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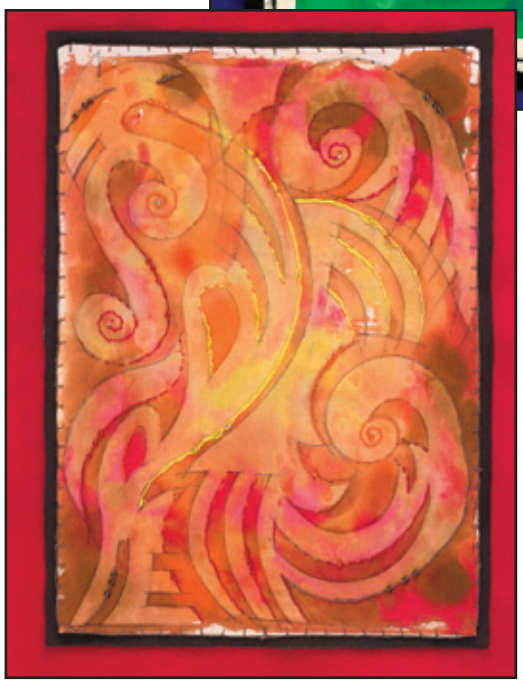
Matisse
Prints du Soleil

Harness the power of the sun to make cut-out Heliograph prints on fabric or paper

(art + science)



Wheelchair-bound after surviving cancer, French artist Henri Matisse poured a renewed energy and expressionism into his work, in what he called “a second life.” As a leader of the Fauvist style, Matisse was already renowned for his use of color, with 50 years of painting and sculpting behind him when he entered this new phase. He began creating cut-paper collages, a technique he called “painting with scissors.” Having been raised in a region of France that produced textiles for the Paris fashion industry, Matisse felt he had come full circle. He said, "You see as I am obliged to remain often in bed because of the state of my health, I have made a little garden all around me ... there are leaves, fruits, a bird."

Taking inspiration from Matisse's cut-out forms and love of nature, students can use sunlight or light from an artificial indoor light source to print onto a color-saturated swatch of canvas. The process of making a Heliographic print blocks areas from exposure to light so that paint dries more quickly in the areas that are fully exposed. Color migrates from beneath the masked places in the same way water flows onto a dry paper towel or sponge — moving from an area of high concentration to low — a process scientifically known as “diffusion.”

This process works on natural-fiber fabrics (such as unprimed canvas, muslin, or silk) and on watercolor paper, although results will vary according to the surface used.

NOTE: Liquid Watercolor is not permanent on fabric and should not be used on any surface that will be washed or laundered.

GRADES K-12 Note: Instructions and materials are based upon a class size of 24 students. Adjust as needed.

Materials (required)

All-Purpose Chipboard, 30-ply, 22″ x 28″ (13115-2232); share one sheet among six students

Painting surface, choose one:

- Utrecht® Unprimed Cotton Canvas, 9 oz, 52″ wide (07377-0172); share one yard among 12 students
- Quality Unbleached Muslin, 38″ wide (63104-1338); share one yard among nine students
- Canson® XL® Watercolor Paper 140 lb, 9″ x 12″ 30-sheet pad (10173-1023); need one sheet per student

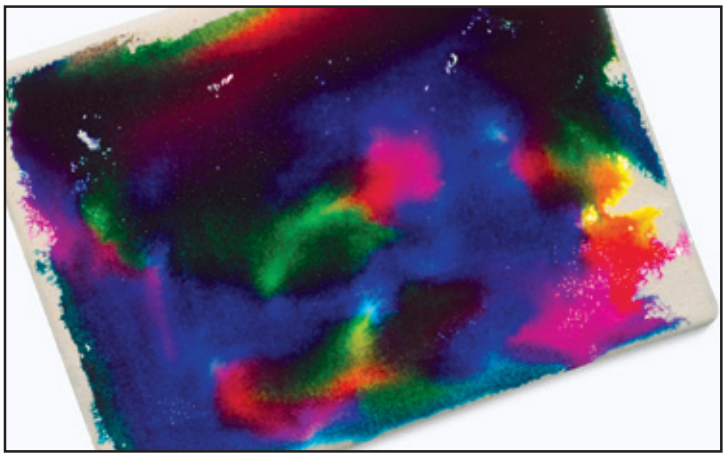
Blick® Construction Paper, Black, 9″ x 12″, 50-sheet pack (11409-2003); need one sheet per student

Blick® Liquid Watercolors, 8 oz assorted regular colors (not Metallic or Glitter) (00369-); share at least three colors across class

3M® Tartan™ Masking Tape, .94″ x 60 yd roll (24113-1094); share one roll across class

Foam Brush, 2″ (05114-1002); need one per student

Step 1: *Cut shapes from a sheet of black construction paper.*



Step 2: *Wrap fabric around chipboard or, if painting on paper, tape edges. Brush with clear water, then saturate with liquid watercolor.*

Step 3: *Place cut-paper shapes on paint and brush water on top of them. Set them outside or inside under a light source.*

Step 4: *Remove the paper shapes when the surface is completely dry.*

Preparation

1. Do not pre-wash fabric.
2. With a heavy-duty paper trimmer, cut chipboard or corrugated cardboard into 9″ x 11″ pieces. If printing on fabric, cut the fabric into pieces large enough to stretch over the cardboard, approximately 11″ x 13″.

