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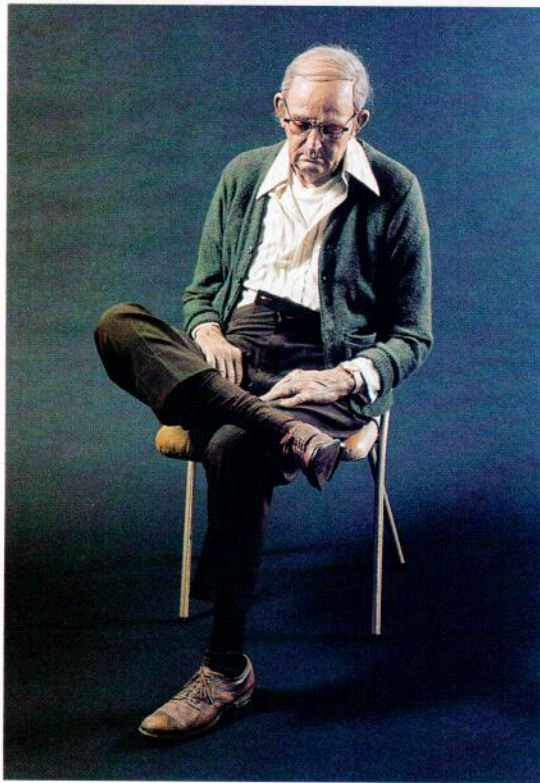
Texture

Key Vocabulary

texture
real texture
implied texture

IMAGINE A LIFE IN WHICH EVERYTHING had the same surface look and feel. Fortunately, our world is full of a rich variety of surfaces that provide us with both information and visual pleasure.

One of the features of surface quality is *texture*, the physical surface structure of a material. Woven fabrics, for instance, have particular textural surfaces. They range from the closely knit fibers of silk to the heavy weave of burlap. We can often readily identify a material by its texture: glass is smooth and slick; sand is gritty and fine.



6-1 Polyester and Fiberglas™—the materials used to create this sculpture—help make it look so realistic that from a short distance, an observer can be fooled into thinking it is a real person.

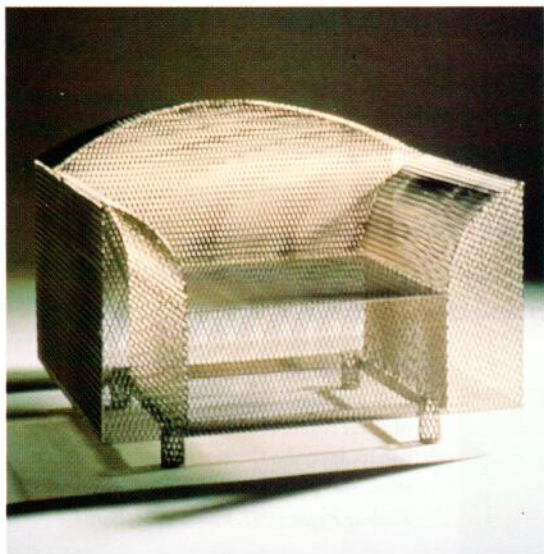
Duane Hanson (1926–96). *Old Man Dozing*, 1976. Cast vinyl polychromed with oil and mixed media, 48" x 24" x 38" (121.9 x 61 x 96.5 cm). Estate of Frederick R. Weisman.

6-2 Some artists delight in depicting textures as realistically as possible. Here, a remarkable number of different textures are represented.

Anna Alma-Tadema (c. 1865–1943). *Interior of the Gold Room, Townshend House, London*, c. 1883. Watercolor with scraping over graphite on paper, 20 7/8" x 14 1/8" (53 x 35.9 cm). The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, Missouri. (Bequest of Milton McGreevy).

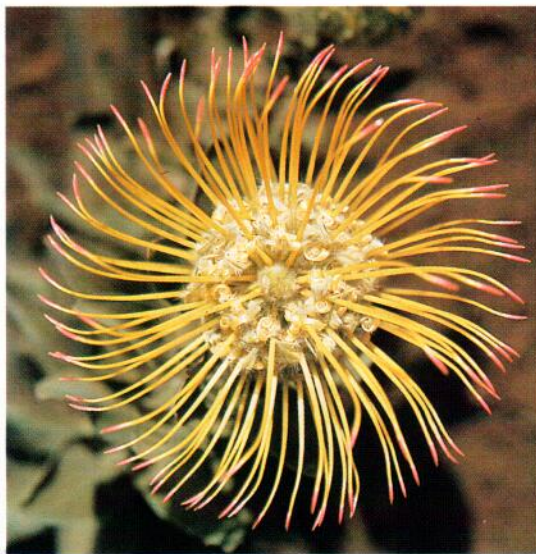


Texture might create diverse effects in a design. Just as some artists or craftspeople may focus on line, shape, or color, others concentrate on texture to capture a particular look or feel. In this chapter, you'll explore a wide range of textures, their effects on the viewer, and various methods of incorporating them into your own art.



6-3 Designers sometimes use an unexpected texture to add an element of surprise to their work.

Shiro Kuramata (b. 1934). *How High the Moon* armchair, 1986. Nickel-plated steel, 28 1/4" x 37 3/8" x 32" (71.8 x 94.9 x 81.3 cm). Manufactured by Vitra Inc., Basel. Photo courtesy of Vitra Inc.



6-4 How would you describe the texture of this flower?

Pinwheel/Protea. Photo by J. Scott.



6-5 Often, the forces of nature can change the texture of an object. These river rocks have been made smooth by the force of flowing water. What other natural or manufactured objects undergo such a change?

River rocks. Photo by N. W. Bedau.

