

Revised Sept. 2011

FAMOUS ARTIST SERIES: HENRI MATISSE (1869-1954)

"Goldfish"

57 ½" x 38 ½"

The Pushkin Museum, Russia

Supplies needed:

- Pre-cut construction paper
- * Students will need their scissors, glue, and pencil
- * Star hole puncher from in supply box
- * Laminated copies of Matisse's work from supply box (6 total)
- * Framed prints to present: Matisse "Goldfish", Seurat's "Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte" , van Gogh "Sunflowers"
- * Sample artwork and project guide sheet
- * ***A Bird or Two: A Story About Henri Matisse*** , Bijou Le Tord

Reference Books

- * Henri Matisse Jean Stewart
- * Henri Matisse Volkmar Esser
- * The World of Matisse John Russell
- * Matisse M. Venezia

AHEAD OF TIME NOTE: Please plan this presentation near the end of the school year when the students have better dexterity for the project. In addition, please make copies of the master "Famous Artist Series" note to hand out to students.

To prepare for the project, you will need to refer to the "Project" guidebook in the supply box to cut necessary shapes. You will need enough pieces of each step for each student:

- 1. letter-sized colored construction paper (may need to cut down larger sheets in supply room).***
- 2. 2 rectangles from different colors***
- 3. smaller rectangle from 3rd color***
- 4. small square for students to cut a circle***
- 5. white copy machine paper – half page is fine.***
- 6. small red square for students to cut out heart***
- 7. long skinny rectangle for students to cut out snake shape***
- 8. precut stars from scraps (die cut in supply box)***

The artist, Henri Matisse, (pronounce first name "on-ree") was born in France over 130 years ago. As a young student Matisse attended law school. When he was 20 years old he suffered from an appendicitis attack, which was a lucky thing for Henri, because his illness turned him into a painter! While he was in bed recovering, his mother gave him a box of paints and this changed his life forever. He began to experiment with them, and found that painting was his true love. He never felt bored when he was painting; he said it was like his

imagination was set free! ***You may show laminate #1, both sides have self-portraits done by Matisse.***

Matisse gave up practicing law and went on to Paris to study painting. Others who were painting at the same time were Georges Seurat and Vincent van Gogh who each took a new and bold approach to color. Matisse learned to draw with looser lines and shapes and he began to use a whole rainbow of colors in his paintings. One teacher told him, "Think your color."

Show the framed print "Goldfish". Ask the students what they "see" . . . does the picture look "normal or realistic" to them? Sometimes his paintings were considered "abstract" meaning the objects did not look realistic. Now show framed pictures by Seurat and van Gogh, discuss bold color and bold shapes. These artists influenced Matisse.

Paintings that were considered "art" before Matisse painted were beautiful landscapes or classical statues. When Matisse and his friends, who painted in a similar style to his, exhibited their art, people laughed.

Show "Goldfish" again. Are the colors Matisse used the colors you would expect to see of a goldfish bowl? Who ever heard of using yellow and green and white inside a goldfish bowl to show the clear, blue water? Why is the wall pink? Is the pink background a lily pond or wallpaper? Why is it colored black surrounding the table? Matisse and his friends liked to "think color."

Henri Matisse felt that the most important part of the picture was the feeling or mood it presented – not the details of people or places. He broke down his objects into simple shapes. He used very soothing colors - not necessarily ones you might see in real life. He added a lot of light. He made things look two-dimensional, very flat. He said he wanted his artwork to give people pleasure and be soothing. By perfectly balancing simple shapes and colors, his paintings seem to make you feel good all over. Matisse himself said, "I desire an art of balance and purity which neither disturbs nor troubles. My wish is that the man who is tired, worn out and overworked should taste peace and calm as he stands before one of my paintings".

Look at the arm of the chair in "Goldfish" again with the students. It is two dimensional and rather flat, but you can still tell that the artist means it to be an armchair.

However, you can still recognize what the picture represents. He used colors to represent the feelings of the artist or the people in the picture.

Show laminated print #2 of "Red Studio."

