

TEXTURAL CONSIDERATIONS IN PAINTING

by

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INTRODUCTION

Textures have been a part of painting since the beginning of art but texture as a major consideration, an integral, planned, manipulative component of painting is comparatively new. It is doubtful that the primitive painter, working on granite or limestone cave walls, had any planned consideration for textural effects in his painting. It is also doubtful if the Egyptians considered textures as a part of the composition in their wall paintings. Later the Romans were skillful at painting both exterior and interior walls of their palaces and baths, but Roman painting had little texture since walls were scraped until fairly smooth and pigment or stain applied as evenly as possible. Texture was actually obliterated.

In this century textures have been studied with increasing interest by many artists. It was the purpose of this thesis to explore texture from the experimental standpoint, to examine some of the materials and methods used in producing textural qualities. Some study has been given to ground and supports because of the close relationship that exists between textures and the supports on which they are placed. The basis for most of this study has been paintings created over the past three years. Results of many experiments conducted are inconclusive due to the length of time necessary to prove out glues, binders, and other materials.

HISTORY OF TEXTURE

Man has felt the need to express himself graphically since the beginning of time. First of these expressions were formed on the bumpy, uneven cave walls. These paintings told the story of a day's hunt. Crude though they were they related art to man's basic need for food and shelter. It has been theorized that the cave paintings of Altamira, Spain and Lascaux, France were made by blowing color through reeds and by dabbing earth pigments with sticks, stones, and bits of fur. Discovery of these paintings brought the realization that man, in his early development, had the ability to express himself with a great deal of clarity and feeling.

How did the caveman learn to make such skillful painting? We don't really know for sure. But since the pictures were done on the sides of the cave, which are rough and bumpy, it is possible that the idea of making pictures came from these bumps.¹

If this is true then it must be assumed that texture played an important role in painting from its very beginning.

As man became more agricultural and no longer needed to roam the land looking for food, need for permanent shelter became apparent. His first dwelling was made of crude, sun-dried brick and stone. Since man had little wood and no cloth or parchment to use he painted on the walls of his dwelling. The texture of these walls was much smoother than cave walls so his painting became more refined. Because he had learned to grow crops and

¹H. W. Janson and Dora Jane Janson, The Picture History of Painting, p. 8.

therefore provide most of his needed food, he had time to observe, separate, and define what he saw. The walls being smoother aided him in his attempts to put more detail in his painting. Man no longer had to work with bumpy, uneven surfaces. Painting had made its first change.

Art became more and more refined as advancements in civilization were made. Surfaces on which the artist painted were painstakingly prepared for the utmost smoothness.

During the medieval period wood was one of the most widely used painting supports. These were prepared by gluing small panels of wood together. A very high quality glue was discovered, made from lean cheese that was soaked in water, crumbled up, ground with lime and a little water. This mixture made a glue which dried as hard as stone, impervious to moisture and amazingly adhesive. It was necessary to treat the wood surface to seal it from moisture. A mixture of thick white gypsum and glue, called gesso, was applied. It is still widely used for paint grounds.

Gesso was applied in two coats. The first one, "gesso grosso," a thick, coarse mixture covered the cracks and bumps on the wood surface. This coat was allowed to dry, then milled and sanded as smooth as possible. The second coat, called "gesso sottile," was thinner as well as more liquid than the first, thus producing a very smooth surface.

Painters of this period took great pride in getting a perfect paint surface. As a result their paintings had little or no texture. The bristles of the artist's brush made the only

visible texture.

Canvas was used very little for painting in the Middle Ages. Its primary use was for banners and pennants used in religious pageants and processions. At this time canvas was not considered a permanent painting support. Not until the 15th Century was this material used on a significant scale due to the fact it was cheaper, lighter, more portable, and more easily prepared. Any consideration for texture was subordinate to the draftsmanship and painting technique the artist employed. Some texture did exist, however, because the natural texture of the canvas was visible.

A mixture of white lead was used as the grounding agent. The canvas was sized with glue followed by two or three coats of the thin, white lead mixture. This did not conceal the natural texture of canvas. For three centuries this remained the primary support and ground for oil painting. With very little additional consideration given to textures, painting remained a combination of draftsmanship and painting techniques.

