▲ **FIGURE 7.1** Notice the work's title. A playscape can be created with any playground equipment such as ladders and parallel bars. Why do you think this artist called this sculpture a playscape? Describe the way the surface of this sculpture appears to the touch.

Jesús Bautista Moroles. *Granite Weaving Playscape.* 1995. Fredericksburg granite. 45.7 × 45.7 × 17.8 cm (18 × 18 × 7″). The Getty Museum, Los Angeles, California.

CHAPTER 7

Texture

Everything you touch has its own special feel, or texture. Polished glass feels slick; a bumpy road, rough. As an element of art, texture may be real, as in **Figure 7.1,** or it may be "suggested." The photo of Figure 7.1, for example, is smooth to the touch.

In this chapter, you will:

- Explain how texture is perceived through the senses.
- Compare and contrast different textures in personal artworks and in those of others.
- Create two- and three-dimensional artworks that explore texture.
- Analyze the use of texture in the artworks of others to express meaning.

Focus on Art History

American sculptor Jesús Bautista Moroles (b. 1950) draws inspiration from the past. His sculpture in Figure 7.1 was inspired by the art of the ancient Mayan civilization. Peaking around A.D. 800, this civilization occupied much of present-day Central America. The Mayans created towering structures from local stone (Figure 12.27, page 340). All were characterized by their deliberately rough-hewn textures and repeating geometric forms. These characteristics are also found in Moroles's sculptures. He has worked with many stone materials but prefers to use granite because it is such a challenge to work with and because of the textures he can create.

Describe. Examine Figure 7.1, the Olmec sculpture in Figure 12.26 on page 339, and the Buddha sculpture in Figure 12.14 on page 329. Describe general characteristics of these artworks from a variety of cultures.

Texture in Your Life

Vocabulary

texture
tactile texture
visual texture
matte surface

Texture is *the element of art that refers to how things feel, or look as if they might feel, if touched.* Textures play a role in decisions you make every day. Think about how fabric textures have influenced your clothing choices. Would you wear a shirt made of rough burlap against your bare skin? Probably not. Clothing manufacturers consider this when they decide what fabrics to use and how to make their clothes.

Think about the textures of food. Imagine the smoothness of ice cream, and consider how different it is from the angular roughness of tortilla chips. Would grilled steak taste the same if it were ground up in a blender? Textures are important to us in a variety of ways.

How You Perceive Texture

You perceive texture with two of your senses: touch and vision. Infants learn about their environment by touching objects and by putting them into their mouths. Toddlers are attracted to all objects that are within their reach. When you look at surfaces, you are able to guess their textures because you have learned how textures feel. Your eyes tell you what something would feel like if you were to touch it **(Figure 7.2).**

