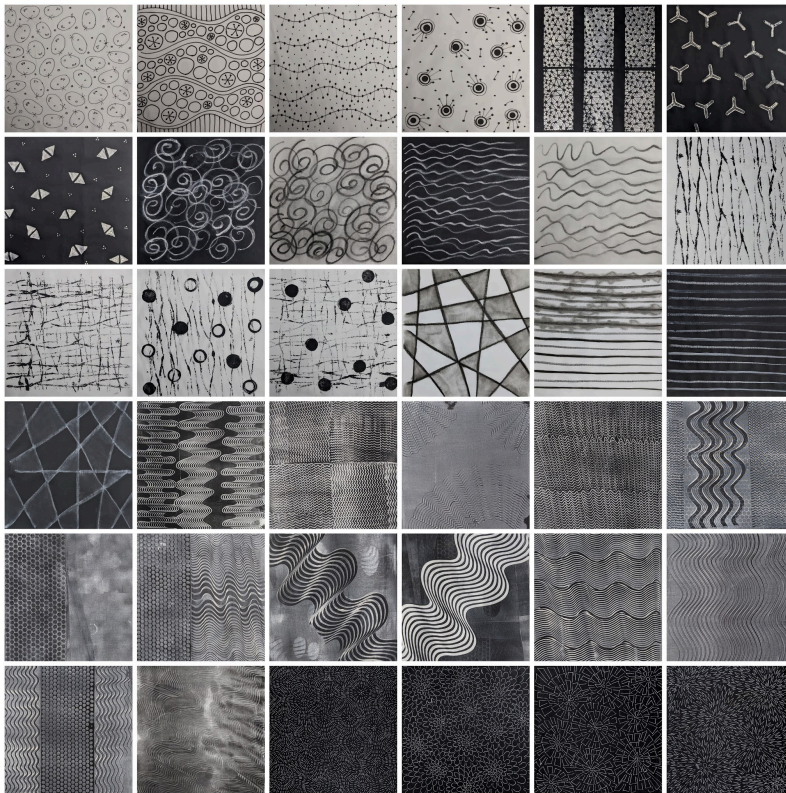


Texture and Mark-Making: The Language of Touch

Art is not just about what we see—it's also about what we feel. Texture and mark-making are ways to add dimension, energy, and emotion to your artwork through the physical marks you create. Whether working with pencil, charcoal, paint, or found objects, every mark you make tells part of your story.



For neurodivergent artists, texture and tactile experiences can be especially meaningful. Some people find certain textures calming or stimulating, while others use repetitive mark-making as a form of self-regulation. This lesson celebrates all the ways texture and marks can help you express yourself and connect with your art on a sensory level.

What is Texture in Art?

Texture refers to the way something feels (actual texture) or appears to feel (visual texture). In art, we create texture through the materials we use and the marks we make on a surface.

Two Types of Texture:

- **Actual Texture (Tactile Texture):** Texture you can actually feel with your hands. This includes collage, thick paint application, or adding materials like sand, fabric, or paper to your artwork.

