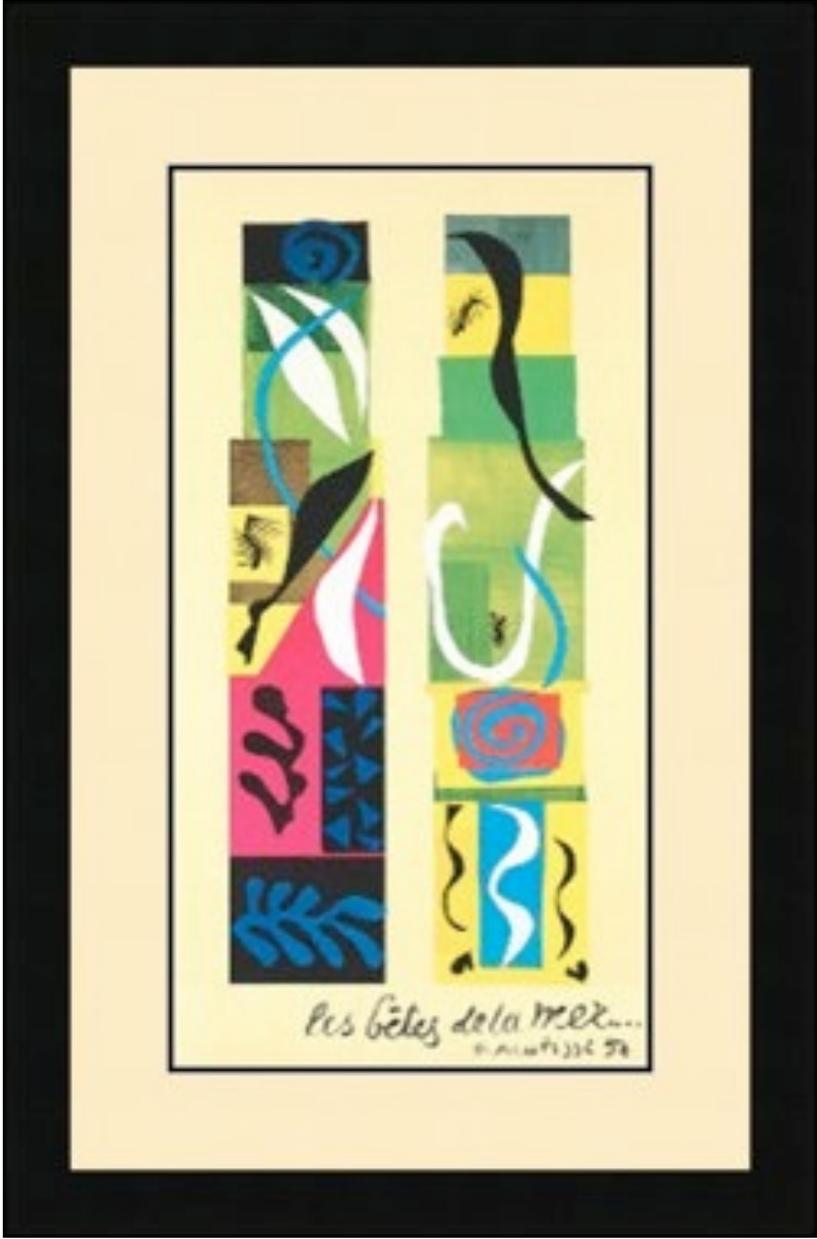


Third Grade Art Print

Beasts of the Sea - by Matisse



Background Info:

About the Artist

Henri Matisse was born in France in 1869, around the time the telephone was invented. His parents owned a general store, and his dad wanted Henri to be a lawyer. When he was around 18, he became a lawyer. He first started to paint when he was 20. He had appendicitis, and while he was bed ridden his mother gave him a paint set. He discovered “a kind of paradise” as he later described it, and decided to become an artist, deeply disappointing his father.

Matisse went to art school but didn't like the realistic way he was being taught to paint. He wanted to use bolder and brighter colors. He wanted to be more expressive. His critics named him the “King of the Wild Beasts” because of his expressive artwork. He responded by wearing a sheepskin lined coat inside out to look more “beastly”.

He married and had 3 children. His wife owned a hat shop, and she supported him, making it possible for him to remain an artist. Late in his life he was confined to a wheelchair and began a new phase of his career creating cut paper collages, called gouache decoupee. He called this new technique “painting with scissors”. Matisse's art became famous for its bright colors and vivid patterns. He died at the age of 84 from a heart attack.

About the Art Work

Everything has a shape, right? But what exactly is a shape? Shape is a flat area surrounded by edges or an outline.

Artists use all kinds of shapes. Geometric shapes are precise and regular, like squares, rectangles, and triangles. They are often found in human-made things, like building and machines while biomorphic shapes are found in nature. These shapes may look like leaves, flowers, clouds—things that grow, flow, and move. The term biomorphic means: life-form (bio=life and morph= form). Biomorphic shapes are often rounded and irregular, unlike most geometric shapes.

