

Fauvism is for the Birds!

An Upcycled Hanging Bird Feeder

(art + science)

Derived from the Greek word koll or kola (meaning Fauvism is the style of les Fauves (a French term that means “the wild beasts”), a group of early 20th century artists whose works emphasized painterly qualities and strong color over the realistic use of color favored by the Impressionists. The paintings of the Fauves were characterized by seemingly wild brush work and strident colors, while their subject matter featured a high degree of simplification and abstraction.

It turns out that the colors used by “the wild beasts” are also favored by our wild bird friends. Even though Fauvism lasted only a few years (1904–1908), the intense colors and vibrant color juxtapositions of the movement are seen in beautiful tropical flowers and in birds’ plumage. It’s no wonder that bird species are attracted to the bright colors of flowers that harbor the sweet nectar or seed they’re looking for.

While early ornithology was principally concerned with descriptions and distributions of species, ornithologists today seek answers to very specific questions, often using birds as models to test hypotheses or predictions based on theories. Research has found that hummingbirds like red, orange and pink, while songbirds prefer colors that mimic trees and bushes, such as gray, brown and green. Some scientists think that specific birds such as bluebirds may be attracted to the colors of their species. Others believe that bright red will attract bluebirds and blue jays because they identify the color with berries. Why don’t you find out what colors the birds in your neighborhood prefer by making a hanging bird feeder featuring various bright, “beastly” colors?

GRADES K-12 Note: instructions and materials are based upon a class size of 25 students. Adjust as needed.

Preparation

1. Provide each student with an 8" x 10" canvas panel.
2. Collect a number of fairly thin materials with textured surfaces, such as fabrics, cardboard, wire mesh, tooling foil, embossed wallpaper, pressed leaves, string, and other materials.
3. Provide small bowls of acrylic gel medium to use as glue and as a final coat for the plate.
4. Provide textured gel mediums such as Liquitex Glass Beads, Blended Fibers or Ceramic Stucco (optional).
5. Tear or cut printing paper into 10" x 12" pieces.



Materials

Blick® Academic Canvas, 8" x 10", package of two (07167-0810); one per student

Blickrylic™ Student Acrylics, 6-Color Basic Set (00711-1049); share one set across class

Colorful Plastic Canvas, 10-1/2" x 13-1/2", assorted colors (63103-); need 1/2 sheet per student

Suede Lace, Medium Brown, 1/8" x 75-ft spool (63014-8021); need 3-ft per student

Aleene's® Quick Dry Tacky Glue, 4-oz (23884-1104); share two bottles across class

Snippy® Scissors, package of 12 sharp (57040-2009); need one per student

Blick® Scholastic Golden Taklon Brushes, Round Set of 6 (05385-0069); share four sets across class

Optional Materials

Craft Button Assortment, 1-lb (61495-1001)

Glass Globs, 1-lb (34924-1106)

Recycled wooden picture frames

Recycled window screen



Preparation

1. Gather old wooden frames from your attic or from thrift stores. Alternatively, a Blick® Academic Pre-stretched Canvas works wonderfully and assures a consistent feeder size across the classroom.

Process

1. If using a frame, remove old glass and backing material. If using a canvas, cut an "X" with scissors from the middle up to the inner corners of the stretcher bars. Fold the canvas toward the back and glue it in place. Some trimming may be necessary.
2. Paint all the surfaces of the frame or canvas in the style of the Fauvists. Use bright colors and energetic brushwork to embellish, and glue glass globes or buttons on the design for additional pizzazz. Flower, bird or Impressionist abstract motifs are great choices.
3. Cut a piece of Plastic Canvas slightly smaller than the overall size of the frame or canvas. Using Aleene's® Quick Dry Tacky Glue, attach the plastic canvas to the back of the feeder. At each inside corner of the plastic canvas, cut a small hole in the mesh through which to thread the suede lacing.
4. Thread pieces of suede lacing through the holes and tie each one around the feeder, further securing the plastic canvas. If the frame or canvas is a larger size, also tie the lacing around the four sides at the midpoint for additional support. Tie a knot joining the ends of the four (or more) strands, fill the frame with birdseed, hang it from the branch of a tree, and enjoy!

Options

- Use old window screen mesh as another upcycling option. If the screen is metal, use caution handling the edges.
- Use two to three thin coats of Plaid® Outdoor Mod Podge™ (O2916-1008) over the finished painting to further weatherproof the feeder.



Step 1 — If using a canvas, cut an "X", fold back and glue to the back side.



Step 2 — Paint in the style of the Fauves — bright colors and energetic brushstrokes!



Step 3 — Attach plastic canvas to the back side with tacks. Tie suede lacing in all corners, gather and tie at the top, then hang and enjoy!

National Standards for Visual Arts Education

Content Standard #1 — Understanding and applying media, techniques and processes

K-4 Students know the differences between materials, techniques, and processes.

5-8 Students intentionally take advantage of the qualities and characteristics of art media, techniques, and processes to enhance communication of their experiences and ideas.

9-12 Students apply media, techniques, and processes with sufficient skill, confidence, and sensitivity that their intentions are carried out in their artworks.

Content Standard #6 — Making connections between visual arts and other disciplines

K-4 Students identify connections between the visual arts and other disciplines in the curriculum.

5-8 Students describe ways in which the principles and subject matter of other disciplines taught in the school are interrelated with the visual arts.

9-12 Students evaluate the effectiveness of artworks in terms of organizational structures and functions.

