

Adding a Dimension

In this exercise we observe the layers and mechanics behind an artwork, to explore the artist and to expand our own perspective.

By focusing on textures, shapes and materials, experiencing art becomes more immersive. We use both the logical and creative sides of the brain, in trying to deduce how an artist created their work and in then imagining their state of mind as they were creating it.

This exercise can be useful for people who feel like they cannot understand art, or for those who want a deeper understanding of how to create art themselves.

- Choose an artwork with a good level of texture, it could be a painting, sculpture, or if your options are limited it could be everyday objects.
- Take a comfortable, stable stance, with a relaxed body.
- Walk from side to side of the painting, until you find an angle where you are able to view layers of paint. This is usually good from the side of the frame, quite close up.
- Once you have found a good position, start to glance over the painting. Notice the details.
What is the texture like? Is it rough or smooth? Is it matt or glossy? Are the strokes big or small? How does the light bounce over the surface? Are there many layers of paint or just a few? Does it look different when you tilt your head one way or the other?

Once you have observed the physical details, take note of the mood.

How was the paint applied? Does it look neat or messy? Is it precise or rough? Was it painted quickly or slowly? Do you think of

any emotions when looking at the texture? Does it feel different depending on whether you are close up or further away?

Close your eyes. Picture the same textures in your mind. Now imagine seeing the artist creating the painting.

How are they applying the paint? Is it calm or frantic? Are they looking close-up or from a distance? What tools are they using? How are they standing? How are they moving? How are they feeling? How do they feel before, during and after the painting?

- Breathe in through the nose. Breathe out through the mouth. Open your eyes.
- Look back at the texture of the painting. Gradually step back and centre yourself, to look at the whole painting from the centre. Take note of any changes in your mood, perspective and understanding.

Does the painting look different from this angle? Does it feel different from when you first viewed it? Can you relate with the artist? Do you notice anything about it you didn't before?