Colourful CUT-OUTS

Henri Matisse developed a new form of artmaking: the paper cut-out. He used a pair of scissors to make shapes in different coloured paper in the stylised forms of figures, plants, and animals and arranged them in designs. Matisse was drawing with scissors!

The Parakeet and the Mermaid Henri Matisse, 1952

When Henri Matisse was making his cut-outs, he hardly ever threw anything away. He would cut out a shape and save the rest of the paper and use it too. You can see this in the artwork: *Composition, Black and Red (Composition, noir et rouge)* Henri Matisse, 1947.
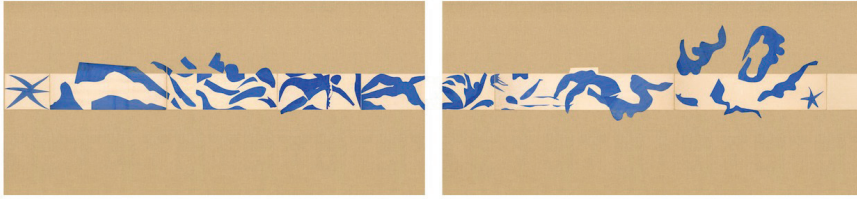
On the left side, the green leafy shape in the corner is the shape he cut out. This is called the positive image. Just above it is the leftover paper of the shape he cut out — you can see it has a leaf-shaped hole in the middle. The empty space is called the negative image.

Composition, Black and Red Henri Matisse, 1947

In this activity

you will use scissors and paper to create colourful cut-outs like Matisse.

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Activity: Create colourful cut-outs like Matisse

The Swimming Pool (La Piscine) Henri Matisse, 1952

Can you make some crazy shadow silhouettes with your own body on the wall or floor?

Let's draw with scissors to create our own colourful cut-outs.

What you need

- ◎ coloured paper
- ◎ a larger piece of paper to attach your shapes to
- ◎ scissors
- ◎ glue.

How do I do it?

1. Use your scissors to cut different shapes out of coloured paper.

What shapes will you make? Will you cut geometric shapes like squares, rectangles, and triangles that are found in buildings and machines, or will you cut out organic shapes that are curvier and more rounded like in nature and the figure?

What colours will you choose to go together?

2. When you have cut out your shapes, arrange them on a large piece of coloured paper to form a composition. Remember you might want to use the leftover cut-outs too!

Experiment with repeating the shapes or overlapping the cut-outs.

3. When you are satisfied with the design, glue the shapes in place.

Tip: Matisse painted white sheets of paper using gouache to create his own colours. You could also paint your own paper using acrylic paints and a wide brush.