

# Texture and (Arts) Education - Encouraging Attention, Awareness and Sensitivity

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## Abstract

In this article, the complexities of the concept of texture and its relationship to (arts) education, here with a specific focus on attention, awareness and sensitivity, are explored and elaborated upon. Texture can be described simply as the visual and tactile character of surfaces, which covers both nature and culture and, indeed, much of life itself. The overall aim of the article is to explore the following: (i) (arts) education through the lens of texture; (ii) texture, education and the arts as they relate to bodily and sensory experiences; and (iii) texture and (arts) education in relation to silence, silent spaces and repetition. The ultimate goal is to develop theoretical and philosophical insights into diverse understandings of texture as they relate to (arts) education as a way to illuminate and sharpen the sentience and appreciation of its meaning and importance for students in the classroom. The article is theoretically founded on the thinking of the French philosophers Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Mikel Dufrenne. The ways in which texture, education and the arts are related to bodily and sensory experiences are outlined and discussed, which is followed by an exploration of silence, silent spaces and repetition as essential elements of both texture and education. The discussion is exemplified by a narrative, here in the form of a paradigmatic case, of students examining texture in the classroom. To conclude, texture encourages or elicits attention, awareness and sensitivity, all of which are of significance not only for (arts) education, but also for the formation of society—for the formation of our lives.

Keywords: *Texture, (arts) education, bodily and sensory experiences, silent spaces, repetition*

# Texture and (Arts) Education

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## Encouraging Attention, Awareness and Sensitivity

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### Openings for Continuation

All humans encounter the world through their bodies. Humans bodily inhabit the world; humans and the world cannot be separated (Merleau-Ponty 2002). In the same way—or to paraphrase the words of Merleau-Ponty—students (and teachers) encounter school through their bodies. They bodily inhabit the school; students and the school cannot be separated. In turn, these encounters require bodily experiences of sensing the world (or the school) in a variety of ways as prerequisites; indeed, this is crucial for teaching and learning, education and schooling—for knowledge creation in general. Essential for schooling is, however, to be observant of the fact that education is not just about creating knowledge regarding a subject but that it is equally about becoming human through the life of education (Biesta 2006). The acquisition of education, knowledge and

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experience happens in relation to the social context and interpersonal relationships, but also in relation to physical things, for example, different materials—through sensory and bodily experiences. This is stimulated through rich access to different materials, qualities and textures, in which the variety of tactile experiences is transformed into bodily knowledge. Small children use their hands to touch different things and surfaces, often using their mouths as well. By crawling on the floor or ground, which consists of different textures, the child acquires an increasing number of sensory impressions and experiences and, consequently, learns more about their surroundings and self. The need to retain the child's momentary awareness of natural somatic and aesthetic sensibility so that this awareness can develop throughout life was emphasised by Doodington (2014). Increasing a child's bodily control is important because this leads to the development of bodily consciousness, which suggests 'the cultivation of a specific form of aesthetic awareness' (Doodington 2014, 53).

In the struggle to acquire awareness, experience, understanding and knowledge of the world, the body is undeniably important, and so is texture. The human body itself is a landscape of textures that manifest on the skin, with all its wrinkles, hair, softness or dryness, or even nails, with their sharpness or bluntness. People are often described according to their body's textures, but they are also identified by the textures of their bodies, for example, by using their fingerprints.

Given this, texture is the difference that makes the difference. Texture may even be more effective and meaningful than we realise; it may encourage attention, awareness and sensitivity, thereby being of significance for (arts) education (Opstad and Alerby, 2017).

## What is to Come: Aims and Theoretical Considerations

In the current article, the complexities of the concept of texture in relation to (arts) education<sup>3</sup>, with a specific focus on attention, awareness and sensitivity, will be elaborated upon. The overall aim is to explore the following: (i) (arts) education through the lens of texture; (ii) texture, education and the arts as they relate to bodily and sensory experiences; and (iii) texture and (arts) education in relation to silence, silent spaces and repetition. The ultimate goal is to develop theoretical and philosophical insights into the diverse understandings of texture as they relate to (arts) education as a way to illuminate and sharpen the sentience and appreciation of its meaning and importance for students in the classroom.