This was such a new idea and way of painting, that his work and that of his fellow artists was labeled "fauves" (pronounced fohv), a French word that means wild beasts. People were outraged, they thought the artists had just slapped on wild colors on the canvas. Matisse didn't mind and said, "When I put a green, it is not grass. When I put a blue, it is not the sky."

From Matisse's many travels he developed a love of rich textures, fabrics, decorative patterns, and costumes. **Look at laminate #3 Harmony in Red and compare to earlier painting on flip side, The Dinner Table. Talk about the differences.** They are the same subject, but look very different. His vibrant color and texture are quite obvious in the later painting. **Also show laminate #4 of Woman in Blue 1937. Ask the students to point out the colors, textures, fabrics and costumes.**

When Matisse was over 70 years old (maybe your grandparents age!), he created a new way of working with color called "Paper Cut-Outs". Henri would cut out shapes from brightly colored paper to make some of his most exciting art ever! Henri said it was like drawing with scissors and sculpting with color. He repeated shapes and colors to create a pattern on paper. Henri loved to make cut-outs of marine animals and bold squiggly lines. His works were very simple and very colorful. He found he could do this, as well as make sculptures, at a desk from his wheelchair.

Show laminate #5 of Matisse working with his cut-outs. Laminate also shows Matisse on a ladder working on a large mural.

Now show "Icarus" laminated print (flip side of Red Studio), an example of his paper cut-out work. Note simplicity and colors. Icarus is a man/bird deprived of his wings. **Show also laminate #6, Sorrow of the King 1952, another example of his paper cut-outs. Ask the students what shapes they see, and how does the picture make them feel.**

Towards the end of his life, Matisse did sculptures at his desk in a wheel chair. He even designed beautiful stained glass windows for a chapel in southern France. Here, he used all the techniques he was known for - very bold, simple shapes, strong colors and lots of beautiful light from the windows that reflected beautiful colors onto the floor. Henri Matisse died at the age of 84.

Project:

Now we will make our own paper cut-out picture very much like Matisse would have done. I have a stack of colored paper for each student, but before we pass it around, let's talk about what we are going to do.

Everything we will make, we will do so together, but you can place your shapes where you want to on your paper. It is important to listen to my instructions. We will wait until each student is ready before we go on to the next step. Each time we glue, try to remember to glue the side of paper with the pencil markings down. Try to "draw with your scissors" like Matisse did as you cut your own shapes out of bright paper.

1. Start with the large sheet of construction paper. There are two equally sized rectangular sheets. Select one, and glue it anywhere on the large sheet.

2. Take the other rectangle, and use your pencil to make a very large smile that goes from one end to the other. At the top, make four or five "fingers." Now cut it out, and glue it anywhere on the sheet. (See example)

3. Take the long rectangle piece of paper, and cut it into about 10 strips. If you start to cut and see you will only have 8 or 9 pieces, that's ok. Glue them in some sort of group, like a school of fish or flock of birds, onto your paper.

4. Take the square piece of paper, and use your pencil to draw a large circle. Glue it onto a corner of the sheet, with part of it coming off the page. We will trim it later.

5. Take the white rectangle and fold it in half lengthwise. Use your pencil to trace the outline of half a person, so the fold is on the inside and the arms and legs go off to the unfolded corners. (See example). Now cut out your person, and glue it somewhere on your sheet.

6. Take the small square and fold it. Use your pencil to trace a small heart. Glue it on your person between their arms on their chest.

7. I have a bag of pre-cut stars. If you would like some to glue anywhere on your picture, please raise your hand and I will pass them out.

8. If you are done early, and would like to add something different to your picture. You make trace a snake shape on the long, skinny rectangle and glue it on your picture.

PLEASE LEAVE AT LEAST FIVE MINUTES AT THE END OF THE PRESENTATION FOR THE STUDENTS TO PRESENT THEIR WORK TO THE CLASS.

FAMOUS ARTISTS SERIES

Matisse

Today in class a volunteer parent presented the works of French Impressionist painter Henri Matisse. They learned about his life and the different styles of art he embraced. The students also made a take-home art piece in the style of Matisse.

The Art Institute of Chicago has a number of works by Matisse. In addition, Cook Library has a children's book entitled When Picasso met Matisse by N. Laden which would be fun to read with your child.

Sincerely yours,

Art Volunteer