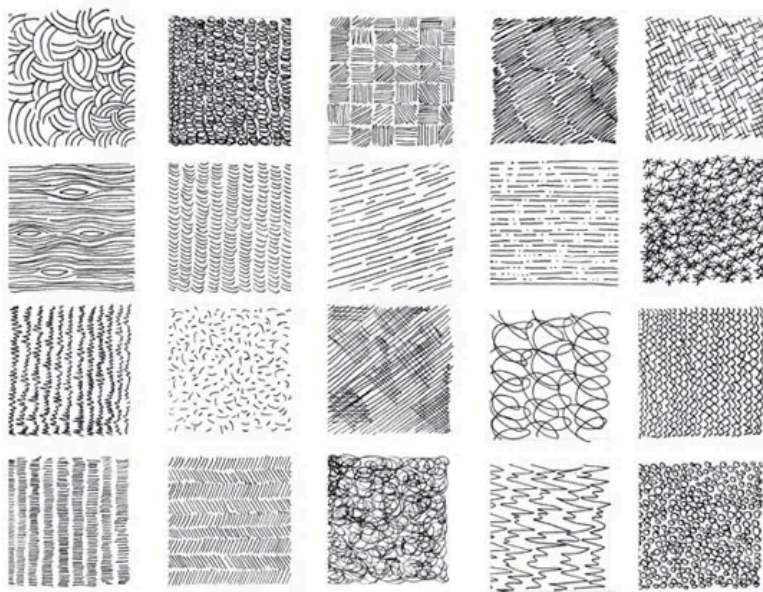


- **Visual Texture (Implied Texture):** Texture that looks like it would feel a certain way, but the surface is actually smooth. This is created through drawing, shading, and mark-making techniques.



What is Mark-Making?

Mark-making is the process of creating lines, dots, shapes, and patterns on a surface. Every tool creates different marks, and every person makes marks differently. Your unique way of holding a pencil, the pressure you apply, and the speed of your movements all contribute to your personal mark-making style.



Marks can be expressive, energetic, calm, chaotic, precise, or loose. They can show emotion, movement, rhythm, and energy. Think of mark-making as your artistic handwriting—it's uniquely yours.

Types of Marks You Can Make

Here are some fundamental marks and what they can express:

Mark Type	How to Make It	What It Can Express
Lines	Straight, curved, wavy, zigzag, thick, thin, continuous, broken	Direction, movement, energy, boundaries, connection, flow

Dots/Stippling	Small points placed close together or far apart	Texture, density, vibration, meditation, buildup, patience
Hatching	Parallel lines drawn close together	Shading, volume, structure, rhythm, discipline
Cross-Hatching	Layers of hatching in different directions	Depth, darkness, complexity, dimension, intensity
Scribbles	Quick, loose, overlapping circular or random marks	Energy, chaos, emotion, freedom, release, movement
Dashes	Short, broken lines	Speed, instability, excitement, nervousness, action
Spirals	Circular marks that wind inward or outward	Growth, repetition, hypnotic quality, focus, meditation
Smudging	Rubbing or blending marks together	Softness, atmosphere, dreaminess, transition, mystery

Tools for Creating Texture and Marks

Different tools create different marks and textures. Part of the fun is experimenting to discover what each tool can do!

Tool/Material	Marks & Textures It Creates	Special Qualities
Pencil	Precise lines, soft shading, detailed textures	Easy to control, can be erased, range from light to dark
Charcoal	Bold, smudgy marks, rich blacks, atmospheric effects	Very expressive, messy, great for large areas and drama
Ink/Pen	Sharp, permanent lines, crisp details, clean marks	Cannot be erased, requires commitment, very graphic

Markers	Bold lines, layered marks, solid coverage	Quick and easy, can create interesting overlaps
Paint (brush)	Smooth or textured depending on technique and thickness	Wet medium allows blending, layering, and variety
Sponge	Soft, organic, cloud-like textures	Creates natural, irregular patterns, gentle application
Toothbrush	Spattered, splattered, sprayed effects	Creates energy and randomness, exciting unpredictability
Palette knife	Thick, sculptural, impasto textures	Adds physical dimension, bold and direct
Fingers	Direct, personal, smudged, blended marks	Most tactile experience, intuitive and intimate
Found objects	Unique imprints, stamps, rubbings from real textures	Brings the outside world into your art, surprising results

Techniques for Creating Texture

Beyond tools, there are specific techniques you can use to create interesting textures:

- **Rubbing (Frottage):** Place paper over a textured surface and rub with pencil or crayon to capture its texture (leaves, coins, fabric, wood grain, etc.)
- **Impasto:** Apply paint thickly with a brush or knife so it stands up from the surface
- **Sgraffito:** Scratch through a top layer to reveal a layer underneath

• **Dripping:** Let paint or ink drip down the page to create organic, flowing textures • **Collage:**

Glue down materials with actual texture (fabric, paper, sandpaper, foil) • **Printing:** Press

objects into paint or ink and stamp them onto your surface • **Resist:** Draw with crayon or oil

pastel, then paint over it—the paint will resist the waxy areas • **Dry brush:** Use a brush with

very little paint for scratchy, rough texture

Artists Who Mastered Texture and Mark-Making

Vincent van Gogh - Expressive Brushstrokes

Vincent van Gogh is famous for his thick, visible brushstrokes that swirl and dance across the canvas. He applied paint so thickly (impasto technique) that you can see every mark he made. His brushstrokes were emotional and energetic, following the movement of wheat in the wind, the spiral of stars in the sky, or the texture of tree bark. Van Gogh's marks made his paintings come alive with emotion and movement.

