

Visual Element - Texture

I. Term: Texture

II. Definition of the term: The tactile surface quality of an object. Visual (implied) texture is simulated by variation of light/dark patterns in a two-dimensional artwork.

III. Examples of the term:

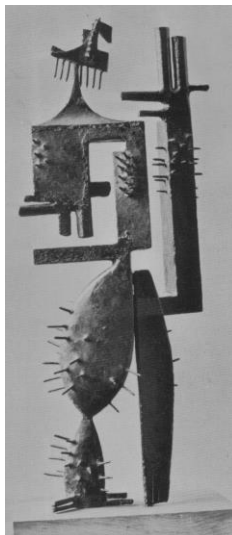
ACTUAL – Mass (such as sculpture and architecture) has actual texture that you can feel.



Rodin *Mme Vicuna* 1884

- This marble sculpture demonstrates a contrast of actual textures.
- The face and neck of the woman are smoothly polished to resemble the texture of skin.
- Rodin left the lower portion rough with visible chisel marks.

POWER OF SUGGESTION: Throughout your life you have had experience with a variety of actual textures. When you encounter with a new object or image you may recall experiences with similarly textured objects and make a mental connection. When you view artwork, you might have subconscious associations that influence your interpretation of the work.



- Think for a minute or two about the texture of this abstract sculpture by Julio Gonzalez.

- What comes to mind? Even though some of the forms are geometric, the texture suggests the subject matter.
- After looking at the texture, it probably does not surprise you to learn that the title of this piece is *Monsieur Cactus I*. (Julio Gonzalez *Monsieur Cactus I* 1939)



Robert Arneson, detail of *John with Art* 1964

- The texture in Robert Arneson's sculpture is also suggestive!
- I do hope you're not eating right now!

EMOTIONAL IMPACT: Some textures tend to seem more welcoming than others. I find Joan Miro's *Lunar Bird* sculpture (1966) very inviting. I see a rounded mass with large uninterrupted areas of reflected light. These visual cues suggest that it would be smooth.



Joan Miro *Lunar Bird* 1966



John Chamberlain *H.A.W.K.* 1959

- John Chamberlain's sculpture *H.A.W.K.* (1959) seems much more threatening. This metal mass has jagged edges and sharp points.
- I can see clearly defined shadows and very few large and rounded reflections of light.
- These visual cues suggest that I may be hurt if I am not careful around this work.

VISUAL/IMPLIED: Visual texture is the illusion of texture on a flat surface. Visual textures can be simulated by reproducing the light/dark patterns and colors of actual textures.



Jacques-Louis David *The Death of Marat* 1793

- Jacques Louis David created visual/IMPLIED texture in *The Death of Marat*. You can almost feel the wood grain of the box with all of its holes, knots and crevasses. If you could run your hand over the painting, however (usually highly discouraged by museum guards), you would only feel the smooth, thin layers of oil paint on the canvas. You're reading patterns of light and dark.

IMPASTO: A technique using thick applications of paint.



Van Gogh *Starry Night* 1889

- Paintings, such as Van Gogh's *Starry Night*, do have actual the texture from the thickly applied paint. When you see this work in person, or look closely at a detail, you can see the obvious brush strokes and ridges created by the heavy application of paint. This technique is known as *impasto*.