

By WUCIUS WONG

formations or distortions without rendering the original images unrecognizable. (Fig. 69c)

Tactile Texture

Tactile texture is a kind of texture that is not only visible to the eye but can be felt with the hand. Tactile texture rises above the surface of a two-dimensional design and approaches a three-dimensional relief.

Broadly speaking, tactile texture exists in all types of surfaces because we can feel them. This means all kinds of paper, however smooth, and all kinds of paint and ink, however flat, have their specific surface characteristics which can be discerned by the sense of touch. In two-dimensional design, we can say that a blank area or a solidly printed or painted area contains no visual texture, but there is always the tactile texture of the paper and the ink or paint.

To narrow down its scope, we can limit our discussion to the kinds of tactile texture specially created by the designer for the purpose. This means the materials have been specially shaped or arranged, or combined with other materials, to form a composition, or the materials have undergone special treatment, resulting in new textural sensations. Thus we can have three distinct kinds of tactile texture:

Available natural texture - The natural texture of the materials is maintained. The materials, which may be paper, fabric, branches, leaves, sand, strings, etc., are cut, torn, or used as they are, and pasted, glued, or fixed onto a surface. No effort is made to hide the identity on the materials.

Modified natural texture - The materials are modified so that they are not the same as usual. For instance, paper is not pasted flat but creased or crumpled, or it can be stippled, scratched, embossed. A piece of

sheet metal can be folded, hammered, or drilled with tiny holes. A piece of wood can be carved. The materials are slightly transformed, but not beyond recognition. (Fig. 70a)

Organized texture - The materials, usually in small bits, chips, or strips, are organized into a pattern which forms a new surface. The textural units may be used as they are or modified, but they must be small or cut into small pieces. Examples of these are seeds, grains of sand, chips of wood, leaves cut into very narrow strips, paper twisted into tiny balls, pins, beads, buttons, strings or threads to be woven, etc. The materials may sometimes be identifiable, but the new surface sensation is much more dominant. (Fig. 70b)

All kinds of tactile texture can be transformed into visual texture by the photographic process.

Light and Color in Tactile Texture

The play of light upon a tactile texture may be very interesting. Certain materials may reflect or refract light, with fascinating results. The tactile quality of rough surfaces is usually emphasized by strong side-lighting.

Some designs may have been conceived with light modulation as an essential element. In this case, the textural units are usually long and thin, projecting from the surface of the support material, so that shadows are rather linear, forming intricate patterns.

However, it should be pointed out that both light and shadow are visual, not tactile, because they have nothing to do with the sense of touch. Programmed lighting and changing relationships of the light source and the design can produce kinetic light patterns, but still the effect is a pure visual sensation.

Color can also play an interesting role in

tactile texture. The natural color of the materials can be maintained, but a coat of color can create a different feeling, at least rendering the materials less immediately recognizable, giving them less of an available natural texture but more of a modified natural texture. Diverse materials on a surface can resemble each other if they are all coated with the same color.

When there is more than one color on a surface, the colors will form a pattern which is visual. Sometimes the visual pattern can dominate over the sensation provoked by the tactile texture.

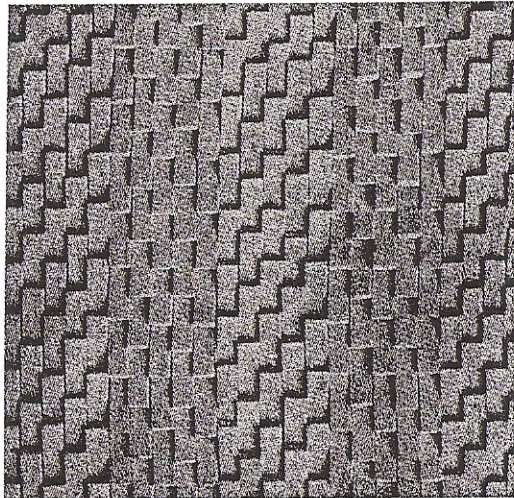
Notes on the Exercises

Figures 71a, b, c, d, e, f, g, and h all show the use of printed type to form textural patterns. Single characters of large type or lines of small type from printed matter have been specially cut and arranged so that blank spaces are eliminated as far as possible. Type of the same size and weight can be grouped to form a uniform texture, while a gradational texture can be created with type of varying size and weight.

