

Why Might Byzantine Artists Have Created Mosaics?

Core Competency: Critical Thinking

To complete this project, you will need a printout of a color photo of a person's face. If you do not have a color printer, you may use a black and white printout and just follow the colors as they appear on your screen. The photo should be approximately 2 ½" by 4" in size. You will also need scissors, six different colored sheets of construction paper, and glue.

Byzantine artists often used mosaic to create images. Explore this technique by creating a paper mosaic.

1. Place the picture of the face on a table in front of you.
2. Cut out small pieces of construction paper (approximately ¼" by ¼") to employ as the mosaic "tiles," using colors similar to those in the face.
3. Following the design on the picture, paste the cut pieces of construction paper directly on top of the face.
4. Place similar colors of construction paper over similar colors on your picture (so, for example, you would paste red or pink construction paper over the mouth on your face). The picture should still be recognizable as a person's face even with the cut pieces of construction paper on top.
5. Place the cut pieces of construction paper close together and cover the entire face.
6. When you are finished, you should not be able to see any of the original image.

Once your mosaic is complete, consider the effect by answering these questions:

- How is your mosaic different in form and style from the original picture of the face?
- Would you describe your mosaic as representational, abstract, or nonobjective? Why?
- How is your mosaic similar to and different from the Byzantine mosaic shown in Chapter 14 (figure 14.11)?
- Now that you have completed this project, and knowing what you do about Byzantine art, why do you think that Byzantine artists might have chosen the medium of mosaic to create images?
- How did the medium help Byzantine artists achieve their goals?