Lesson Plan: Texture Sculpture
Provided by the Art Institute of Chicago Department of Museum Education

Suggested Grade Level: 1–3
Estimated Time: 2 hours, plus drying time

Introduction
Charles Henri Joseph Cordier created layers of texture in his sculpted portrait of Said Abdullah, from the rough hair of his beard and moustache to the smooth skin of his face to the elaborate details of his costume. By using many different textures, Cordier was able to provide us many details about this man, including his age, personality, and emotion. Students first explore a variety of everyday objects and group them according to their textures. Students then discuss what kinds of textures they see in Cordier’s sculpture and what those textures tell us about the man. Students finally create a clay portrait, learning how to manipulate the material and tools to create different textures.

Lesson Objectives
• Describe and analyze a work of art.
• Identify specific textures in a work of art and in a variety of other objects.
• Use tools to create textures in a clay sculpture.

Key Terms
• Texture

Instructional Materials
• 5–7 shopping bags of a variety of scrap and collage materials with different textures:
  o remnants of ribbons
  o fabric
  o paper
  o wood
  o buttons
  o sequins
- leaves
- small stones or rocks
- sandpaper
- plastic lids
- foam
- cardboard (look around your home or classroom)
- clay, clay tools such as blunt knives, plastic spoons and forks, toothbrushes

### Procedures

#### Discussion:

- Introduce the element of texture. Provide groups of three to five students with shopping bags of textured objects. Ask each group to organize the objects according to texture. Which objects feel smooth? Rough? Soft? Hard? Squishy?
- Examine the Cordier sculpture. Ask:
  - What do you see? Describe the man's facial expression, costume, and other attributes.
  - Imagine you could run your fingers over this image.
  - Which areas would feel rough and jagged?
  - Why is that an appropriate texture?
  - What objects in your bags feel the same way?
  - What areas of the image would feel smooth?
  - What objects in your bags feel the same way?
  - What other textures can you find?
  - What do these textures depict?
- Explain that an artist like Cordier uses different tools and techniques to create these textures in his clay.
- Distribute clay tools to the class. Ask them:
  - What texture could you create with each tool?
- Have students demonstrate the motions they would use with the tool to create a texture (brushing, making grooves or gouges, rubbing softly). Discuss how some tools can create different textures—a fork can create grooves or can be pressed into the clay to create a pattern of shallow lines.
**Activity:**

- Provide each student with a piece of clay. Roll a small portion of this clay into a 4-inch long piece and bend it to form a circle. Form the rest of the clay into an oval and place it in the circle so that it stands upright. This is the “head” for the portrait.

- Add facial features to the portrait using appropriate textures. Eyes might be incised with a small knife. Hair could be added with tiny rolls of clay or scratched into the surface using a brush or fork. Use fingers or other tools to smooth the cheeks, forehead, and chin.

- Encourage students to experiment with manipulating a variety of tools in different ways. If they are not pleased with a particular texture, ask them to smooth it out with their fingers and try again.

- Add details of a costume around the bottom of the portrait or make a hat. Fabric samples or other objects from the opening activity may be pressed into clay to create new textures.

- Allow portraits to harden overnight or longer. Ask students to compare how the textures in their portraits compare to those in Cordier’s image.

**Evaluation**

Base students’ evaluations on their ability to recognize and create a variety of textures, their correct use of different clay tools, and their ability to discuss and describe a work of art.

**Follow-up:**

Students can extend their exploration of texture by creating two-dimensional collage portraits from a variety of found and scrap materials. Display the clay and collage portraits together and discuss with students their similarities and differences.

**Illinois Learning Standards**

Fine Arts: 25–27