Note it

The outdoors presents many different natural textures. Some are obvious, such as the bark of a tree. Others are more subtle, such as fine spider webs or frost on a window pane. Write brief descriptions of outdoor textures that interest you. Make a small sketch next to each description. Try to capture the feeling of the texture in the marks you make.

Surface Qualities

Whether you are the viewer or the artist, you experience two kinds of textures: real and implied. **Real textures** are those that can actually be touched, such as the smooth surface of a bronze sculpture or the spiky surface of a cactus. **Implied textures** are those that are simulated, or invented. They include the roughness of a rock seen in a photograph and the fluffiness of a cloud depicted in an oil painting. Real textures offer both look and feel; implied ones provide only the appearance of texture.

Real Textures

Real textures are important because they provide clues about an animal's or object's nature and, to a large degree, about its function. The rugged texture of an elephant's skin seems quite logical for survival in the rough terrain and heat of Africa and Asia; the slick, smooth skin of a snake helps it maneuver swiftly in water and over the earth.



6-6 We often describe animals in terms of their texture. What words would you use to describe the texture of cat fur, snake skin, and porcupine quills?

Sleeping Roger, 1997. Photo by R. Banas.

6-7 This tree displays several textures. How many can you see?

Tree trunk and branches. Photo by J. Selleck.



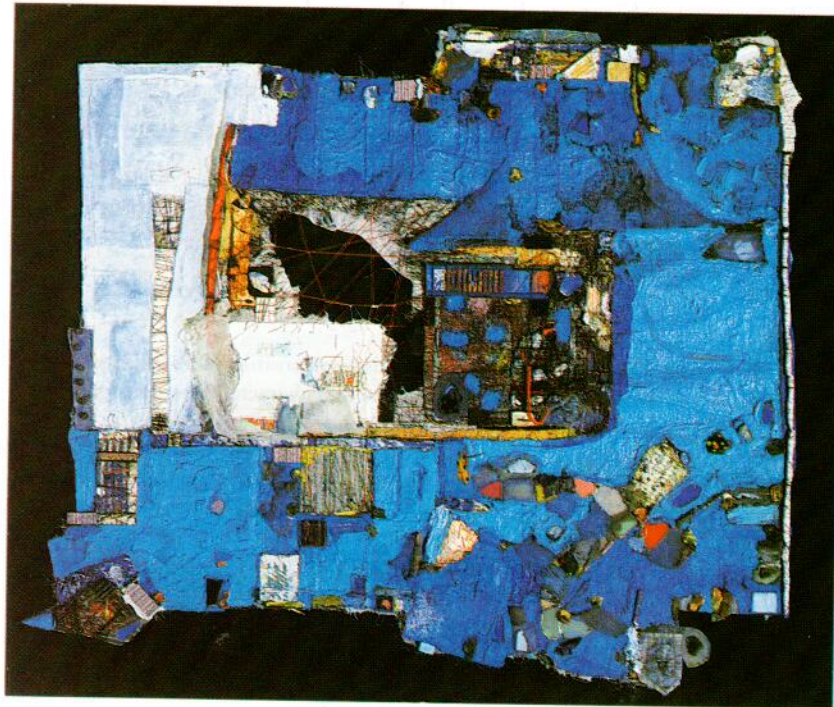
Try it



Explore textures by touch only. With your eyes closed, let your hands identify objects and surfaces by the sensations delivered through your fingertips. Group together a number of objects that have different textures. Then study what creates these textures.

Many textures have a protective purpose. Fur provides warmth. Prickly plants and spiny animals give fair warning that their surfaces are unpleasant to touch—or eat; therefore, humans and other animals usually avoid them. Other textures attract. We enjoy the softness of cat fur, the smoothness of silk, and the reflective surface of polished wood.

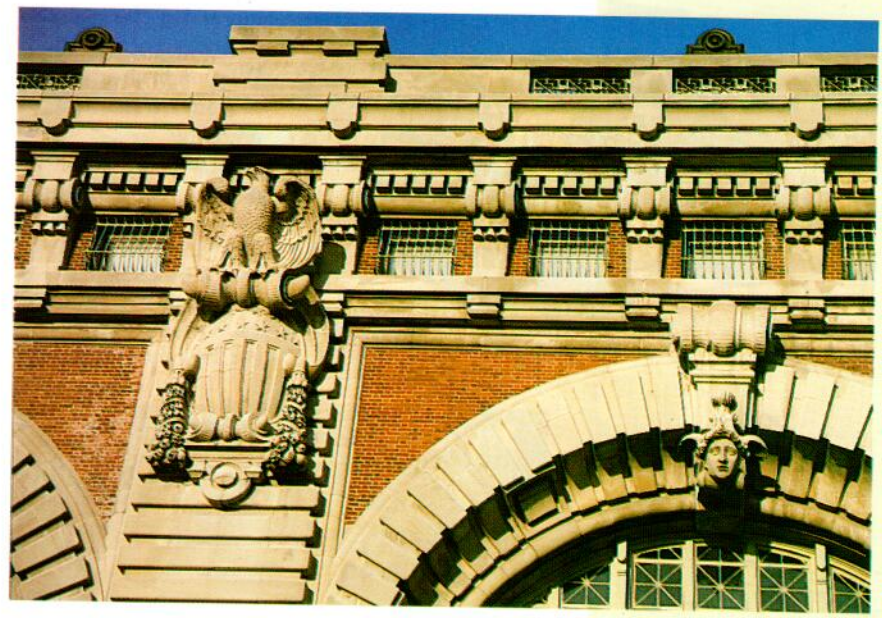
Actual textures in artworks often provide visual interest—even when they cannot be touched. But for texture to be appealing, the artist must control its use. Too much texture or an inappropriate type can disturb the appearance of a surface. For instance, raised, bumpy,



pebbly, or craggy textures are visually active; whereas smooth, woven, and finely textured surfaces are more restful. Artists sometimes include areas of refined or minimal texture as a visual rest from highly textured areas.