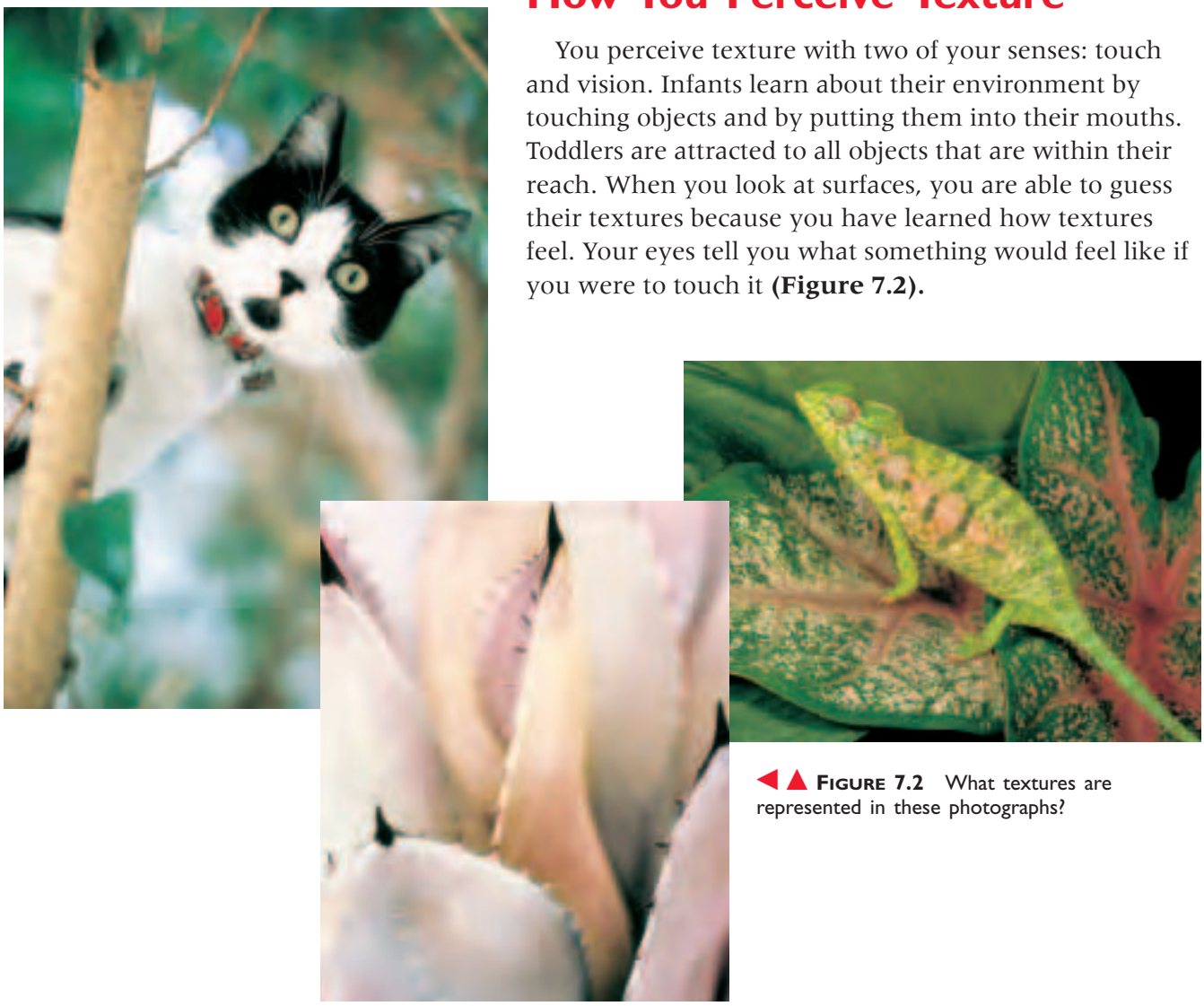


FIGURE 7.2 What textures are represented in these photographs?

When you actually touch something to determine its texture, you experience **tactile texture,** *the texture you feel.* When you look at a photograph of a texture, such as velvet, leather, concrete, or ice, you see surface patterns of light and dark that bring back memories of how those objects actually feel. When this happens, you are experiencing **visual texture,** *the illusion of a three-dimensional surface.* If you touch visual textures, you do not feel what your eyes told you to expect.

There are two kinds of visual texture: *simulated* and *invented.* Simulated textures imitate real textures. Plastic tabletops can be made to look like wood. Vinyl flooring can be made to look like ceramic tile or stone. Manufactured fabrics imitate natural leather and fur.

Artists can do the same. For example, painter Peggy Flora Zalucha simulates textures in her paintings so accurately that you think you might be looking at a photograph **(Figure 7.3).**

▲ **FIGURE 7.3** At first you might think you are looking at a photograph because the artist has simulated the textures of objects so realistically. This is actually a still-life painting of items associated with taking a road trip. The details of the map are so clear that if you recognized the area of the country, you could read the map. Zalucha has used white highlights to represent the brilliant reflections of light off the shiny surfaces of the glasses and keys. She has used more subtle changes of value to represent the textures found in nonreflective surfaces, such as the wrinkles on the map.

Peggy Flora Zalucha. *Map Still Life with Carnations, Keys, and Glasses*. 1989. Mixed watermedia. 76.2 × 111.8 cm (30 × 44"). Private Collection.