The advent of Impressionist and Pointillist movements in painting late in the 19th Century brought texture in painting more into focus. There is some doubt as to whether the texture of paintings of these two movements was actually considered an important part of painting or whether it was merely a by-product of paint application. The theory of broken color evolved by the Impressionist painters, Monet and Pissaro, established a technique of applying paint a little thicker than had previously been done; therefore more texture was involved. Georges Seurat, one

of the leading painters of the Pointillist movement, showed great concern for applying pigment to canvas. However, his concern was directed more to what influence one color had on another rather than what influence texture had on color. Whether or not these artists had any consideration or concern for texture as an integral element in their painting is doubtful. The fact that heavier textures did develop in their painting cannot be overlooked. It was through their efforts that the door to further expression through the element of texture was opened.

Vincent Van Gogh's concern for color lead to further developments in textures. In his late paintings, those done in 1889 and 1890, it is readily apparent that he took advantage of texture to establish direction and mood in his work. Van Gogh's dark, mystic "The Starry Night," done in 1889, shows a true concern for establishing mood through heavy applications of paint. These heavy applications of pigment heighten the emotional content of this composition. It is due to Van Gogh that textures were finally considered an integral element in painting.

The collage, first developed by Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque, was the forerunner of present-day experiments in textures. The collage demonstrated that pigments were not the only avenues of expression in two-dimensional design. These were first executed by gluing pieces of paper to a stretched canvas. Although these experiments in texture may seem timid by present standards, they were a very important step in use of textures.

Picasso probably did not realize it then and there, but he had just started to invent a new language of painting. The still life "Le Courrier" by Braque shows us the

next step in the growth of this new language. Here the main parts of the design are pasted together out of odd pieces of paper with only a few drawn lines and bits of shading added to make it complete.¹

These first attempts at breaking away from the confines of pigment started a chain reaction of experiments with diverse materials. As art has broken away from strict representation texture has become more and more important to the artist.

RECENT EXPERIMENTS WITH TEXTURE

Using many different types of material meant new ways of application had to be found. The brush has been replaced by the glue pot, and paint has been given a number of strange new bed fellows. Conventional brush work has been replaced by a number of new tools. Putty knives, spoons, forks, cement trowels, plastic drafting angles and many other such instruments are now being used.

Application of paint on canvas with a brush was abandoned by Jackson Pollock in favor of dribbling colors from sticks held at some height from the painting surface. Kurt Schwitters, German artist, was more concerned with setting material against material than form against form. He assembled every kind of scrap, putting these together with marvelous feeling for texture. Schwitters used painted wood, wire, all types of paper, old train tickets and nails to express himself. A striking example of wood

¹H. W. Janson and Dora Jane Janson, The Picture History of Painting, pp. 292-293.

collage by Bernard Langlais, shown at the 1962 Fine Arts Festival at Kansas State University, exhibited use of many small pieces of wood imbedded in asphalt. The power of this painting lies in the sensitive use of exceedingly heavy texture. Accompanying the wood bolts, nails, and small bits of wire created exciting line reliefs.

A marriage of painting and sculpture was created by the Italian silversmith, Giovanni Pomodora, with "Le Pietre e il Sole." Basically an example of sensitive silversmithing, silver shapes were mounted on painted velvet producing an amazing relationship of materials.

"Wire Painting," a composition done in 1951 by the Swiss painter Walter Bodmer, is a study in wire relief on canvas. Although treated as a painting this work has more the feeling of a piece of sculpture.

Every material has a structural quality that determines the character of its surface which is usually apprehended by the sense of touch.¹ The viewer of present-day experiments with textures is torn between wanting to touch the painting and knowing that a painting is not supposed to be touched. The use of heavy materials or objects producing high reliefs brings the realization that the gulf between painting and sculpturing is rapidly vanishing. Each new experiment brings together materials previously considered incompatible. The decision as to whether a

¹Helen Gardner, Art Through the Ages, p. 7.

work of art is painting or sculpture is becoming more and more complex as artists continue to experiment with textures.

