

GOLDFISH BOWLS

Inspired by Matisse by Karen Evans

My elementary students always enjoy seeing the works of Henri Matisse (French, 1869–1954). They particularly like his Fauve period with bright colors used in bold ways. I explain to them that late in his life, when he could no longer paint, he made collages out of brightly colored paper that he called “cut-outs.” “Decoupage,” artwork created by cutting and pasting pieces of painted paper, was invented by Matisse.

When his health and eyesight faded, Matisse used this art form so that he could continue to express himself through visual art. Painting required too much strength and energy—decoupage allowed him to work tactilely. Matisse cut out different shapes from paper that his assistants had painted under his direction. He would cut out many shapes—changing and rearranging the abstract designs as



ABOVE Kaho Miha, grade 3.

LEFT Nilka Figueroa, grade 3.

if “drawing with his scissors.” My students were fascinated by this information and by examples of his artworks.

After discussing these works, we decided to make a “cut-out” reproduction of Matisse’s painting, *The Goldfish Bowl*. We talked about how artists are inspired by other artists’ works. I showed them the comparison of *The Goldfish Bowl* with Roy Lichtenstein’s sculpture, *Goldfish Bowl II*. The two examples can be found in *How Artists See Animals*, by Colleen Carroll (Abbeville Publishing Group, 1996).

The project was completed in three one-hour sessions by following these steps:

- *Step 1:* Students chose a wallpaper sample for their background and glued this sample to their poster board. Tables were designed with black construction paper (at this point, the table was not glued down, but was put in position and traced). Colorful tissue paper squares were glued down around the tracing to represent a cloth design or abstract garden.



ABOVE Michelle Tran, grade 3.

BELOW Jayme Powell, grade 3.



MATERIALS

- Fish bowl templates
- One 11½" x 22" poster board per student
- Black, green, orange and white construction paper
- Crayons
- Blue and green watercolors
- Salt
- Glue (gel or white)
- Wallpaper scraps of various patterns
- Assortment of 2" x 3" tissue paper scraps

• *Step II:* Students were provided with a template to trace the shape of a goldfish bowl on white construction paper. Students who wanted to design their own shape certainly could, but were encouraged to make it at least 9" x 9". The wet-on-wet watercolor technique was discussed and demonstrated for the students. Students painted their bowls, and salt was sprinkled on each before being taken to the drying rack. Students loved the watery effect that the salt gave to the watercolor.



Blake Benfield, grade 3.

• *Step III:* Students cut out their fishbowl shapes and positioned them on their assemblage, but did not glue them down. Total composition, balance and design concepts, as well as examples of fish shapes, were shown and discussed. Students were instructed to design goldfish shapes, paying careful attention to size and number. Leaves of various shapes and sizes were cut from green construction paper. Some students drew veins on the leaves with crayons.

The students were now ready to assemble their work. The goldfish bowl, leaves and black tabletop were put into place and glued. The fish cut-outs were placed carefully and glued into position. All edges were checked to make sure that they were well attached.

The students had so much fun "drawing with their scissors" just as Matisse did in his final years as an artist. These decoupages made a very colorful exhibit in our school cafeteria, which the entire school enjoyed. ■

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