Theoretically, the present article is predominantly based on the thinking of the French philosophers Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Mikel Dufrenne, who were both active and influential in the phenomenological movement. Merleau-Ponty is likely best known for his theory of the lived body (Merleau-Ponty 2002; Merleau-Ponty and Lefort 1968). Merleau-Ponty (1995) also stressed that not everything can be communicated verbally; some things are unspeakable because they exist in a manner beyond what can be described, which he called silent and implicit language. Nevertheless, this silent and implicit language can appear through visual presentations, such as

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3 In the framework of this article, ‘arts’ is within brackets—(arts)—as a way to illuminate and highlight that *all* education embraces the arts in different forms and also that we consider education and arts education in a holistic way. Given this, the arts are not exclusively for arts education, even though the arts are an obvious and indisputable part of arts education—the very essence of arts education. Without the arts in arts education, there would be no arts education. However, from a holistic perspective, the arts are also essential for education as a whole and, vice versa, independent of the subject (cf. Ministry of Education and Research, 2019; Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020).

different kinds of (art) forms: a picture, a photograph, a sculpture or a *texture*. Meanwhile, Dufrenne (1973) is well known for his work on aesthetic experiences, and he emphasised the rich diversity of sensory impressions, feelings and expressions that aesthetic experiences embrace. He also claimed that aesthetic experiences lead to an emotional response that makes the surroundings visible for the individual. According to Dufrenne (1973), aesthetic experience is characterised as helping individuals to see the world and themselves in new ways.

Texture as a concept is an inevitable part of everyday life, as well as of (arts) education and various school activities. By using texture and the experiences of it in different (arts) educational contexts and situations, students may be given the opportunity to explore their creativity, values, attention, awareness, sentience and sensitivity.

In the following sections, we explore complex and multidimensional notions of texture, including an elaboration on the various characteristics of texture, as a foundation. Thereafter, (arts) education is illuminated and discussed through the lens of texture. We illuminate and exemplify the discussion by presenting a narrative in the form of a paradigmatic case of some primary school students examining texture in the classroom.<sup>4</sup> The ways in which texture, education and the arts are related to bodily and sensory experiences are then outlined and discussed, which is followed by an exploration of silence, silent spaces and repetition as essential elements of both texture and (arts) education. In the article, the intertwined relationship of texture and (arts) education is explored and elaborated upon. The discussion is exemplified by and connected to the narrative, which is interwoven within the argumentation throughout the text. Finally, we conclude by arguing that texture is essential for edu-

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4 Even though we exemplify and connect the theoretical and philosophical exploration with a narrative regarding primary school students' examination of texture, the present article should not be construed as a purely empirical study. Instead, it should be viewed mainly as a theoretical contribution to the field of (arts) education but with a connection to a classroom situation in the form of a paradigmatic case.

cation and training, teaching and schooling, for formation and transformation and for the formation of society and individuals' lives.

## Notions of Texture: Complex and Multidimensional

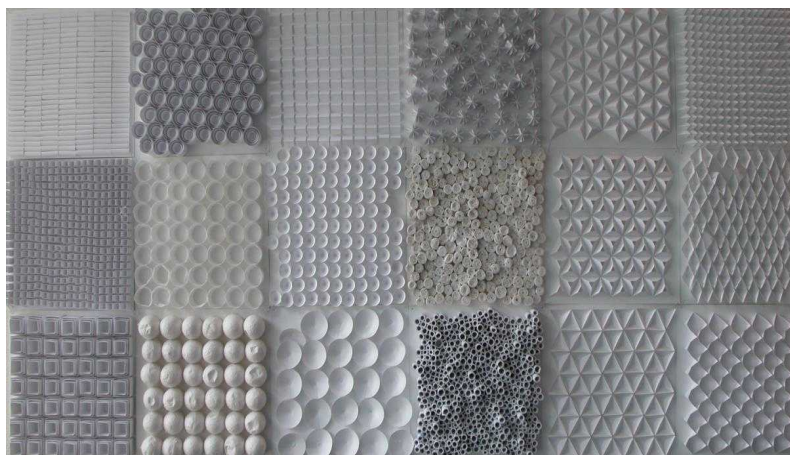
Texture can be simply described as the visual and tactile characteristics of surfaces, hence covering both nature and culture; indeed, texture covers much of life itself. Within all visual art forms, craft design and architecture, texture is a formal aesthetic tool, much akin to shape and colour. As a professional term, texture is used not only in arts and crafts but also in disciplines such as music, language and gastronomy, though with slightly different meanings (Loan 2002).

