

Raoul Dufy

January, 2006 F.A.M.E. Artist

Docent costume suggestions: Wear bright colors, especially bright primary and secondary colors. An alternative suggestion is to wear beach clothes—shorts, Hawaiian shirts, etc.

Introduction

Do you remember the elements of composition? (*Show graphic*). Look at the clothes I'm wearing today, and see if you can guess which of these elements we're going to be focusing on (*Color*).

Psychologists have spent a lot of time and effort studying color, and they know that color can affect the way that we feel. (*Choose two volunteers, one wearing bright colors and one wearing dark colors*). For example, what do you notice about the colors these two volunteers are wearing? What kind of feeling do you get from each type of color?

Usually we think of colors as being "warm" or "cool" colors. (*Show color wheel*). Which colors do you think might be the "warm" colors (*Orange, yellow, red*). Which are the "cool" colors? (*Green, blue, purple*). How might you feel in a room that was decorated with lots of warm colors? (*Excited, happy, energetic*). The color orange is often believed to increase people's appetite, so restaurants will often have some orange decorations. How might you feel in a room decorated with lots of cool colors? (*Calm, peaceful, quiet*). Green is often a color that calms people down, so in settings where people might get nervous, like hospitals or waiting rooms, they often use lots of green.

But we can get very different feelings from the same color, too. Think about black for a minute. When grown-ups get very dressed up to go to a wedding or a fancy event, they often wear black tuxedos and dresses. But black is also a color often used for funerals and for mourning. There is even a holiday where black is one of the major colors—can you guess what it is? (*Halloween*). And what feeling does black represent on Halloween? (*Scary*).

Artists know a lot about how colors affect us. So an artist will choose colors very carefully so that he or she can express a certain feeling, and so that the person viewing the painting will have feelings about it.

Artist Biography

Our artist today loved to use lots of color, and he used color in some very unique and interesting ways. The artist's name is Raoul Dufy (Ra – OOL Do – FEE) and our painting is called *Mediterranean Scene*. (*Show painting*). As you can see, there is lots of wonderful color in this painting. I'm going to let you look at this for a few minutes while I tell you a little bit about Raoul Dufy.

Think about our artist's name. Where do you think he might have been born? (*France*). He was born into a rather poor family in 1877, and was the oldest of nine children. Like many of our artists, he didn't do very well in school. In fact, he spent more time drawing sketches in his books than he did actually reading! When he was fourteen, he went to work as a shipping clerk to help support his family. When he was twenty years old he enrolled in art school at night, so he would work at his job all day and then go to art school at night.

He was a good enough artist to get a scholarship to a famous art school in Paris called the Ecole des Beaux Arts. It was here that he learned to paint with both hands instead of just his left hand. When he was much older, in his '70's, he developed arthritis in his hands, but being able to paint with both hands meant that he could keep painting.

Dufy explored many types of painting, including Cubism, which uses lines and geometric shapes in paintings, and Impressionism, which paints an impression rather than the details of something. But even though he was influenced by many styles, he continued to change things and develop his own style. He once said of himself, "I don't follow any system. All the laws you can lay down are only so many props to be cast aside when the hour of creation arrives."

By the time he was forty, he had settled into a very unique style, involving lots of color. In fact, people would speak of something being "Dufyesque" (Do-fee-esk) when they saw the characteristic clear colors and lines. He painted thousands of paintings, many small enough to be hung in people's homes. Dufy believed that art should be usable, and should make everyday life more enjoyable, so besides painting he designed fabrics, pottery, book illustrations, and even advertisements. There's a story that a one of his shows, a rich society woman was very scornful of his work. However, she didn't realize that the dress she was wearing was made out of fabric he designed!

Dufy was a very happy person, with a happy marriage and homelife. He and his family loved music, and many of his paintings have musical themes. He also loved the Mediterranean Sea, and painted it often. He loved to paint pictures that made people happy and showed them having fun. He died in 1953, when he was almost 75 years old, and was buried on a hill overlooking the Mediterranean Sea.

The Painting

Do you remember the name of our painting? (*Mediterranean Scene*). Which element do you notice most in this painting? (*Color*). What color do you see the most in this painting? (*Blue*). Is this blue a sad, dark, dull blue? (*No*) No, it is a joyful, happy blue. Dufy painted in oil paints, but some of his paintings look almost like watercolors because of their clear, bright colors. Most artists will put their oil paints onto a palette and mix the colors before applying them to the canvas. However, Dufy developed a technique of thinning out his oil paints and applying them directly onto the canvas without mixing the colors. That is part of how he gets the colors to be so light and delicate. He also leaves sections of the canvas uncovered to allow the light to show through.

What kind of a day is it in this painting? (*Sunny, bright*). Do you think it's a warm day or a cold day? (*Warm*). Remember what we said about warm and cool colors? Is Dufy using mostly warm or cool colors in this painting? (*Mostly cool*). But if he's using cool colors and it looks like a warm day, how is he doing that? (*Answers will vary*).

Notice how there are many shades of color in this painting. Where do you see lots of shades of color? (*Each tree is a different color, and there are many colors of blue in the ocean and sky.*) Is the painting very still, or do you get the feeling of movement? (*Movement*). Why? (*Answers will vary: the lines on the ocean are choppy; the stick figures look like they're moving; the lines on the palm trees are jagged.*) Notice how Dufy uses black lines over patches of color to make the trees, people, and cars. Do you like this style of outlining? Look at these two trees (*point out one tree that is outlined and one tree that is not*). Which do you prefer and why? (*Answers will vary*).

Optional Art Activities

There are two different art activities today. The first one involves mixing primary colors to make secondary colors, and is best for the younger grades. The second one uses paint, and could be adapted for any age.

Color mixing:

Ask students if they know which colors are primary (red, yellow, blue) and which are secondary (orange, purple, green). Explain how you blend primary colors to make secondary colors (red and yellow = orange, blue and yellow = green, red and blue = purple), and ask them how they might make them lighter or darker (add black or white).

Have them take out a crayon and try to blend two colors to make a third. Why doesn't it work? (Because the colors are solid). Choose three volunteers to come up and give each a small bottle of food coloring. Have them drop a few drops of food coloring into a small jar of water, and then add a second color and stir to make a secondary color.

Painting activity:

Give each student a piece of white paper. Make sure they write their name on the back. Then put a small amount of yellow, red, and blue paint in a triangle. Give them a piece of waxed paper to put on top, and show them how to gently move the waxed paper to smear the paint and allow it to blend at the edges. Don't move the waxed paper too much, or the painting will become muddy. You want to have three distinct primary colors with some color blending where they meet. Gently peel off the waxed paper—you might want to have an adult do this for the younger kids—and discard the waxed paper.

Allow the paint to dry, and then look at the painting from different angles to see what it looks like. Then use a black sharpie marker to draw an outline of the thing that you see. And voila! A Dufyesque painting!