

Sketching Your World in Watercolor - Composition and Depth

Or
Any other medium you may like!

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DesignN - The main idea

- Make interesting and appropriate shapes.
- Put them in interesting places.



alamy stock photo Chardin

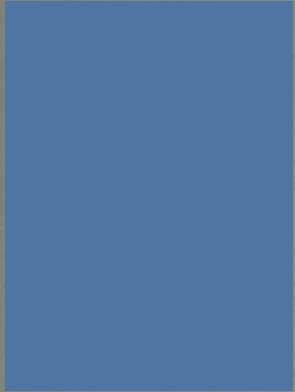
Artists create beauty by design.
They do not wait for nature or
humans to provide it.

"It's beauty I seek, not beautiful things" - Plato



Desgoffe

Format –the 1st decision



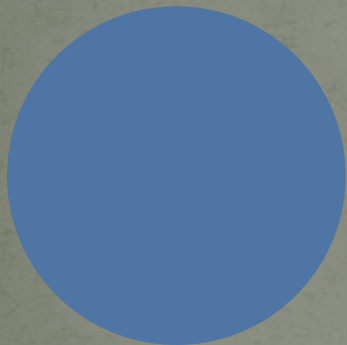
Portrait



Landscape



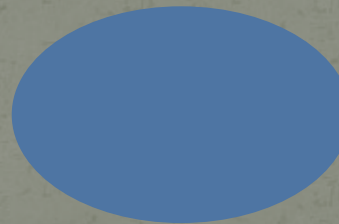
Square



Circle



Oval



Flattened oval

Common compositional formats

Creative formats -



Sailing to Byzantium

I

That is no country for old men. The young
In one another's arms, birds in the trees
- Those dying generations- at their song,
The salmon-falls, the mackerel crowded seas,
Fish, flesh, or fowl, commend all summer long
Whatever is begotten, born, and dies.
Caught in that sensual music all neglect
Monuments of unageing intellect.

II

An aged man is but a paltry thing,
A tattered coat upon a stick, unless
Soul clap its hands and sing, and louder sing
For every tatter in its mortal dress,
Nor is there singing school but studying
Monuments of its own magnificence;
And therefore I have sailed the seas and come
To the holy city of Byzantium.

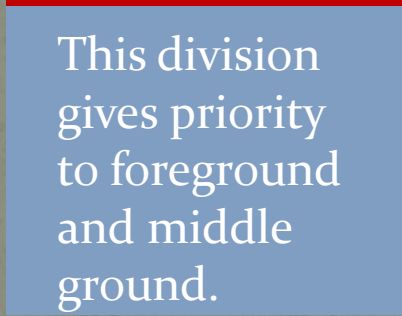
Excerpt - W. B. Yeats

Dividing the space -

A common page division.



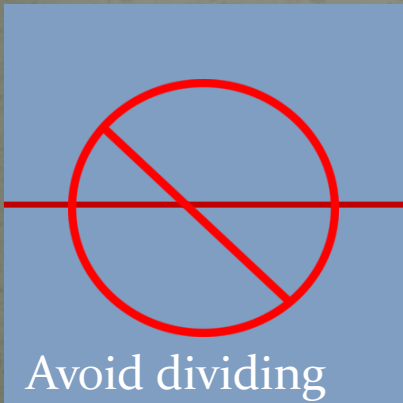
This division gives priority to foreground and middle ground.



This arrangement emphasizes the sky.



This could be a hillside. An angled $\frac{1}{3} - \frac{2}{3}$ arrangement.

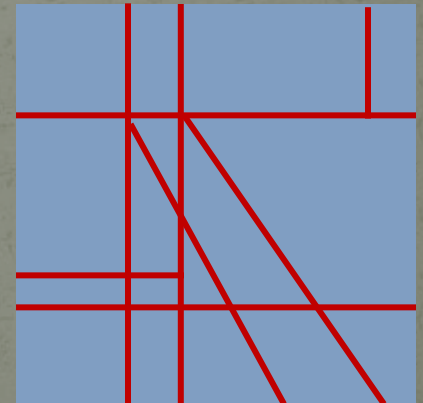


Avoid dividing the page into equal halves.



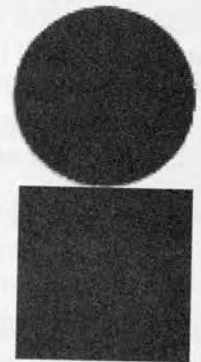
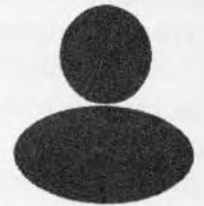
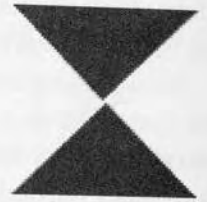
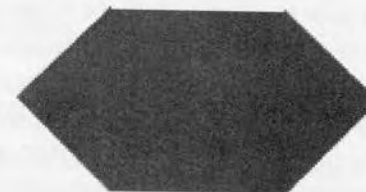
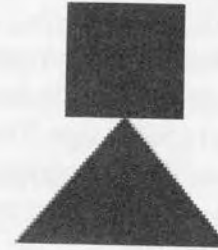
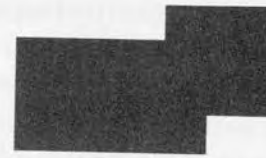
Avoid placing long, vertical objects at the edge of the page.

This could be the arrangement of a still life.



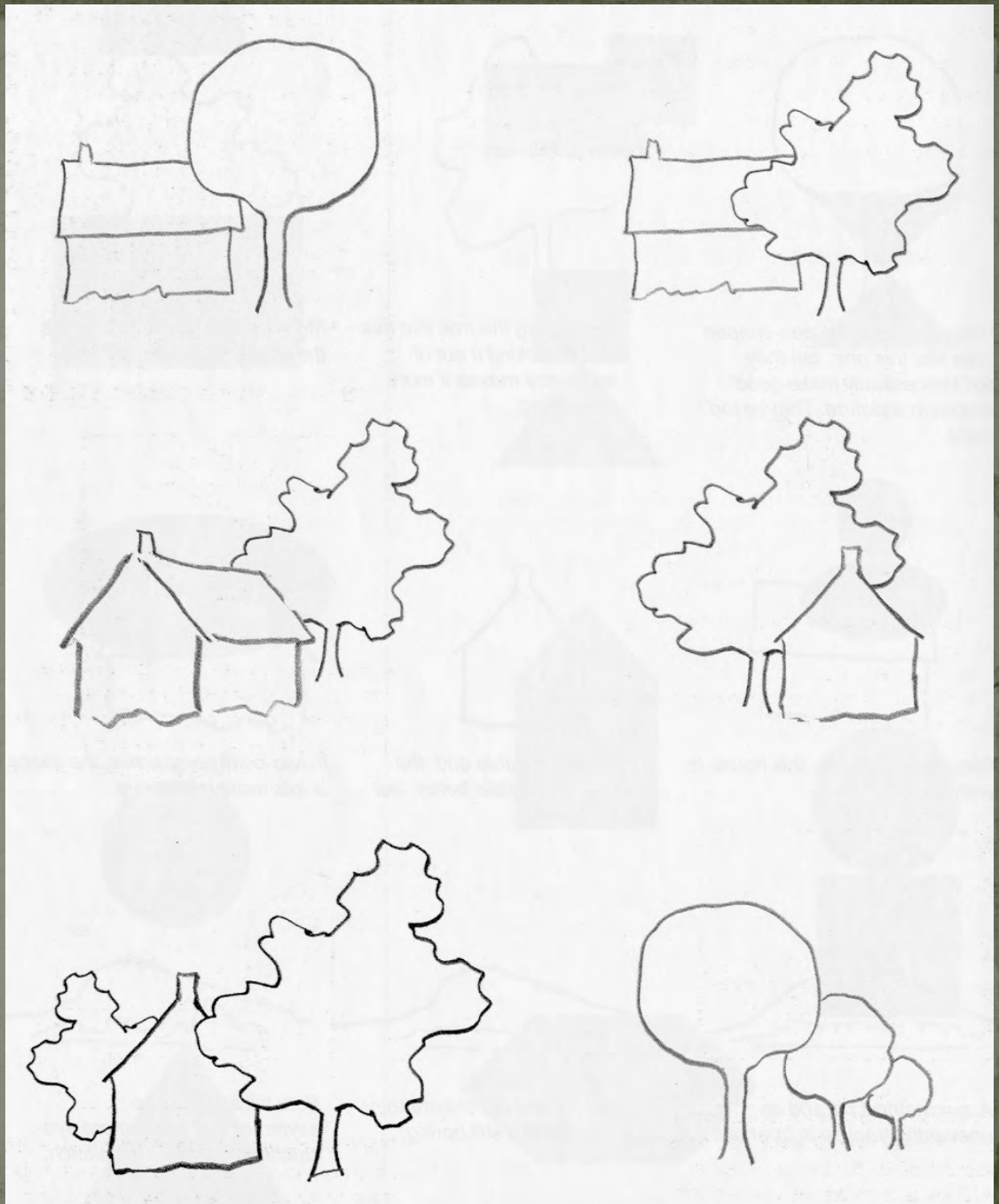
Shape -

- Shapes do not have to be complex to be interesting but sometimes it helps.



Combining shapes -

- Smooth horizontal shapes are more restful than angular or vertical shapes.
- In general that is why a landscape is more restful than a cityscape.
- Quiet shapes are often mixed with active shapes to increase interest by their **contrast**.



Shape dominance and variety -

- Generally, one shape should dominate with other shapes providing supporting roles, i.e. buildings mixed with a few shrubberies and trees to break the monotony.