6-8 Some artists create real textures on the surface of a canvas.
Franklyn Liegel (b. 1952). *Gaudi's Presence*, 1995. Mixed media on canvas, 44" x 59" (111.8 x 149.9 cm). Collection of Barbara and Kenneth Holland, Santa Fe, California. Courtesy of the artist.

6-9 Architects are highly selective in choosing textures to enrich the appearance of a building. Combinations of glass, wood, brick, stucco, stone, and metal offer textural variety and contrast. In this detail from a building at Ellis Island, notice how well the stone and brick surfaces work together.
Ellis Island, *Main building*, by Boring and Tilton, 1898. Detail of cornice, arch, and carving. Photo by H. Ronan.



Implied Textures

All our experiences with real textures build memories that we experience again when we see similar implied textures. These memories also help us make judgments when we encounter unusual or unfamiliar textures. When an artist uses implied textures, he or she is “fooling our eyes” in a sense. We are seeing an impression, or something that is not really there, because in our imagination we can feel the texture portrayed.

Naturally, implied texture plays an important role in photography. Texture is essential in paintings and drawings that portray objects realistically. Artists also use familiar and invented textures to enhance their abstract or nonrepresentational art. In such works, textures can suggest certain feelings and moods, or even remain purposely ambiguous. Textures and textural contrasts can also function as organizational devices: they may unify an area or create patterns and movement within a composition. In any successful work of art, the artist has paid careful attention to texture and its effects.



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6–10 The music style called “jazz” is very versatile. Here the artist seems to be emphasizing the smooth sound that characterizes some jazz. How does the texture of the painting help create that impression?

Man Ray (1890–1976). *Jazz*, c. 1919. Tempera and ink (aerograph) on paper, 28" x 22" (71.1 x 55.9 cm). Columbus Museum of Art, Ohio: Gift of Ferdinand Howald, ©1999 Man Ray Trust/ARS, New York, NY/ADAGP, Paris.



6–11 Notice the lifelike appearance of this sculpture and of Hanson's *Old Man Dozing* (fig. 6–1). Why might an artist want to represent reality so precisely?

Marilyn Ann Levine (b. 1935). *Work Boots*, 1983. Ceramic, right boot: 8 1/2" x 11 3/4" x 5 3/4" (21.6 x 29.9 x 14.6 cm); left boot: 9" x 11 1/2" x 4 1/2" (22.9 x 29.4 x 11.4 cm). O.K. Harris Works of Art, New York.



6–12 Brushstrokes themselves create texture. Here, the artist used broad sweeping strokes. What kind of strokes do you think Vermeer used in *Street in Delft* (fig. 6–13)?

Clyfford Still (1904–80). *Untitled R No. 2*, 1947. Oil on canvas, 105" x 92" (266.7 x 233.7 cm). Private collection.

Try it



Cut out a number of implied textures from magazines or newspapers, and fit them together to construct a landscape.

Jan Vermeer

Why are most people so fascinated when viewing a painting by Jan Vermeer? Vermeer's talent lay in his ability to transform an ordinary scene—he often painted people doing an everyday task, such as writing a letter—into a poetic and lasting impression. We are drawn into these scenes, often without realizing exactly why they hold such interest.

This sense of mystery is often heightened by visual devices: figures placed behind an object such as a table or chair, or seen through a doorway. Vermeer brings us into the mood of the scene with his great sensitivity to color and light, his skill in using (and subtly altering) perspective to create depth, and his amazing ability to render textures.

Vermeer rarely dated his paintings, but art historians have determined that he mastered the ability to portray textures by the time he was in his thirties. Highly skilled in painting surface appearances, he used a combination of impasto (thickly applied paint) and thin glazes. Whether depicting the sheen of a pearl or the roughness of bricks, he carefully recorded each material's unique texture. The exactness of these implied textures gives an air of great realism to his work.

Son of art dealer, weaver, and innkeeper Reynier Jansz, Jan Vermeer was born in Delft, Holland, in 1632 and lived there until



Jan Vermeer (1632–75). *The Painter and His Model as Cleo*, 1665–66. Oil on canvas, 47 1/4" x 39 3/8" (120 x 100 cm). Detail. Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna. Erich Lessing/Art Resource, NY.



6–13 Compare and contrast the many textures that are depicted in this scene.

Jan Vermeer. *Street in Delft*, c. 1658. 21 3/8" x 17 3/8" (54.3 x 44 cm). Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam. Art Resource, New York.

his death, in 1675. Nothing is known of his artistic training, and only thirty-eight paintings are firmly attributed to him. When he signed his paintings, Vermeer often used different signatures, or marks, making the art historians' task—to verify certain works as his—more challenging. Nothing is known of his personality. However, he is considered one of the most accomplished painters in art history. We can only guess at the kind of legacy he would have left had he lived longer.

The documents that outline Vermeer's life are those that relate to the history of Delft. Historians know that when he was twenty-one, Vermeer registered as a professional with a painters' guild. He was then also starting out in business, with the art dealership he inherited from his father. Although Vermeer was considered a master painter, no records indicate that he took students. During his lifetime and for almost the next two centuries, his works were not widely known. Then, in the eighteenth century, English painter Sir Joshua Reynolds "discovered" a Vermeer painting in Holland. Reynolds's praise for the work led to worldwide recognition of Vermeer's achievements.