SUPPORTS AND GROUNDS FOR TEXTURAL STUDIES

Many artists using heavy textures in their work are disregarding an important part of painting; that is, the proper preparation of the ground on the proper support or carrier.

Visual innovations and experimentations with new materials tends to obscure the equally important matter of durability and conservation. Quite often paintings only a few years old show signs of premature aging. Such inherent flaws as cleavage and cupping are usually the result of unfortunate selections of material, incompatible combinations of oil, tempera, and plasters and the improper technique of application.¹

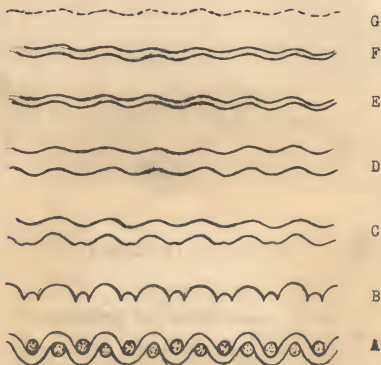
Jackson Pollock experimented with several different media in painting. He combined paints of different types such as oil and latex. As a result of these combinations several of his paintings are deteriorating at a rapid rate. The traditional method of preparing a support for painting (Plate I) has been ignored by many who experiment with textures. Some have no doubt deliberately ignored traditional preparation in their textural experimentations; however, there are some aspects of the preparation which cannot be disregarded.

A great deal of consideration should be given to the type of support to be used. It is a good rule to use an inflexible support with an inflexible medium or ground. If an inflexible medium

¹Gustav D. Klimann, "Restoration of Contemporary Painting," Art in America, 1960, 1:9.

EXPLANATION OF PLATE I

The traditional method of preparing a
paint support.

PLATE I¹

Anatomy of an oil painting
(reading from the bottom of the diagram)

- A. Linen support
- B. Glue sizing
- C. First coating of ground
- D. Second coating of ground
- E. The painting. This may be one simple, directly applied paint-film or it may consist of several layers, e.g.,
 1. Underpainting
 2. Overpainting
 3. Glazes or scumbling
 4. Isolating varnish or veils
- F. Picture varnish
- G. Dirt

¹Ralph Mayer, The Artists Handbook of Materials and Techniques, p. 380.

is used on a flexible support chances are the painting will not last very long. Use of concrete on canvas has caused the painting "Textured Composition" done in 1960 by the Polish artist Bronislaw Kierskowski to start to disintegrate. Large portions of the edge of this composition have fallen away weakening it to such an extent that in a very few years the painting will be no more.

The permanence or durability of a painting, its optical or visual effect, and the excellence or successful execution of the artists personal technique, all depend to quite a degree on the nature of the ground; therefore, far apart though it is from the artists principal concern, these considerations are of extreme importance, and attention given to their correct preparation or selection will repay the painter in many ways.¹

Experimentation and research has found a number of materials readily available which are adequate as grounds and supports for compositions dealing with texture.

Masonite has been accepted as one of the most reliable supports for painting. Since it lacks porosity and flexibility it is well suited for a variety of painting dealing with heavy textures. Several types of grounds can be applied to masonite not appropriate to a flexible support such as canvas. Most of these grounds are heavy in nature and prone to cracking and buckling; therefore a rigid support is necessary. Grounds of spackling compound and heavy gesso with an admixture of sand are two which are most susceptible to cracking. Traditional grounds of white lead and gesso work equally well on masonite. Because the porosity of canvas is absent in masonite, applying two thin coats of white lead proved

¹Ralph Mayer, The Painters Craft, An Introduction to Artists Materials, p. 58.

more successful than one thick coat. However, a ground of gesso may be applied to masonite following the same procedure used in preparing canvas. Gesso should never be used on masonite which has been treated with oil. This board, called "tempered masonite," is impregnated with an oil for toughness and durability. The oil-impregnated surface prevents the desired adhesive qualities necessary if gesso is used, and surface cracks will appear as the gesso dries.

