"Expressive Skittle Portraits"

Objective: Students will create expressive self-portrait mosaics while using self-control to not eat the art supplies.

Materials

- Digital Camera and Photoshop
- Cardboard and White Glue
- Skittles, lots and lots of Skittles

Motivation

- Look at Christian Faur's crayon mosaics.

- Learn about applying Photoshop gradient maps and mosaic filters. This is linked to a description on Ian's blog.

- View information about the entire process and look at finished examples on the Art of Apex blog.

Step 1: Set the Stage with History

We looked at mosaic artists across time, from byzantine art to current mosaic artists like Christian Faur. There are lots of examples of mosaics created using modern materials such as t-shirts, tinted coffee cups and even rubix cubes.

Step 2: Take and Edit Photos

Students posed for photos. We set up a light source to create contrast and value. Each student selected an emotion which was displayed through his or her facial expression.

The photos were imported into Photoshop where we applied a gradient map. This allowed the colors of our photos to match the colors of the Skittles. Next we applied the mosaic filter. This filter breaks the photograph down into small squares. Each square represents one Skittle. These images were printed out in color and served as references for the rest of the project.

Step 3: Create Mosaics

Using their printed images as maps, students began the process of gluing Skittles. Large sheets of cardboard were used as canvases. Each Skittle was held in place using white glue. Most students developed a system to correlate the printed image and each Skittle they glued down. It is easy to get lost, so they would cross out the square on the image whenever they glued down the matching Skittle.

Tip: Find a balance with the number of squares you use: too many and you need too many Skittles, too few and the image is unrecognizable.

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