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Zhao, Y.; de Ridder, H.; Stumpel, J.F.H.J.; Wijntjes, M.W.A.

DOI

[10.1167/jov.22.14.4298](https://doi.org/10.1167/jov.22.14.4298)

Publication date

2022

Document Version

Final published version

Published in

Journal of vision

Citation (APA)

Zhao, Y., de Ridder, H., Stumpel, J. F. H. J., & Wijntjes, M. W. A. (2022). Material perception across different media, comparing perceived glossiness and softness on paintings and engravings. *Journal of vision*, 22(14), Article 4298. <https://doi.org/10.1167/jov.22.14.4298>

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Material perception across different media, comparing perceived glossiness and softness on paintings and engravings

[Yuguang Zhao](#); [Huib de Ridder](#); [Jeroen Stumpel](#); [Maarten Wijntjes](#)

— Author Affiliations

Yuguang Zhao

Delft University of Technology, Perceptual Intelligence Lab

Huib de Ridder

Delft University of Technology, Perceptual Intelligence Lab

Jeroen Stumpel

Utrecht University, Department of Humanities

Maarten Wijntjes

Delft University of Technology, Perceptual Intelligence Lab

Journal of Vision December 2022, Vol.22, 4298. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1167/jov.22.14.4298>

Abstract

Before the invention of photography, paintings were reproduced in a graphic and linear medium, engravings. To compare material perception across two modalities, paintings and engravings, we conducted two online experiments. We collected 15 pairs of color oil paintings and their engraving reproductions. Then we selected 40 elements from these 15 pairs, including fabric and skin, which resulted in 80 stimuli in total. In experiment 1, we used original (colored) versions for both paintings and engravings. In experiment 2, we used the same stimulus set, but achromatic (luminance only). Two attributes were rated in both experiments: glossiness and softness. 30 observers completed online rating tasks for each attribute in each experiment (120 observers in total). For glossiness, independent of color or black and white versions, engravings scored higher than paintings. In experiment 1, engravings were rated as glossier in 28 out of 40 pairs of variations, with 11 out of these 28 pairs showing significant differences. In experiment 2 (achromatic), engravings scored higher in glossiness than paintings in 33 pairs with 21 pairs showing significant differences. Both numbers increased when colors were removed. For softness, 21 elements in experiment 1 and 29 elements in experiment 2 were judged glossier in engravings than in paintings. Surprisingly, engravings performed well in presenting both gloss and softness. Moreover, when colors were removed, the performance of engravings in conveying glossiness and softness got even better. The increased number of significant cases underscores the robustness of this trend.

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