Texture and Light

Because texture is mainly a surface quality, the way that light falls on an object has a definite effect on the readability of the surface: when light hits an object, it strongly defines the texture of the object. If that same object is in shadow or dim light, the surface texture may be reduced or become imperceptible. When the light is right—that is, when it is bright enough and in the best position—the texture becomes active and dominant.

Even in bright light, however, the surface appearance of an object may change, depending on whether the light hits it from above or from an angle. If a rounded surface is lit from above, its texture may be smoothed out on top, strongly evident on the sides, and lost in the shadows below. The late afternoon sun, ideal light for dramatic outdoor photographs, emphasizes the texture of an object and causes strong shadows to be cast.



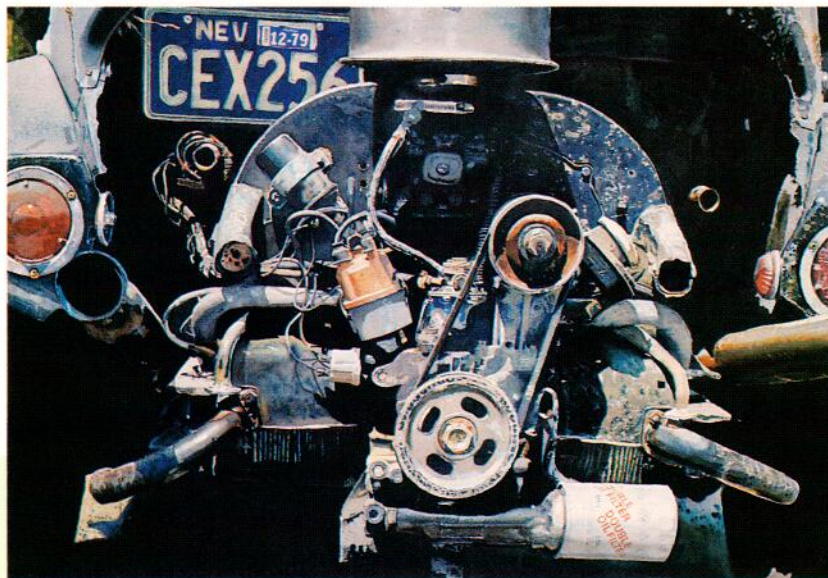
6-14 Brilliant sunlight and deep shadows often combine to create a heightened sense of texture.

Egyptian Sailboats on the Nile River, Egypt. Photo by A. W. Porter.



6-15 How does the light accent the texture of this wood?

Wood Grain Erosion, from Driftwood Series. Photo by J. Scott.



6-16 Here, the artist represented the textures of this engine as they would appear in direct, stark light. We are still able to distinguish the textures, though they are somewhat flatter than they would be if the light were altered by shadow.

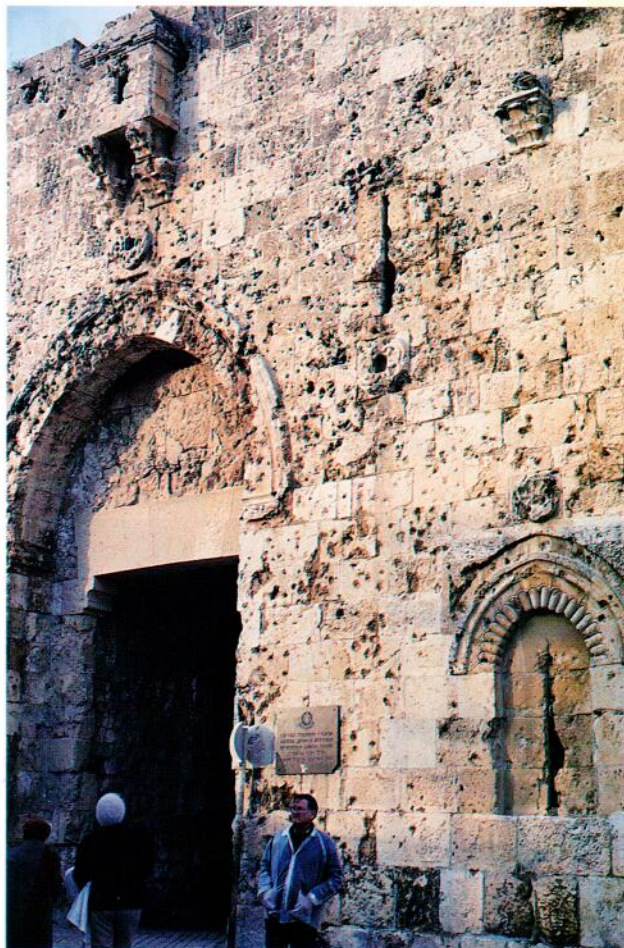
Alexander J. Guthrie (b. 1920). *Happy Wanderer*, 1983. Watercolor, 25" x 30" (63.5 x 76 cm). Courtesy of the artist.

An artist might find that bright light is too strong for a highly polished surface: the light bounces off the surface and creates a glare. For surfaces that are smooth or finely textured, an artist might use indirect lighting to bring out their definition and character.

Because light is such a significant element in creating texture, artists sometimes test how materials look in various lighting situations. Before creating an outdoor sculpture, for instance, an artist might explore how shifting natural light will affect the final work. For artwork that will be displayed indoors, an artist might experiment with placement of light sources, which can enhance surface effects and highlight even the finest textures. This kind of critical analysis helps artists achieve the desired results from their designs.

6-17 The late afternoon sun emphasizes the surface detail of this building in historic Jerusalem.

Building in Jerusalem. Photo by L. Nelken.



6-18 Note how the lighting in this student work emphasizes the subtleties in its texture.

Lauren DiColli (age 18).

Chinese Platter, 1997.

Handmade paper pulp and found plant materials, 17" x 24" (43.2 x 61 cm).

Haverford High School, Havertown, Pennsylvania.