Vary shapes to increase interest -

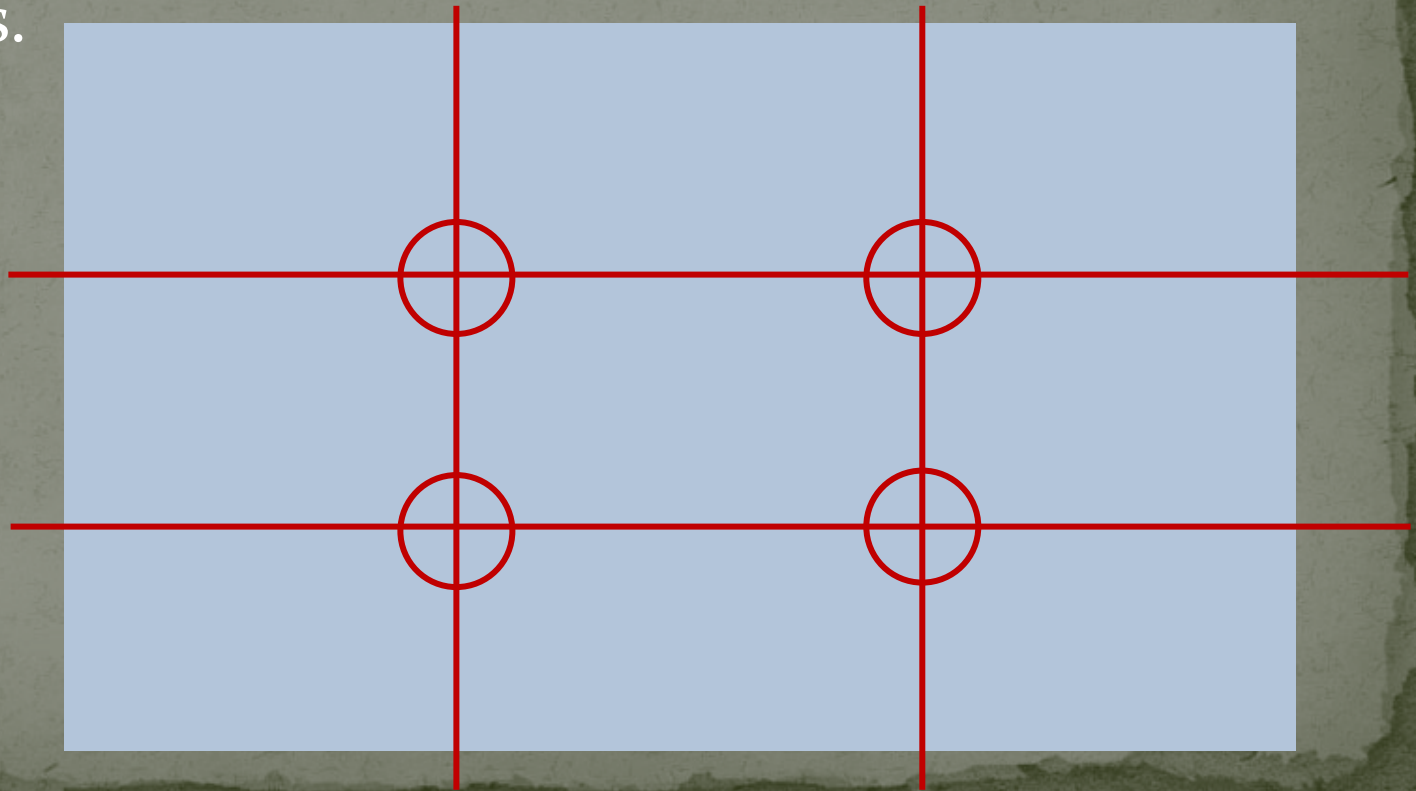


Sometimes this can be perfect!



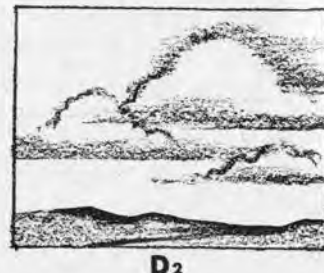
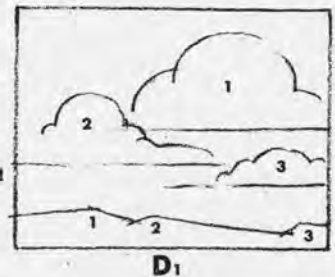
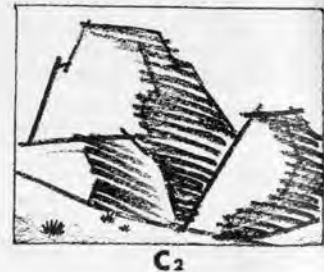
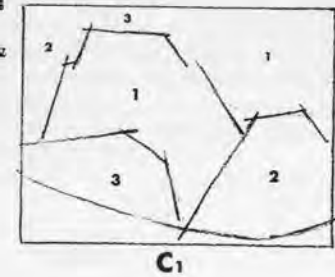
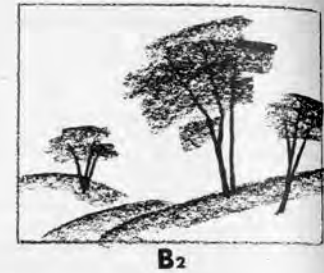
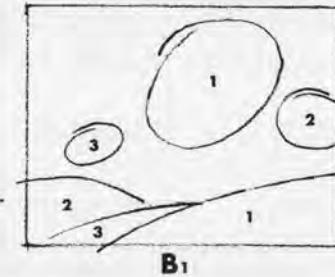
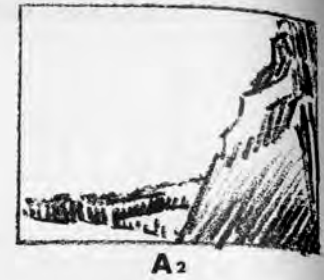
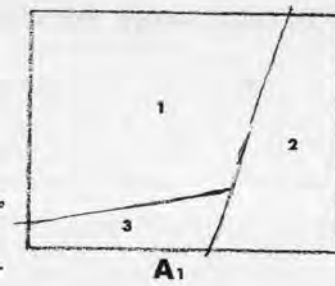
Location –

- Where do you place the shape on the page?
- The center of interest is often placed near the intersection of a picture space that has been divided into thirds.



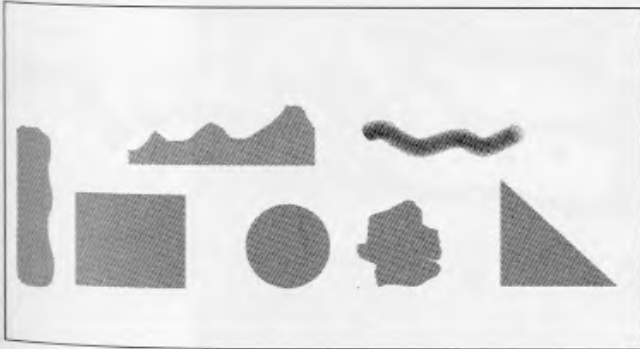
Rule of 3's

- Groups of 3 similar objects almost always make a good composition. Odd numbered groupings seem often better than even numbers.
- In a group of 3 there is usually a large, medium and small object. (The 3 bears.)

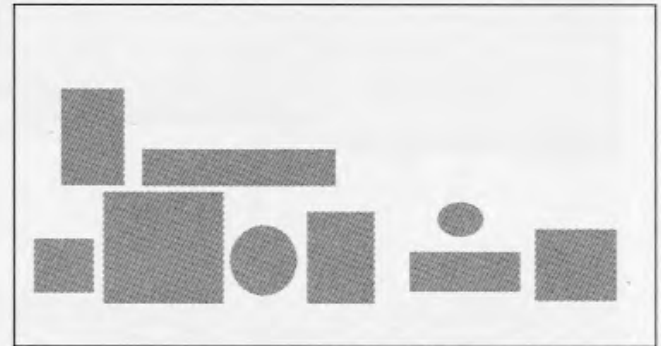


Repetition -

- Shape repetition can provide unity to a picture.
- Too many different shapes are confusing.



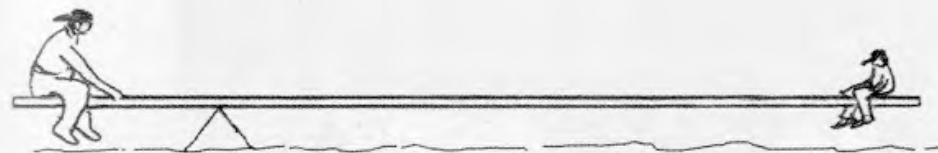
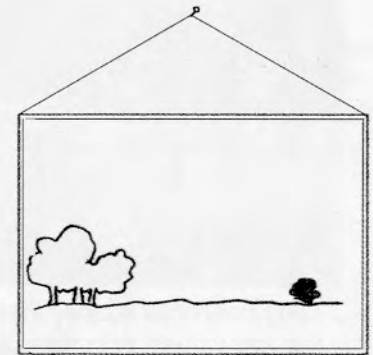
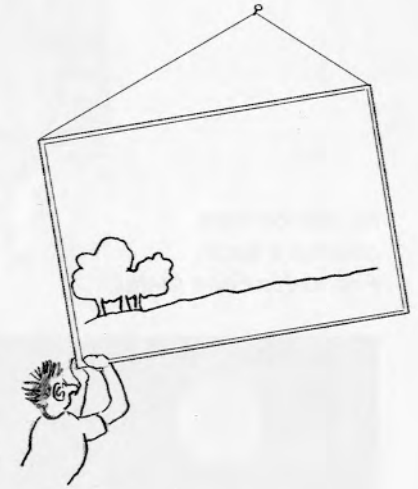
Too many different kinds of shapes is confusing.



A limited number of kinds of shapes offers enough variety without being confusing.

