

Trips for creating believable and more interesting landscapes

Creating a believable landscape painting with depth really isn't some magic trick, it's technique. For more than a century, skilled artists have used some of the following techniques to carefully orchestrate a convincing landscape painting. Learn how to pull spectators into your landscapes with these tips.



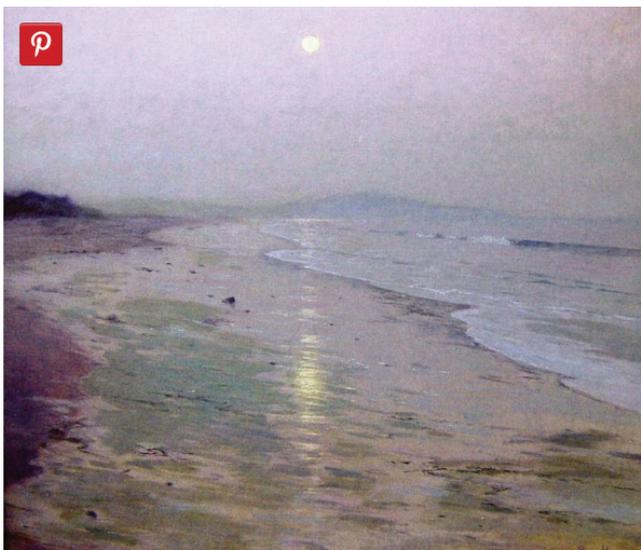
1. Layering and Overlapping

Layering and overlapping is effective when there is a notable contrast in the shade or texture of two overlapping objects. This creates extra contrast and helps to separate the objects from one another. In the dramatic Edgar Payne painting below, the smaller boats in the foreground layer and overlap and partially hide the larger boats. This creates a sense of depth.

I like that the closest items are not the center of interest and that they are in shadow. It does bend some perspective rules but is possible in the real world.

2. The S Curve or Winding Path

A winding river or path that meanders like an S through the painting can be used as a way to move the viewer's eye. Charles Warren Eaton's tonal painting, *Winter Solitude* is an example of this popular technique. Again.. this one breaks a general rule where the horizon is pretty centered but still works pretty well. I'd prefer to see less sky and more ground.



3. Use Diagonals

The artist Lowell Birge Harrison effectively used diagonals in the composition, *Moonrise on the Beach*. The gently rolling waves angle away and recede from us, creating a sense of depth and distance.

4. Aerial Perspective

A faraway mountain range will usually appear lighter, hazier and bluer as it gets further away. This phenomenon is called, aerial perspective. It is an optical effect caused by the atmosphere on objects viewed at a long distance. Use temperature changes in color to help with aerial perspective. This is a generalization, but warm colors are more attention grabbing, therefore they seem to advance more than cool colors which seem to recede. Learn more about this and composition from Edgar Payne. I would prefer a bit more fore ground in this one.. :) notice how the cool (blues) makes things recede. As confusing as it is.. this is not true in painting faces where warms seem to make things recede. Those of you who have been with me know that if you add warm tones inside of nostrals they appear to recede



5. Foreground Interest

When painting a subject at medium to far distance, it can often appear flat. Include an object of interest in the foreground to enhance the sense of depth. This leads the viewer's eye into the scene, from the foreground to the subject in the distance. Generally, use less detail, and texture in the background. Renowned artist, teacher and author, John F. Carlson exemplifies this technique in the following painting.

6. Changes in Size

In this painting, The Road to Sluis, Holland, Charles Warren Eaton effectively used the Changes in Size technique. Notice how although in real life we know these trees are the same size, Eaton masterfully crafted them descending away from the viewer. In other words, the trees get smaller as they get further away. The descending trees give a wonderful illusion of depth to this painting.

I personally would like to see the trees in the distance be a lighter value and possibly more muted or slightly cooler in temperature



As you study great landscape paintings you will discover that many of them employ one or more of the above techniques. These tips help you create believability and depth in your own landscape paintings. Of course, there are exceptions to every 'rule' but, you need to know the rules before you break them!

How to Paint Landscapes with Depth – 6 Tips for Creating Distance in any Painting

When painting a landscape, it is essential that you are able to illustrate a visual “sense” of depth, through your brushstrokes, colors, and composition. We all know that this is important. . . but the question is, how exactly do you create a painting that does not appear flat and devoid of distance?

In today’s article I’ll be sharing what I consider to be the most effective ways to describe a sense of distance and atmospheric perspective in your landscapes—and it doesn’t matter whether you’re using a brush, pencil, or pastel.

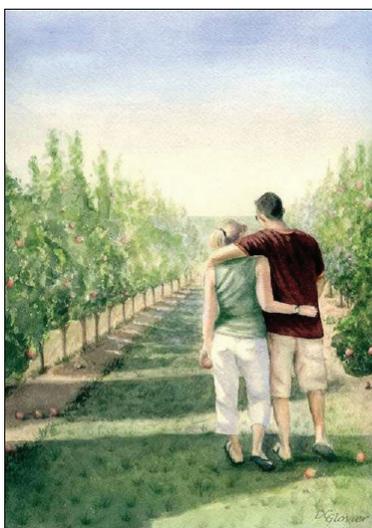
6 ways to increase depth in a landscape painting

1. Overlap various elements within your composition so that some are forced forward or backward in the scene.
2. Use less detail, texture, and definition when painting objects in the mid-ground and background of the landscape.
3. Paint with lighter values and less contrast for distant elements
4. Use cooler colors to push elements farther into the background.
5. Use warmer, darker colors to bring elements forward into the foreground.
6. As elements recede in the distance, paint them at a much smaller scale than objects in the foreground.



If you look all the way to the back you’ll see a clear lack of detail in the trees at the horizon, along with a cool blue-green used in their foliage. Those trees are also very, very small when compared to the foreground grass, which is probably the most effective distancing technique of all.

In the following watercolor painting, *A Walk in the Orchard*, overlapping elements play a much more significant role in pushing the apple trees back into the distance.



The first thing you might have noticed is that a sense of distance is established by cooling the hues as the eye moves back into the painting. Values also shift to the lighter end of the value scale.

In the foreground, the warmer blues in the water and the warm greens in the marsh grasses visually pushes the cooler shades back. Additionally the grasses reveal less detail and texture in the mid-ground and even less in the background.