Discuss it

Experiment with light sources to alter the surface appearance of objects with different textures. What happens when a bumpy object is lit from the side, from behind, and from above? What happens to a smooth object or a transparent one? How can you create different textural effects by varying light and shadows?

Artists and the Use of Texture

Think about all the materials that artists can use to express their ideas: paint, clay, cloth, wood, ink, glass, metal, and stone. Each of these has a unique textural surface. Artists can use these materials and others—alone or in combination—to convey a variety of messages and emotions.

Three-dimensional Art

When artists create three-dimensional works, they usually turn to materials that have real textures. Potters, for instance, commonly use clay. Sculptors and installation artists may explore the uses of plastic, marble, and found objects—including broken plates, driftwood, and used car parts!



6–19 Examine the range of textures in these containers. Which container do you prefer? How did texture influence your choice?

Three clay containers. Student work from Villa Park High School, Villa Park, California.

6–20 Compare the texture of this ceramic with that of the clay container on the far right in fig. 6–19. How are they similar? How are they different?

Qing (18th century, China). *Incense burner in bronze form.* Ge ware porcelain with off crackled glaze. 3 ¼" x 4 ¾" (8.3 x 11.8 cm). Avery Brundage Collection, ©1996 Asian Art Museum of San Francisco. All rights reserved.



Pottery and Ceramics Pottery that has been *thrown*, or made on a wheel, usually has a uniform, smooth surface. But potters also use various tools and procedures to create pronounced textures. They may incise lines or draw into a piece. Before they *fire*, or bake, the clay, they might add glazes to produce a specific finish—smooth or rough, transparent or opaque, marbled or cracked. Some potters deliberately throw salt into the kiln during firing to pit the surface of the pottery and produce a texture similar to that of volcanic rock.

Sculpture Sculptors achieve textural qualities by selecting and combining materials with certain surface attributes. They also use tools to alter those surfaces. They might carve, gouge, sand, or polish the surface of wood. They might alter a metal surface by cutting, welding, rusting, or polishing. For centuries, artists have sculpted marble to simulate the soft folds of fabric and the appearance of human skin and hair. Italian sculptor Desiderio da Settignano, for instance, perfectly captured the smooth flesh of a young child's face (fig. 6–21).

Today sculptors explore the potential of plastic and synthetic materials using processes such as vacuum forming and epoxy laminations.



6–21 The soft textures of the child's hair and skin belie the cold, hard qualities of marble.

Desiderio da Settignano (1429/30–64). *A Little Boy*, 1455/60. Marble, 10 $\frac{3}{8}$ " x 9 $\frac{3}{4}$ " x 5 $\frac{7}{8}$ " (263 x 247 x 150 cm). Andrew W. Mellon Collection. ©1988 Board of Trustees, National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC.



6–22 The familiar woven texture of basketry is used here to create a lively, tactile sculpture.

Carol Eckert (b. 1945). *Spell of the Green Lizard*, 1995. Cotton and wire, 11 $\frac{1}{2}$ " x 7" x 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ " (29 x 17.8 x 8.9 cm). Courtesy of the Connell Gallery/Great American Gallery, Atlanta.

Two-dimensional Art

Most two-dimensional art relies heavily on implied textures, which may be drawn, depicted in paint, or achieved by means of a print process. Textiles, however, may incorporate both implied and real textures.

Drawing and Printmaking In drawings, skillful artists can portray an array of textures—from wrinkles in a face to ripples in a pond. Artists might use charcoal, ink, colored pencils, or pastels to achieve different surface qualities; or they might choose to work on paper that has a smooth or a coarse texture of its own.

Printmaking—which involves transferring an image from a carved or etched surface onto paper—creates additional opportunities for artists. To create implied textures, printmakers might use the grain of a woodcut; the sharp, etched lines of a zinc plate; or the uneven textures of a linoleum block.

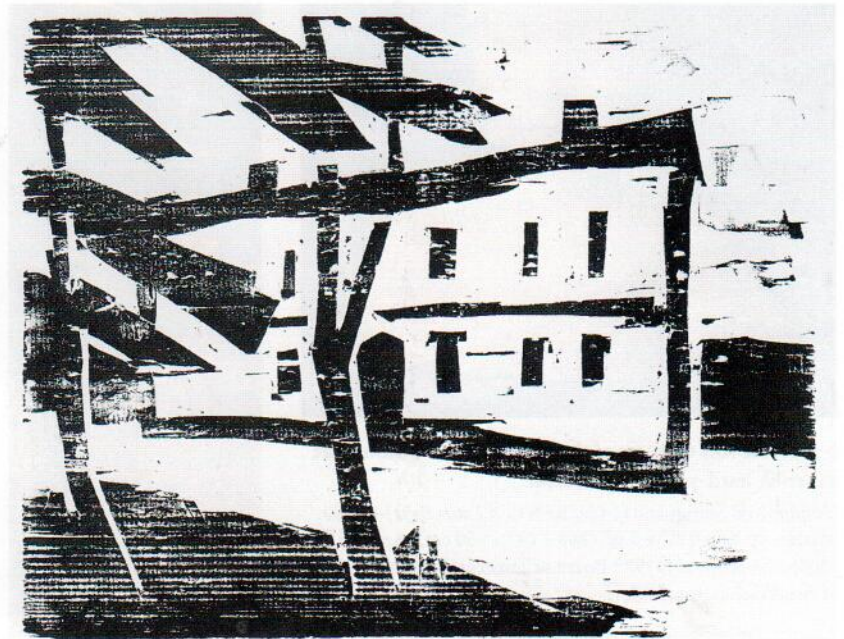


6–23 Vija Celmins depicted the texture of the ocean so well that the sound and feel of the ocean are immediately brought to mind.