Balance -

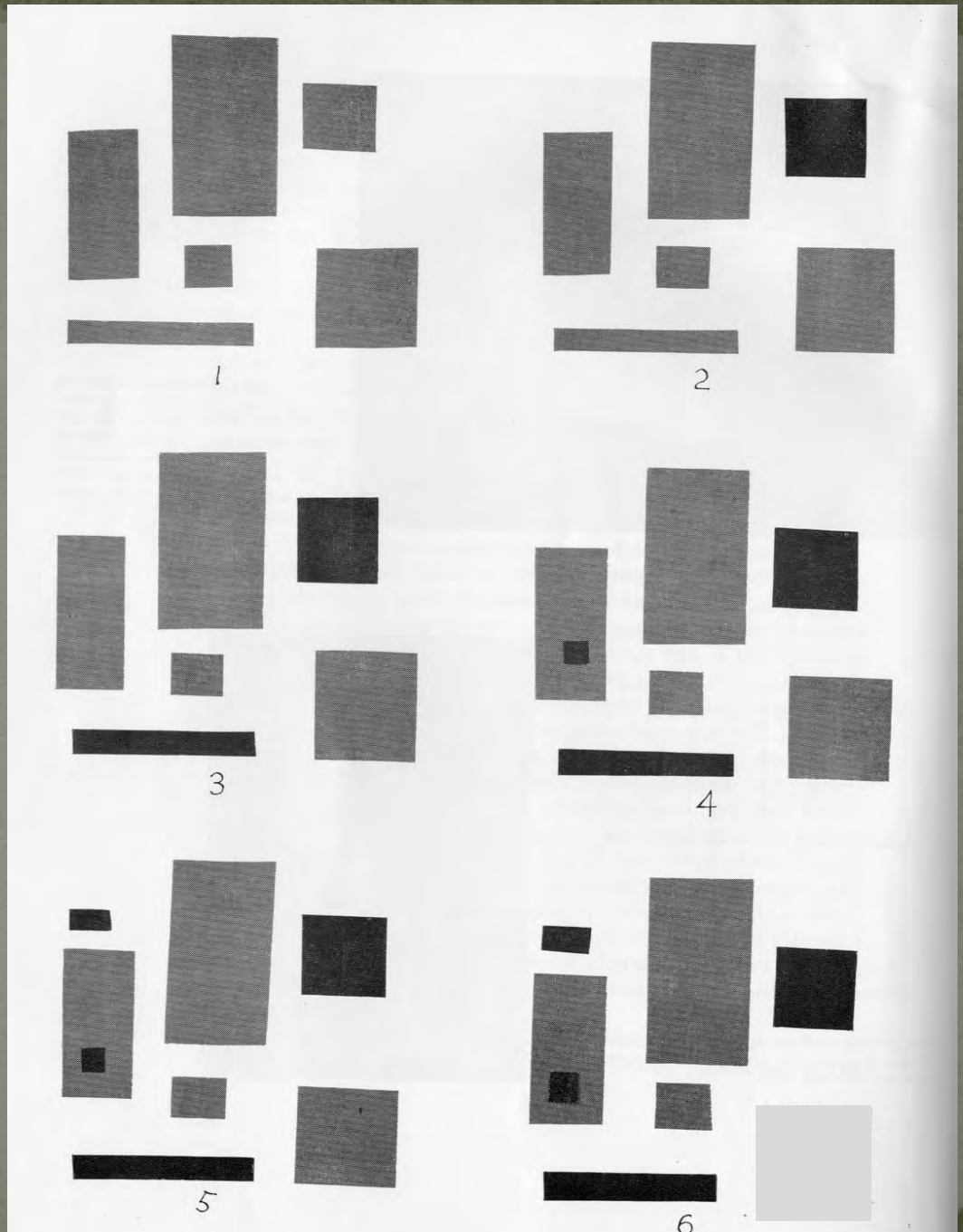
- Balance shapes in the pictorial space.
- Do not pile several objects on one side of the page.
- A large dark object needs balanced with other smaller objects.
- A large light object can be balanced with a small dark object placed at a distance from it.
- Don't worry! It is something that you just feel. People seem to know if they have it wrong.



The little guy balances the big guy just because of his advantageous position.

Balance -

1. A balanced composition.
2. Upper right square darkened – unbalanced.
3. Darken lower rectangle – balance better.
4. Further improvement with small black square.
5. The composition is again balanced.
6. Lower right square lightened. Out of balance again.



Balance -

Symmetrical balance used to suggest stasis. It demonstrates the impoverished family's inability to change their circumstances.



“Family Unit” Alexander Brook

Balance -

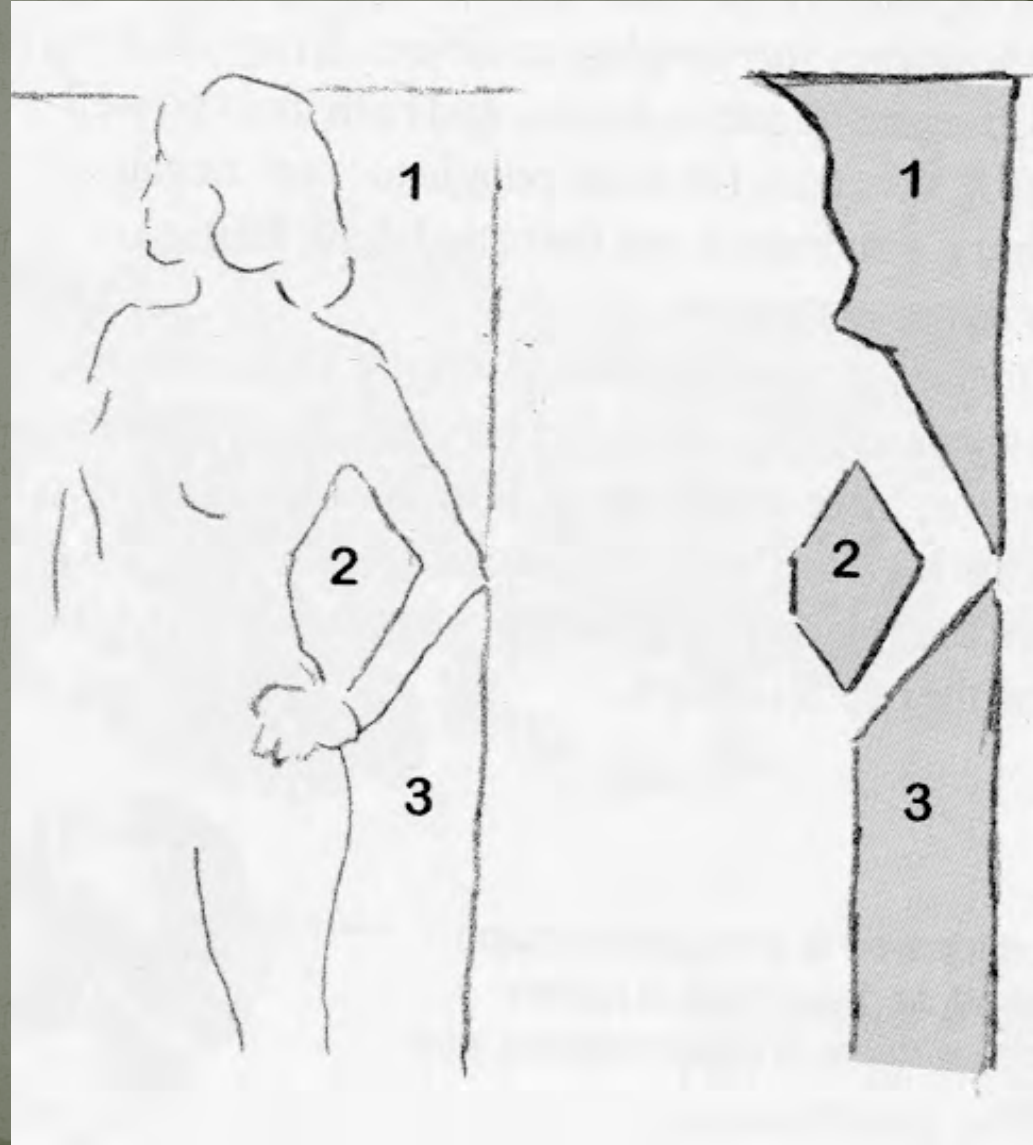
Balance of opposing rock masses
held together by the horizontal
lines of surf.



"Monhegan Theme" Lamar Dodd

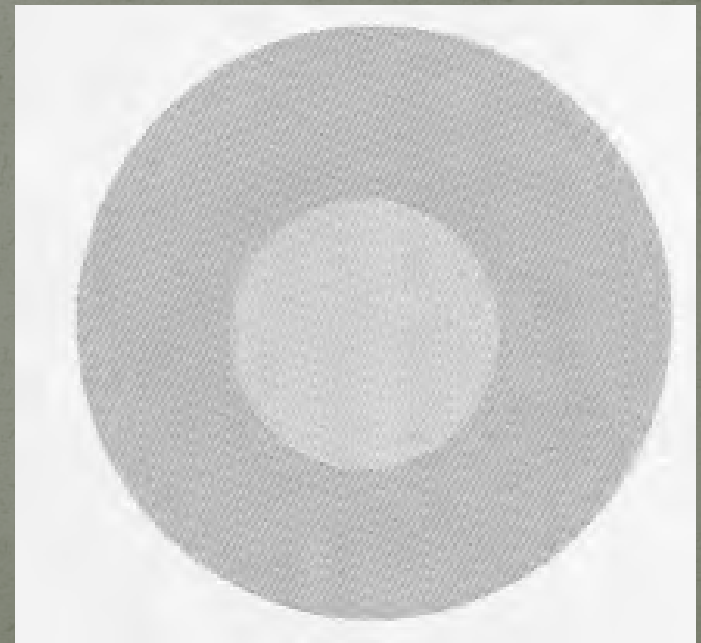
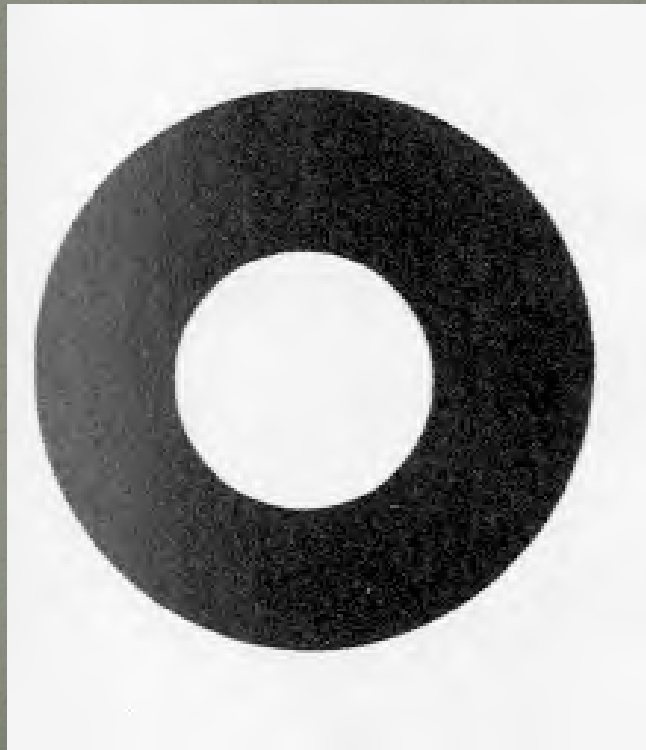
Negative space -

- The negative space around an object can also be made interesting.