As a concept, texture has the same origin as the word 'text': it comes from the Latin word *textus*, which means weave, tissue or spin. According to Vasseleu (2005), a texture is 'a disposition or characteristic of anything which is woven into a fabric, and comprises a combination of parts or qualities which is neither simply unveiled or made up' (12). Different textiles, such as clothes, cloth, fabric and thread, are comprised of texture, but texture can be much more. Absolutely everything in our surroundings has surfaces with different textures, including artefacts, nature, animals and humans. Although we cannot always feel or see texture, we have a variety of expressions for describing it, such as soft, hard, smooth, rough, spiky, uneven and furry (Opstad, 1990, 2011). In contemporary society, particularly in the context of (arts) education, texture is essential for both visual and tactile attention and aesthetic compliance, both of which are aspects that are significant for exploration and creative activities (Opstad and Alerby, 2017).

### Different Characteristics of Texture Exploration

Everything in the world—body–mind, outer–inner, subject–object, culture–nature—are intertwined and cannot be separated; they are not 'either or', but 'both and'

(Merleau-Ponty, 2002). This, in turn, means that previous experiences, such as, for example, the sight of a texture, are connected to earlier touches and that touch may refer to earlier sights. However, texture is often divided into two forms of perception based on sight and touch: visual and tactile. Therefore, the texture is perceived with the senses of sight and touch—that is, with the bodies (Opstad, 1990, 2011). Visual texture is linked to the visual perception of surfaces or what can be seen but not felt (even though a visual texture in the form of a photograph, e.g., has a tactile texture in the form of the print's quality-based texture). Meanwhile, tactile texture is linked to one's sense of touch; even though the texture images included in the current article can be regarded as visual, they display tactile textures (e.g., Figure 1)



*Figure 1: Tactile texture in different paper grades. Student work by Trine Egerdahl.  
Photo by Kari Doseh Opstad.*

Textures can be created by humans, nature or both. All textures created by humans are either the result of conscious actions with functional and aesthetic intentions or unconscious actions that are the consequence of quotidian human activity—that is,



traces of lived lives. Other external influences that change textures include rain, wind and age (see Figure 2).



*Figure 2: Examples of a texture created by humans (left), a texture created by nature (middle) and a texture created by a combination of humans and nature (right). Photos by Kari Doseth Opstad.*

According to Thiis-Evense (1987), an additional way to describe texture is to divide the concept into three groups based on the quality of the texture: smooth, fine or coarse. Smooth textures seem to be hard, slip away when touched and cannot be grabbed onto. This kind of texture seems unapproachable, and its smoothness becomes like a repelling membrane that gives it an inner value. Glass, shiny metal and polished stone are examples of such surfaces. The fine texture seems soft, and the fine-grained surface is open and does not reject contact. This texture can be experienced as porous and, thus, can have a scratchy effect. The plastered wall is an example of this touch quality. The coarse texture seems to be repellent but in a different way from the smooth texture. Although smoothness protects the interior, a coarse texture brings the interior forward. The expression is aggressive and stands for active resistance. It gives texture stability and heaviness. Rough bricks, natural stone and coarse wood can have this touch quality (Thiis-Evense 1987).

Regardless of whether texture is visual or tactile, is created by humans, nature or both or is smooth, fine or coarse, it can convey both harmony and disharmony. Whether it communicates harmony or disharmony depends on a range of factors, including the composition principles, as well as upon the person's previous experiences and state of mind. The sense of harmony or disharmony can also be because of bodily or tactile reactions when touching the texture. Some textures might be experienced as pleasant to touch—for example, when it comes to striking a smooth and silky cat—while other textures are unpleasant to touch—here regarding touching something cold and wet, which is experienced as slimy (or maybe the texture of the cat is experienced as uncomfortable for some). It all depends on previous experiences of touching. In addition, when touching another person—or even an animal for that matter—the texture of the toucher's hand affects the experience of the one who is touched in different ways and vice versa, here in the same way as Merleau-Ponty (2002) emphasised the mutual interplay between the individual and the world, between subjects and objects. The interplay between the individual and the world reveals, in turn, a dualistic ratio between an autonomous subject and an objective world. Instead, the interplay between the human and the world encroaches upon each other in a 'chiasm' (Merleau-Ponty and Lefort 1968).

## (Arts) Education Through the Lens of Texture

Aesthetics are parts of (arts) education and various school activities, most often in the form of the specific subjects governed by school legislation and the curricula for arts subject. However, Lewis (2009) argued that above and beyond the curricula, aesthetics play an essential role in education as a whole. By using aesthetics and experiences of the same in different educational contexts and situations, students are given the opportunity to explore their creativity, values and ethical positions (Dufrenne 1973).