Vija Celmins (b. 1939). *Ocean: 7 Steps #1*, 1972–73. Graphite on acrylic-sprayed paper, 12 5/8" x 99 1/8" (32 x 252 cm). Purchased with funds from Mr. and Mrs. Joshua A. Gollin. Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. Photograph ©1998 Whitney Museum of American Art.



6–23a *Ocean: 7 Steps #1*, detail.



6–24 How has Schmidt-Rottluff incorporated the grain of the wood medium into the image?

Karl Schmidt-Rottluff (1884–1976). *House Behind Trees*, 1911. Woodcut, 8" x 10 3/8" (20.4 x 26.2 cm). ©British Museum, London.

Painting Like drawings, some painted images rely heavily on implied textures and the skill of the artist to reproduce them accurately. But painters also achieve textural effects with their materials. Painters might apply the medium thinly or thickly, or they might mix it with wax and other substances. Thick, textured applications of paint create highly energetic forms that almost seem to leave the surface of the canvas. Artists might apply paint with brushes, sponges, or palette knives, or by spraying or dripping. The surface on which they record images may range from finely textured canvas (fig.6–25) to rough burlap to smooth glass or wood.

Textiles Throughout the centuries, artisans and weavers have produced fibers and fabrics with rich textures. Early Egyptian fabrics are still unparalleled and are treasured for their finely woven materials. Museums around the world preserve examples of European tapestries made during the Middle Ages and Renaissance. The striking beauty of woven materials from the South Seas, the Andes, and Guatemala—as well as those crafted by Native Americans—also reflect great skill and inventiveness.

6–25 Here, Helen Frankenthaler used such a thin layer of paint that the texture of the very finely woven canvas she chose to use shows through and becomes an important part of the painting.

Helen Frankenthaler (b. 1928). *Small's Paradise*, 1964. Acrylic on canvas, 100" x 93 3/4" (254 x 238 cm). Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC. Photo National Museum of American Art, Washington, DC/Art Resource, NY. ©Helen Frankenthaler.



6–26 The tight, heavily textured weave of this Navajo saddle blanket contrasts with the looser texture of its fringe and tassels.

Navajo saddle blanket, late 19th century. Germantown yarn, 46" x 37 1/2" (116.8 x 95.3 cm). Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC. National Museum of the American Indian, Matthew M. Cushing Collection. Presented by Mrs. Nellie I.F. Cushing in his memory. Photo by Katherine Fogden.

Texture in Your Environment

Each day, you encounter texture, as well as lines, shapes, forms, colors, values, and space. These elements of design are unavoidable aspects of your environment and essential parts of everyday life. They are crucial to interior design and exterior landscaping. And they are significant in the clothes you wear and in the advertisements that sell them.

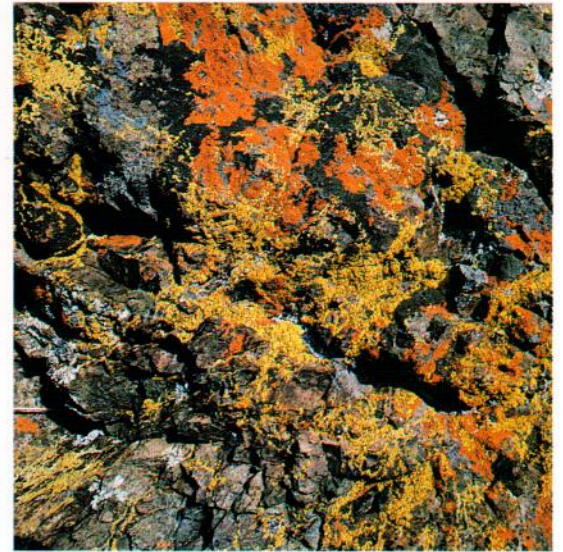
City planners introduce textures in parks and squares, outdoor sculptures and fountains, and even the surfaces upon which we walk. Sidewalks and parking lots do not have to be great expanses of uninterrupted cement: they might contain textured bricks or other stonework, benches, and lighting fixtures. Even the simple addition of plants, grasses, and trees can provide relief, enjoyment, and visual interest.

Museums, hotels, churches, and temples all integrate texture into their design. Houses and apartment buildings offer many textural opportunities: materials used in carpeting, draperies, furniture, and wall coverings both provide textural variety and enhance our surroundings. Look around and study your environment. You'll discover that textures—and all the other elements of design—are essential aspects of seeing.



6-27 During the course of a day, we encounter so many textures that we usually do not notice them. How many common textures can you see in this image?

Overview of downtown Los Angeles plaza, Los Angeles, California. Photo by J. Selleck.



6-28 A walk outside often lets us appreciate the textures in the natural environment.

Lichen pattern on rock. Rust and yellow. Photo by J. Scott.

