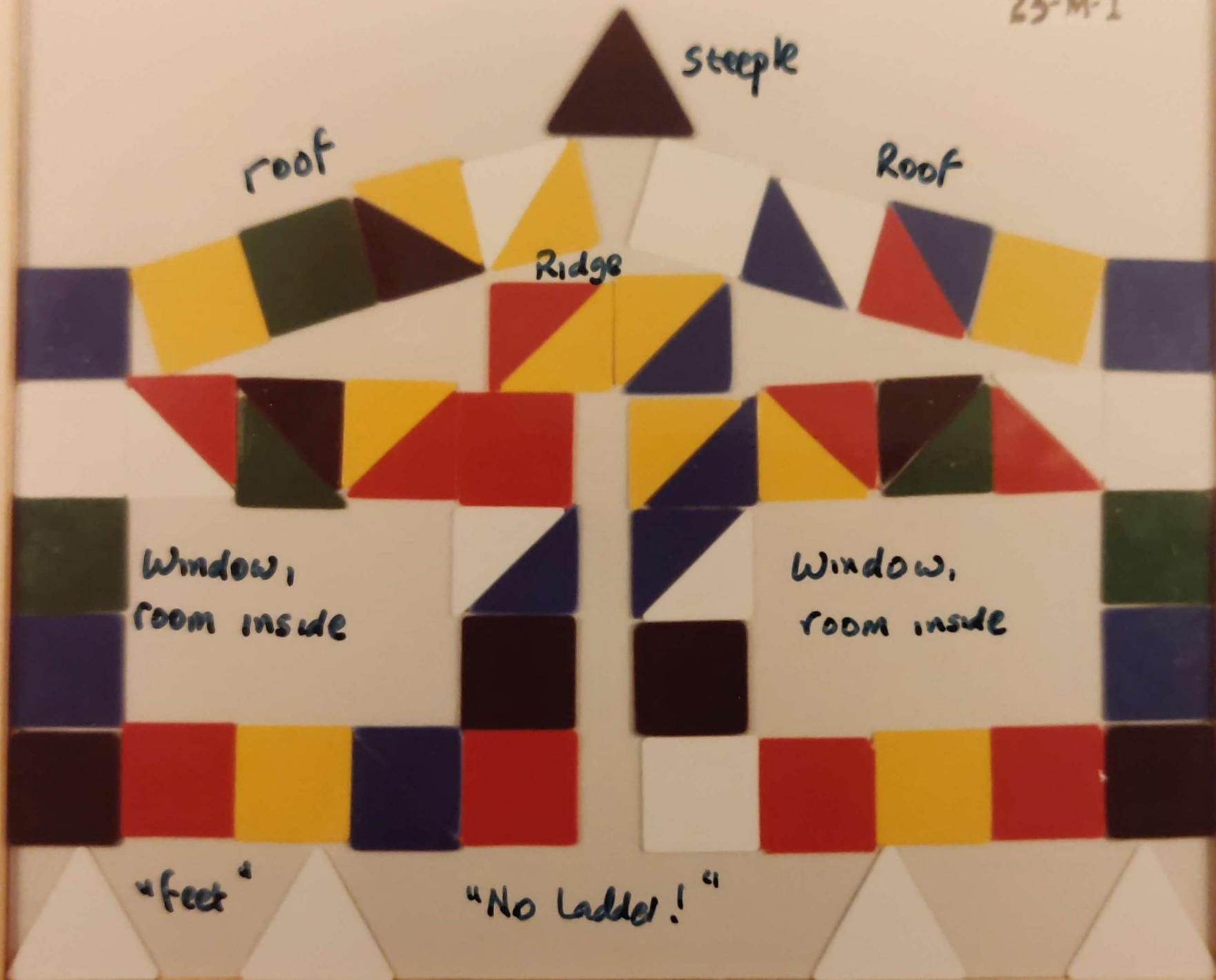
Ridge

Window,
room inside

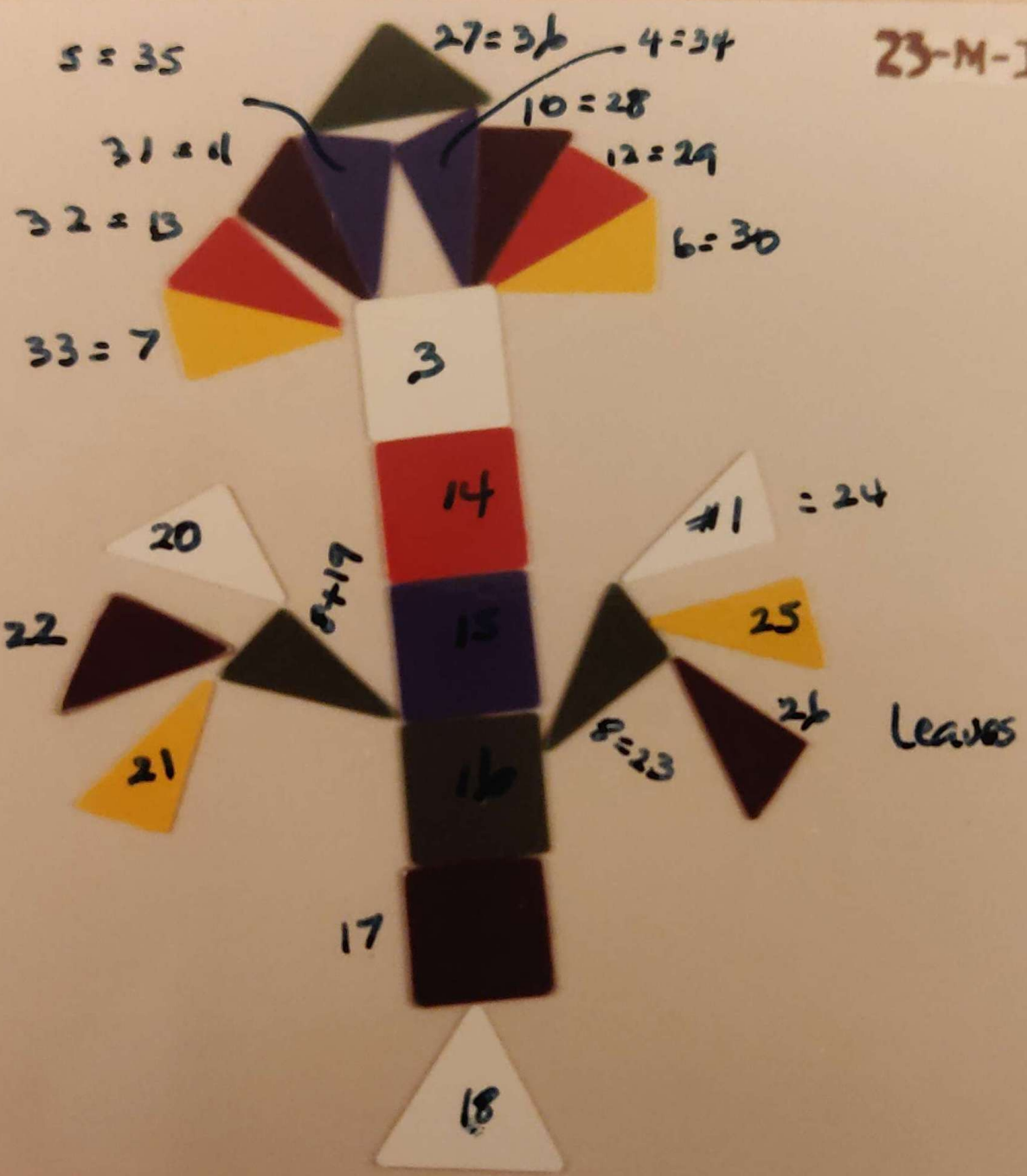
Window,
room inside

"feet"

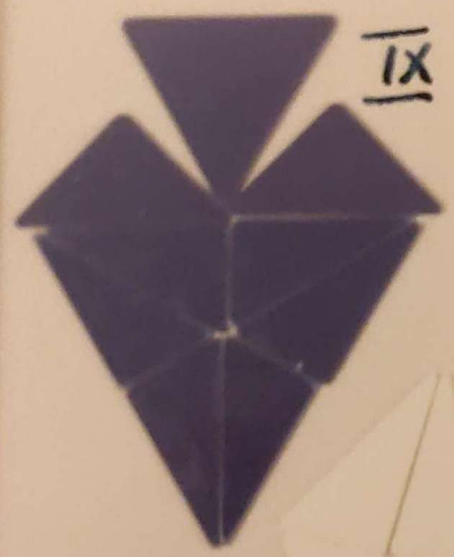
"No Ladder!"



