LESSON TITLE: Matisse Maquettes

GRADE: Pre-K to 12th grade
SUBJECT: Visual Arts
DURATION: 45 minutes

LESSON OVERVIEW: Students will learn about Henri Matisse and his cut out work, then visually analyze one of his maquettes. After learning about visual art vocabulary and art elements such as complementary and analogous color, positive and negative space, organic and geometric shapes, and abstraction, students will then create their own maquettes for stained glass windows using Matisse’s cut out method.

LESSON OBJECTIVES:

• PRE-K – 1:
  o Make inferences about Henri Matisse’s artistic intentions when creating his cut outs by visually analyzing his work.
  o Participate in group discussions about artwork.
  o Use visual art vocabulary and/or identify art elements (color, shape, organic/geometric, complementary/analogous, space, positive/negative, abstraction) in discussions about artwork.
  o Demonstrate safe and proper procedures for using materials, tools, and equipment while making art.
  o Create a unique work of art that includes elements of self-expressions.

• 2 – 12:
  o Use symbolism and narrative when creating art work.

MATERIALS:

• Images of Henri Matisse The Dance, and the maquette of The Dance
• For Pre-K – 5th: Black construction paper (4.5” x 9”), 1 per student
• For 6th – 12th: Black or white construction paper, 9” x 12”, 1 per student OR 18” x 24”, 1 per 2 students
• For 6th – 12th: Brainstorm paper
• Color wheels
• Colored construction paper (3” x 4.5”/1.5” x 2.25”, or large scraps), in bowls to be shared between two students
• Small bowls/trays, 1 per student (for holding cut paper shapes)
• Scissors, 1 per student
• Gluesticks, 1 per student
• (optional) Sponges for sticky fingers, 1 per 2 students

LESSON OUTLINE:

• BRIEF BACKGROUND:
  o In the 1940s, Matisse began using a wheelchair after undergoing a cancer surgery that made it painful for him to walk and stand. Realizing that he would not be able to paint or work
using same methods he had used before, Matisse turned to a new artistic medium: cut paper. First, Matisse would have his assistants paint large sheets of paper with gouache, and then he would cut a variety of abstract and organic forms from these sheets. Matisse used his scissors like a pencil, and often referred to the act of cutting forms from paper as “drawing with scissors”. He would arrange the forms into a composition, playing with ideas of color, decoration, and space. These late works would come to be known as ‘the cut outs’.

Though the bulk of Matisse’s cut out work occurred in the latter part of his life, Matisse was experimenting with cut outs long before then. Matisse’s early 1930s work on The Dance, a large mural completed off-site for the Barnes Foundation, involved the constant pinning and rearranging of large cut-out forms on canvas as a method for planning out the piece. In the last few years of his life, Matisse drew connections between his cut out works and stained glass windows. Matisse believed that they both dealt with the use of light and color, although in different ways: the cut-outs were opaque, and made to reflect light; the stained glass windows were transparent and made to transform light. Additionally, Matisse believed that by creating stained glass windows, he could further bridge the decorative arts and the ‘fine arts’.

Matisse was commissioned to design many stained glass windows, some for religious institutions and some for private homes. To work out window designs, Matisse would recreate the measurements of the windows and create ‘maquettes’, or models, using cut outs. Matisse did not use penciled or painted blueprints for these works. His designs were often influenced by stories and events, natural forms and landscapes, or by specific emotions he wished viewers to feel when viewing the works.


**ART ACTIVITY:**

Before talking about Matisse, show students the maquette of The Dance. Encourage students to visually analyze the work with these questions:

- **What do you notice about the work? How is it arranged?**
  This is a cut out by Matisse. It’s a maquette, or a ‘working sketch/model’, for the large mural The Dance. Matisse used cut outs to help him plan out his final composition.

- **What colors do you see? Are they bright/dark? How are they placed together? Do the colors go together, or do they contrast each other?**
  Colors that contrast each other are *complementary* colors, and they are opposite each other on the color wheel. For example, red and green are complementary colors, as are blue and orange. Colors that go together are *analogous*, and are next to each other on the color wheel. For example, red, red-orange, and orange are all analogous colors. It may be helpful to use a color wheel to show this to students.

