“Contour Self-Portraits”

Objective: Use different contour line techniques to create self-portraits.

Materials
- Mirrors
- 6”x18” construction paper
- Black permanent markers
- Watercolors in primary colors

Motivation
- Read parts of *Alexander Calder: Meet the Artist!* by Patricia Geis.
- Discuss and explore images of Calder’s wire sculptures, focusing on the element of line.
- Discuss the difference between contour line, continuous contour line, and blind contour line.

Step 1: Practice
Have students practice all three types of contour line drawings with pencil. You may want to create a visual that shows the difference between the three for students to reference.

Step 2: Draw
Split or fold the large piece of paper into three equal parts. In the top section, have students create a regular contour portrait. In the middle section, have students create a continuous contour portrait. In the bottom section, have students create a blind contour portrait.

Encourage students to use the mirrors and take their time.

Step 3: Add Color
Have students use the watercolors to paint some of the closed shapes in their pieces. If you’d like, review the primary colors by limiting students to red, yellow, and blue.

Tip: When talking about continuous line, tell the kids to pretend their markers are “stuck” to the paper.

Tip: Encourage students to observe what they actually see in the mirror instead of what they think they should be seeing.

Tip: You may want to pre-fold the papers to make the three-way split more obvious for the students.