# Drawing and Painting the Landscape

A course of 50 lessons

**Philip Tyler**

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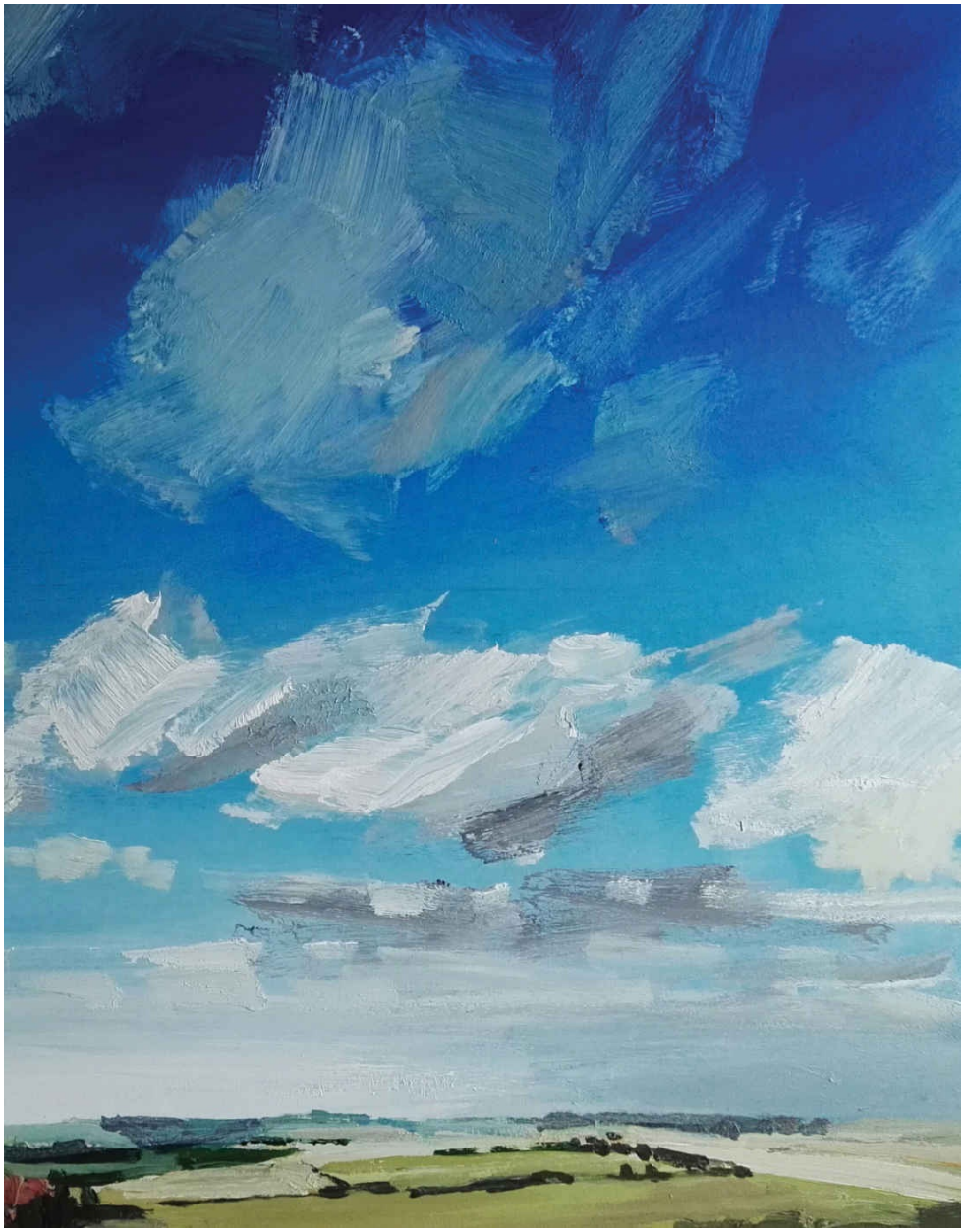