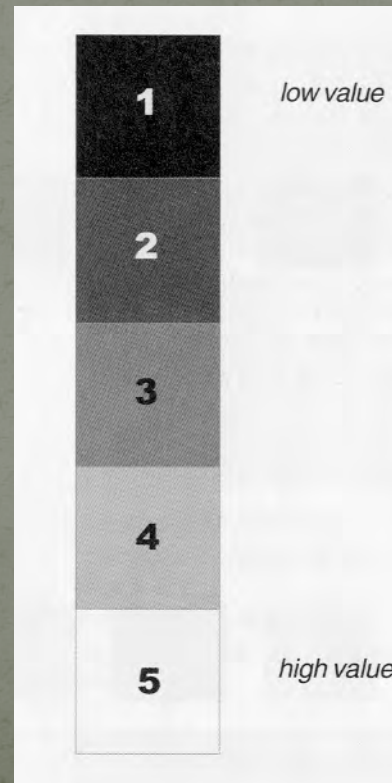
Value contrast -

- Sharp contrast attracts the eye.
- Low contrast areas are less noticed and recede to the background of the mind.

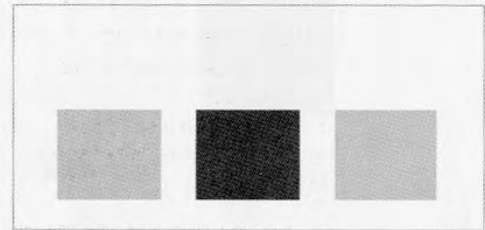


Value balance -

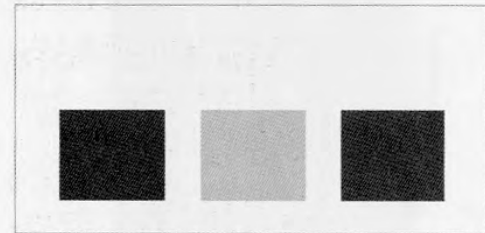
- Values need balanced much like shape must be.
- Generally, avoid symmetry. In value or shape.
- Use well placed darks to liven up your sketch even if you have to make them up.



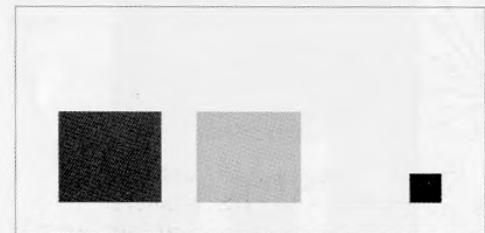
Too heavy on the left.



Too obviously balanced.



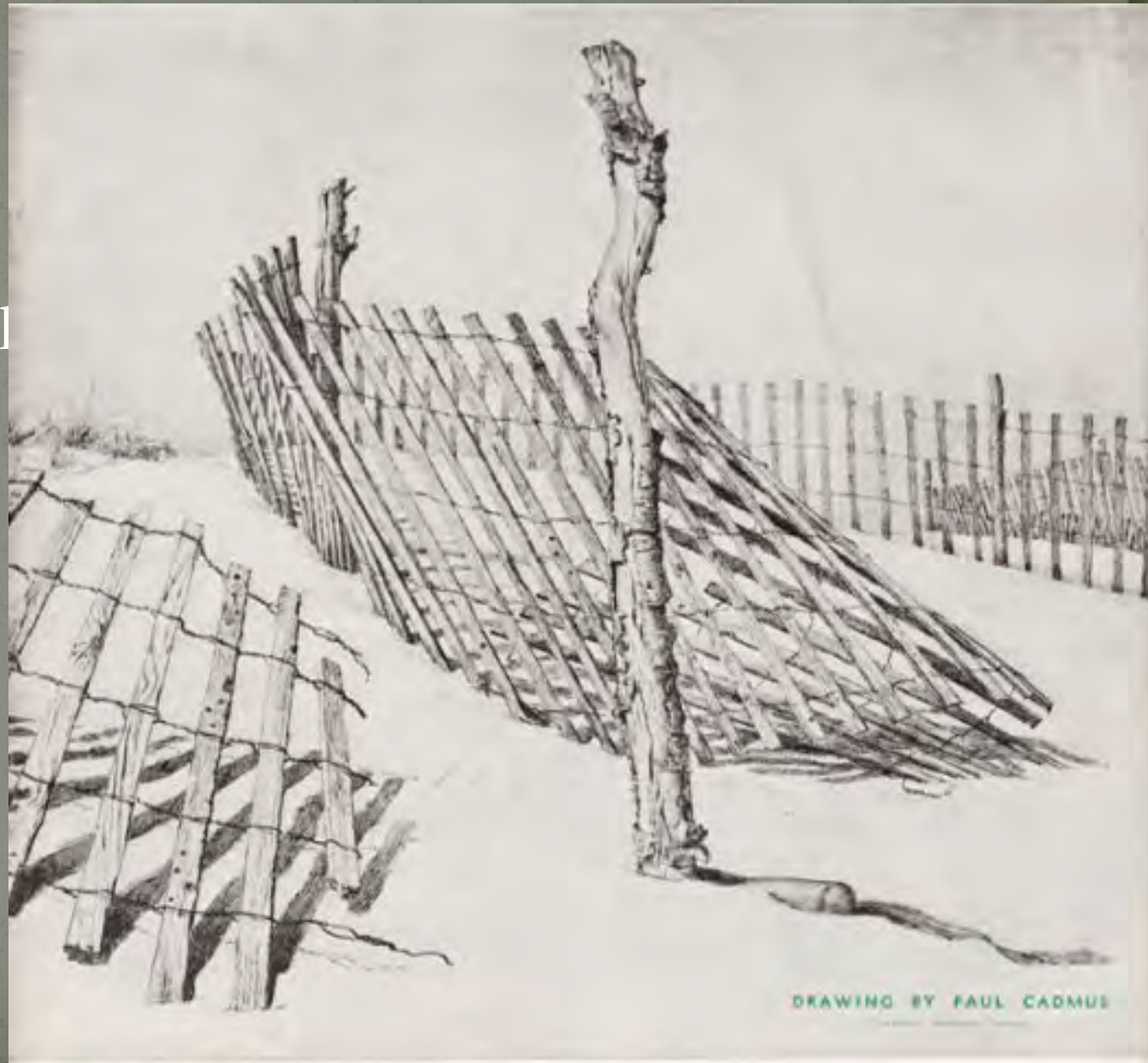
Too obviously balanced.



Balanced.

Line -

- Line can also be used as a compositional device.



DRAWING BY PAUL CADMUS

Simplification -

- Simple compositional design.



Simplification -

- Simplification leads ultimately to abstraction.



“Smeltbrook Falls”
Marsden Hartley



Perspective -

- Perspective lines are a very strong compositional force.

Robert Watson

Perspective -

- Perspective is a great tool for making strong sketches.



Framing -

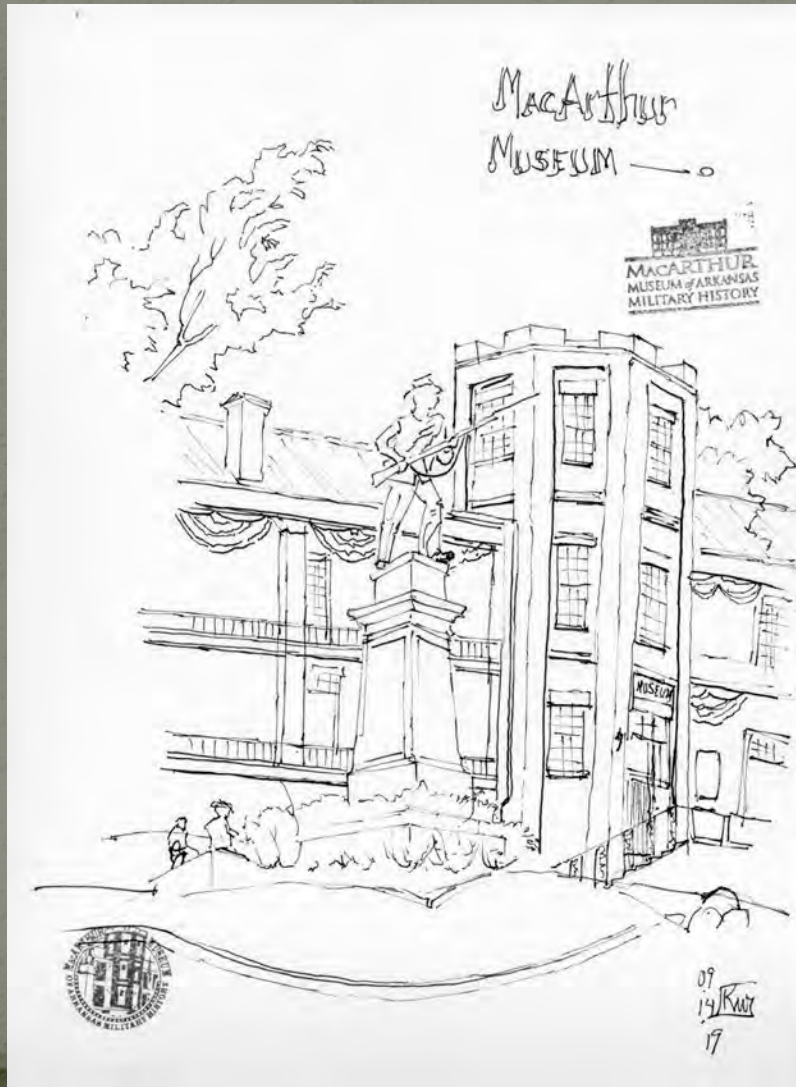
- People like to look out of something such as arches, curtains, trees etc.