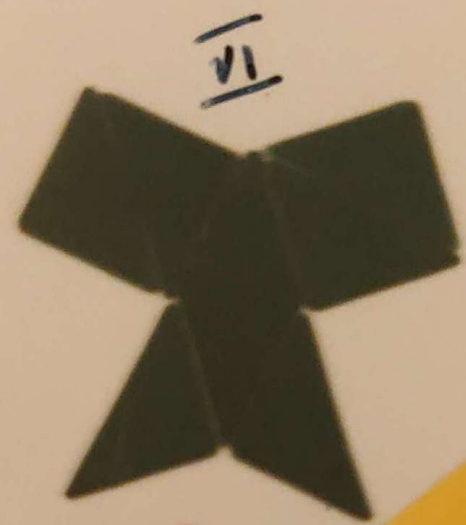
23-M-II



24-M



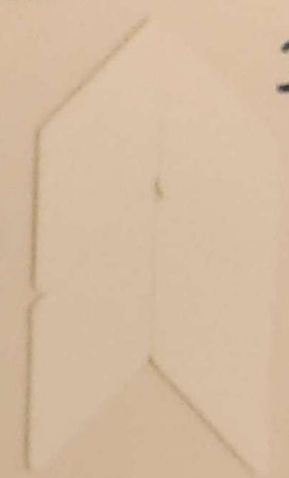
IX



VI



VIII



V



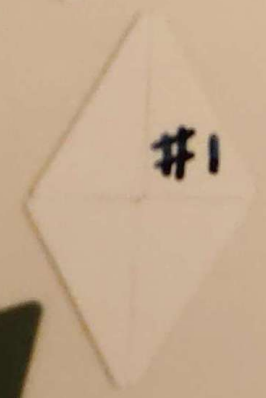
VII



IV



III



#1



II



XI



X

25-M

