



Painting Like Matisse

French painter Henri Matisse is one of the most important artists of the 20th century. He is most famous as a painter but he did not only use paint to create his artworks. As we will discover through making our own Matisse inspired artworks, he used other methods too.

WHO WAS MATISSE?

Matisse was an artist who lived from 1869 to 1954. Matisse was not always an artist. He started out as a lawyer. However, when he was ill, his mother bought him an art set. It changed his life. He described making art as a paradise. He decided to become an artist. He disappointed his father by giving up his law studies and studying art.

At first, he learnt traditional styles of drawing and painting. Later, he experimented and came up with his own style. He is famous for his use of bright colours and big bold shapes and patterns. In 1941, he became ill and struggled to paint. However, he still wanted to make art. It was his passion and it also gave him a way to experience the world when he could not go out as much. He came up with a new style. His assistants painted big sheets of paper. Then he cut shapes out and arranged them in different ways. He called it 'drawing with scissors'.

MATISSE'S CUT-OUTS

Matisse was inspired by plants, animals and the human body. He cut shapes and patterns straight into the colour. Some of the artworks look very simple and almost random. However, Matisse thought carefully about how to compose the different cut-outs. He thought about the combinations of shapes and colours. 'The Snail' (1953) has a spiral of coloured paper inspired by the spiral of a snail shell. 'Icarus' from 1947 has the simplified figure of a body and yellow stars against a blue background.



METHOD

1. Paint pieces of paper in bright colours. It is fine if you can see some brush strokes. It all adds to the character.
2. Whilst the paint is drying, look at some examples of Matisse's work. Can you see how the shapes are big and bold? Choose a theme for your cut-out. You could choose plants, animals or people like Matisse did.
3. When the paint is dry, you are ready to cut. Matisse did not draw or trace his patterns first. He cut straight into the coloured paper. Aim for big, bold shapes like Matisse - these are easier to cut too! Don't worry if you go wrong. After all, you might be surprised at how effective these so-called mistakes are!
4. Gather approximately ten shapes. You can also use the leftover pieces from your cut-outs. These are called the 'negative shapes' and they can be interesting too.
5. Arrange your cut-outs onto the large piece of paper. Try them in different places and compositions. You can use blue-tac to hold the pieces in place as you experiment. Which colours work well together? Why not try layering different shapes?
6. When you are happy with your composition, stick the pieces in place with glue.
7. Stand back and admire your work!

EQUIPMENT

- A large piece of paper or card for a canvas.
- Smaller pieces of art paper.
- Paint in various bright colours.
- Scissors.
- Blue-tac (optional).
- Glue.

EXPLANATION FOCUS

1. In the introduction, the writer says Matisse used 'other methods'. What methods are being referred to?
2. Why does the writer use the term 'so-called' mistakes?
3. How has the writer encouraged people to experiment when they are creating their artwork?
4. Can you find an example of a command? Why have these been used?
5. What has the writer used to organise this text?

VIPERS QUESTIONS

R

What job did Matisse's father hope he would do?

R

Why did Matisse begin to 'draw with scissors'?

R

What inspired Matisse in his art?

I

What evidence is there that Matisse was very determined?

V

What does *optional* mean?