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## Art Masterpiece: "Hunt's Vase" - Janet Fish

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**Keywords:** Primary and Secondary Colors, Realism, Color & Light

**Grade:** 1st

**Activity:** Painting a School of Primary & Secondary Colored Fish



**Meet the Artist:**

*"The real structure of the painting comes from the movement of color and light across the entire surface. What matters is the complex relationship of color and form from one area of the painting to another, eventually everything is intertwined."*

A Janet Fish painting is a celebration of **light** and **color** that continually delights the eye and engages the mind. Fish's style of painting is called **Realism**, which is a style that show real everyday life and objects as they are. Her paintings invigorate the still life form, both by the energetic way she paints and the often witty and ironic combinations of objects that she depicts. Glass bowls overflowing with fruit, exotic vases filled with vibrant flowers and seashells, are among the objects that are precisely arranged and rendered in beautiful strokes of vibrant color.

Fish attributes her fascination with light and intense color to having grown up amid the dazzling brightness and vibrant tropical colors of Bermuda. An artistic family also contributed to Fish's early interest in art: her grandfather was Clark Voorhees, the American Impressionist; her mother and uncle were sculptors; and her father occasionally taught Art History. She attended Smith College, where she received a B.A., before earning a Master's Degree in Fine Art from Yale in 1963. After graduation Fish moved to New York City. Her paintings from the late 60s and early 70s are studies of transparent objects in which she begins her life-long exploration of the nature and substance of light. Since 1978, she has spent half the year in New York and half in the Green Mountains of Vermont. The shift to Vermont coincided with the incorporation of still life, human figures and landscape into increasingly complex scenes in which color, light, and shadow are masterfully handled.

## **Activity: Painting a School of Fish Using Primary and Secondary Colors**

### **Process:**

Discuss the setting of the still life oil painting. Ask students questions about the lines, shapes and colors. Can students tell where the light source is coming from, left side, right, or over head? Ask if they know what **primary** & **secondary** colors are. Does the painting look like something in real life, or imaginary? What does a **realist** painter paint? (Everyday objects, people or places in life, the way they actually look).

### **Supplies:**

12" x 18" White paper

Large & small oval templates

Pencil

Black waterproof marker

Red, yellow, blue tempera paints (palette for each child...I know, lots of prep!)

White tempera paint (to mix with blue for the ocean water)

Paint brushes

Water containers for cleaning brush between stages

Paper towels for drying brush between stages

Black oil pastel

### **Drawing the Fish:**

I make oval templates (3 lg. & 3 sm.) for the children. You don't have to of course, but it speeds up the lesson. Ask students to trace 3 big oval templates and 3 little oval templates with a pencil. Draw over the pencil with a permanent marker, then add tails, fins, eyes, etc., but no designs...yet!

### **Painting the Primary Colors:**

Pass out a paper plate/tray/palette, with yellow, red and blue tempera paint (one for each student). Ask the children to paint one big fish yellow, one big fish red and another big fish blue. Demonstrate the importance of cleaning their brush.

### **Painting the Secondary Colors:**

Now for the mixing! Take a tiny scoop of yellow and a tiny scoop of red and mix on the palette. Once they've created their orange, have them paint it on a baby fish. Do the same for blue & yellow to make green, and red & blue to make purple.

### **It's really common for some things to happen:**

- A child will trace more big fish than small fish.
- A child will paint more than one fish yellow because the paint feels real good and he just can't help himself!
- The child can't resist mixing all the colors together.
- The child gets busy mixing all the colors and makes beautiful designs on his fish (yea!)

**For all of these problems, don't correct or point them out. The lesson is in the discovery!**

### **Adding Value: Painting the Sea**

After all the fish have been painted, it's time to bring out a tray of white and blue paint. You can put these in a well-type palette so that the kids can share. Instruct students to scoop small amounts of each color, mixing the blue and white directly onto their paper to create the ocean water. Kids LOVE this part...some areas are light, some dark. It's totally within their control!

### **Outlining and Defining: Optional, if time permits.**

If their painting is dry, have students use a black oil pastel to outline and add details to fish if they wish too.