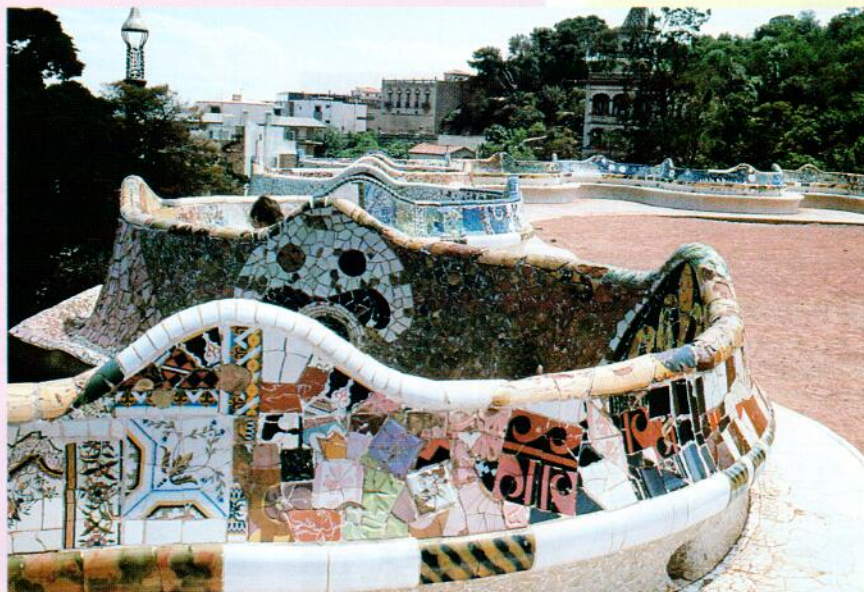
Antonio Gaudí

Güell Park

How might it feel to own a home in the midst of a city-garden fantasyland? Would you like to live surrounded by the wildly creative shapes, colors, and textures of Gaudí's creation? The plan for this park included sixty houses, a market, a medical center, schools, a chapel, and other facilities. Work began in 1900, and although never completed, Güell Park is one of the best-loved destinations in Barcelona. Under the imaginative direction of architect Antonio Gaudí, enough work was accomplished to provide a magical space in which to dream and play.

There are fountains made of colorful mosaics, a walkway with an arcade of angled trees, fanciful gatehouses, pathways lined with leaning columns, and a monumental staircase flanked by ceramic walls leading to the *Sala de les Cent Columnnes*—eighty-six Doric columns supporting a mosaic-tile area decorated with dogs' heads. A giant mosaic dragon is close to the famous bench: its mosaic pieces suggest the dragon's scales. The mosaic bench surrounds the park's "central square" with a series of glistening ceramic curves. From this area is a panoramic view of the city below.

The concept for the bench—believed to be the longest one in the world—was Gaudí's, yet much of the detailed work was executed by artist Josep Jujol. To achieve mosaic tiling of the curved surfaces, traditionally-made flat tiles were broken and organically rejoined. This technique was also used by Gaudí in other artworks. The bench design was so innovative that some art historians see it as a forerunner of the abstract and surrealist movements. In fact, the park was known to be an inspiration for surrealist Salvador Dalí.



6–29 How would the rich texture of these benches strike you in the midst of a park's greenery?

Antonio Gaudí (1852–1916). *Güell Park benches*, 1900–14, Barcelona, Spain. Photo ©1991 Benedikt Taschen Verlag GmbH, Köln. Photo by François René Roland.

Güell Park was funded as an urban-development project by the financier and Barcelona art lover Eusebio Güell. Nearly fifty acres were acquired in a city area that needed renewal, and the site was intended to be a place where architecture was integrated into the natural surroundings. For the job, Güell commissioned Gaudí, who had a liking for nature and was known as an eccentric genius and religious mystic.

When Güell died, which brought a halt to the funding and the work, only two houses had been built. One of them was built as a model to encourage others to build and live there. The house was designed by Gaudí's colleague, Francesc Berenguer, and Gaudí himself lived there from 1906 until shortly before his death in 1926. Gaudí completed his work there by 1914; in 1922, the project was given to Barcelona by Güell's family, for use as city parkland.

Another Look at Texture



6-30 Using terms from this chapter, describe the texture of this belt.

Guatemala, *Woven belt*, 1972. Cotton, 83 7/8" long (213 cm). Photo by Allan Koss.

6-31 Imagine running your fingers along this fly whisk from one end to the other. Write a description of the textural journey your fingers would take.

Tubuai, Austral Islands. *Fly whisk*. Wood, plant fiber, feathers, and mother-of-pearl, 35" high (89 cm). Courtesy of the Division of Anthropology, Yale Peabody Museum. ©1998 Peabody Museum of Natural History, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut, USA.



6-32 How has this student communicated the texture of a sunflower?

Rachel Shuman (age 17). *Flower of the Sun*, 1998. Acrylic, 15 1/2" x 6 1/2" (39.4 x 16.5 cm). Holliston High School, Holliston, Massachusetts.

