



TITLE: Blue Nude
ARTIST: Henri Matisse (1869 - 1954)
DATE: 1952
MEDIUM: lithograph
SIZE: image: 13 1/2" x 9 3/4" (framed: 19 3/4" x 16")
ACCESSION #: 2001.1.109
Additional works in the collection? Yes__ No X



ARTIST'S STATEMENT

"I believe, however, that the essential expression of a work depends almost entirely on the projection of the feeling of the artist in relation to his model rather than the organic accuracy of the model."

--Matisse, 1954: Flam, 1973, p. 151.

ARTIST'S BIOGRAPHY

Henri-Émile-Benoît Matisse was born in Le Cateau-Cambrésis, France in 1869. Throughout his artistic career, Matisse worked in a variety of media including painting, sculpture, printmaking, paper collage, textile design, stained glass design, and scenery sets for stage performances. Matisse's initial excitement and interest in art led him to take art classes everyday before he went to work where he served as a lawyer's assistant. By 1891, Matisse had abandoned his legal career to focus on studying art. He started at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts under Gustave Moreau, and in 1896 he made his first sale of four paintings while on exhibition at the Salon de la Société Nationale. Matisse, along with fellow artists that exhibited at the 1905 salon, created a scandal by emulating Impressionistic and neo-Impressionistic styles. This controversial style with its intense non-naturalistic use of color, caused an art critic to call the artists "Fauves" or "wild beasts." By 1909 the artist explored simplified figurative paintings as well as woodcut and lithographic prints. Matisse considered the last 14 years of his life "a second life," where he focused on creative exploration. In 1941 while convalescing from surgery Matisse began a gouaches découpées, or painted paper cut outs, series. Matisse found that the paper collages helped him to achieve a style for which he had struggled his entire life. In 1944 Matisse agreed to publish an entire book of his gouaches découpées, and in 1947 a collection of 20 images and text by Matisse entitled *Jazz* was printed. Matisse supervised a series of lithographic figurative studies entitled *Nu Bleu* that were based upon some of his earlier paper cut out figure studies. He was halfway through the series when he died in 1954.

CONTEXTUAL INFORMATION

Blue Nude is part of the last and most elaborate series of nudes made by Matisse between September 1951 and June 1952. The series, based upon some of his earlier gouaches découpées, was planned for a special issue of *la Revue Verve* entitled "Les Dernier Oeuvres de Matisse," which translates in English to "The Last Works of Matisse." The issue was delayed when Matisse died in 1954. In 1956, the series was printed as lithographs. The ones that were produced before his death have his signature, while those that were printed posthumously do not. A tribute issue to Matisse was printed by *la Revue Verve* (vol. IX, no. 35 & 36) in 1958. The *Blue Nude Series* lithographs are numbered by order of appearance in this tribute issue.

MEDIA DESCRIPTION

At first glance this *Blue Nude* appears identical to Matisse's earlier *Blue Nude*. However, his earlier series of nudes were created with gouache on paper cut outs, or gouaches découpées. In contrast, this *Blue Nude* was created as a lithograph. The artist recreated his design on a flat stone surface, such as limestone, or on a metal plate. Prints were then pulled using a special press so that an impression was created on the paper. It is interesting to note that lithography was originally invented in 1798 by Alois Senefelder of Germany. Color lithographs, or chromolithographs, first became popular with French artists such as Toulouse-Lautrec, Edgar Degas, and Paul Gauguin, during the second half of the nineteenth century.

REFERENCES

- Essers, Volkmar, and Henri Matisse. *Henri Matisse, 1869-1954: Master of Colour*. Köln: Taschen, 2002.
- Flam, Jack. D. *Matisse on Art*. London: Phaidon Press Limited, 1973.
- Girard, Xavier. *Matisse: The Wonder of Color*. Translated by Mark Paris. New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1993.
- "Matisse 7: Blue Nudes (1950-1954)" Spaightwood Galleries, Inc. (April 21, 2014), <http://www.spaightwoodgalleries.com/Pages/Matisse7.html>

RELATED TERMINOLOGY

Gouaches Découpées: a French term for "paper cut outs" that Matisse coined when creating his paper collage images.

Lithograph: planographic printing process using a smooth surface such as a stone or metal plate. Color lithographs are also known as chromolithographs.