- **What shapes do you see? Are they straight, are they curvy?**
Matisse used organic and geometric shapes in his cut out work. An organic shape is inspired by nature and usually curvy, whereas a geometric shape has straight edges and isn’t usually found in nature.

- **What do you notice about the space around the shapes? What about the placement of the shapes? Are they close together, stacked on top of each other, or far apart? Is one side the same as another side?**

  Matisse often played with space in his cut out works, thinking about ideas like symmetry and positive and negative space. Symmetry in art occurs when one half of an object or work is the same as the other half. Positive space is what appears on ‘top’, or in the foreground, of a work; negative space is what surrounds/is behind the positive space in a work. Matisse often created new shapes using the negative space between his cut out forms.

- **Do the shapes remind you of anything? Is the image telling a story, showing a scene?**

  When creating both his cut out works, Matisse often distilled certain elements used in stories, events, landscapes, or nature into simple shapes. This process is called abstraction.

  - Students will be introduced to the art activity: making a maquette. Students will be thinking about using geometric and organic shapes, complementary and analogous color, positive/negative space, and symmetry as they create. Creating a cut out is a simple process – you’re just cutting and gluing – but the ideas and intentions behind it can make it very complex. **10 mins**

  - Before beginning their maquettes, students will hear about how Matisse often used stories, events, or natural landscapes to inspire his work with stained glass windows. 2nd through 5th grade students will think about landscapes and scenes from their life. Encourage students to brainstorm landscapes or scenes they may wish to depict in their maquettes. As seen in Matisse’s work, he used colors and specific shapes to suggest landscapes or natural elements. Encourage students to think about what aspects of their landscapes they would use shapes or colors. For example, a forest landscape could use more organic leaf shapes or rectangles for branches, and include colors like green, yellow, blue, and purple; a city landscape could have cloud shapes, bird shapes blues, whites, stars, sun and moon shapes, etc. **Write some of their ideas on a board. 5 mins**

  - Students will first be given a 4.5” x 9” sheet of black construction paper to create the symmetrical form of their maquette. Matisse often played with symmetry in his work. (If younger students are unfamiliar with symmetry, you may briefly explain it. This activity is perfect for demonstrating the concept of symmetry.) Demo folding the paper in half, “hot dog style”. Keeping the paper folded and holding it with the folded side on the left, demo how students will then use scissors to cut a line from the middle of the right side of the paper to the top folded corner of the paper. Encourage students to think about what kind of line they will be cutting – will it be straight? Curvy? Zigzag? Bumpy? What kind of line would go best with the landscape you’ve chosen? When finished, students will unfold the paper to reveal that it is symmetrical. **5 mins**

  - Now students will learn about and cut geometric and organic shapes out of colored paper. An organic shape is inspired by nature and is usually curvy, whereas a geometric shape has...
straight edges and often can’t be found in nature. Students will share squares of paper to cut out their shapes, so that they may choose their own colors. Student will NOT use pencils to draw shapes, but will instead “draw with scissors”, as Matisse did. Thinking about their landscapes, students must cut out at least 4 organic and 4 geometric shapes. The teacher may wish to demo how to cut out shapes like spirals, long zigzags, which Matisse used frequently in his work. When choosing colors, students may wish to choose complementary colors (colors that contrast/are opposite of each other on the color wheel) or analogous colors (colors that go together/are next to each other on the color wheel). Students will place these shapes in a bowl. 10 mins

- Students will learn about positive and negative space and arrange their composition. As they finish cutting out their shapes, have them look at the hole they’ve made in the paper from which they’ve cut their forms. Does it form a shape? This shape is negative space. The positive space is what is cut out, and the negative space is what’s left behind. Another way to explain it is that positive space is what’s on top, and negative space is what’s behind. As students think about how to incorporate negative space into their window, have them begin to arrange their pieces on their stained glass window form. Encourage them to think about symmetry, color, shape, and space. Encourage students with questions like, will you use analogous or complementary colors? Will you create a new shape by using the negative space between two of your cut out forms? Will the shapes mirror each other on either side? How will you represent your landscape or scene? Students may arrange and rearrange their composition until they are satisfied. 5 mins

- When students have finished arranging their shapes, they may begin gluing them into place. 5 mins

- Clean up. 5 mins

Lesson created by Melissa Revel