Childe Hassam "Golden Afternoon"

Analyzing your composition - What have I done!?!??

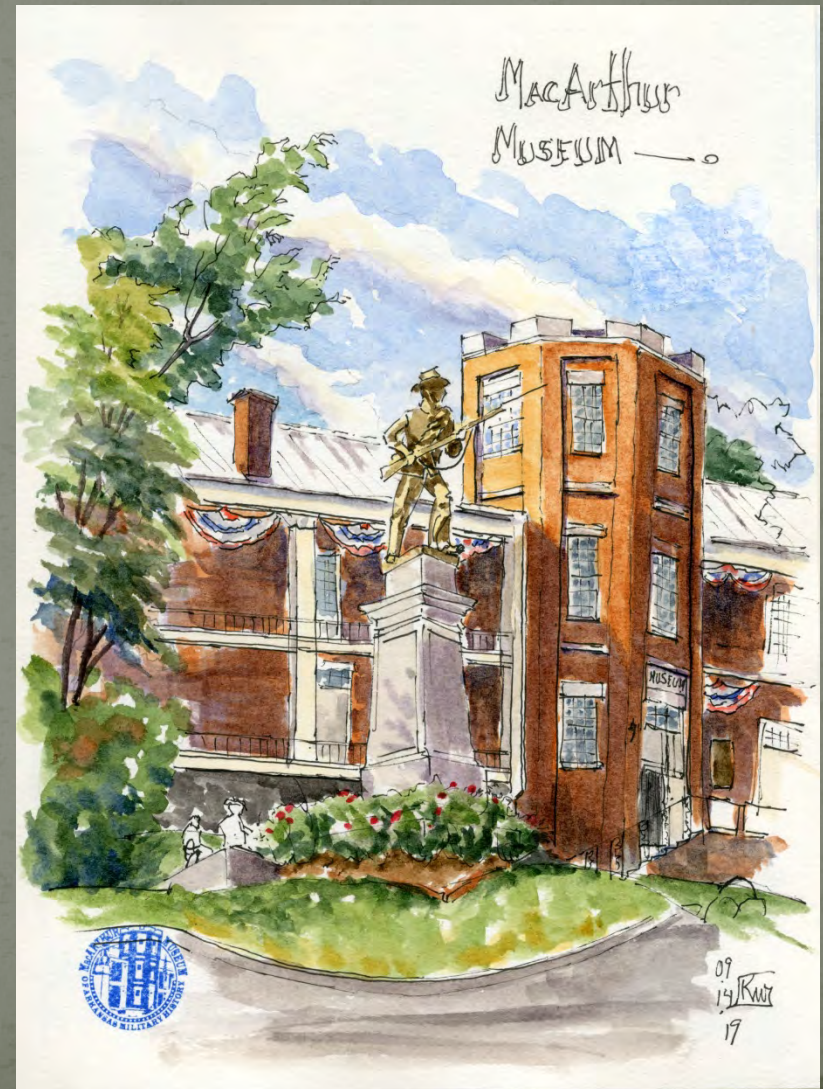
- Out of balance.
- Center of interest?
- Eye sent off the page?
- Contrast?



Analyzing your composition -



Analyzing your composition -



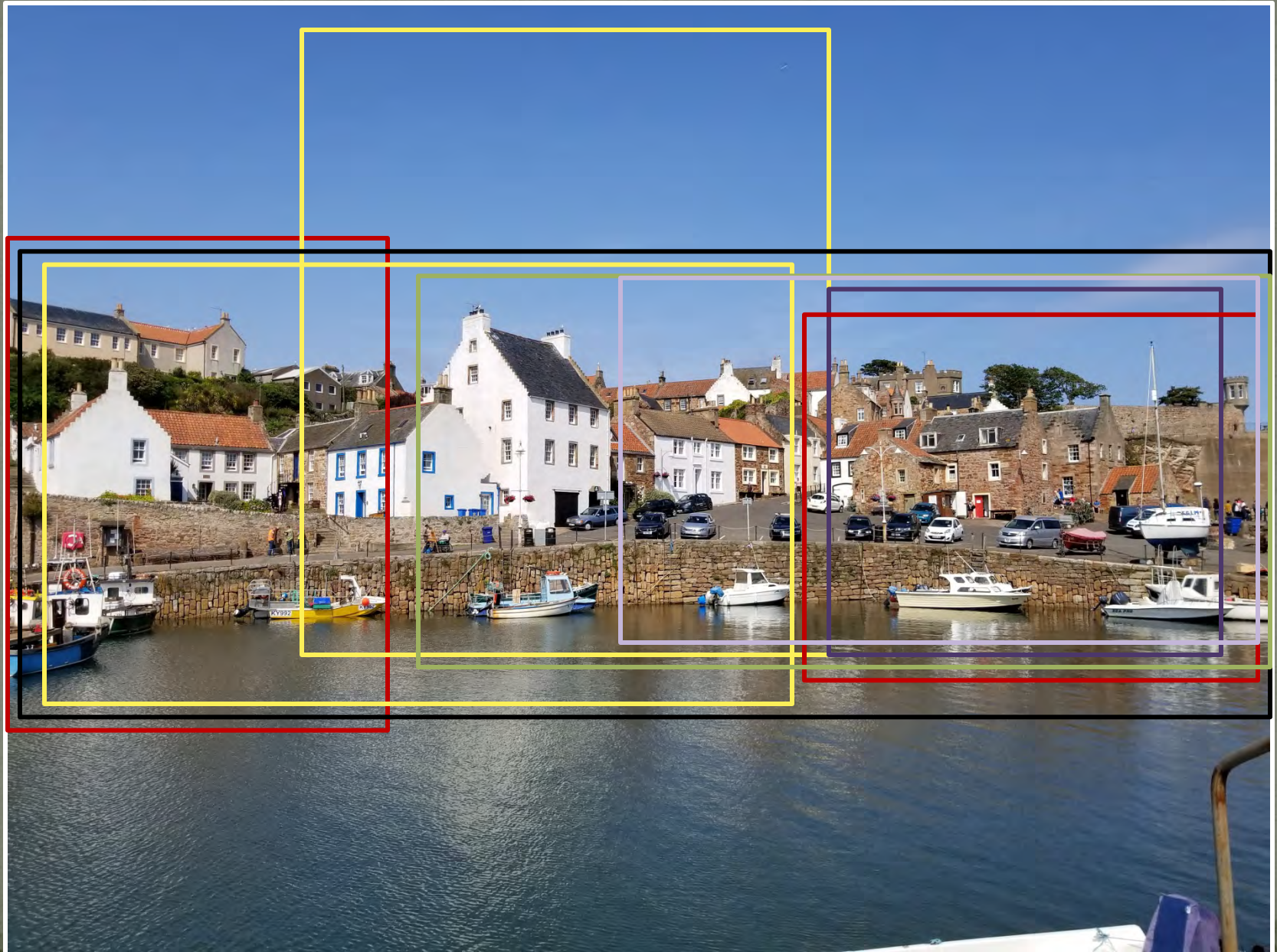
Using your sketches -



Using your sketches -



Choosing your composition -

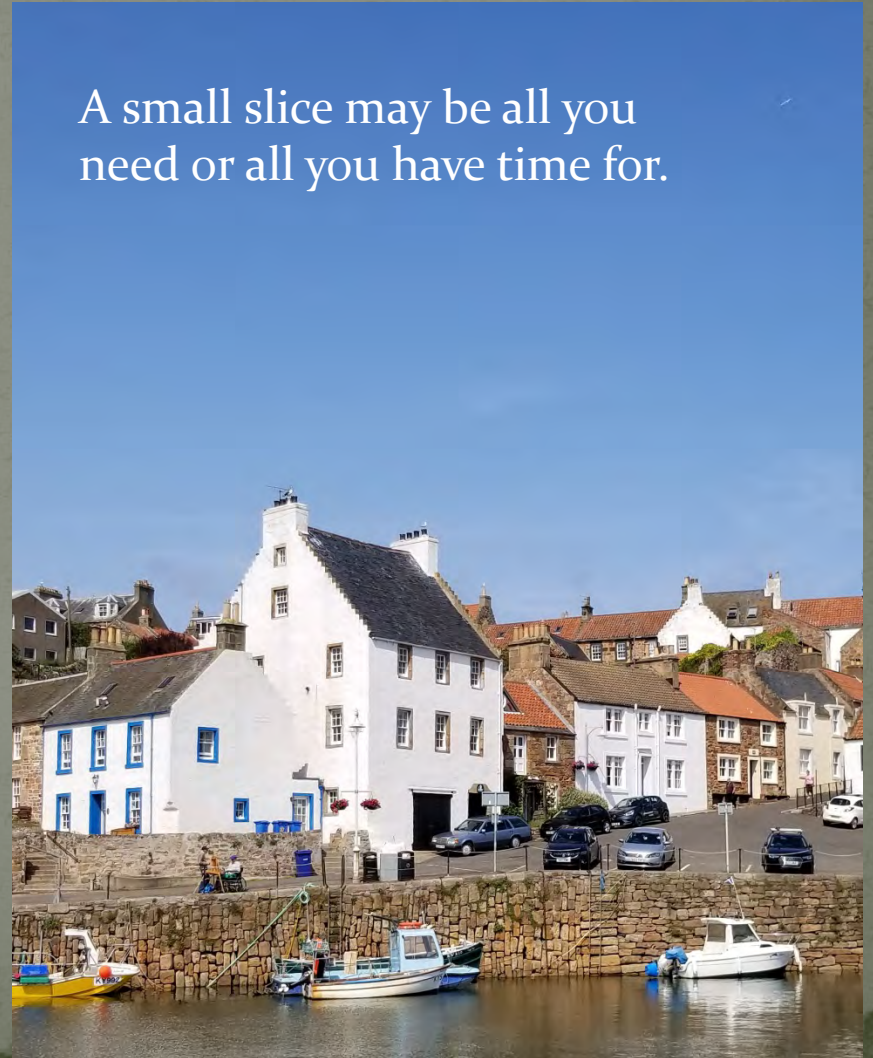


Choosing your composition -

Narrowing it down.