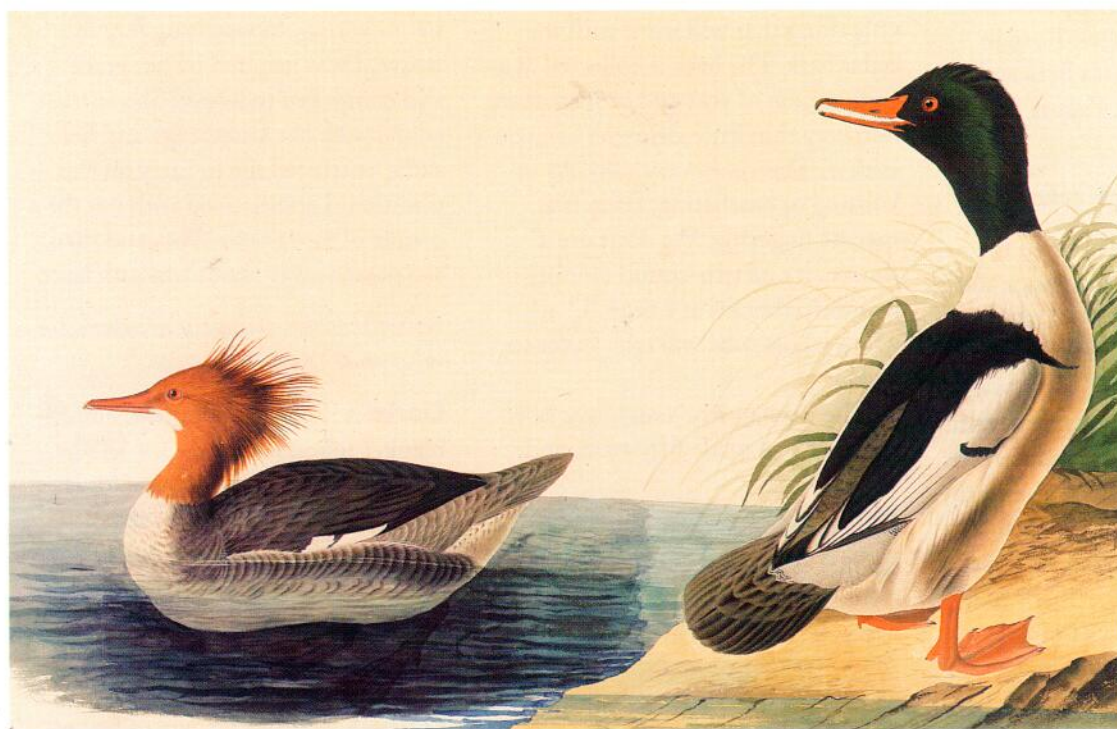


6-33 Note that this piece is made of metal, not fiber. How does your impression of the piece change when you realize it is not a typical basket? What other contrasts in texture does the artist use?

Ken Carlson (b. 1945). *Porcupine Basket*, 1993. Copper, woven and oxidized, 10" x 9 1/2" (25.4 x 24.1 cm). White House Collection of American Crafts. ©1995 Harry N. Abrams, Inc. Photo by John Bigelow Taylor, New York.

6-34 This image is one of a series of prints of the birds of North America. Why is texture a vital element in a depiction such as this?

John James Audubon (1785-1851). *Common Merganser (Goosander)*, 1832. Hand-colored engraving from *Birds of America*. ©Abbeville Press Publishers, New York. Collection of the New York Historical Society.



Review Questions

1. To what does the art element *texture* refer?
2. What is the difference between real and implied texture?
3. Explain why light is important to how people see texture.
4. What are some methods that artists use to create real textures?
5. Identify and describe three different textures in your environment.
6. Describe an example of implied texture from the images in this chapter.
7. What type of subjects did Vermeer often paint? How did he add a sense of mystery or intrigue to his subjects?
8. What material did Gaudí use to create a colorful texture on the bench in *Güell Park*, Barcelona?

Career Portfolio

Interview with a Weaver

Drawing from her Native American (Tlingit) heritage, **Clarissa Hudson** makes one-of-a-kind ceremonial robes. Some are traditional Chilkat woven robes like the one on page 150. Some, such as the robe on this page, are hand-stitched. Like other artwork meant to be worn and touched, texture is an important consideration in these robes. Born in Juneau, Alaska, Clarissa lives and works at her home in Pagosa Springs, Colorado.

Tell me about the "Eagle" robe.

Clarissa In the 1800s, when the first navy ships came to Alaska, the native people saw the wool navy blankets, and they traded furs for those. They saw how they could use them for ceremony, for some of their robes. They also saw the mother-of-pearl buttons that were on the clothing of the men on these navy ships. The buttons were mother-of-pearl with steel shanks—steel loops that came down off the back of the buttons. The shanks were pushed through the thick wool, and leather strips were used to hold the robe in place. You can always tell the very old

The eagle design in this robe is made entirely of mother-of-pearl buttons—about 800 of them! The edging is appliquéd work, cut-out wool that has been sewn to the main body.

Clarissa Lampe Hudson. *Eagle Robe*, 1988. 100% woven blanket-weight wool, two nickel metal faces (in the eyes), mother-of-pearl buttons, 5' x 6' (1.5 x 2m). Now part of the Native art collection of the Tlingit and Haida Central Council in Juneau, Alaska.

robes—that were done in the 1800s—because they had those steel shanks. You cannot buy these steel-shank buttons through a retail store any more, but sometimes you may come across them at an antique store or through a trader. I use mother-of-pearl buttons, that I get from a button company in Iowa.

How long does it take to make a robe?

Clarissa The appliquéd ones take about a month. The Chilkat woven robes take at least a year, a year to two years. Traditionally, they were made from thin strips of cedar bark and mountain goat wool. We now use New Zealand's merino wool because it is the closest thing, and the only thing that will work with the cedar bark. The bark is collected at a certain time of year and broken down into very thin little strips. When you soak it, it becomes very silky. As in knitting or crocheting, there is a specific fingering. We don't use a shuttle; it's all two-strand twining of two warp threads at a time. That's why a whole robe will take a year to make.

The woman who taught me how to weave had made fifty robes and



about twenty-five tunics. Her name was Jennie Thlunaut. She made seventy-five major garments in her lifetime, which was ninety-six years. Her speed, accuracy, and tension were superb and graceful because of her fingering. In watching Jennie weave, I was inspired by her grace and compelled to weave. She entrusted me with her knowledge and her skills, entrusted me to carry on the tradition. I apprenticed with her for a couple of months in 1986, and then she passed away about a month later.

Given the work that goes into them, the robes must be very expensive.

Clarissa For the appliquéd, button-blanket robes: I sold one for \$350, and the most I have sold one for is \$6,000. The woven ones—the Chilkat or raven's-tail robes that take a year or two to make—those go anywhere from \$15,000 to \$30,000.

Do you use traditional designs?

Clarissa Yes and no. My robes are usually based in personal experiences, visions, and dreams, interpretations of humankind; this is where the robe designs are not traditional. But, they have the look of traditional design because I stick to the form line art, the traditional art form. Traditionally, what you put on a robe is your clan crest—eagle clan, raven clan, killer whale clan—or an image of a story or clan history.