Some of the examples were done by gathering and arranging type to form a uniform or gradational texture on a thin sheet of paper. This was later cut into pieces for final organization into a structured pattern.

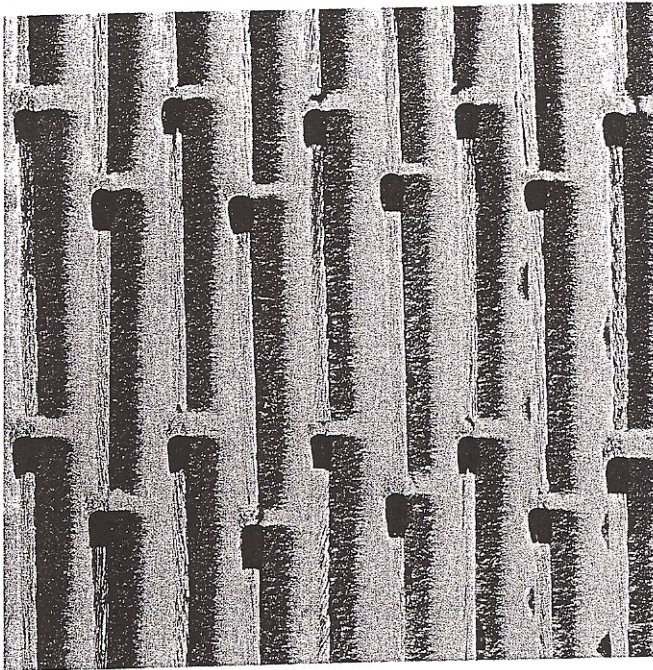


a

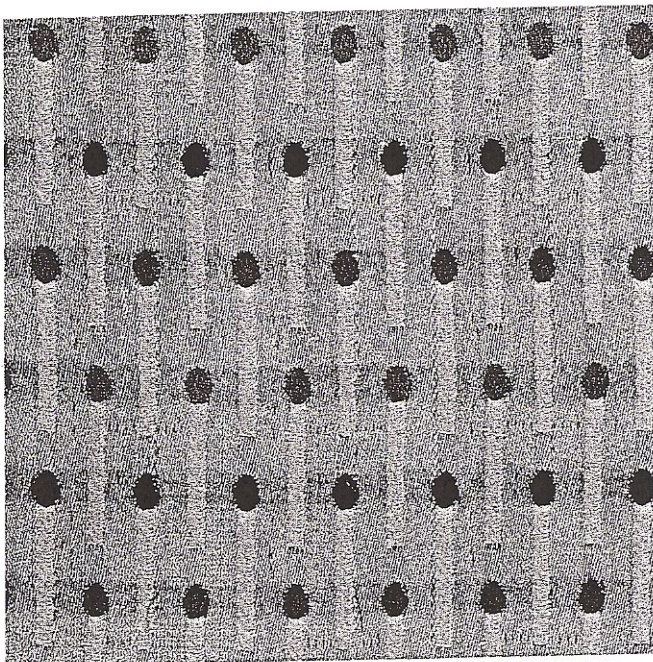


b

From Design and Form by Johannes Itten

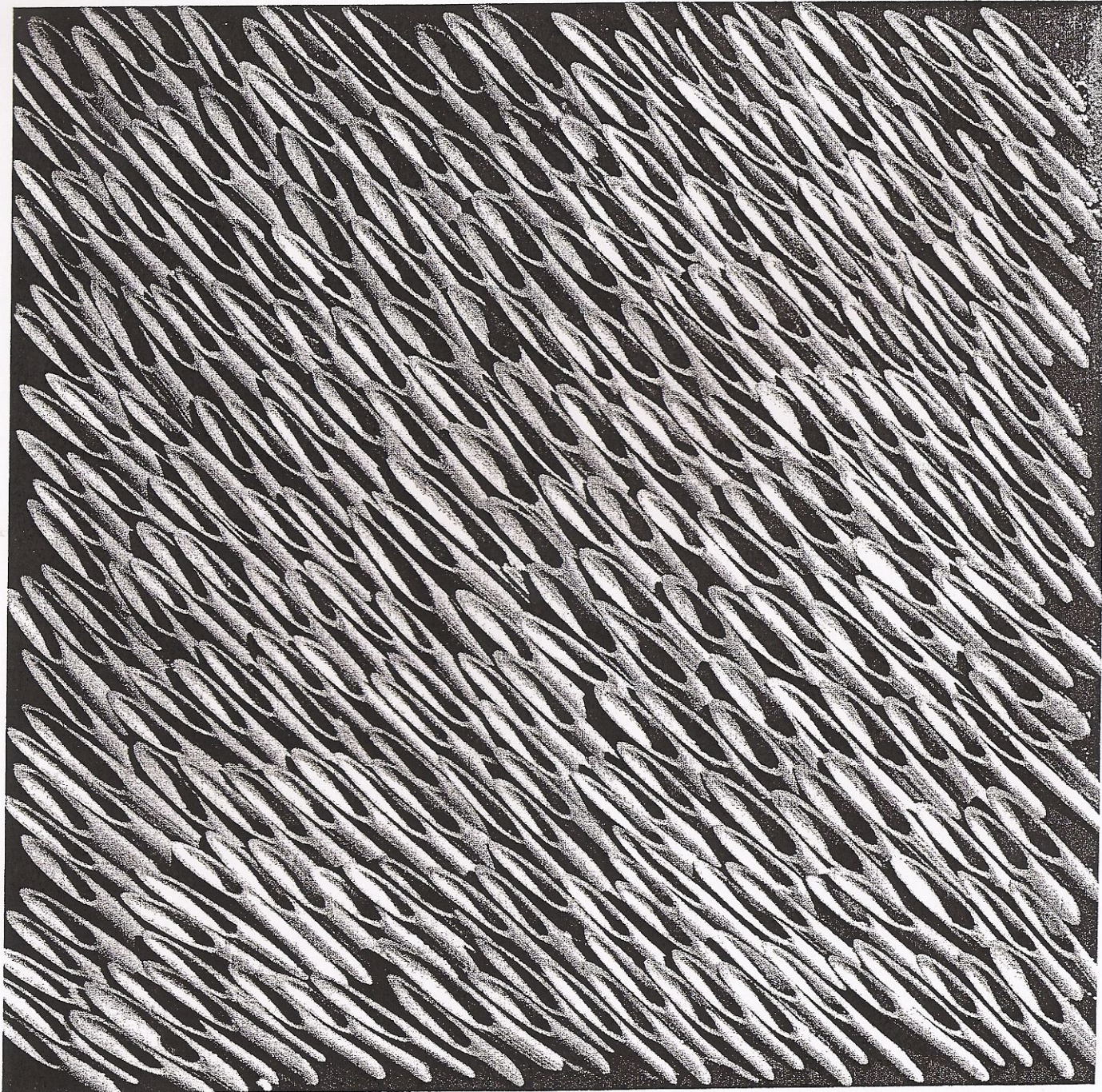


Four match sticks can produce numerous new forms by various combinations, rotation, reflection and overlapping.



Square, rectangle, rhombus, triangle and hexagon with equal sides can divide a plane without any blank spaces. These basic forms may be changed by adding and simultaneously taking away sections. Positive-negative forms were already used as ornamentation in antiquity and for the textile designer they open up a wide field of new forms which may vary even more by the distribution of color.

Matchstick montage and woven fabric, Krefeld, 1934.



Montage of cut straws. J. Hansen, Krefeld 1934.