A small slice may be all you need or all you have time for.



Choosing your composition -

Harbor masters house on 1/3 but everything seems to be leaving the page.

The house is better situated but perhaps too much is included in the scene. Especially on the left side.



Choosing your composition -

The house seems too far to the left. The castle tower is a nice stop that keeps the eye in the picture.



This composition appears well balanced but the castle tower is lost.

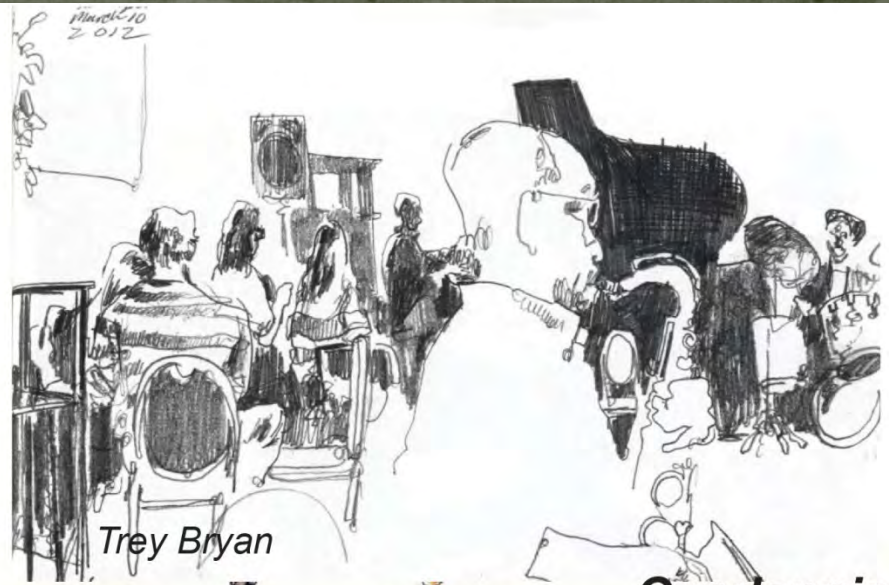
Choosing your composition -



The composition of the harbor office (left) works. It is focused and balanced. There is an interesting skyline. There must be thought as to how to contrast building against similar colored background.

Depth -

- Overlap



Overlapping



James Richards

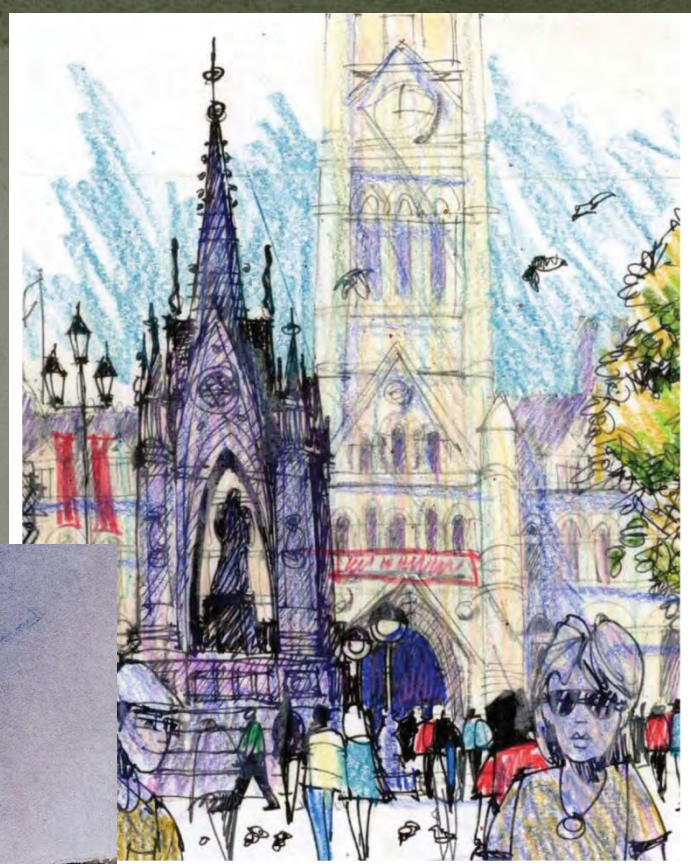
Overlapping

Depth -

- Atmospheric perspective.



David Bellamy



Atmospheric depth (value/ color)

James Richards

Depth – • Line weight.



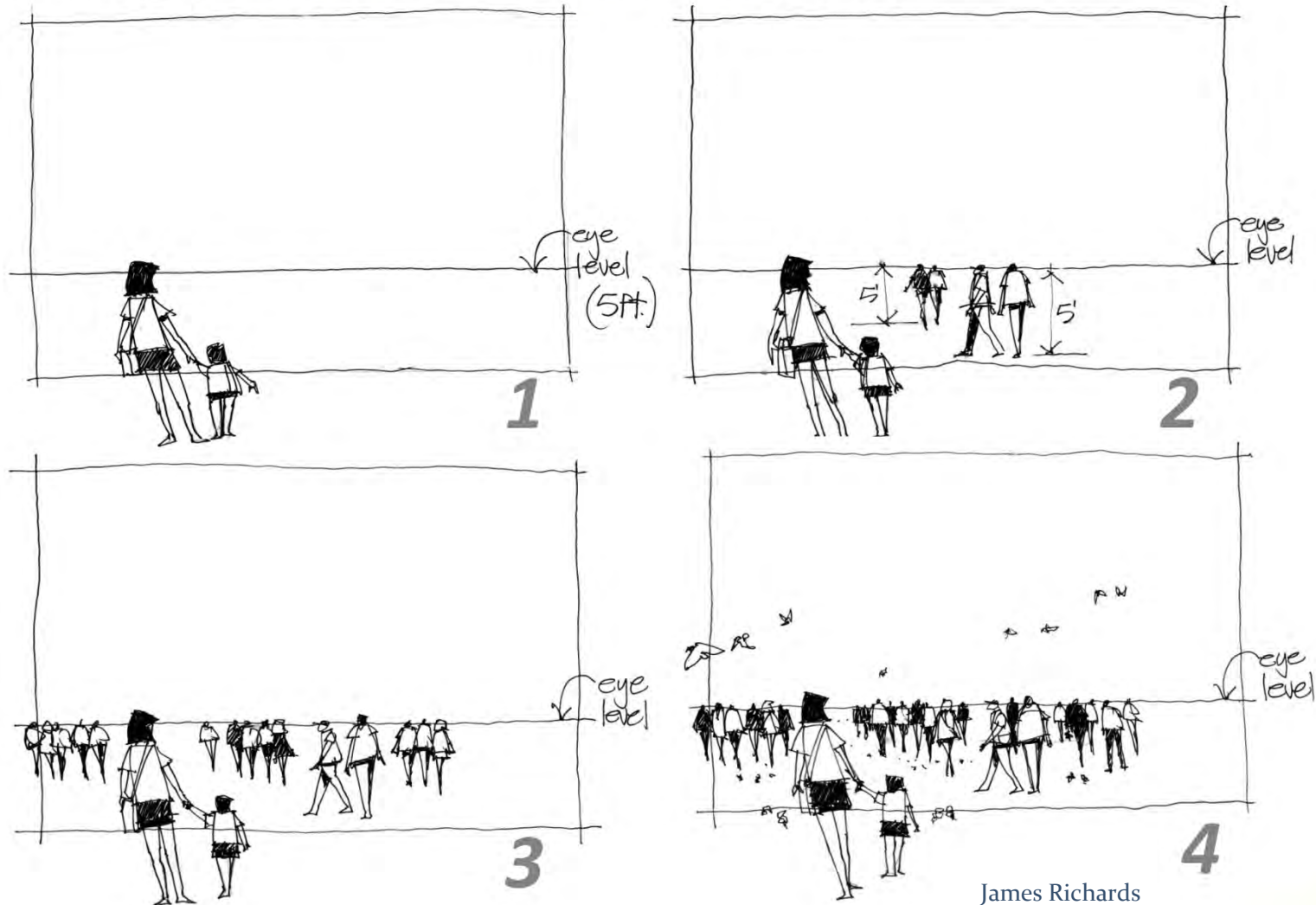
Ronald Searle

Line weight—heavy in the foreground,
fainter in background.

James Richards

Depth - • People -

Using people to create depth...



Depth - value

Values tend to become lighter as an object recedes in the distance.

You may want to change this for various effects.