Bison board proved satisfactory when experimenting with heavy textures (Fig. 1). Though softer than masonite, this support, a paper pulp composition board, has relatively the same inflexibility. In preparing bison board considerable care should be taken in sealing the edges before ground is applied. Applying shellac, both on edges and surface of the panel, seals it adequately. If not sealed properly when ground is applied moisture blisters are likely to appear under the thin paper covering of bison board. Two coats of shellac should be used in sealing. Shellac must be allowed to thoroughly dry before applying ground. If not sufficiently dry, the ground will mix with the shellac weakening both ground and sealer. Bison board has the disadvantage of being rather sensitive to moisture. With changes in humidity the board will expand and contract causing the ground to crack and peel. Moisture also tends to warp or buckle bison board. This type of support was found to be inadequate for any painting intended to be permanent; however, it can be recommended for student work and experimental painting.

Beaver board (Fig. 2), a thick, highly porous composition



Fig. 1. Painting on bison board sized with two heavy applications of rabbit skin glue followed by a light coat of three-pound white shellac. Sand and sawdust were added to a ground of powdered gesso. Lacquer mixed with pigment resulted in an interesting build-up of paint. The support proved inadequate due to a tendency to warp.



Fig. 2. Beaver board was roughened by gouging out parts of the board with the claws of a hammer for this composition. A sizing of diluted "Elmers Glue" was used under a ground of white lead. Bits of string and coarse sand were used as textural elements. This support proved to be inadequate since it could not be sealed sufficiently.

board, offered several possibilities for textural experimentation. Its softness and rough texture can be utilized many ways in textural expressions. The surface of beaver board may be further roughened by scratching it with a knife or the claws of a hammer to form directional lines or establish shapes. Areas may be gouged forming low reliefs. Other materials can be imbedded in the surface to form a collage. Such textural devices should be prepared before the ground is applied. The same problem of applying a ground to a porous surface exists in preparing beaver board as with bison board. Again the surface must be sealed before the ground can be successfully applied. A thick mixture of rabbit skin glue was used for this purpose, using two coats of equal strength. Complete drying of the glue was allowed before the first coat of ground was applied. Gesso was used as the grounding agent, applied in two equal, thick coats. It was found the gesso must be thick to prevent soaking into the porous surface of this board. White acrylic latex house paint also proved to be an adequate ground for beaver board. Two coats of that material were essential. Sizing was not required with this ground since latex, which is naturally thick, has sealing properties which preclude the necessity for prior sealing. There is a distinct disadvantage in using beaver board. Its softness and porosity make it extremely vulnerable to moisture since the surface is so difficult to seal. As this type of board becomes older it tends to become brittle and the surface tends to crack, the ground tends to separate from the board causing any overpainting to peel and flake. Permanent painting, therefore, is undesirable

on beaver board.

Plywood can be used as a support for painting with reasonable assurance that it will withstand weathering if properly prepared (Fig. 3). It became apparent that plywood has all of the advantages of masonite except that the latter is somewhat heavier. Plywood has an advantage over masonite since it will not warp as easily. Because it can be purchased in varying thicknesses it is appropriate for a variety of painting experiments. Large sheets of plywood can be used without bracing which is necessary for large sheets of masonite. This support was prepared basically the same as was masonite. If heavier grounds such as thick gesso or spackling compound were used, the surface had to be sized with an additional coat of rabbit skin glue to increase bonding strength. Many interesting things can be done to plywood before the ground is applied. Exciting shapes and movements can be created by carving into the board with wood gouges and parting tools. The feeling and excitement of this treatment may be enforced by leaving the carved portions rough, thus adding still another dimension to the texture. Pieces of wood in varying thicknesses may be used to create forms in relief. The panel was first coated with a heavy application of horsehide glue before placing pieces of wood in relief. After the wood had firmly adhered to the panel small brads were used to insure permanency. The ground was applied after carving and relief members were in place.