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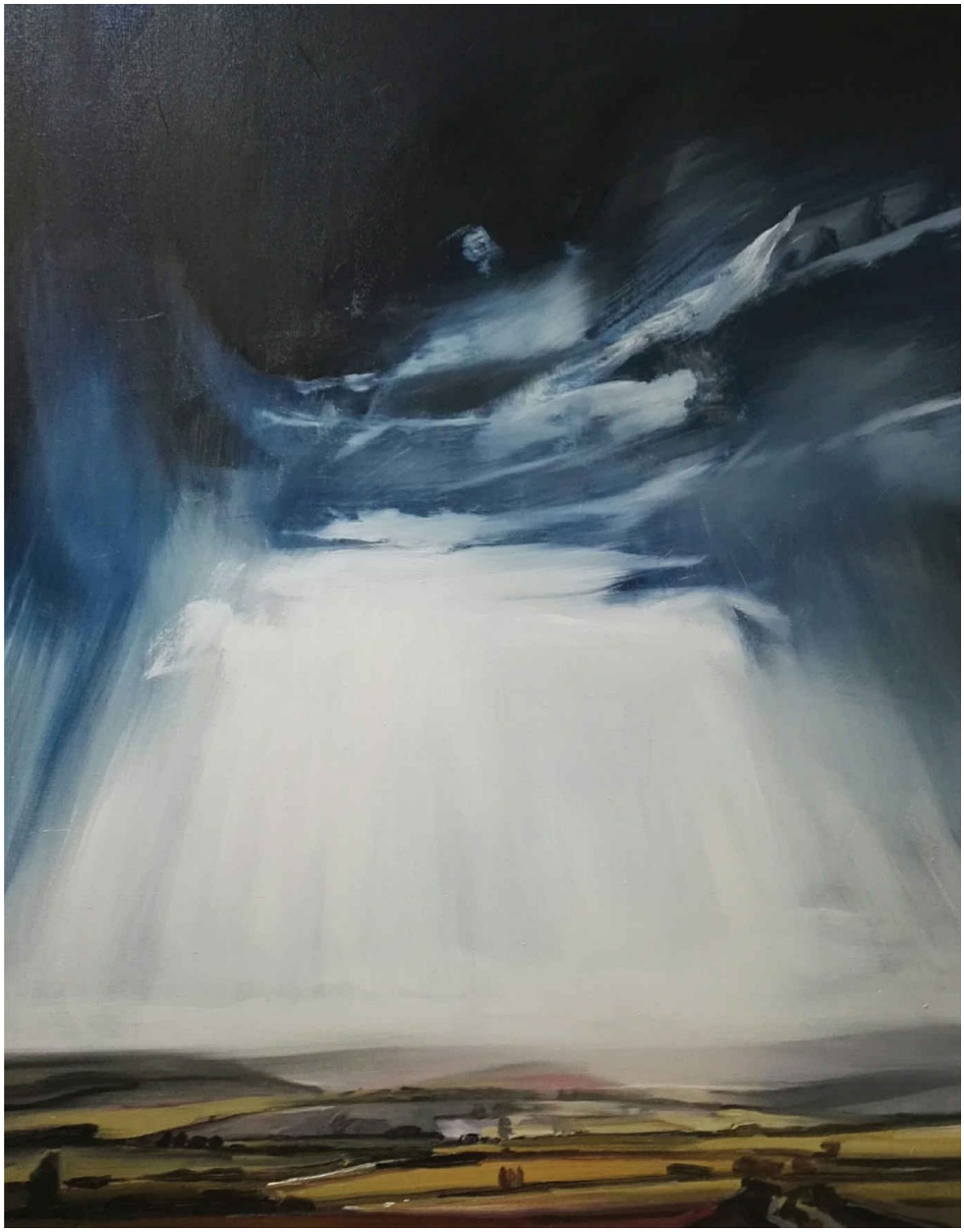
Frontispiece: *Brancaster Staithe Tears*, acrylic on board.



