Abstract Trees

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Visual Art Standards:

2.3 Create a drawing, using varying tints, shades, and intensities.

2.4 Create increasingly complex original works of art reflecting personal choices and increased technical skill.

4.3 Develop specific criteria as individuals or in groups to assess and critique works of art.

4.4 Change, edit, or revise their works of art after a critique, articulating reasons for their changes.

Elements and Principles of Art demonstrated in lesson:

- Color
- Shape
- Balance
- Movement
- Pattern
- Variety
- Unity

Curriculum related to lesson:

- Math and Science (pattern in nature)

Introduction:

Abstract art is taking parts away from real things. Taking the shapes from trees is the motivation for these abstractions. Oil pastels will be explored. Negative spaces should be understood.

Materials:

- 12” x 18” black construction paper
- Oil pastels (Large sets with 24 or 48 colors allow for many more color options. The pastels can be shared.)
- Photos of trees from the internet or magazines. Or take a walk around campus observing the trees.

Directions:

Review different types of trees. You can use the tree trunks or branches to begin. Expand the lines to the edges of the paper. Create shapes in the negative spaces (the shapes in-between the branches).
Enlarge parts of the tree, as leaf shapes, or seed pods. These can go in the negative spaces too. Use any color you want. Make patterns with the colors. The colors can move the viewers’ eyes around the drawing. Repeating colors and patterns bring movement to the artwork. It also gives it unity.

Add dots or lines in patterns to form the trunk.

Be creative. Sign your name.

Form small groups of students. Let them discuss each other’s art. Here are some questions for discussion:

Do the colors chosen work together?

Are the shapes balanced?

Does your eye travel through the artwork? Movement in the shape? Movement in the color? Movement in the patterns?

Does the painting have enough variety? too much (chaotic)?
Do you think your art could use improvement? Do the other students think it is finished? 
Would you like to make another abstract?

Conclusion:

The pieces make wonderful displays. When hung, students can see the many solutions to the problem of abstracting trees.