



LESSON 17 LEVEL B ORGANIC SHAPES

CUT-OUTS in the MANNER of MATISSE

WHAT YOU WILL LEARN:

cutting organic shapes and arranging them in a composition; learning about positive and negative shapes, unity and variety



Henri Matisse The Thousand and One Nights Carnegie Museum of Art Pittsburgh

WHAT YOU WILL NEED: a variety of colored papers, including some textured ones (decorative papers); white construction paper; scissors; paste or glue.

“TIPS”: Geometric shapes, you remember, are usually made of straight lines (square, triangle, hexagon, etc.) or regular curves (circle, oval). Organic shapes are those that are not geometric. They are the shapes found in nature (people, shells, leaves, clouds, etc.)

WORDS TO LEARN:

positive shape(s): the shapes of the subject(s) of the art work

negative shapes: the shape(s) of the space around the subject

unity: an arrangement in which all the parts seem related or unified

variety: a group of different things

Getting Started: If you cut or draw any shape, the shape is called “positive”. The shape of the space around the shape is called “negative.” You will use both positive and negative organic shapes to create a composition of colored paper. A famous artist, Henri Matisse, made large art works of paper that he had painted with bright colors. Actually, he cut and arranged them on a background. He tried out many arrangements before he fastened them down. Look at as many of Matisse’s cut-outs as you can find. Study the variety of organic shapes he made. . . birds, leaves, fish, and, sometimes, just squiggles. Notice the strong colors he chose. See how the negative spaces of the background relate to the positive shapes he pasted onto it. He often repeated shapes to make a decorative pattern or a border for his compositions. You can too!





Annette Age 8

1. Plan to cut interesting shapes of different colors and sizes, but choose one color to use several times around your composition. This will unify it and keep it from looking scattered. Practice cutting some shapes from scratch paper, if you like.

2. Notice that as you cut out a shape (positive), the leftover scrap of paper automatically makes a different sort of positive shape when you place it

on the background paper! (You can find some examples of this in Matisse's cut-outs if you look closely.) You can arrange both of these kinds of positive shapes on the negative space of your white paper.

3. When you have a variety of shapes, try to organize them so they do not touch one another on the white background. Cut more colored shapes if you need to. Be sure you have large, medium and small sizes for variety. Repeat some of the same color for unity.

4. Try several arrangements before you decide to glue everything down. Lift one piece at a time; put some glue on the back and put it back where it was.

CLEAN UP: Save the big pieces of paper for another project. Now the little scraps must be picked up and thrown away. To make it easier to pick up the very littlest scraps, wet your fingers slightly and the scraps will stick to your fingers. Then you can wipe them off into the waste basket. Put away the glue and scissors. Check your work area. Did you get all the scraps?

TALK ABOUT IT: Does your composition seem balanced and unified? Did you include a variety of shapes and colors? Do the positive and negative shapes seem to relate to each other?

CONNECTIONS: Study a map of the world to find organic, positive continent shapes on a negative ocean background.

Find trade routes and explorers' voyages you have learned about in school.