An artist that loved to explore the possibilities of mixing geometric and biomorphic shapes was Henri Matisse. In the last few decades of his artistic career, he developed a new form of art-making: the paper cut-out. Still immersed in the power of color, he devoted himself to cutting colored papers and arranging them in designs. “Instead of drawing an outline and filling in the color...I am drawing directly in color,” he said. Matisse was drawing with scissors!

Matisse enjoyed going to warmer places and liked to watch sunlight shimmering on the sea. He often traveled to seaports along the French Mediterranean, also visiting Italy, North Africa, and Tahiti. *Beasts of the Sea* is a memory of his visit to the South Seas. In this work of art, Matisse first mixed paint to get all the brilliant colors of the ocean. Then he cut this paper into shapes that reminded him of a tropical sea. Lastly, he arranged these *biomorphic* shapes vertically over rectangles of yellows, greens, and purples to suggest the watery depths of the undersea world.

Discussion:

Why do you think Matisse titled this artwork *Beasts of the Sea*? What title would you give it?

What shapes do you recognize in *Beasts of the Sea*? Can you find shapes that remind you of:

playful fish

floating seahorse

curvy coral

sinuous eels

waving seaweed

spiral shells

You may introduce the following terms about shapes and discuss what types of shapes are in *Beasts of the Sea*. Geometric shapes are precise and regular, like squares, rectangles, and triangles. Biomorphic shapes are often rounded and irregular, unlike most geometric shapes.

Can you see patterns in this picture? Patterns are when lines or designs are repeated.

How many different colors do you see? Can you name some of them?

Project:

”Painting with Scissors” - In this project, students will create their own Matisse-inspired collage using shapes that they cut out from construction paper. Each student will select a large colored sheet of paper to use as the background on which their cut-outs will be glued.

Ask the students to decide on a theme for their collage (e.g., the sea, a view from a window, the memory of a vacation, or whatever they would like). Using this theme, the students will cut out various shapes (geometric and biomorphic) that represent the scene or theme they are creating.

Show how they can use both the positive and negative images of their cutouts. Positive images are when they use the actual shape that was cut. Negative images are when they cut out a shape and use the remaining area around the shape where you can see the background behind it. They can create the checkerboard effect by arranging their shapes onto different geometric colored blocks, similar to Matisse.

Encourage them to cut out all of their shapes first and arrange them on the large paper, moving, rotating, and re-arranging until they are satisfied. They may also cut out smaller squares of different colored paper to position the shapes onto. Then, they can glue everything into place at the end (instead of gluing as they cut). This is how Matisse created his masterpiece.

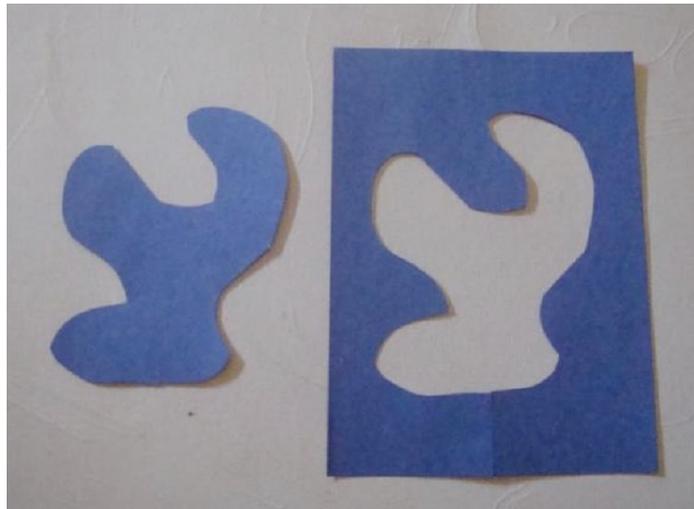
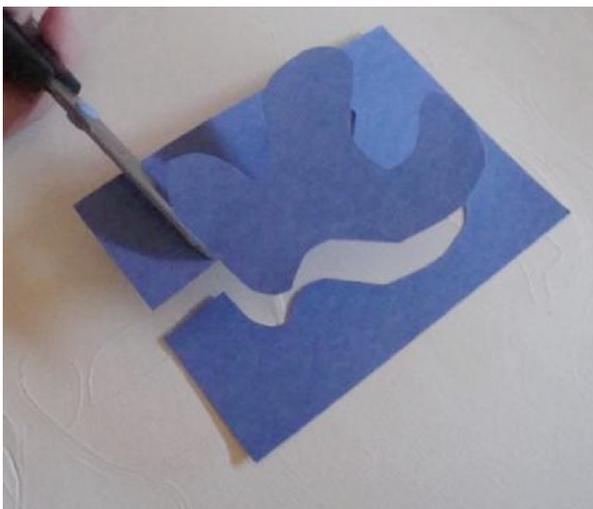
To create symmetrical (even) shapes fold the paper in half and cut out a shape from the folder side of the paper.



Note the positive image (on the left) and negative image (on the right).



To create asymmetrical (uneven) shapes place scissors at the edge of the rectangle and cut into the paper cutting a shape out of the middle. (Do not exit the shape at the edge.)



Here are some examples of in-process and finished products:

