

This year started out a little differently for my 11th-grade art class and me. The art program at my school is growing, and with limited space, I found myself teaching an art class in a new room that was not set up for the “art experience.” I needed to do something that would focus the students who were uncomfortable with their new surroundings, and yet would not require a great deal of supplies or create a mess. With these requirements, I developed a project I called “Close to Mosaic Drawings.”

The main source of inspiration for this assignment, as the name indicates, was the recent work of the painter Chuck Close. We began the project by reading an article on the artist. We then viewed and discussed a video on his life and work. The beauty and scale of his works impressed all the students. They were amazed that when viewers are in close proximity to a Close canvas they see only squares of colored patterns, but once viewers stand back, an image of a person’s face appears.

Students were also impressed with Close’s artistic patience. We discussed how Chuck Close emphasized the importance of all areas of his paintings. Each square on his grid is equally important to the entire work, regardless of whether it is a part of the background or a prominent facial feature.

We also looked at the work of Robert Silvers, who creates “photo-mosaics.” He pieces together thousands of photographs, based on value and color, to ultimately create a new and larger image.

The project began with students selecting a photographic image to work from just as Chuck Close does. They selected images from magazines that were at least 4" x 6" in size, but larger is preferable. The smaller the image, the more difficult it is to see details. Students were to select images with a good range of values from very light, through the gray tones and into very black. The image also needed a strong illusion of volumetric forms through the contrast in values. The actual subject matter was left up to them. Any subject matter seemed to work as long as it was not overly complicated or too simple.

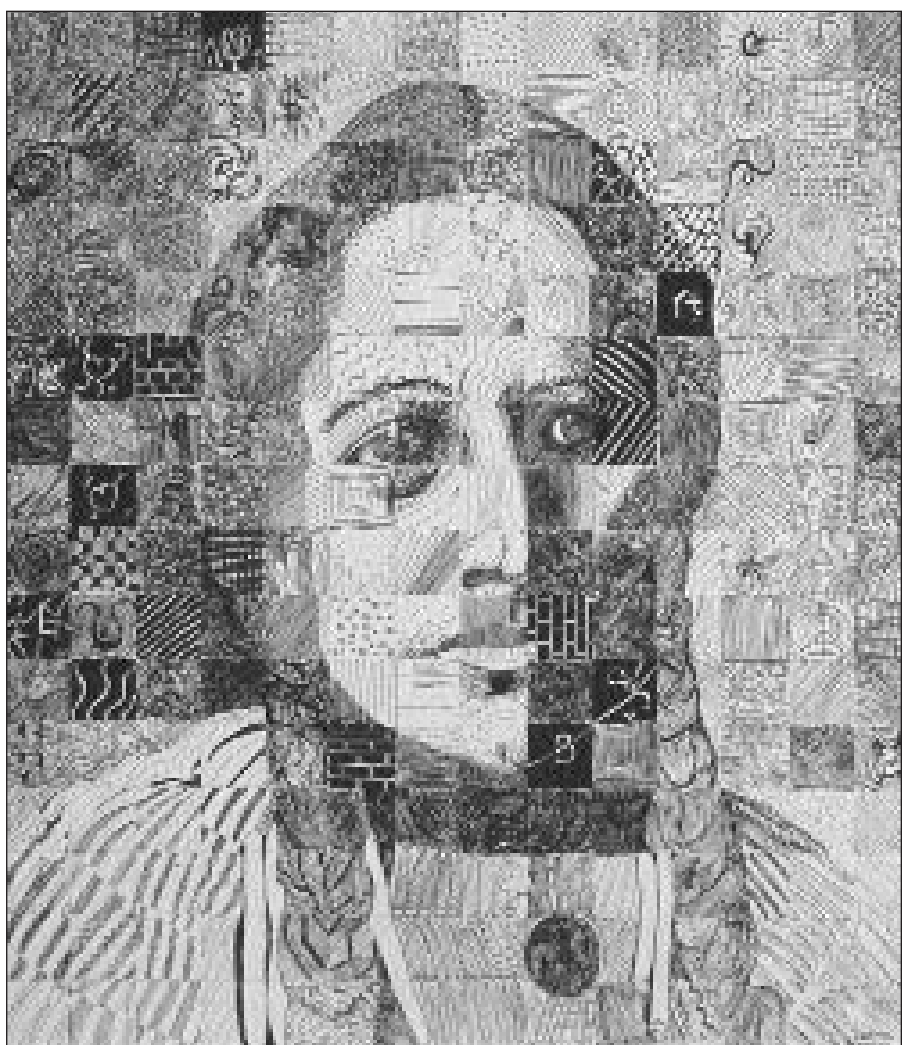
Once they have selected their images, students are given 10" x 14" sheets of mayfair paper. Using pencils to create light lines, the students draw grids that are 1" x 1" in size. The actual size of the grid may vary depending on the format of the photographic image with which students are working.

A grid is then drawn over the top of the photographic image, or a photocopy of the

image, so there are exactly the same number of squares, vertically and horizontally, on the image as on the drawing paper. A photocopy of the image works well because it makes the image black and white and students can see the value scale easier.

Students then began to translate and transfer each section of the photographic image to the drawing paper. The big difference from the standard grid drawing that students often do is that they are recording value changes rather than an exact reproduction of the image. Each section of their photographic image must be studied for light, gray and dark values and then recorded in the corresponding square of the grid on the drawing paper. The way in which they record the values is what makes this drawing so special.

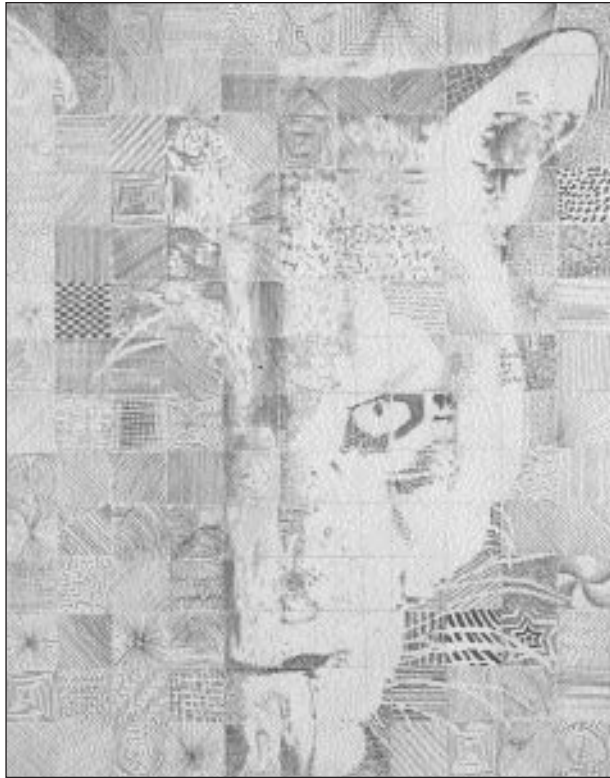
They must use a pattern, linear arrangement or texture of their own creation to fill in each square so that the values



Besima Hodzic

CLOSE to MOSAIC Drawings

by Paul Zabos



Michael (Zhong) Lee



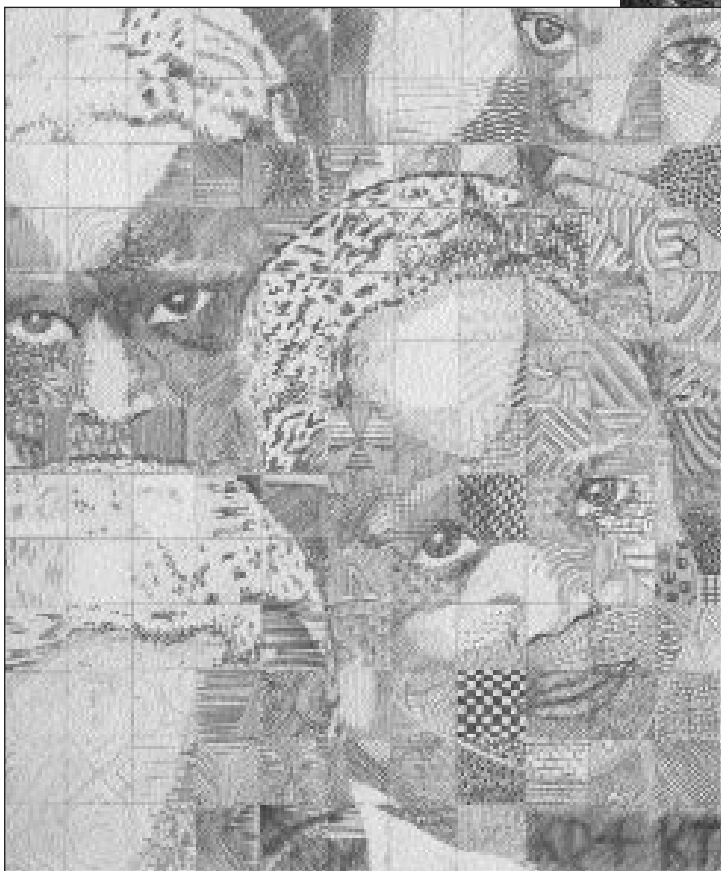
Tina Mellwrick

found in the square on the actual photograph are recorded on the drawing paper. Each square does not need to be completely different as long as similar ones are spread throughout the drawing—but a large variety does look great. Up close the drawings look like grids of creative markings, but when viewers stand back from the works, a fantastic black-and-white image appears from the markings. The values create this illusion of volumetric form.

This project does take time to successfully complete. My students averaged about 10 squares an hour. A 10" x 14" drawing took about 14 hours to complete. Students were allowed to use graphite pencil or a very fine-tipped felt pen. Once completed, the students who used felt pens erased the pencil grid lines they had put on their drawing paper. The felt-tipped pens turned out to be bolder than the pencils and in the future I will strongly encourage all my students to use these pens.

As you can see, the results were terrific. All the student artists were very impressed with their work, as were other students and staff throughout the school. ■

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Kai Deneve