Canvas, the traditional carrier for oil painting, remains one of the most versatile of all supports and its durability has been proven. Since a great deal of the experimentation being done in



Fig. 3. To this painting on plywood with a sizing of rabbit skin glue and a ground of powdered gesso, rags, plaster, fine sand and paint scrapings were added for texture.

textures is extremely heavy, canvas was found to have limited use. If heavy textures are composed primarily of pigment, canvas can be used with some assurance of permanency. It was found that cotton duck canvas while not of top quality is fairly durable, and if used with reasonable care can be expected to give good service (Fig. 4). This canvas can be purchased in most department stores. Another type of canvas may be obtained in various weights through companies manufacturing awnings and upholstering material (Fig. 5). Some of this is treated with oil to make it water repellent and should not be used due to the difficulty in making a ground adhere to its oily surface.

Experiments with sizing resulted in the realization that a household glue could be used to prepare canvas. Glue which goes under the brand name "Elmers Glue" was thinned with hot water before application to the canvas (Fig. 6). Since common types of canvas have a great deal of filler, it was necessary to either nail the stretcher to the floor or weight it in some manner to prevent the canvas from buckling. Two light coats of glue dried more evenly than one heavy coat, thus reducing the danger of buckling.

Several types of ground may be used on common canvas. Gesso which has traditionally been used on rigid panels was found to work well on canvas, due primarily to the fact the gesso now sold is of higher quality than that previously obtainable. Gesso offers a number of possibilities as a ground for textural studies. Other materials can be mixed with it to give pleasing results. Sand, glass beads (such as used in highway paint), saw dust,



Fig. 4. White acrylic latex paint was employed as the grounding agent for this painting on white cotton duck canvas, sized with rabbit skin glue.



Fig. 5. Sand collage on medium weight white awning canvas with a sizing of rabbit skin glue and ground of acrylic latex paint. This painting proved interesting since no pigments were used for coloration. All of the color was natural. Sand, paper toweling, plaster and tissue paper were employed as textural devices. Horsehide glue was used to adhere these materials to the panel.



Fig. 6. The rough side of untempered masonite was found pleasing as a paint support. A sizing of diluted "Elmers Glue" was used under a ground of commercial white enamel. The ground proved to be undesirable, drying with a semi-gloss which was rather difficult to paint on.

string, metal filings, small sticks, and various other materials may be used. It was found that the inclusion of other materials made it necessary to mix more water with the gesso. The usual mixture is composed of two volumes of dry gesso to one volume of water. When other materials were included it was found that better results were achieved if two volumes of dry gesso were mixed with two volumes of water. The gesso was placed in a container which could be covered and allowed to swell in the usual manner. After the gesso had been allowed to swell and small bubbles of glue had appeared, one ounce of rabbit skin glue was added. The container was then placed in a double boiler of water and heated. As it was being heated the extraneous material was added and mixed in thoroughly. The gesso was applied to the canvas while still hot and in its most fluid form. Best results were obtained by pouring gesso on the canvas and then brushing it around. If gesso is allowed to stand too long the added material will settle to the bottom.

Spackling compound may be used as a ground on canvas (Fig. 7). Because of its thickness it is necessary to apply spackling compound with a spatula or putty knife. This creates an impasto surface which may be further roughened by running the tines of a fork or the edge of a blunt instrument over its surface forming reliefs in the ground. Spackling compound has the disadvantage of being somewhat absorbent. Coating spackling compound with shellac or lacquer reduced its absorbency to a controllable point. This ground, though showing many possibilities as a textural element, is difficult with which to work because of its inclination



Fig. 7. This experiment on the rough side of tempered masonite was sized with rabbit skin glue. The ground, spackling compound, was coated with three-pound white shellac.

to crack when drying. By adding a small amount of linseed oil, drying was retarded and no cracks appeared.

Common burlap (Fig. 8) may be used as a carrier in oil painting with a great deal of satisfaction; however, it must be very carefully prepared. Stretching the burlap as taut as possible before applying sizing is important. Any slackness invites the unhappy experience of watching the burlap buckle and warp as it dries. Humidity has a great deal to do with preparing burlap. If the day is hot and the humidity high burlap will become quite limp. Sizing should not be applied when it is in this condition for it is certain to buckle and warp. Rabbit skin glue is the best sizing to use on burlap because this material is highly porous. Experimentation showed it was necessary to apply two coats of sizing to burlap. Sizing should be applied with great care since each coat of glue must be applied uniformly. Both applications should be allowed to dry thoroughly, six hours for each coat of sizing. A reliable sizing can be obtained if two ounces of dry glue are added to one pint of cold water. This mixture must be allowed to stand until the glue has become soft and swollen. After this the container should be placed in a double boiler of cold water and gradually heated. Glue must not be allowed to boil as this tends to weaken it. After the glue has been warmed it should be stirred until smooth and applied to the burlap while still warm. If allowed to cool before applying to the support it becomes semi-liquid and does not penetrate burlap sufficiently.



