Rousseau’s Rain Forest
By Janis Doukakis

Objective:
Students become acquainted with Henri Rousseau’s life and art, and then create their own fantasy rain forest painting inspired by his work.

National Core Arts Standards
Creating: #1, 2, 3
Presenting/Producing: #5
Responding: #7
http://www.nationalartsstandards.org/

Vocabulary:
Compose
Horizon
Foreground
Middle Ground
Background
Tint
Shade
Cohesive

Materials:
Tempera Paint
Brushes
Paper 18 x 24
Pencil
Black Marker
www.greatartstartshere.com
www.fabercastell.com

“Nothing makes me so happy as to observe nature and to paint what I see.”
—Henri Rousseau 1844-1910

Grade Level: 2nd - 6th grade
Time Required: 3 45-min. class periods
Henri Rousseau, 1844-1910 was a French painter known for his imaginative art of lush jungle scenes with wild animals and exotic flowers; amazing paintings he created all without ever leaving France. Rousseau found his inspiration for his paintings from postcards, magazines, and visits to the arboretum and zoo. His exotic animals were also drawn from toys and figurines bought in Paris gift shops. His charming paintings were known for their uneducated and naïve style. Their unrealistic scale, vivid colors, and dramatic quality gave them a dream-like feel. Search Rousseau for more on his life and works.

1. To begin, have students establish a foreground, middle ground, background and horizon line. Discuss types of animals to include. Study Rousseau’s jungle scenes and notice his fluid, stylized drawings and repeated shapes.

2. Compose your scene. Demonstrate how to create a dense jungle scene by sketching plants and animals to the middle ground, then leaves, flowers and grass to the foreground. Use large, simple repeated shapes.

3. Mix color. Begin with the background and paint the sky in blue or dreamy sunset colors. Demonstrate how to create a variety of greens by mixing paint—add blue or black for darker shades and add yellow or white for lighter tints.

4. Paint your picture. Create contrast with the use of dark, medium and light colors and shades. Repeat colors throughout the painting to create a cohesive look. Finally, give your painting a stylized look by adding a black outline to everything.