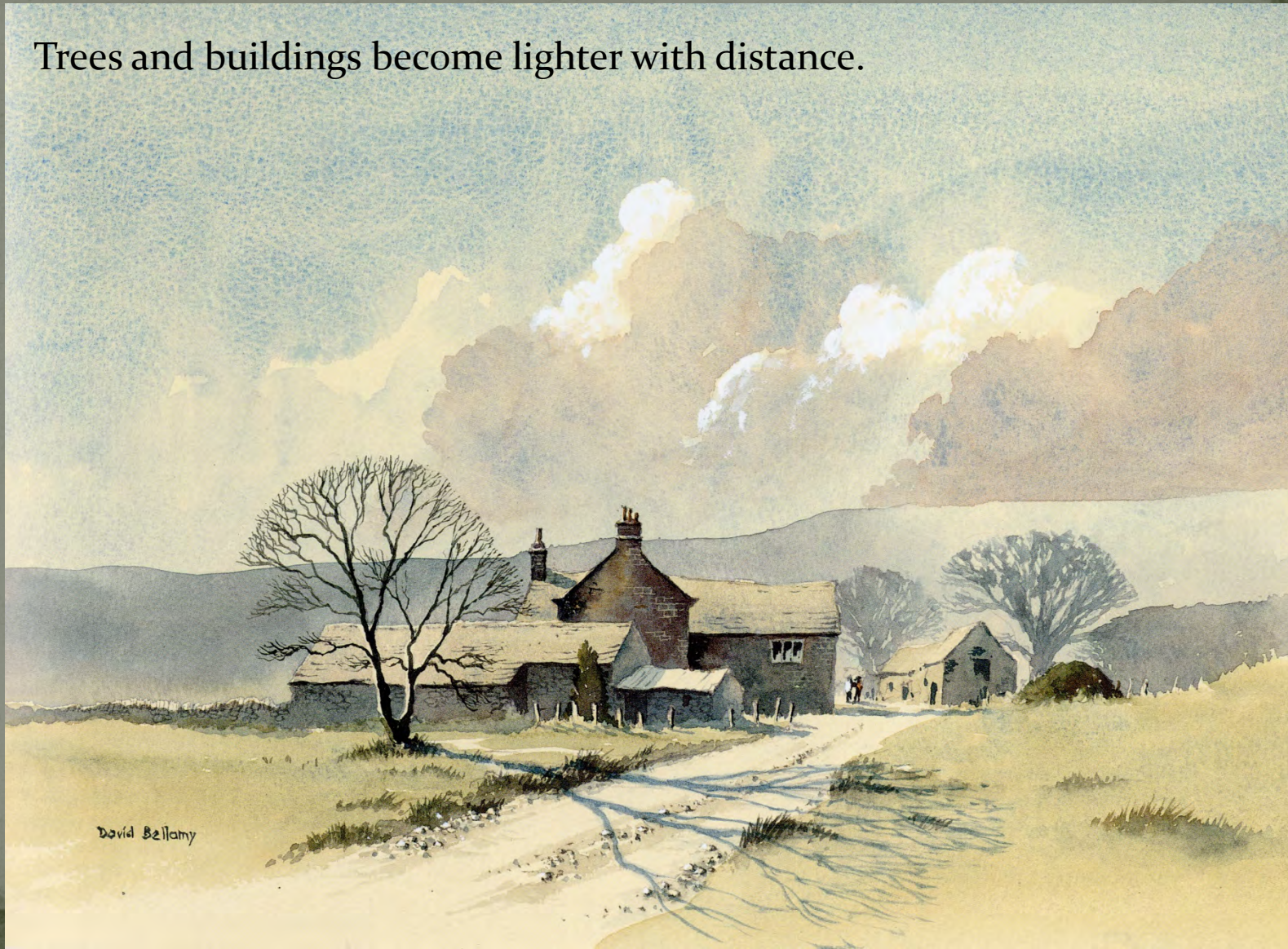


Value—I have good luck with darkest in the foreground frame, then progressively lighter in the middle and background.

James Richards

Depth – value in color

Trees and buildings become lighter with distance.



Depth - value

- Colors fade with increased distance.

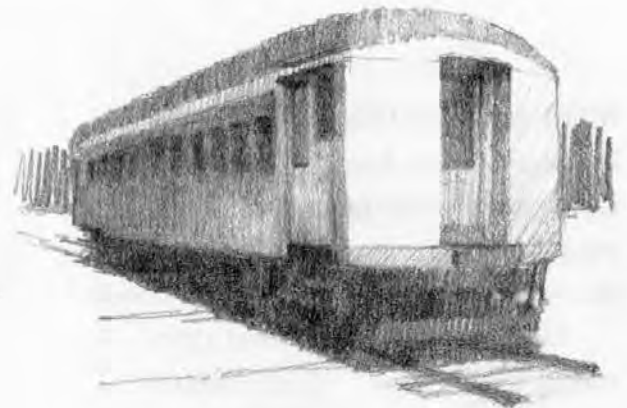
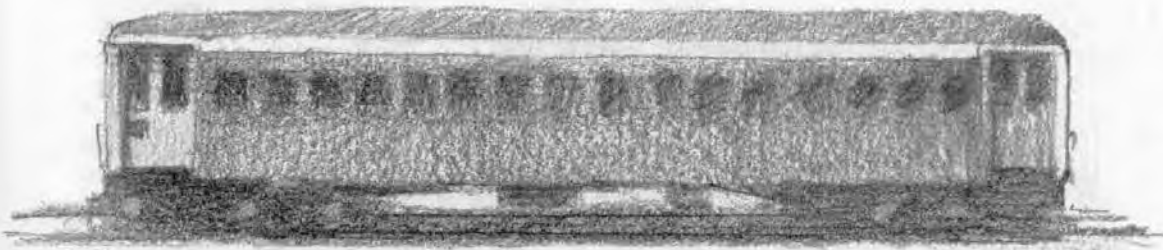


Richard Taylor

Depth -

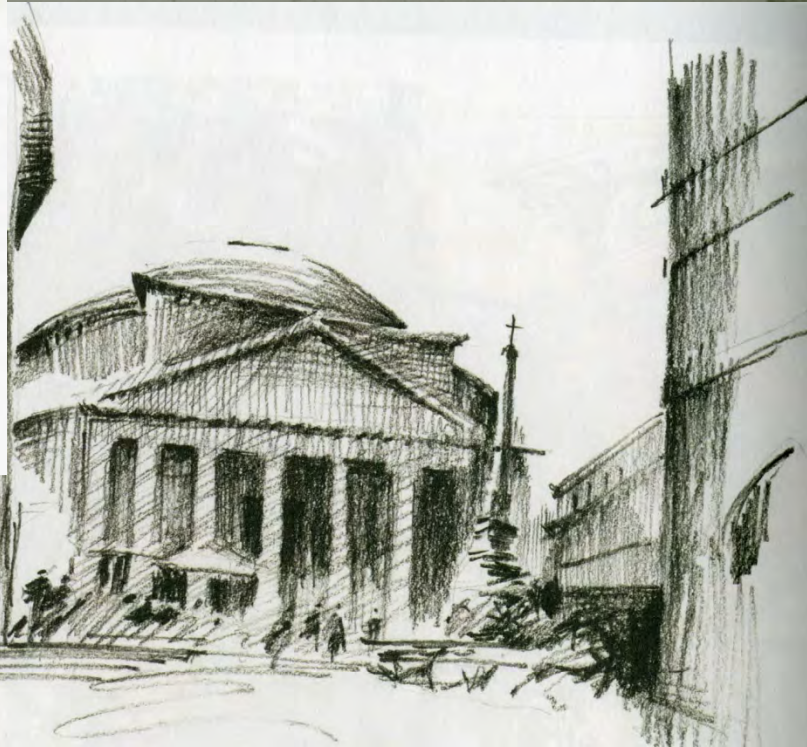
- 3D

2D elevation view compared to 3D $\frac{3}{4}$ view.