How, then, can the role of aesthetics—and, more specifically, the concept of texture—be explored and elaborated upon in daily school life in the classroom with students? To exemplify and connect the theoretical and philosophical exploration in the current article with an everyday classroom situation, the following narrative of an arts lesson with primary school students will serve as a point of departure for the discussion. The narrative has been constructed as a paradigmatic case by the present researchers based on real events (cf. Pavlich 2010). According to Mills, Durepos and Wiebe (2010), a paradigmatic case is made up of carefully selected examples extracted from the studied phenomena, which, in turn, are based on previous experiences of collective and shared situations and events. Therefore, the following narrative is a depiction of our collective experiences from projects focusing on (arts) education and students' attention, awareness and sensitivity related to their near surroundings in the school and themselves. Throughout the present article, the narrative will be connected to and analysed in relation to theoretical and philosophical exploration.

## A Narrative of a Lesson on Texture

A class of ten-year-old students in an ordinary primary school in the northern part of a Nordic country is having an arts lesson. The lesson is part of a collaborative project between the school and nearby university. Anne, the teacher for the lesson, is a senior lecturer in arts and crafts from the university. This time, the lesson is focusing on raising attention, awareness and sensitivity through texture. Anne starts the lesson by asking the students to explore their surroundings, to look for different textures and to depict the textures through the technique of rubbing, here by using plain paper and pencils or crayons. At first, the students seem a bit confused. They mostly stroll around the classroom, looking at different things. However, after a while, some of the students start to touch the things with their hands, and some even hold different things to their cheeks. Soon, more and more of the students are doing the same.

‘Wow, look here!’ one of the students calls out, ‘I found a cool piece of wood here’—the student gently touches the piece—‘it’s really spiky and rough, but it’s cool in a way. Look at the texture when I rub the crayon over the paper on top of the wood!’ The student views the texture on the paper and softly strokes her hand over the sheet and notes with interest: ‘What a difference it is to stroke the paper and the piece of wood ... even though it actually is the same texture. Strange ... I’m not sure how to say it ...’.

The lesson continues, and the students concentrate on the task. After a while, another student says, ‘And I found a soft and cosy ball of yarn. It feels like my jumper. I wonder if it will have any texture ... let’s try ...’.

‘You can’t guess where I found a texture!’ one of the students excitedly cries out. ‘On my own hand! Look what happens when I place the paper on top of the knuckles of my hand and rub the pencil over it’.

Another student gently strokes his hand over the school desk and mutters quietly, ‘Maybe this is a texture ...’. He places the paper on the desk and starts rubbing it with a crayon. Gradually, a visual image of the texture emerges. The boy smiles and shows it to a classmate before handing it to the teacher.

The students’ examinations increase in intensity, and they become more and more engaged in the task. At the end of the lesson, all the sheets of paper depicting a variety of different textures from their nearby surroundings and the students themselves are displayed on the classroom wall as collective artwork. The students and teacher discuss their experiences of the task and what came out of it. They are all happy with the task and its results.

## Epilogue

A couple of weeks after the texture lesson, Anne, the teacher, bumped into one of the students—the boy who found a texture on his school desk—when she

was shopping for food in the grocery store. As soon as the boy spotted Anne at the fruit and vegetable corner, he ran towards her and proclaimed loudly and excitedly, ‘Anne, Anne, have you seen all the textures that are here in the grocery store?’

The technique of rubbing—a so-called frottage technique that they used in the arts lesson described in the narrative—is quite common in (arts) education, and by using the technique, the students depicted texture through an aesthetic form of expression. Thereby, the students were given the opportunity to increase their attention, awareness and sensitivity through texture, and as a result, they may transform their bodily and sensory experiences so that aesthetic experiences could occur (cf. Dufrenne 1973). Aesthetic experiences can enable a person to see the world and themselves in a new way—or to make one’s surroundings visible again (Dufrenne 1973). It is clear that the students had not previously paid attention to the textures in their surroundings or on themselves in the same way as they did during the lesson on texture. This may, in turn, mean that ‘new’ ways of viewing the world draw attention to and support new experiences of value not only for education and the arts, but for life itself.