Fig. 8. The natural coarseness of burlap created a pleasing paint surface. The panel was coated with two light applications of rabbit skin glue followed by a ground of powdered gesso. This material offers many possibilities for textural exploration.

Gesso, white lead, and spackling compound were found to be good grounds for burlap. When gesso was used as the ground agent it was necessary to apply two coats. The first coat should be somewhat thicker than the second and should be very carefully brushed, using firm, even strokes and slowly brushing back and forth to obtain an adequate covering. Tiny pinholes are liable to appear after the first coat of gesso has dried. These pinholes are air bubbles caused by brushing back and forth over the burlap. They can be covered by the second and thinner coat of gesso. It is of prime importance that both the sizing and ground be allowed to dry under normal room temperatures. Artificial heat should never be used to accelerate the drying time. Too rapid drying will cause the panel to buckle forming small hairline cracks which will enlarge in time; the ultimate result being a separation of ground from support.

White lead should be applied to burlap in the same manner it is applied to canvas. White lead has one undesirable characteristic; for the ground to be effective it is necessary to apply white lead impasto, therefore destroying the natural texture of the burlap. The ground cannot be thinned because of the porosity of burlap. If the texture of burlap is covered there seems to be no valid reason for its use.

Spackling compound may be used as a ground on burlap with limited success. In many respects spackling compound has a great deal of merit; it is easily applied, is premixed, and may be built up to give exciting textural reliefs. The disadvantage of this material is its rather thick consistency which inclines to

cover the texture of burlap in the same way that white lead does.

Unbleached muslin (Fig. 9) was found to be another material adaptable as a paint support with satisfying results, and basically is prepared the same as canvas. Muslin must be stretched drum-tight before sizing is applied as any slackness will cause it to wrinkle when sized. Rabbit skin glue and "Elmers Glue" proved adequate sizing for this support. The glue must not be too thick when applied or it may dry unevenly, leaving small ridges where brush strokes overlap. An attempt was made to eliminate these ridges by removing the muslin from the stretcher and washing it; however, washing is not recommended. Though the ridges were removed, the size which is in the cloth when purchased was also washed away leaving the cloth limp and unsatisfactory. Because muslin is very thin it is not suitable as a support for painting which employs extremely heavy texture, or for textures requiring use of heavy glue. It cannot support the weight of heavy textures and use of heavy glue causes buckling. However, it works very well for paintings using light textures or as a support for collages of light materials. Muslin has the advantage of being inexpensive and can be purchased in widths up to 108 inches. All department stores stock it so it is easily obtainable. Price and size make it ideal for experimental work in collage or light texture. There is some question of its durability because of its lightness.

"Pellon" (Fig. 10), a dressmaker's fabric, was found to offer many possibilities as a textural element. This fabric is made of pressed paper pulp and is too light to be stretched so it was



Fig. 9. Unbleached muslin was employed as the support for this composition. Sizing of rabbit skin glue was used under a ground of powdered gesso fortified with two ounces of rabbit skin glue. Rags, glass beads used in highway paint, and coarse sand were incorporated as textural elements. Areas were also built up by dripping enamel paint on the surface.



Fig. 10. In this experiment with drip painting untempered masonite covered with "Pellon", a dressmaker's fabric, was used. The material was glued to the support with horsehide glue. Commercial lacquers and enamels were used as pigments. Included in this painting were rags and glass beads used in highway marking paint.

necessary to glue it to a masonite panel with horsehide glue. Softness of this material diffuses the paint creating interesting color relationships. "Pellon" may be folded, shredded or wadded to create unusual textural effects.