# Contents

Patrick George, *Curtain of Trees* (2000), oil on board. (Courtesy of Browse and Darby Gallery)

# Preface

The day had started promptly enough. A light scraping of ice on the windscreen. A car full of the things I would need to interview Patrick George: a camera, my phone to record the interview and a few gifts too. Five or six turns of the car key confirmed that my car was dead and a faltering battery was indeed not fit for much else. An hour or so later, the AA man was on his way; for what would be a busy day, I set off on my journey. As I drove through West Sussex, my thermometer hit -8°C at one point, but the landscape did not seem that cold, bathed as it was in a golden light. Driving through Essex, the countryside became an altogether different vista; heavy cloud created a muted space, a subdued series of colour patches, a flat pattern of shapes. As I entered Suffolk, the space seemed to stretch away from me but formed a thinner, more compressed landscape. The air began to lift and colour began to seep in, permeating the landscape, bringing it back from grey.

As I entered Patrick's house, greeted warmly by both Patrick and Susan, and the fresh soup and bread that Susan had made that morning, I saw that his house seemed to have light coming in from all sides. On the walls were fellow comrades in arms, a Tony Eyton, a William Coldstream, a Craigie Aitchison, and a Jeffery Camp, each one quietly exuding their presence on the space. After this delicious fare, I began to talk with Patrick and he began to interview me.

Why paint landscape? His eyes looked straight at me, making me justify my own responses to the North Norfolk coast and the Sussex Downs. I discussed the emotions and recollection one had in front of a particular space. At that moment, I wished my phone were on record; his thoughts sparkled in the room, which seemed to light up in front of me. Eventually, my phone switched on and our conversation developed over the next hour. We talked about us both growing up in an urban environment, he Manchester, me London, and the notion that the landscape may have offered us both an escape, a chance to look into the far distance rather than at one's feet. We talked about drawing, about colour and more than anything about really looking.

As the interview developed, the light seemed to grow in luminosity, moving across the floor and gradually riding up over Patrick himself. His face became bathed in the most glorious intensity; the loaf, soup bowls and coffee cups became magical and luminescent. Every so often, Patrick would look away from me, and stare out of the window into his garden. I knew what he was thinking, he was probably waiting for the moment when he could paint that view. His oil paints and easel already there in preparation for the moment.

You tend to think of great paintings in galleries, private collections or museum walls. You don't expect to see paintings that you have grown to love, stacked up against the wall with their backs turned. Susan later unveiled each in turn, a view of Hickbush, a Saxham tree, the facade of a building; paintings I have grown to love since my first encounter with a George back in the mid 1980s at the hard won image show. What touched me then was this simple idea: paint what you see, discover the extraordinary in the everyday. That painting with its electrical pylon rooted itself in my psyche. Its flatness, a configuration of shapes and colours, a mutable landscape, Patrick had revisited the same spot over and over again. Finding that the space had changed, he simply recorded his new experience, trying to make sense of his visual experience.

Within a year of that show I was studying in America, experiencing a light I had never seen before, a magical light, intense, clear and richly saturated. Everything seemed to be in sharp focus, and it was during that time I saw my first Richard Diebenkorn.

Patrick George, *Winter Landscape, Hickbush*, late 1970s. (Courtesy of Browse and Darby Gallery)

Whilst I never made the connection back then, as I looked again at these Patrick George paintings in the flesh I saw parallels, the often-rectilinear movements of the landscape punctuated by diagonals, the evidence of contemplation, the need to get to some kind of truth that could only be arrived at over time by dedication, questioning and transformation. Would this colour work? How could one capture the experience of light falling on that leaf? I was rather interested in Patrick discussing his choice of Suffolk. Somehow there were fewer leaves on the trees here, less obstacles to deal with, yet his paintings are full of the problems he has set himself to solve. When I asked him about what aspect of landscape he was trying to convey, he simply said that he just wanted ‘to do the best he can.’ Like a bird resting lightly on a branch, Patrick’s touch is a delicate one, barely breathing the paint on the surface of the support. His paint tubes, and there were many greens, are testament to time some seemed to hark back to an earlier age.