Various modes of expression, such as artwork like an image or texture, convey messages to their audiences (c.f. Merleau-Ponty 1995). However, when talking about the different art forms, Bourdieu (1993) emphasised the need to reflect on the meaning of art. This is because most art forms go beyond words. There is, however, a difference between experiencing aesthetically and shaping an aesthetic process (Cronquist 2020). In the lesson exemplified in the narrative, the students were able to shape the process. The students had the opportunity not only to experience the texture as spectators, but also to involve themselves in the world and interact with it through an exploratory approach. In connection to arts and arts education, Biesta (2018) formulated an exploratory approach as follows: ‘Art itself appears as the ongoing exploration of what it means to be in the world, the ongoing attempt to figuring

out what it means to be here, now; to be—here—now’ (17). This concerns whether a student acquires knowledge by viewing the world or acting in the world.

## Texture, Education and the Arts in Relation to Corporality and the Senses

Humans are in a continuous dialogue with their physical and visual surroundings, and textures of different forms often evoke a desire or need to touch them. By touching textures, the person can experience and sense them with their fingers or with more tender areas of the skin, as some of the students did in the narrative above: ‘I found a cool piece of wood here’—the student gently touches the piece—‘it’s really spiky and rough’. Textures often arouse a variety of senses, even though our sense of touch must be regarded as central to the experience of texture. Therefore, our bodies are of critical significance in all experiences and, in this case, when experiencing and exploring texture.

Learning is moulded by the experiences that people undergo as human beings in the world, and these experiences are, above all, incorporated through the body, as pointed out by Merleau-Ponty (1968, 2002). Human beings experience the world through bodily senses: looking through their eyes, listening through their ears, incorporating different experiences of taste through their mouths, experiencing smell through their noses and grasping and feeling things or other people through their hands (Alerby, 2009). Thus, it is through the body that experiences in the world arise and knowledge of a complex and inhabited world can be acquired. Therefore, a significant means of understanding the world is the body. It is also through the body that humans live in relation to other things, such as texture.

In the narrative above, it is evident that the students used their bodies when looking for and exploring different textures: ‘after a while, some of the students start to

touch the things with their hands, some even hold different things to their cheeks'. By doing so, the students acquired not only more experiences of the texture and their surroundings in the school, but also of themselves. One of the students used his own body as both a subject and an object: 'Look at what happens when I place the paper on top of the knuckles of my hand and rub the pencil over it'. In this example, the knuckles became the depicted object, while the fingers on the student's other hand—the subject—held the pencil and rubbed the texture. This can be seen as a further example of the mutual interplay between the human body and the world, or as Merleau-Ponty (2002) expressed, '... the world is wholly inside me and I am wholly outside myself' (p. 408).

It is not only the experiences acquired in school that matter. Doodington (2014) emphasised that the experiences of an everyday activity, such as strolling on the grass or walking down a city street, increase a person's bodily sensibility. For example, when engaged in such activities on the way to school, a student approaches and experiences multiple textures; these experiences are of significance to tactile attention and aesthetic compliance. However, as Doodington (2014) noted, it is essential '[to] shape this sensibility through expressions that bring the experience to consciousness' (52). Therefore, it is about being aware of and attentive to the tactile and visual world—the world of texture—and using it in different (arts) educational situations to strengthen the same. One example of how this can be done is highlighted in the narrative above. Letting students acquire aesthetic experiences and including these in teaching as a form of the didactic approach may lead to developing the students' imagination, sentiment and critical thinking (cf. Dufrenne 1973). However, the point is not only to focus on how teachers can help students create personal expressions or express themselves—it is about how students should be able to engage in a dialogue with the world (Biesta 2010).

## Texture and the Challenge of Senses

In accordance with the argumentation above, illuminating the degree to which the human senses communicate with each other is interesting. To exemplify the communication of the senses, a lemon can be used (cf. Alerby, 2009). If a person has touched and tasted a lemon, they have a previous experience of the texture of a lemon peel and how it tastes. The person in question does not need to touch or taste it to know that it is a lemon. Instead, previous sensory experiences of the touch and taste of a lemon communicate with the sense of sight, and the person can understand the lemon in terms of what they see—its yellow peel and sour taste. Another example of the senses in communication is manifested in the assembling of a snowball and the knowledge of how snow cools the hands and how the texture of the snow feels against the skin; this experience leads the person to see a snowball's coldness and texture. The sight gives the idea of shape, and the touch confirms the perception and gives a fuller picture of consistency, hardness, temperature, material properties and structure—that is, texture—which, in turn, is related to previous experiences.