Canvas panel board (Fig. 11) proved to be adequate for experimental work; however, it has some limitations. The panel consists of cotton canvas glued over cardboard. It is not necessary to prepare panel boards since they are sized by the manufacturer. This support has the disadvantage of being sensitive to moisture which affects the cardboard backing. With the advantage of being inexpensive it is ideal for experimentation; however, this support cannot be considered adequate for painting intended to be permanent.

"Liquitex" (Fig. 12), a recently introduced ground agent, was found to be reliable. This preparation is prepared gesso and offers some benefits. When using this product it is unnecessary to size the support prior to applying the ground as sizing is mixed with the gesso. "Liquitex" works well on both flexible and inflexible supports. It was discovered that this product can be used as a paint medium with satisfying results.

MATERIALS FOR TEXTURES

Materials never previously considered in painting have come into use. Chicken wire, metal reinforcing strips, surgical applicators, sponges, corduroy cloth, bottle caps, old keys, string, asphalt, plaster of paris, cotton gauze, and tissue paper have



Fig. 11. Canvas panel board supports this lacquer and sand painting. The panel board is prepared by the manufacturer; therefore no sizing or ground is necessary. Sand was sprinkled on wet lacquer to achieve the texture. Clear lacquer mixed with oil pigments provided the coloration. Lacquer proved inadequate as a bonding agent for sand.



Fig. 12. This painting done on a support of cotton duck canvas employed a ground of "Liquitex", recently introduced. The use of this ground made it unnecessary to size canvas before applying the ground since it is included in the mixture.

made their way into painting. Use of these seemingly odd materials has opened vast new areas of paint expression. Tree bark and twigs (Figs. 13 and 14) were found to have much character when used for collage because of their irregular shapes and varied textures. An interesting aspect achieved by these materials is the shadow patterns resulting from their irregular relief. Pieces of bark or twig glued side by side on a panel assume a completely different character because of the shadows one piece may cast on another. New qualities of color can be obtained when combined with heavy texture; brilliant colors become somewhat subdued and light colors assume new expression by emphasizing the texture.

Light porous materials such as cheese cloth (Fig. 15) and tissue paper (Fig. 16) are ideally suited for textural studies as they produce exciting effects. Wadding, tearing, folding, shredding, or overlaying these materials gives a multitude of varied patterns and textures. Paint, when thinly applied to light materials, will diffuse, creating a soft, gossamer quality. Several thin washes of different colors lend unusual color relationships. In places thin washes are retained where applied, and in other places will diffuse through the material, intermixing in subtle shades.

Pigment mixed with turpentine and poured over a surface at random, repeated with several colors, develops pleasing harmonies; fascinating effects occur in the shapes and line qualities formed.

There is a disadvantage in working with porous materials. Once paint has been applied and soaked into the cloth or paper it



Fig. 13. Bark was glued to untempered masonite with horsehide glue in this collage. After the glue had set the bark was coated with another application of the same glue and allowed to dry thoroughly. The bark was then painted.



Fig. 14. Untempered masonite was used as the support for this twig collage. The twigs were glued to the support with "Elmers Glue" used full strength. After the glue had set the twigs firmly, a diluted solution of "Elmers Glue" was applied. A ground of white lead was applied to the uncovered portions of the panel. Sawdust was incorporated as an additional textural element.



Fig. 15. This painting on white cotton duck canvas was sized with rabbit skin glue. After the sizing was applied, cheesecloth and tissue paper were arranged on the panel followed by an additional coat of rabbit skin glue. A light ground of acrylic latex paint was then applied. This painting was very interesting to work with because of the multitude of color subtleties that could be achieved by the use of light washes of color.



Fig. 16. Tissue paper and plaster were included as textural elements in this painting on untempered masonite. The tissue paper was glued to the panel during the sizing process. Rabbit skin glue was used as size with powdered gesso as the ground. Plaster was mixed with pigment to build up certain areas. The textural effects that could be achieved with tissue paper were found to be exciting. Tissue paper proved to be a very versatile textural element due to its lightness and porosity.

is impossible to alter without destroying the color subtleties. If a change is desired it is necessary to paint over the area with white lead or light gesso, thus destroying the soft diffusion and intermixing of color.

