

TEXTURAL PAINTING

In the early 1900s, the Cubist painters introduced a great many innovations into painting, which have now become commonly accepted. Among them was the idea of creating textures and forms with additions to the paint itself, rather than by creating the illusion of them with brushstrokes. Certain artists began experimenting by mixing coarse-textured substances into the paint before applying it to the canvas. They added sand, marbledust, sawdust, and woodshavings to give extra bulk to the paint and produce interesting textures on the canvas, often resembling bas-relief.

What these artists were striving for was to emphasize the presence of the painting itself, as an object in its own right. Indeed, many of the more heavily textured works by Picasso, Braque, and Jean Arp seem to bridge the gap between painting and sculpture.

To explore the tactile qualities of opaque paints such as oil, acrylic, and gouache, try adding sand, plaster, or sawdust to the paint to give it body and texture. The thickened paint should be applied to the support with a knife, rather than a brush.

In addition, all kinds of textures can be scratched, scraped, incised, or imprinted into a layer of thick paint. Experiment with a variety of improvised tools — old kitchen forks, spoons and knives, hair combs, wire brushes, popsicle sticks — anything that will leave an interesting, irregular texture.

Such experiments may act as a springboard for ideas that you can develop in your paintings. A combed texture might suggest tree bark, for example, or the way the light falls across a stippled texture could suggest a rocky terrain.

Experimenting with paint in this way serves a useful purpose in stretching the imagination and in

developing confidence in the handling of the medium. Even so, textural painting should not be used for purely facile or superficial effects. Rather, the textures you create should spring naturally from the textures which you observe in nature.

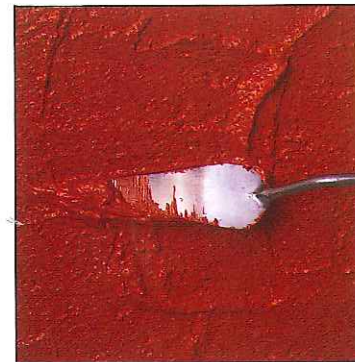


Mixing sand with paint

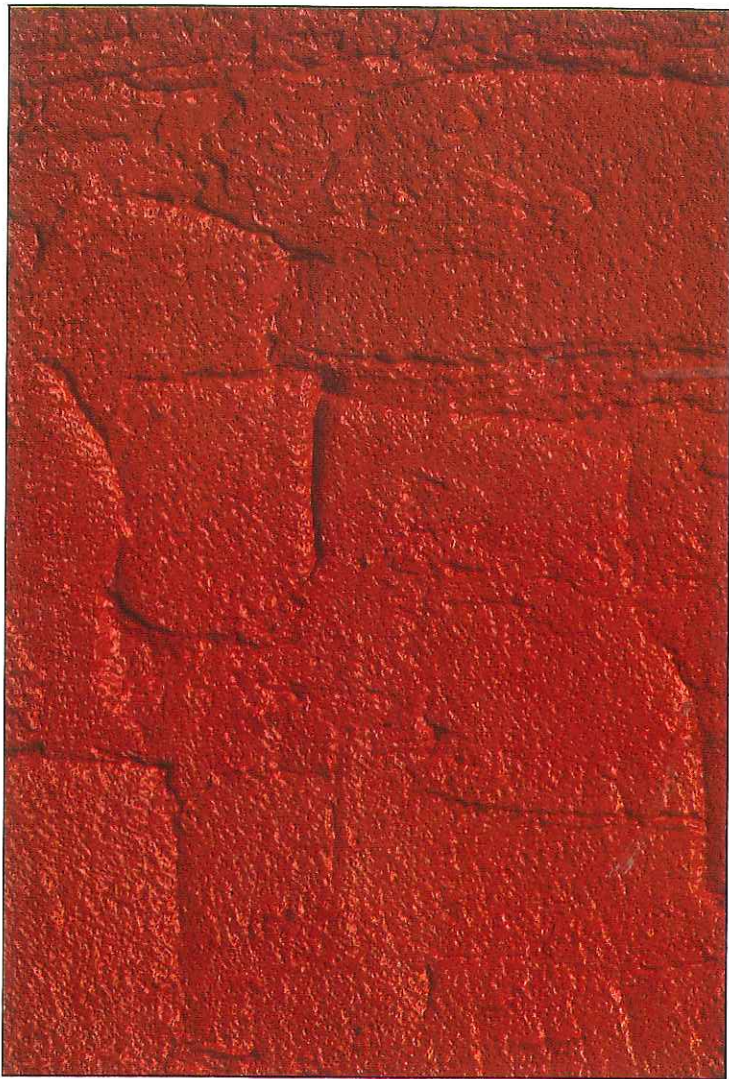
1 Almost any granular material can be mixed with oil or acrylic paint to create a textured surface. Here the artist lays out coarse building sand and acrylic paint on his palette and mixes them together well.



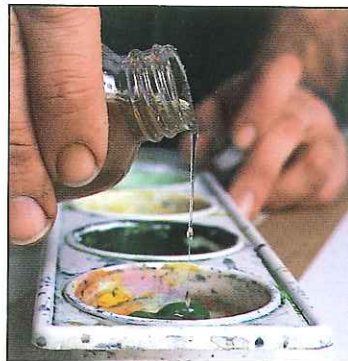
2 The textured paint is spread over the canvas with a knife and worked into the weave to make it adhere. The paint should be of a thick consistency, but not too dry.



3 When the first layer is complete, more paint is added using a painting knife. Gradually the surface is built up to a thick impasto. In order to prevent eventual cracking of the paint surface, try not to lay the paint on *too* thickly.



4 This close-up shows the fascinating texture achieved; the impression of the knife strokes is retained, and the ridges of paint cast interesting shadows.

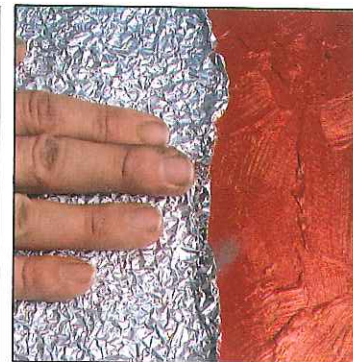


Comb texture

1 A thick layer of gouache can be worked over with a pointed tool which leaves its imprint in the paint and creates textured effects. Here the artist mixes gouache with gum arabic, which thickens the paint and gives it a slight gloss.



2 The paint is poured onto the paper in a thick layer, and then smoothed out and worked into with a hair comb to produce a three-dimensional texture.



Texturing with silver foil

1 In this adaptation of the frottage technique, a stippled texture can be created in a thick layer of oil, acrylic, or gouache. The paint should be of a thick tacky consistency — if it is too runny the texture will be less pronounced.



2 When the foil is peeled away a raised texture is left which, when dry, can be accentuated with glazes or drybrush.