Process

1. If using canvas or muslin fabric, wrap it around the chipboard and tape it to the back side. If using paper, use masking tape to create a thin border that will hold it to the chipboard.

   Canvas will create the sharpest prints, because it will have a slower dry time than muslin or paper, allowing more time for the paint to migrate into the unblocked areas. However, the process still works with muslin or watercolor paper.
2. Cut shapes from black construction paper. Use Matisse as an inspiration or create shapes from your imagination. Black paper will block the most light and provide the best contrast.
3. Brush clean water over the surface of the fabric or paper with a foam brush.
4. Spread liquid watercolor onto the fabric or paper. Keep the colors intense and saturated; don't spread them too thinly. The darker the color, the greater the contrast will be in the finished print.
5. Place the cut-out shapes on the painted surface and smooth them down, making sure there is good contact. Use a brush dipped in water or fingers to wet the cut-out shapes to make them lie flat and to keep the area as wet as possible.
6. Place the shapes in direct sunlight in a location that is protected from wind. If it isn't possible to place them ouside, leave them inside under an artificial light source. The closer the light source is to the artwork, the better. Drying time will vary according to heat, light intensity, wetness of paint, humidity, and other factors, but should take approximately one hour. The cardboard may warp a bit, and the edges of the paper shapes may curl, but this won't affect the print.
7. Black or dark color construction paper not only makes the strongest mask against the light, it also makes it easier to see when the shapes are completely dry. All dark areas will be gone and the shapes will be an even, matte color. Touch the fabric or paper to determine if it is dry.

Process

8. Pick up the paper shapes and remove the tape to release the print.

Options

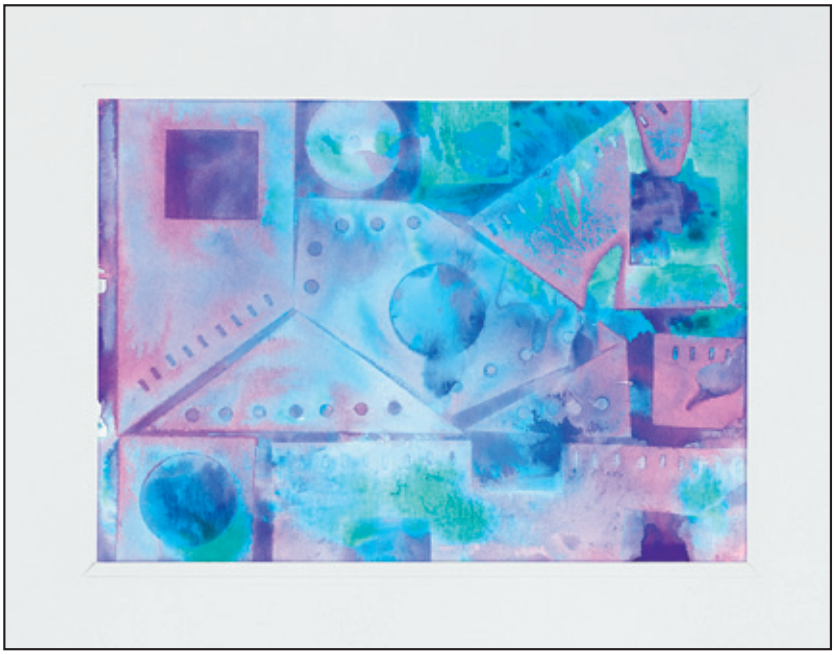
— Enhance the design with stitching, fabric pens and markers, more paint, colored pencils — or just leave the design as it is. The fabric may be stitched to a piece of felt for a background, or designed into a pillow, scarf, bag, or other decorative piece.

National Standards for Visual Arts Education

Content Standard #1 — Understanding and applying media, techniques, and processes.
K-4 • Students describe how different materials, techniques, and processes cause different responses.
5-8 • Students intentionally take advantage of the qualities and characteristics of art media, techniques, and processes to enhance communication of their experiences and ideas.
9-12 • Students conceive and create works of visual art that demonstrate an understanding of how the communication of their ideas relates to the media, techniques, and processes they use.

Content Standard #5 — Reflecting upon and assessing the characteristics and merits of their work and the work of others.
K-4 • Students describe how people's experiences influence the development of specific artworks.
5-8 • Students analyze contemporary and historic meanings in specific artworks through cultural and aesthetic inquiry.
9-12 • Students identify intentions of those creating artworks, explore the implications of various purposes, and justify their analyses of purposes in particular works.

Content Standard #6 — Making connections between visual arts and other disciplines.
K-4 • Students identify connections between the visual arts and other disciplines in the curriculum.
5-8 • Students describe ways in which the principles and subject matter of other disciplines taught in the school are interrelated with the visual arts.
9-12 • Students synthesize the creative and analytical principles and techniques of the visual arts and selected other arts disciplines, the humanities, or the sciences.



Watch the Lesson at:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dDnilEVUJoA