Anselm Kiefer - Physical Texture

German artist Anselm Kiefer creates artworks with extreme physical texture, mixing paint with straw, ash, lead, sand, and other materials. His surfaces are rough, heavy, and deeply textured—you can feel the weight of history and emotion in the physical quality of his work. Kiefer shows that texture can be sculptural and that what you add to your artwork matters as much as what you paint.

Leonardo da Vinci - Mastering Visual Texture

Renaissance master Leonardo da Vinci could make a smooth painting look like it had incredible texture. Through careful observation and mark-making with tiny brushstrokes, he could make fabric look soft, metal look hard and shiny, and skin look warm and real. His hatching and cross-hatching in drawings created depth and dimension through pure mark-making skill.

Cy Twombly - Expressive Scribbles

American artist Cy Twombly created huge paintings filled with scribbles, scratches, and gestural marks that look almost childlike. His work proves that loose, spontaneous mark-making can be powerful and sophisticated. Twombly's scribbles and loops are energetic and free, showing that there is beauty and meaning in marks that are not perfectly controlled.

Texture and Mark-Making for Self-Expression

For many neurodivergent artists, texture and repetitive mark-making can be both expressive and regulating. Creating patterns, repeating marks, or engaging with different textures can be calming, focusing, or energizing depending on what you need.

- **Sensory exploration:** Engaging with different textures can be stimulating or calming

- **Repetitive motion:** Creating patterns can be meditative and help with focus • **No**

wrong way: Mark-making is intuitive—trust your instincts about what feels right •

Physical release: Energetic marks can help release emotions or excess energy •

Unique expression: Your natural way of making marks is part of your artistic voice

Activity: Create a Texture Exploration Artwork

Today you will create an artwork that explores different textures and marks. This is your chance to experiment, discover new techniques, and find what marks feel right to you.

Choose Your Challenge:

Option 1 - Texture Sampler: Divide your paper into sections and fill each section with a different texture or mark-making technique. This is like creating a visual dictionary of all the

marks you can make.

Option 2 - Textured Landscape: Create a landscape (real or imaginary) using only texture and marks—no outlines. Use different marks for different elements: dots for sand, scribbles for grass, hatching for mountains, etc.

Option 3 - Abstract Emotion: Choose an emotion and express it purely through texture and marks. What does anger look like in scratchy, sharp marks? What does peace look like in soft, flowing lines?

Option 4 - Pattern and Repetition: Fill your entire page with a single repeating mark or pattern. Notice how the repetition feels and how small variations create interest.

Option 5 - Mixed Media Texture: Combine different materials (paper, fabric, found objects) with drawn marks to create a highly textured collage artwork.

Suggested Materials:

- Paper (any kind—smooth for detail, rough for extra texture)
- Pencils (different hardnesses create different marks)
- Optional: charcoal, pens, markers, crayons, oil pastels
- Optional: paint and various application tools (brushes, sponges, palette knife)
- Optional: collage materials (fabric scraps, textured paper, sandpaper, foil)
- Optional: found objects for printing or rubbing
- Optional: glue for mixed media work

Tips for Success:

- Experiment with pressure—light, medium, and heavy touches create different effects

- Try holding your tool in different ways to see how it changes your marks • Don't be

afraid to make 'messy' marks—they often have the most energy and life • Pay

attention to how different marks make you feel as you create them • Remember:

texture is about how things feel, not just how they look

- If repetitive mark-making feels good, embrace it—there's no rule about variety

Most Important: Your marks are uniquely yours. The way you naturally hold a pencil, the pressure you naturally apply, the patterns you naturally create—these are all part of your artistic identity. There is no 'correct' way to make marks. Let your hand move in ways that feel natural and authentic to you.