

Texture, Tactility

by Sophia



WHAT'S COVERED

Artists use many different techniques when creating works of art. Texture is just one tool that is used to create specific characteristics in artwork. In this lesson, you will learn about:

1. Texture

If you could touch a piece of art, how might it feel? **Texture** and tactility refer to the way in which the work of art would feel if a person could touch it. Northern Renaissance painters such as Jan van Eyck really made an effort to convey the texture of materials in their works.

IN CONTEXT

Take a look at the painting below by Van Dyke, titled *The Arnolfini Wedding*.

This painting has several great examples of rendering texture, such as:

- Soft fur trim on the gentleman's clothing
- Wiry fur of the little dog at the bottom of the painting
- Smoothness of the mirror at the very back of the painting



The Arnolfini Wedding by Jan van Eyck



TERM TO KNOW

Texture

How the surface of a work of art would feel if one could touch it, or its visible, tactile qualities

2. Painterly

Historically, painters were trained how to hide or eliminate the appearance of brushstrokes. **Painterly**, in contrast, refers to a style of painting that *emphasized* the **brushstroke** in the application of paint. The brushstroke and application of paint are major features of the painting when using this style.

IN CONTEXT

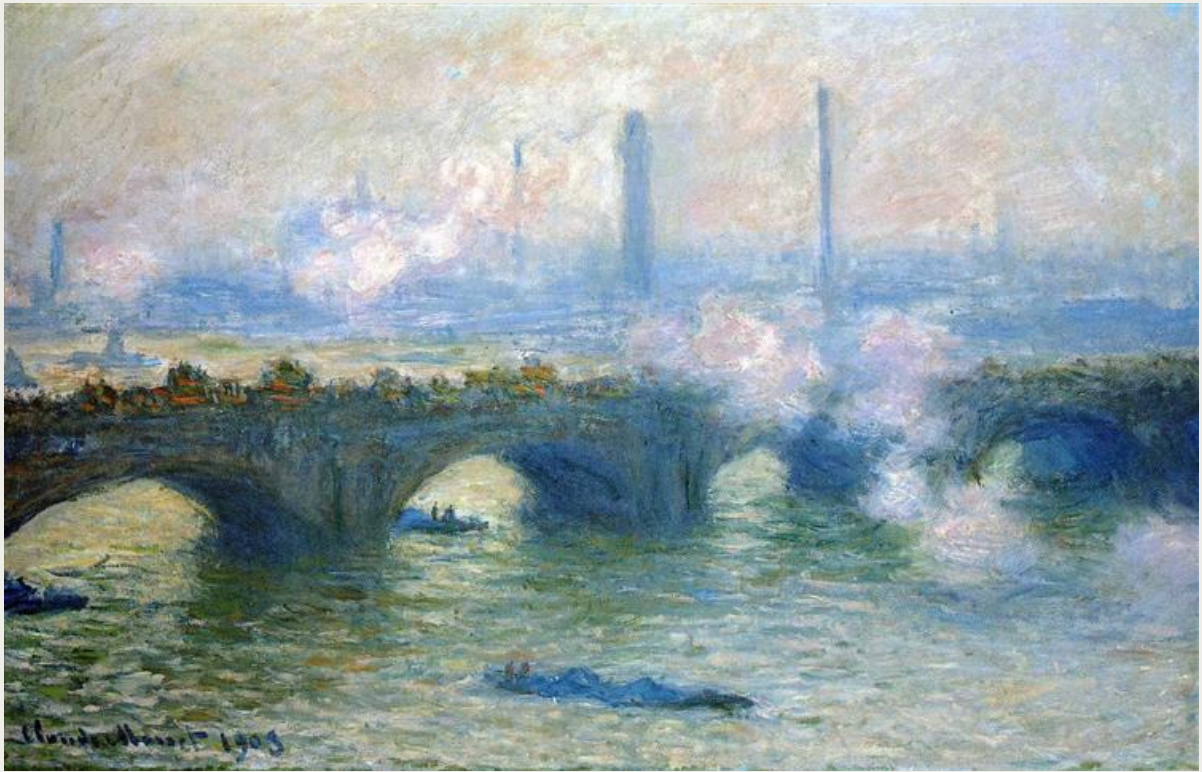
The impressionistic painters often made the brushstroke itself an important feature of the painting. While Monet was out of the studio painting on site trying to capture natural phenomena, for example, he often used these techniques. The way light plays on the water is an example of a scene in which an artist might use this technique.

Take a look below at a close-up of the painting *Starry Night* by Vincent van Gogh. You can see thick buildup of paint on the surface of the painting here. This is an example of **impasto**, or the thick buildup of paint, usually oil or acrylic, on the surface of a painting.



Starry Night by Vincent van Gogh

Here is a painting of the Waterloo Bridge by Claude Monet. Looking closely, you can actually see where the brush applied a dollop of paint. This showcases the individual brushstrokes.



Waterloo Bridge by Claude Monet



TERMS TO KNOW

Painterly

A style of painting (such as Impressionism) that emphasizes the brushstroke action of applying paint to a surface.

Brushstroke

The visible mark of the paintbrush on the surface of a painting.

Impasto

The thick buildup of paint, usually oil or acrylic, on the surface of a painting.

3. Mixed Media

An artist does not always choose to use one medium exclusively when creating works of art. **Mixed media** is an art form that incorporates different types of media, such as paper, paint, found objects, etc., into one work of art.

➞ **EXAMPLE** Below is an example of mixed media. This is a painting/collage titled *Das Unbild* by Kurt Schwitters.



Das Unbild by Kurt Schwitters



TERM TO KNOW

Mixed Media

Any type of art that combines different artistic media

4. Sculptural Texture

These techniques are not seen only in works on paper, such as paintings. Texture can be seen in sculptures as well. Below is a picture of the sculpture *Pieta*, by Michelangelo.

IN CONTEXT

Ever wonder why stone sculptures are often marble? It has to do with the fine-grain texture of marble. This allows the sculpture to be polished as well, and allows artists to really achieve those fine details, such as musculature in the veins, that would be difficult on another type of stone.

Take a look at the close-up below. Note the fine details in this sculpture made from marble.



Pietà by Michelangelo

Marble has a translucency in its upper layer. It allows light to penetrate and reflect back or refract, and the translucency of the marble mimics the translucency of human skin. This makes it appear more lifelike.



DID YOU KNOW

Baroque sculptors in the Renaissance used Carrera marble, which is a special type of marble from Italy.



BIG IDEA

Texture is an important element of composition. In certain artistic movements, texture is a defining characteristic of that movement.



SUMMARY

Texture is often an important and defining element of a piece of artwork. Texture includes all of the visible, tactile qualities that help us envision how the work of art might feel. **Painterly**, one technique to incorporate texture, uses defined brushstrokes instead of attempting to hide the strokes. **Mixed media** brings types of media, such as paper, paint, found objects, et cetera, into one work of art. Texture can even be seen in sculptures. Marble is a common medium used in **sculptural texture**, as fine details are easy to achieve due to the materials.

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TERMS TO KNOW

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Mixed Media

Any type of art that combines different artistic media.

Painterly

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Texture

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