To continue the argumentation on communication between the senses and connect the reasoning to the context of a student learning to write, a letter's sound enters the body through hearing and comes out in the tactile sense of holding a pen (Alerby, 2009). In connection with this reasoning, the product of the writing itself—the text—is also a texture (in most cases and to some extent, it also conveys a message). As Abbs (1989) expressed about languages and texts such as stories or poems, '[I]t involves a sensing of the texture of words, their individual tone, their cumulative rhythm, their imaginal energy, their multiple associations, their cluster of meanings' (67).

In addition to sensations, textures often arouse associations. They may appear attractive or repulsive, here depending on previous experiences. However, previous experiences do not always match what is experienced in the moment. In an art context,



it is not uncommon for artists to challenge previous experiences and senses that we take for granted. *Object* by Meret Oppenheim (see Figure 3) is a good example of this. It is an example of an artist using tactile texture as a central agent or means of expression.



*Figure 3: 'Object, the fur-covered cup, saucer and spoon, by the artist Meret Oppenheim from 1936 at the Museum of Modern Art, New York (Rose 2015).*

The work is an ordinary cup, spoon and saucer wrapped in gazelle fur, and it represents an evocative interplay between the senses. In viewing the cup, sensory experiences are probably aroused. Most likely, a clash is created between the expectations of the object's traditional function and its texture, as modified in the piece. Because of one's familiarity with this object, which are based on earlier experiences, spectators likely knew its original function—for drinking coffee or tea—but also imagine exploiting this function with the added experience of touching a gazelle's fur.

As stated above, previous experiences do not always match what is experienced at the moment, something that is also central to (arts) educational situations. The teacher may end up in a situation that challenges previous experiences so that an ordinary and common teaching situation—a situation the teacher usually takes for

granted—develops into something completely different; hence, new experiences happen. Challenging truths that are generally taken for granted may also occur in the lives of students. Students might end up in situations that test previous experiences, just as the teacher sometimes does. This is not, however, exclusive to (arts) education and school settings but something that occurs in other activities and functions—in life itself.

Another example of artwork as a challenge to the senses and truths that are taken for granted is the stage rug *Metafoil* in the Norwegian National Opera and Ballet, which was designed by the American artist Pae White (see Figure 4).



Figure 4: *The stage rug Metafoil*. Photo by Jens Sølberg.

At a distance, *Metafoil* is an example of a texture that recalls crumpled aluminium foil. However, the surface of the rug is not crumpled; rather, it is totally flat. It is easy to be duped by an image or texture. Textures are not always what they seem. *Metafoil* gives the illusion of three dimensions, a relief effect, but it is nevertheless two-dimensional. In touching the rug, the sense of sight can be convinced that the surface is flat, which is a further example of communication between the senses. A similar example is shown in the narrative above, when one of the students viewed the depicted texture on her paper and softly stroked her hand over the sheet, noting, ‘What a difference it

is to stroke the paper and the piece of wood ... even though it actually is the same texture'. The body's tactile experiences and its memory of them hold a multitude of emotions and expectations that may, however, not be fully expressed through verbal language. Verbally reproducing the nuances of the bodily experience of touching different textures, such as *Object, Metafoil* or a texture from a piece of wood rubbed on a sheet of paper sometimes becomes too difficult. Not everything can be spoken or verbally communicated; instead, Merleau-Ponty (1995) stressed the silent and implicit language that exists in every person; he also stressed that this silent and implicit language can be manifested through visual appearances, such as various forms of art.

As has been emphasised previously in the current article, different textures are always present, which may be so obvious that they are invisible or silent, in van Manen's (1990) parlance. Indeed, nothing is as silent as that which is totally obvious. To further elaborate on reasoning concerning the unspeakable, the relationships between silence, silent spaces, texture and (arts) education, as well as the role of repetition in this context, will be illuminated and discussed.