FIGURE 7.4 In this painting, the artist has used a number of techniques to suggest texture. A variety of line types and shading techniques have been used. Can you identify the textures? Do they represent real textures or are they invented? The artwork clearly depicts two people and an elephant, but would you call it realistic? Why or why not?

Artist unknown. Deccan, Bijapur. *Stalling Elephant with Two Riders.* Mid-seventeenth century. Ink, gold, and watercolor on paper. 16.5 × 12.4 cm (6½ × 4⅞″). Brooklyn Museum of Art, Brooklyn, NY. Gift of Dr. Betram Shaffner.

Invented textures appear as two-dimensional patterns created by the repetition of lines or shapes. These patterns do not represent real surface qualities, but the patterns of light and dark suggest real texture. The purpose of invented texture is to create decorated surfaces that evoke memories of unusual textures **(Figure 7.4).**

Activity Creating Textures

Applying Your Skills. Make a collection of texture rubbings. To make a rubbing, place a sheet of thin paper against a rough object or surface. Hold the paper in place with one hand. Use the flat side of an unwrapped crayon or the side of a pencil lead to rub over the paper. Rub in one direction—away from the hand holding the paper. Rubbing back and forth can cause the paper or object to slip. Examine the rubbings closely, paying special attention to the lines, dots, shapes, and values.

Computer Option. Explore the textures on your computer application as well as those you can create. Begin with a Pencil, Brush, or Shape tool . Draw objects or shapes. Fill each shape with a different texture from available menus. Make some new textures by editing or adding textures. Use a variety of available tools and paper textures. Experiment with a blending tool to soften surfaces. Identify which objects look rough and which look smooth.

Texture and Value

The appearance of a surface depends on how it reflects light. Every surface displays a pattern of light and dark values. From the pattern of light and dark values, we can make a judgment about the texture of a surface or an object even if we cannot touch it.

Rough and Smooth Textures

The roughness or smoothness of a texture can be determined by looking at its light and dark values. A rough surface reflects light unevenly. It shows irregular patterns of light and shadow. Look at a shag rug, an orange, tree bark, or a patch of bare ground. Notice how the high places catch the light, casting shadows of different sizes and shapes.

A smooth texture reflects light evenly. Look at a sheet of paper, an apple, or a new, unmarked desktop. Your eyes glide across these objects, uninterrupted by shadows, just as your fingers would glide across them, uninterrupted by bumps and dents.

Matte and Shiny Textures

In addition to rough and smooth, textures can be matte or shiny. A **matte surface** is *a surface that reflects a soft, dull light.* It absorbs some light and reflects the rest. Matte surfaces, such as paper, denim, unfinished wood, and your skin, have a soft, dull look.

A shiny surface is the opposite of a matte surface. A shiny surface is a surface that reflects so much bright light that it seems to glow. Shiny surfaces also have highlights. Some surfaces reflect bright sunlight with such intensity that you have to squint your eyes to protect them from the glare. Window glass, a new car, a polished brass candlestick, and the surface of a calm pool of water are all examples of shiny surfaces.

Matte and shiny surfaces can be rough or smooth. Sandpaper is matte rough, and a freshly ironed pillowcase is matte smooth. Aluminum foil is shiny and smooth until it gets crumpled up; then it becomes shiny and rough. In **Figure 7.5** on page 176, Janet Fish has illustrated all of these texture variations.

