

Leave a Trail!

Make a dynamic “paint trailed” book cover in the style of Matisse

Henri Matisse is considered one of the world’s greatest and most influential modern painters. He is most commonly known for his use of very vibrant colors, fanciful patterning, flattened and often abstract forms and graceful sinuous line work. When Matisse painted, he transformed his apartment into a stage set with props, luscious colors, and many patterns. He used his favorite objects ... a bird cage, a pewter jug, or a vase filled with goldfish, again and again. A pattern is made whenever a line, shape, or color repeats. It quickly becomes obvious that Matisse loved patterns! In some paintings, it becomes difficult to find a single object to which Matisse has not added pattern. See the painting “Purple Robe and Anemones,” in which Matisse used background colors as intense as the colors in the foreground. Therefore, the subject and the background have equal importance. Even though Matisse’s work often appears effortless, he painted a single canvas again and again before he was satisfied with the result.

Most people understand that Matisse used patterning often, but what is not widely known is that his upbringing greatly influenced his use of the portrayal of textiles in his work. A 2005 show of his work at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City was titled, “Matisse: The Fabric of Dreams — His Art and His Textiles.” The show included not only paintings and drawings by Matisse, but also actual textiles from the artist’s own collection. This show set out to prove how important Matisse’s upbringing was on his work. His family had been weavers in Bohain-en-Vermandois, in Northern France, for generations. The textiles produced were thought “daring,” and some think they may have helped form the artist’s own individuality and strong relationship to decorative materials. Through pattern, Matisse seemed to add extra energy to everyday objects.



Materials (required)

[Felt by the Yard](#), (63201-); need 1 yd of felt to cover six 5 1/2" x 8 1/2" sketchbooks (4 yds per class of 24)

[Detail Writers](#), Package of 6 (32929-1009); share three packages across class

[Blickrylic[®] Student Acrylics](#), Pint (00711-); share at least five colors across class

[Creativity Street[®] Embroidery Floss](#), set of 24 skeins (63100-1009); share one package across class

[Blunt Tapestry Needle](#), #18, pack of 12 (66903-1009); share one package across class

Optional Materials

[Playcolor[®] Textil Fabric Paint Stick](#), (01253-) (must be heat-set with iron)

[Sargent[®] Glitter Glaze](#) (00704-)

[Stick-It Felt Shapes](#) (63211-) (use additional fabric glue for permanence)

[Delta[®] Sobo[®] Craft and Fabric Glue](#) (23820-)

[Assorted Macrame Beads](#) (60709-1000)

[Chroma[®] Molten Metals Acrylics](#) (00688-)



“When I see a picture, I forget what it represents. All that is important to me is line, form and colors.” – Henri Matisse

Using brightly colored felts, paint applied by squeezing rather than brushing, and folding of the fabric to repeat pattern, a vibrant and very individual statement is made on a functional and useful piece of artwork — the book cover.

GRADES 5-12 Note: Instructions and materials are based upon a class size of 24 students. Adjust as needed.

Preparation

1. View the paintings of Matisse, focusing on patterning and color.
2. Fill Detail Writers with various paints.

Process

1. Start with a blank journal, sketchbook, or textbook in need of a cover. Lay the book open on the felt, and trace around it lightly, being sure to include the width of the spine in the size. Add a 3” border to all sides. Cut out.
2. Fold the felt in half where the middle of the spine of the book will be, but slightly offset the fabric so that the back protrudes about a 1/2” more to the right. With a black marker, make a small mark across the front and back sides to use as a registration mark (see Step 1). Crease the fabric to create a line where it is folded, then open it back up.
3. Using paint in a Detail Writer, “trail” the paint onto one half of the felt piece, to the right of the fold line. In this step, the outline of the general composition is made. An option, if a pre-drawn design is desired, use a Textil Fabric Paint Stick in a contrasting color to draw the design, then trail paint over the drawn lines. (When dry, the Textil paint should be heat-set for permanence.) Carefully fold the felt in half along the crease, aligning the registration marks. Press front to back to transfer the paint to the other half of the felt. Open the felt and continue by repeating this step. NOTE: Be sure to fold the fabric before the paint has dried. Work in small sections at a time if the paint dries too quickly. If too much paint is trailed on accidentally, it can be blotted with a piece of scrap felt.
4. Now, add patterning and bright colors using more Detail Writers. Use the process in Step 3 to add pattern to a particular area, fold the felt, aligning the registration marks, and press on the area to be transferred. Paint can be allowed to dry between colors, or if care is used, the process can be done when the other colors are still wet. Just be sure to press only where the latest areas are being transferred. A piece of newsprint can be placed on areas that have already been printed to avoid a second transfer. For larger areas of color, fill in with a Textil Fabric Paint Stick.
5. Once the entire piece has dried, it is made into a book cover. Fold the top and bottom sides in by 3”. These can be left loose or stitched with embroidery floss. Lay the book on top of the felt book cover with the top and bottom sides already folded in. Fold the right end over the right cover of the book. At the top and bottom edge of the cover, at the outside of the corner, add a few stitches with embroidery floss to secure. Repeat on the left side, pulling snugly, for a custom fit.



Step 1: Trace around a book onto felt, and cut out, leaving a 3” border all around. Fold the felt in half width-wise. Slightly offset the top half and draw a registration mark onto both edges of the felt as shown.



Step 2: Lightly sketch the layout for the composition on the right half of the felt with a Textil Fabric Paint Stick, or just start with paint. Begin with general outlining within the composition.



Step 3: Use paint in a Detail Writer to trail on lines and then add patterning. Fold the felt over, lining up the registration mark and press to transfer the paint trail. Repeat with as many colors and patterns as desired.

Options

1. Make a closure using a narrow strip of felt and a wooden bead.
2. Create a felt wall hanging using the process above. Hang on a dowel.
3. Add larger areas of solid color using a Playcolor Textil Fabric Paint Stick. Heat-set with an iron.

National Core Arts Standards - Visual Arts

Creating

Anchor Standard 1: Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.

Connecting

Anchor Standard 8: Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work.