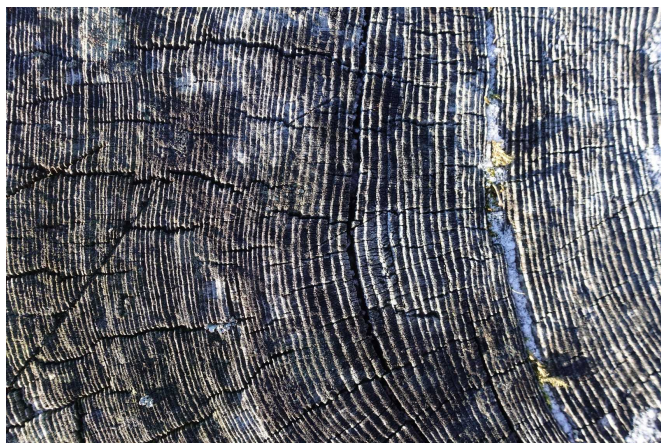
## Silence, Silent Spaces and Repetition: Essential for Texture and (Arts) Education

Given that not everything can be spoken or verbally communicated, the silent dimensions need to be acknowledged and explored. Spoken or written words alone may not be enough to represent human knowledge—something that exists beyond what is explicitly expressed (Merleau-Ponty, 1995). This is something one of the students in the narrative put words to: 'Strange ... I'm not sure how to say it'. The student expressed these words when she realised the difference between the texture of the piece of wood and that depicted on the paper.

As shown in the narrative above, the students were active participants in an arts lesson, and they were encouraged to explore and illuminate their surroundings and themselves through an aesthetic form of expression using the technique of rubbing. In school contexts, however, spoken words are often highly valued, written words perhaps more so. In the context of (arts) education, one can consider whether different art forms are valued and appreciated as obvious and natural modes of expression in school. Dufrenne (1973) emphasised that the aesthetic forms of expression are about one's freedom to express oneself. Using the arts can also be a way to unveil the silent and implicit language that exists in a manner beyond what can be described (Merleau-Ponty 1995).

One way to evoke some of what lies hidden in the tacit domain of our experiences is, therefore, to use different forms of expression. Several artists have done this while working in a variety of art forms, as exemplified above by the two different artworks of Meret Oppenheim and Pae White. Another art form of interest here is literature, and in relation to stories and poems, Abbs (1989) expressed that 'to develop the aesthetic is to develop an involvement with the expressive bodily life of language as it manifests itself in literature' (67).

To connect the reasoning to texture, texts have different paces; it remains of a rhythm consisting of silent spaces in more or less regular cycles or repetitions. Repetitions in a text or speech can have the effect of silencing it; the repetition might mean that the message goes unheard. As with the sound of a dripping faucet, listeners eventually tune it out (Alerby, 2020). In texture, repetition is an essential feature; without repetition, there is no texture. Figure 5 shows an example of the repetitive nature of a specific texture.



*Figure 5: An example of the repetitive nature of a texture.*

*Photo by Kari Doseth Opstad.*

Repetition is common and of significance not only in texture, but in education as well. In school, repetition is something that both teachers and students are familiar with in connection to situations when the student is striving to learn something and in the form of the teacher repeating instructions or a request. The teacher who repeats a request over and over again (e.g., ‘Please, be quiet’) to a group of unruly and chatty students who do not ‘hear’ or obey the teacher’s words might end up finding the teacher’s words being repeated into silence (Alerby, 2020). Additionally, it can be noted that the entire world of school is a repetition. Students’ (and teachers’) lives in school are controlled by the calendar and schedule, with both linear and circular repetition. Both the calendar and school schedule prove to have repetition in their constitution—day by day, week by week, semester by semester, year by year. Given this, the regular cycles and repetitions—the rhythm and pace—of a school can be viewed as its texture.

Like repetition, silence is an obvious and necessary part of texture, and the same holds true for words. Without silent spaces between words, communication would hardly work, and this applies to both spoken and written words. Therefore, silence is

as important as words (Merleau-Ponty 1995; Merleau-Ponty and Lefort 1968). Indeed, the text as a whole—its words and its silences—conveys a certain message that produces different understandings, here depending on its texture, among other things. As mentioned previously, in connection with the work of Abbs (1989), a text means a sense of the word's texture. Additionally, we can again stress that text and texture have the same linguistic origin and are closely linked from that perspective. One could also argue that a word or part of a texture needs to be in solitude, though it is often interpreted in conjunction with other words or, in the case of a texture, with other elements. To illustrate, this paragraph has been reproduced below without any space between the words (cf. Alerby, 2020).

Additionally, we can again stress that text and texture have the same linguistic origin and are closely linked from that perspective. One could also argue that a word, or part of a texture, needs to be in solitude, though it is often interpreted in conjunction with other words, or in the case of a texture, with other elements. To illustrate, this paragraph has been reproduced below without any spaces between the words.