Activity — Creating Contrasting Textures

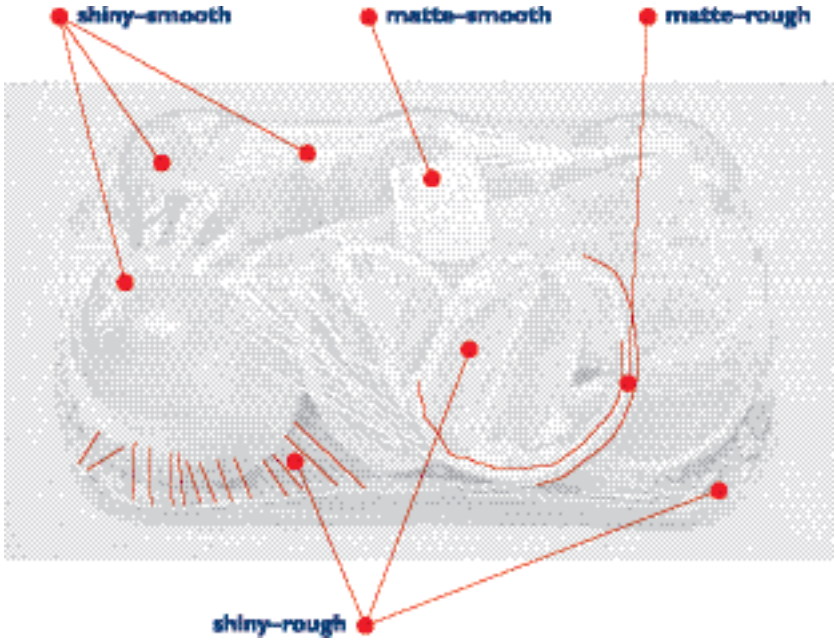
Demonstrating Effective Use of Art Media in Drawing and Painting. Make a series of small drawings and paintings of objects that have different textures. Try to reproduce both smooth and rough textures. You may use a different medium for each drawing, but study the lights and shadows on each object before you choose the medium. For example, you might examine a hairbrush, an old work shoe, weathered wood, a wig, a fuzzy slipper, or a satin slip, then select a medium that would work best for each texture.

Computer Option. Make a series of small drawings and paintings of objects that have different textures, as in the preceding activity. Use the Pencil or Brush tool on the computer. First, sketch your shapes. Then reproduce the texture of each shape using dots, lines, and value blending. Concentrate on the shadows, lights, and highlights of each different texture.

LOOKING CLOSELY

Visual Texture Combinations

Janet Fish has used pastels to create the visual textures in this work. The diagram points out some areas where she has combined different kinds of visual texture, such as shiny-rough, shiny-smooth, and matte-smooth. Can you find more areas where she has created combinations of visual texture?



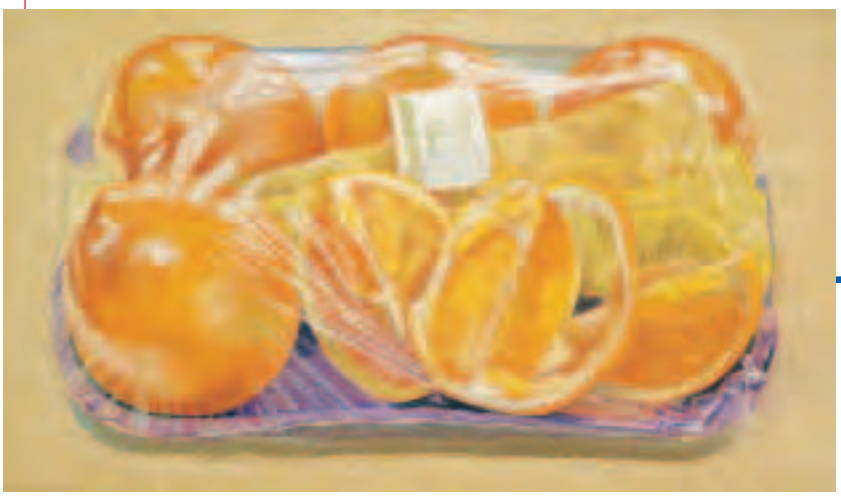


FIGURE 7.5

Janet Fish. *Oranges*. 1973. Pastel on sandpaper. 55.5 × 96.5 cm (21⅞ × 38″). Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Oberlin, Ohio. Fund for Contemporary Art, 1974. © Janet Fish/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY.

Check Your Understanding

1. Define visual texture.
2. Describe, in detail, the two types of visual texture.
3. Compare how rough and smooth textures reflect light.
4. Compare and contrast the use of textures in Figure 7.3 on page 173 and Figure 7.5 on this page.