Richard Scott

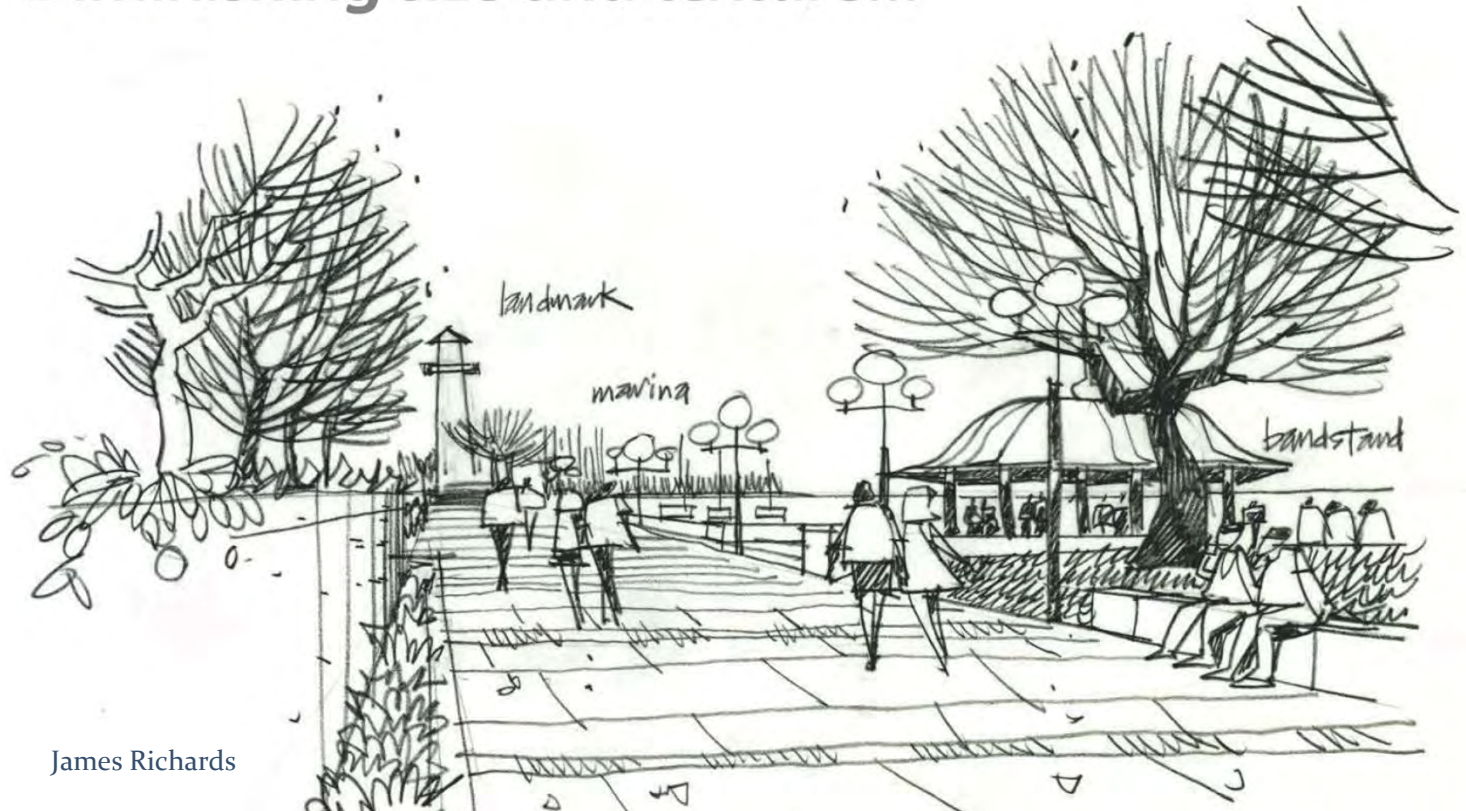
Depth - • Shadow



Matthew Brehm

Depth - • Placement at the top or bottom of the page.

Diminishing size and texture...



James Richards

Depth -

- Contrast increases as objects are closer.



Depth - • Detail decreases with distance.



Matthew Brehm

Depth -

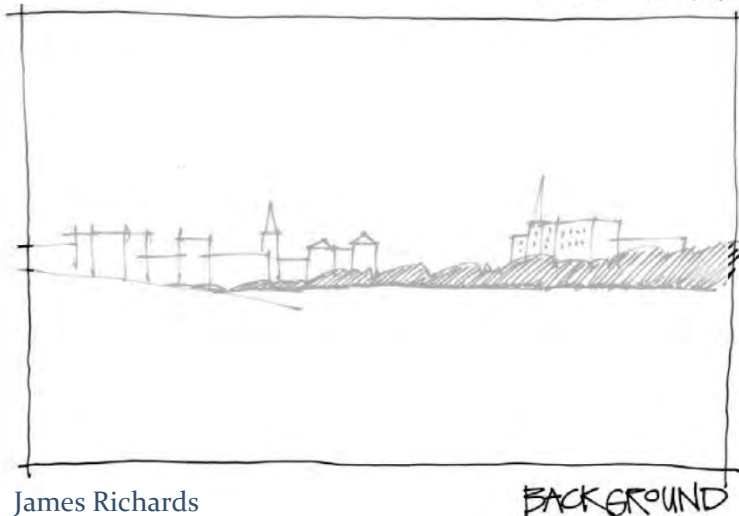
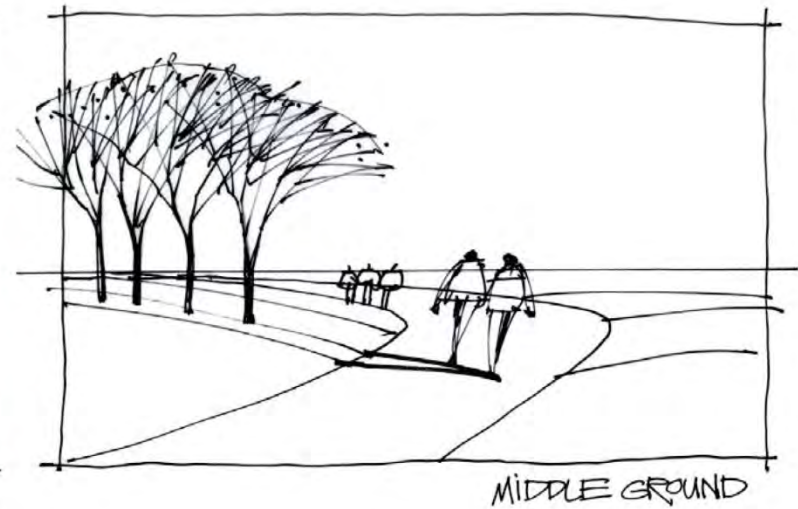
- Edges soften with distance.



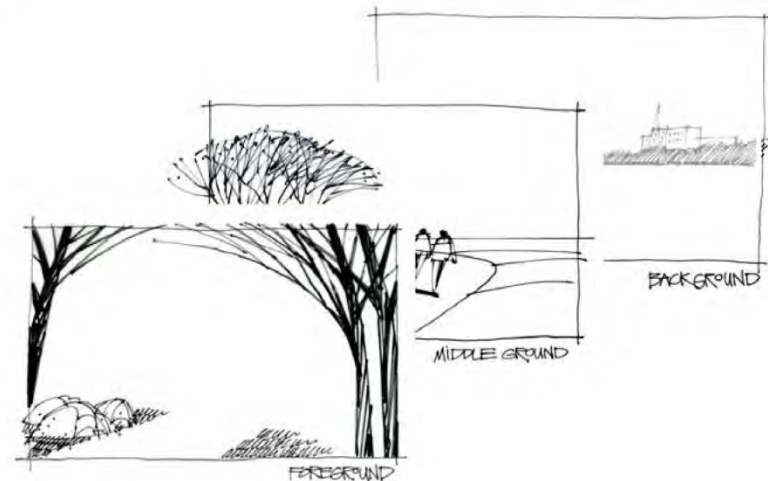
David Bellamy

Depth, tonal separation and layers

The three major planes



James Richards



Depth, tonal separation and layers

The three planes merged to form a sketch with depth.



James Richards

Depth - • Tonal separation and layers.

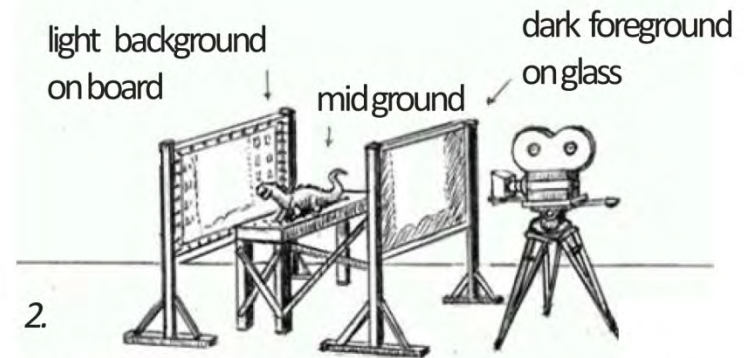
Three planes make magic: King Kong (1936)



1. Concept drawing



3. Three layer camera setup

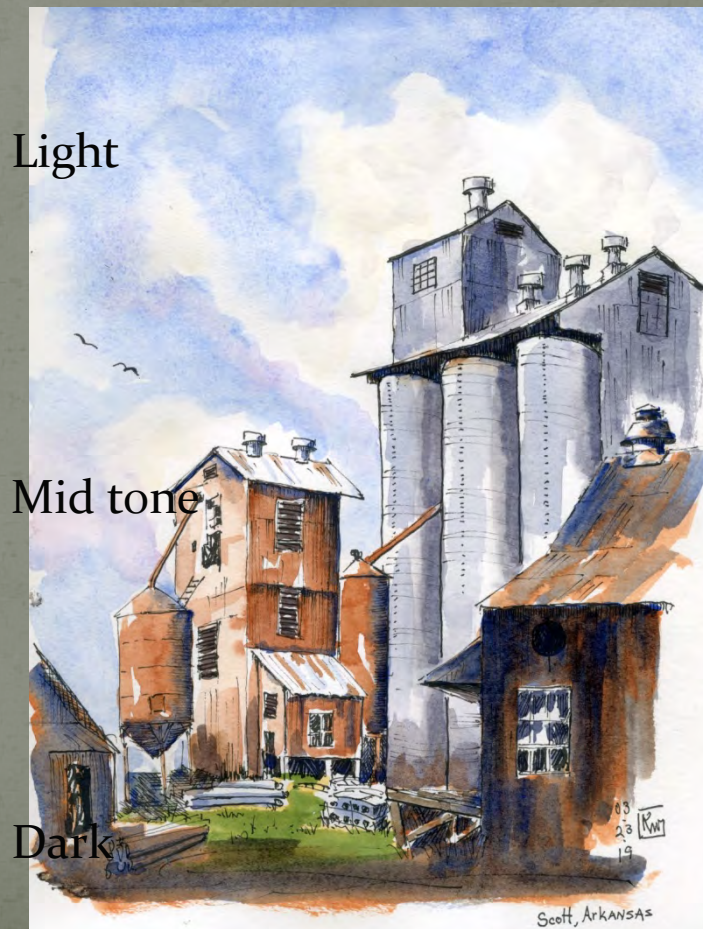


4. Scene as appeared in film

Depth - • Tonal separation and layers.

Layers can be tonally separated to direct the point of focus of the sketch.

- Back ground.
- Mid ground.
- Fore ground.



Layered compositions -

There are 6 basic possibilities.

Six possible tonal combinations for compositions that include a fore ground, mid ground and back ground layer.

Dark

Mid-tone

Light



Light

Mid-tone

Dark



Mid-tone

Light

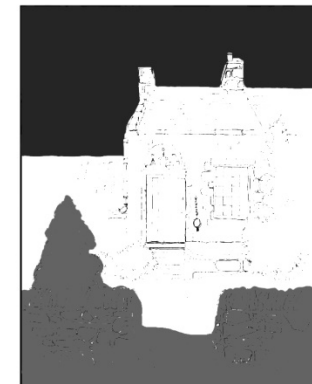
Dark



Dark

Light

Mid-tone



Light

Dark

Mid-tone



Mid-tone

Dark

Light



Watercolor technique -

Let's make a sketch.