This is an example of the importance of silent spaces between words. Without silence between the words, whether the words are spoken or written, communication would not function. By omitting the silent spaces between words, a completely different texture arises, and a completely different understanding of the text occurs. The same is true for other forms of texture: without the silent or empty spaces in a texture, there is no texture. Silent spaces are, therefore, important components in both texts and textures. It is the silent and solitary spaces in between that make the difference and create the text or texture (see Figure 6).





*Figure 6: An example of silent and solitude spaces in a texture. Photo by Kari Doseh Opstad.*

The silent spaces in between in textures can also be viewed as the cracks that unleash dissimilarities and disparities and, in doing so, enable something new or something different and contrasting. As Leonard Cohen (1992) sang in ‘Anthem’, ‘There is a crack, a crack in everything. That’s how the light gets in’.

## Some Final Words: Texture and (Arts) Education as an Intertwined Relationship

In the current article, the complexities of the concept of texture in relation to (arts) education have been elaborated upon, and we have, for example, stated that texture comprises a variety of different aspects, dimensions and characteristics. Texture occurs in a multitude of different shapes and guises, but it is essential to note that a texture often evokes associations and challenges the senses, that the body is of significance when exploring a texture and that an essential issue for both texture and education is silence and repetition.

In the current article, our intention has been to illuminate, elaborate on and explore the complexities of the concept of texture and its relationship to (arts) education, a relationship that can be described as intertwined. Our sincere hope is that the readers of this paper will embrace openness and open-ended curiosity and continue to consider what may happen if different aesthetic experiences, dimensions and concepts are used in genuine and concrete ways throughout society, and, more specifically, in different (arts) educational contexts and settings (i.e., in the classroom). When using the concept of texture and working with it in a tangible way in the classroom with students, attention, awareness and sensitivity might increase. Examples of this have been presented in the narrative and discussed throughout the text.

Aesthetic dimensions such as texture play an essential role in (arts) education (Lewis 2009), but one must be attentive and responsive to them, which first requires having awareness of and valuing bodily and sensory experiences (cf. Merleau-Ponty 1968, 2002). Abbs (1989) argued that humans are aesthetic beings long before they become rational beings. However, the aesthetic dimensions of human life might be un-subtle and undeveloped during one's lifespan. To prevent this, schools play a crucial role with their educational activities. Dufrenne (1973) went as far as to claim that aesthetic experiences help a person make the world visible and view it from new perspectives. This may mean that the things that the individual has not previously paid attention to are brought to the foreground, which is exemplified through the boy in the narrative meeting his teacher in the grocery store and drawing her attention to all the textures there: 'Anne, Anne, have you seen all the textures that are here in the grocery store?' This is an example of how the boy's experiences from the texture lesson enabled him to view the world in the grocery store in a new way. The boy's attention, awareness and sensitivity had likely increased at a more general level in relation to texture. Or as Dufrenne (1973) expressed, it is a kind of emotional response that makes the surroundings visible for the individual. In this example, the boy's sur-



roundings—the grocery store—was filled with textures, and this became visible to him.

According to Abbs (1989), in the same way that language or a text has a texture, the different activities and interpersonal relationships in the classroom have a texture. In all activities and relationships, irrespective of whether they embrace silence, repetition and solitude or not, the humans in the space—teachers and students—collectively shape the texture of the situation. The texture of such a situation is, however, constantly changing and is volatile by nature in contrast to the texture of physical and persisting things, such as a piece of wood, a ball of yarn or a school desk. The material world is important, and without attention, awareness and sensitivity to these issues, both individuals and society might be diminished.

In conclusion, we suggest that (arts) education is or should take the mode of an open-ended and unpredictable transformation, supporting critical and novel considerations of the same. Through the lens of texture, different and more or less obvious aesthetic dimensions might be valued and appreciated. Indeed, the notion of texture and its immediacy within bodily and sensory experiences is of significance for (arts) education, as has been argued throughout the present article. There is a challenge inherent in bodily conceived engagement in an environment entirely entangled with textures, and various forms of texture may sensitise humans to develop the habits to generate growth and a desire for sensory experience. All these aspects are fundamental and essential for education and training, teaching and schooling, formation and transformation—that is, for classroom activities. We argue that texture encourages or brings out the attention, awareness and sensitivity that are of significance not only for (arts) education, but also for the formation of society—for the formation of our lives.

## Acknowledgements

As the authors of this article, we would like to thank our colleagues and friends around the world for their valuable comments and suggestions on an earlier draft of this text. We would also like to thank the anonymous reviewers who reviewed the original submission of the article for their constructive feedback and comments.

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