

PAINTING AND DRAWING LANDSCAPE

During the Unit of Painting and Drawing Landscape, we will devote most of our time to learning different techniques, using a variety of painting and drawing materials, which will then be applied to producing small landscape paintings. Some students who have more experience with art media, may wish to move on to the production of paintings rather than spending much time experimenting with different materials and techniques. You may have some interesting images of landscapes, either in books or photographs that you can bring along to work from. However, you might combine the observation of form from a photo, with the observation of a similar form in nature. It is always advisable to work direct from nature when possible even if you spend some of your own time developing compositions by going outdoors, perhaps to the beach and making rough sketches of a view that interests you. You may wish to make some studies of boats, such as those at Mornington Pier. Boats are quite difficult to draw and paint, and we may go as a group to this location to try and gain an understanding of their structure. You might also make some studies of such things as trees, boat sheds, seaweed, grasses, seagulls, water and clouds. There are a range of 'how to paint and draw landscape' books in Libraries, on-line and at places like Seniors Art Supplies, which will help you portray landscape and the many forms within it.

PAINTING AND DRAWING EXPERIMENTS

- **Pencil and Charcoal** – making marks and tones, some light and delicate and others heavy and dark, to create the effects of clouds, water, bark, leaves and hills etc... Charcoal is particularly effective in the depiction of landscape forms as you can create dramatic contrast between light and dark and also soft areas for such things as clouds and water.
- **Creating areas of texture** – by applying impasto medium to the surface (oil sketch paper or canvas) with a palette knife or piece of cardboard. By gluing things like sand, fine shells, dry leaves and grasses, tissue paper and textured fabric to surface with PVA glue.
- **Painting techniques** – if textured surface has been created, painting should not be done until the area is completely dry. Acrylic paint should be used, either watered down, or full strength and thick. Brushes (bristle brushes like 'hog hair') or a palette knife may be used to apply thick paint. We will also use 'scumbling' techniques or overlays of paint with the brush laid on its side.

MAJOR ARTWORKS

As mentioned earlier, those students with more experience may wish to begin their larger paintings, either on oil sketch paper or stretched canvas, sooner rather than later. They may want to look at techniques being demonstrated, but then skip to planning and undertaking more finished paintings. For others, who may not have undertaken a larger landscape painting before, the leap from experimenting to producing an artwork can be daunting. However, if those with less experience can treat the larger work like a big experiment, they would approach the task more freely and confidently.

First steps – to be taken when painting a more finished artwork, begin with:

- The concept or idea and image in your mind. Rough out the idea in a sketchbook with pencil or charcoal. A few ‘roughs’ may be carried out with ‘thumbnail sketches’ (not literally the size of your thumb, but quite small). Each one may be slightly different. The image may be empty in places and you may try adding some forms to those areas.
- **Composition** – select one of your ‘roughs’ and enlarge it in your sketchbook and then consider how effective the group of shapes is as a whole, making up your composition. You may still have a large area that looks quite empty, like the sky, but that simple empty looking sky may be necessary to contrast with the more busy looking composition below. Alternately, you might paint the sky with some dark, threatening clouds to indicate an approaching storm. There could also be some forms in the middle ground and foreground that reach up into the empty sky, such as trees and buildings.
- **Begin the Major Artwork** – on oil sketch paper or stretched canvas, sketch the landscape composition either with thin willow charcoal, a HB pencil, or a brush and diluted acrylic paint. You might work from your enlarged sketch, perhaps refining it further or work ‘plein air’ (direct from nature). If working plein air, you may need to move some things in you mind, or delete some things, that interfere with the flow of shapes in the composition.

COMPLETING THE LANDSCAPE PAINTING

Each individual person is different. Some people work very quickly and others slowly. This will also affect their style of painting. Those who paint fastidiously and with great attention to detail, will work more slowly than those who work with speed and their work will probably show great ‘gusto’.

What to paint first? – Whether you work quickly or slowly, the areas that need to be painted first are those in the **background**, such as the sky, water and ground areas. Allow those background areas to dry, unless you wish for some forms such as distance to blur softly into the sky.

How will you paint? After looking at landscape paintings by the many artists throughout the history of Art, you may be attracted to a particular **style of painting** or you may have intuitively developed your individual style already. This style may be evident in your drawing. If your drawing is spontaneous and free, your painting will probably also be of that style. Don’t be afraid to follow your gut feeling about style.

Completing the painting. This may happen fairly quickly, but occasionally check that your shapes are relatively correct, such as boats and buildings, or things like trees in the middle distance are not too big considering their location. Also check that the colours used in your painting work well. Forms that recede into the distance, such as distant trees and hills should be lighter in colour and tone than those in the foreground.

You may carry out more than one painting, particularly if you continue working at home. Gradually, you will gain confidence and hopefully be happy with your paintings. Inevitably, we all feel dissatisfied with our own work at times, but with practise you will accomplish more pleasing images.

