

Adventures in Art

“Paper cut-outs enable me to draw directly on colour . . . Instead of drawing an outline and filling in the colour . . . I draw directly into colour.”

Henri Matisse

Cut-Out Fun with

matisse

Make your own cut-outs
like Matisse!

Prestel



In the town of Nice on the French Riviera there is a very old building called the Hotel Régina. People say that there are strange goings-on in a certain room on the third floor . . . Sometimes, if you listen at the door, you can hear the oddest sounds and the light often stays on late into the night. A few months ago, an old man with a white beard moved in there. His name is Henri Matisse and he has just discovered something amazing—how to draw with scissors!

He is sitting in a wheelchair in his room, with paper scattered around him all over the floor, cutting out shapes—wonderful shapes—from huge sheets of coloured paper. Large, small, curved, wavy, round, pointed, zigzag shapes, squares, hearts, crosses, stars, leaves, crescents, apples, seaweed shapes, letters of the alphabet . . . every possible shape you can imagine. He has taken off his shoes and is shuffling the pieces of paper around on the floor with his bare feet to get a better look at them, arranging them with his toes, and all the while snipping away with his scissors.



snip-snip, snippety-snip

The walls of the room are covered with hundreds of cut-out shapes in patterns that go all the way up to the ceiling. “Drawing with scissors . . . cutting directly into colour . . .” mumbles Matisse, stopping for a moment to straighten a few particularly well-cut blue shapes on the wall.

He likes what he sees.

Lost in thought, Matisse gazes at the shapes he has made.

Suddenly, the wall seems to flicker before his very eyes. Everything begins to blur. The blue paper shapes move all by themselves. A graceful young woman, wearing not a stitch of clothing, sits down in front of Matisse. She crosses her legs and looks him straight in the eye.

“Henri,” she says in a quiet, gentle voice: “You have drawn me and painted me many times. And yet I hardly know you. Tell me, what is your greatest wish?”

Matisse thinks for a moment and says: “To see the world through the eyes of a child.”

The woman smiles. “The answer lies in your hands.”

“What do you mean?” asks Matisse. Then he looks down and sees the scissors in his hand and starts snipping away again, cutting shapes out of the coloured paper, getting better and better all the time.

. . . snip-snip, snippety-snip . . .

Quietly, rhythmically: snip-snip, snippety-snip . . . almost like a melody played on piano, saxophone and drums. Everything in the room seems to move to the beat, even the paper shapes on the wall.



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The young woman is no longer sitting cross-legged on the floor. She has stood up and has begun to dance to the music.

She swings her legs up over her head like an acrobat, then she takes a blue rope and sweeps it up over her head and down again beneath her feet. She is hopping and skipping in a graceful dance.

Soon, the walls of the room are too small for her, and her skipping rope keeps catching on the door frame and pieces of furniture.





Things are happening on the opposite wall, too. With a whoop of joy, another dancer leaps up and turns a cartwheel. She moves so fast across her orange mat that we just catch a glimpse of her black legs and arms among the white feathers of her dress.

Nearby, above a dark wooden chest of drawers and behind the flowers, something else is moving. Two large shapes—it's hard to tell whether they are figures or statues or even spinning tops or vases—start swaying to the rhythm of the music. It is not easy for them to keep their balance. The silvery-white shape on the left is a little lighter and more supple. The blue shape on the right is heavier and has difficulty keeping up with the figure on the left.



H. Matisse