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MATISSE CUT-OUTS



The Creole Dancer, 1950,
gouaches découpées,
205 x 120 cm.

FIGURE DRAWING WITH SCISSORS: K-5

Session Activity: The following activity will provide students with an opportunity to try Matisse's innovative approach to making gouaches découpées while also encouraging an understanding of gesture drawing and its use as an approach to representing the human figure.

Objective: Students will acquire knowledge of figure drawing and paper collage techniques. While using gesture drawing, students will draw figures in a variety of poses while gaining a better understanding of the difference between shape and form.

Materials: Crayons or soft pencils, sheets of newsprint, colored construction paper, squares of colored tissue paper, glue.

Activity Procedures: Begin the lesson by showing students images of Matisse's gouaches découpées. The students can discuss the variety of shapes used by Matisse to create abstract imagery of people in different poses. Discuss the way the figures are flat and lacking in volume. Next, students can be given the opportunity to volunteer to serve as models. "Stop action poses," for example sports and dance poses, should be explained. The teacher should then demonstrate the way to do gesture drawings. Once the students understand gesture drawings the students will take turns posing and drawing. Poses should be quick allowing for fellow students to create "scribble sketches." Each student should then select a favorite sketch. Using this sketch, students can begin to collage and fill in the figure drawings with the squares of colored tissue paper. Variety of color should be encouraged to further mirror the body of Matisse's work. Once completed the students should compare their completed poses to Matisse's.

Next Generation Sunshine State Standards: K-5

Big Idea: Skills, Techniques, and Processes

Enduring Understanding 1: The arts are inherently experiential and actively engage learners in the process of creating, interpreting, and responding to art.

Benchmarks: VA.4.S.1.1 - VA.4.S.1.4.

Enduring Understanding 3: Through purposeful practice, artists learn to manage, master, and refine simple, then complex, skills and techniques.

Benchmarks: VA.4.S.3.1 - VA.4.S.3.4.

Next Generation Sunshine State Standards: 6-12

Big Idea: Critical Thinking and Reflection

Enduring Understanding: Assessing our own and others' artistic work, using critical thinking, problem-solving, and decision-making skills, is central to artistic growth.

VA.912.C.2.4: Classify artworks, using accurate art vocabulary and knowledge of art history to identify and categorize movements, styles, techniques, and materials.

MOVEMENT THROUGH ABSTRACT CUT-OUTS: 6-12

Session Activity: In this activity students will extend the lesson plan mentioned above. First, the students will finish gesture drawings, abstract those drawings into paper cut-outs, and finally build-on by creating cut-out backgrounds to complete their compositions. Backgrounds will depict objects or scenes of choice that show movement.

Each student will "paint with scissors" in Matisse fashion. Students will paint papers with gouache in emotionally expressive colors. These papers will be cut for the gouaches découpées.

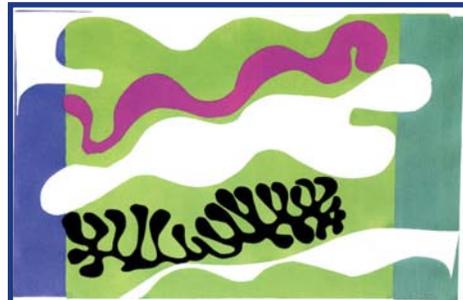
Objective: Students will understand the way to project movement through abstract cut-outs similar to Matisse's gouaches découpées. Students will also select colors to provide visual emotion.

Materials: paper, gouache paints, paint brushes, pencils, scissors, glue

Activity Procedures: Show the students some examples of abstract cut-outs made by Matisse that display movement, such as *Lagoon* and *Blue Nude with Hair in the Wind*. Encourage students to research Matisse's gouaches découpées technique through online search engines such as Google. Next, follow the directions in the lesson plan above. Then allow the students to observe the environment around them, and let them choose objects or scenes that include the element of movement. Students will choose from the available gouache colors based on the moods they would like to convey and paint the papers for the cut-outs. Students may sketch a series of abstract shapes with a pencil onto the dried painted papers before cutting them out. Next, the students will collage the cut-out shapes onto another sheet of painted paper in a manner that implies movement. Display and discuss the work.



Blue Nude with Hair in the Wind, 1952,
gouaches découpées,
108 x 80 cm.



Lagoon 1944,
gouaches découpées,
42 x 65.5 cm.