A. Lincoln by Richard Schlatter
ArtPrize 2017: Public Vote Grand Prize Winner

Artist and graphic designer Richard Schlatter collected 24,000 pennies to create this monumental 8’x12’ portrait of 16th U.S. president Abraham Lincoln. The mosaic image is constructed with different hues of oxidized copper pennies to create shadow and light, and steel pennies from WWII represent the white shirt.

Pennies are coated with copper, and oxidation happens when copper is exposed to air, resulting in a color change that is similar to rust forming on iron. Our eyes blend the various shades of the individual pennies together to create the image, much like how individual pixels make an image on a computer screen. Optical mixing techniques have been used by many artists who work in painting, photography, and video.

Creative Challenge: Penny Pixel Rubbing

Pointillism was an 1880’s style of painting using points of color, and with the advent of computers pixelated images composed of smaller images have become popular ways to express an idea.

- Place a sheet of paper over the penny and make a rubbing of the coin’s surface with the edge of your pencil lead. Using more or less pressure, you should be able to make rubbings that are lighter or darker.
- Create your own pixelated image by moving the paper and flipping the penny to make multiple rubbings in different shades. Aim to fill your entire sheet of paper.
- Take the penny and your rubbing home, and try this investigation to see how acids change the surface of metals: Dip the penny in water and rub it with cotton, does anything happen? Now try the same process with white vinegar or lemon juice, and see what changes.

Bring this card home with you. COLLECT ALL 12 cards by completing ArtPrize 10 Creative Challenges!

STEAM education is an approach to learning that blends science, technology, engineering, art, and math to engage students in problem solving and exposes them to a variety of practical skills and career paths.

ArtPrize LABS sponsored by Grand Valley State University, Herman Miller Cares, and switch