Collages of cardboard and string (Fig. 17) can be rewarding as the dissimilarity of the two form a pleasing relief. The crude properties of these common materials imply a sensation of power, and many variations originate by associating such materials.

CONCLUSION

Textures as a consideration in painting are becoming more and more prevalent. Many materials heretofore unheard of in painting are being employed, bringing about the realization that painting is no longer confined to a two-dimensional surface. Much work being done at the present time brings together materials and techniques which by nature are incompatible to the extent that the paintings lack an appreciable degree of permanency. This is due primarily to the fact many artists have shown a disregard for establishing an adequate relationship between the materials used and the ground and support.

Art can advance only through the process of experimentation. Some artists have, no doubt deliberately, disregarded permanency for more latitude in their experiments. They have chosen to explore new materials and new ways of expressing themselves, oblivious to the need for reliable paint supports and grounds. Study of textures has in a sense become a scavenger hunt. Materials



Fig. 17. The materials in this collage on untempered masonite were glued to the panel with horsehide glue. No ground was used since little paint was used. The white areas are "Liquitex" and dark areas are the natural color of the masonite. Corrugated cardboard, string, burlap, and newspaper were included as textures in this composition.

such as rusty bolts and old paint rags when used as elements in painting may seem, on the exterior, a spoof of all that is meaningful in art. The reverse is true. Employment of these materials has given the artist an opportunity to express himself more vividly. It has also given him the problem of finding ways to make his work more permanent. This need not be a hampering restriction. Adequate bonds between media and support can be found if the artist will take the time to find them. Need for much more experimentation with grounds and supports is evident when the number of fine examples of painting that are crumbling through poor preparation are considered.

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TEXTURAL CONSIDERATIONS IN PAINTING

by

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From the beginning of time man has felt the need to express himself graphically. First expressions were crude paintings on cave walls. With advances in civilization the supports used for painting became more refined. As supports underwent refinements textural elements were lost. The old masters went to great lengths to prepare smooth surfaces for painting, the result being paintings which, for all practical purposes, are completely devoid of texture. With the advent of the Impressionist and Pointillist movements in painting during the late 19th Century texture again made its appearance. This reemergence of textures was not a result of concern for texture but merely a by-product of paint application to explore the theory of broken color.

Vincent Van Gogh was one of the first painters to actually use textures as an integral, considered element in painting. His use of masses of pigments, swirling, curving and forcing strong directional suggestions, were the first glimmerings of textural study. Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque, through experiments with collage, pointed the way for most of the experimentation being done with textures at the present time.

Many different types of materials which had previously been considered incompatible have been introduced into painting. The use of these materials necessitated finding new ways to apply them. Pollock dripped paint from a stick, Schwitters assembled every kind of scrap and glued them to the support. Sponges, rags, cement trowels, putty knives, paint rollers, and tin can lids have all come into use as paint tools.

The use of materials with extremely heavy textures, and materials which lack an appreciable degree of porosity, have presented the problem of obtaining an adequate bond between the material and the support. Much work being done by present-day artists has an extremely short life expectancy. Many have tended to disregard proper preparation of supports. They have either failed to recognize or have chosen to ignore the close relationship that exists between the support and the type of media and grounds that are to be used on that support. It has been found that a rigid medium such as concrete or plaster is incompatible with a flexible support such as canvas. The results of the use of such media and supports are usually unfortunate. They tend to disintegrate in a very short time.

Experimentation illustrated many types of carriers may be used in painting which are inflexible, and if properly prepared will give good service. Masonite, plywood, beaver board, and bison board were included in this group. Cotton duck canvas, common burlap, and unbleached muslin were discovered to have exciting possibilities as flexible supports if prepared adequately. Several types of grounds were studied. Powdered gesso, spackling compound, and white lead were found to be among the most reliable. Sizing solutions of rabbit skin glue, horsehide glue, and diluted "Elmers Glue" proved satisfactory.

These experiments have brought to light the realization that adequate grounds and supports for heavy textures can be found if the artist will take the time to search for them.