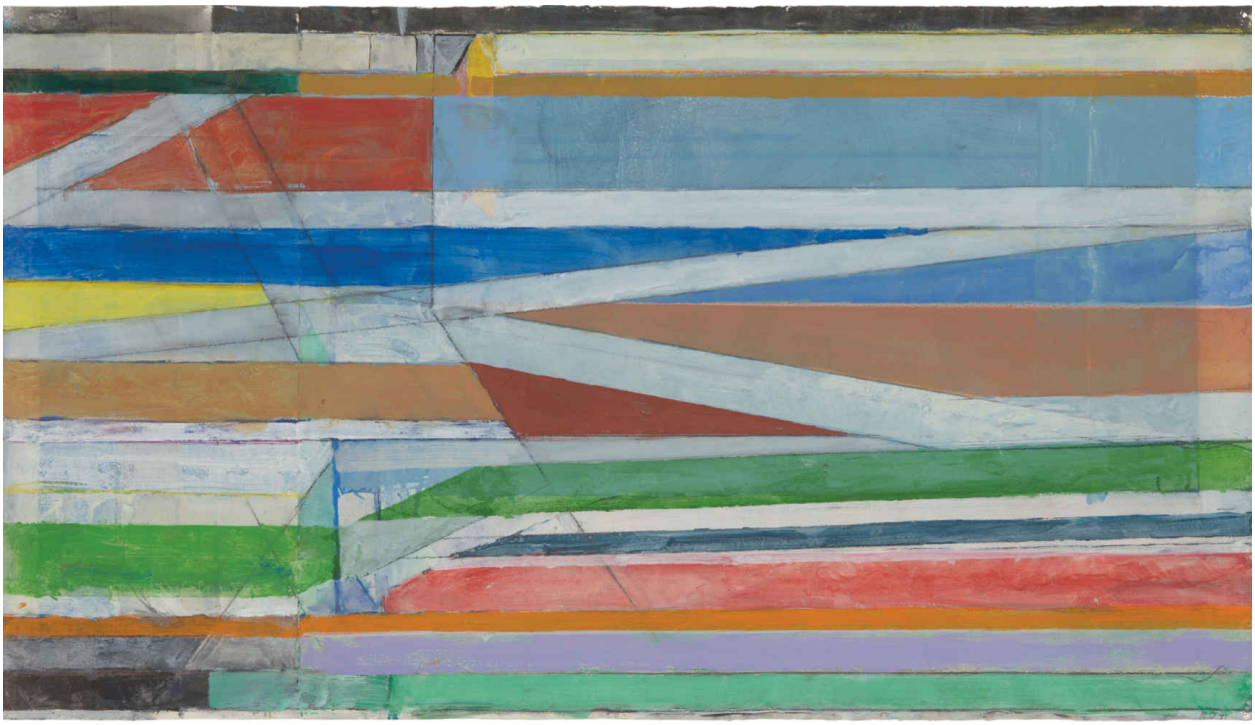
It was once said that Coldstream’s brushes were perfectly clean and free from pigment, cleaned constantly in the process of making a mark, his indecision becoming a nervous set of ticks. I’m not sure if George is so bogged down by

becoming a nervous set of ticks. I'm not sure if George is so bogged down by measurement, his canvases have a decisiveness and breadth of mark, that suggests he is not anchored by measurement, but they are full of contemplation. The loaded gestural attack of Bomberg or Auerbach, the trail of the hand not part of George's oeuvre. Instead, his luminous canvases are full of light and air. Again I am reminded of Diebenkorn and his Ocean Park paintings, whilst the saturation of Diebenkorn's paintings are permeated with Californian light; they have the same touch. They say you should never meet your heroes. Whilst I never met Richard Diebenkorn, I have a handwritten letter from him. When I received this in the mid 1980s, I was touched by the humanity of the man. He was honoured and flattered that I had so forthrightly engaged with his paintings, and I felt the same kind of connection with Patrick, a man of exacting visual intelligence, conviction but also humility. I came away from his house and before I got into my car, I realized that I was surrounded by the subjects of his paintings. Those trees in a field, that branch and roof; everywhere I looked I saw another of his paintings. On my way to Suffolk, I reflected on all those landscapes I had seen and how many Patrick George paintings could be made. On my way home I had a similar experience, every view seemed filled with the light in his work.

Patrick George, *Hickbush*, *Extensive Landscape from the Oaks*, 1961. (Courtesy of Browse and Darby Gallery)

# Postscript

Three months after I interviewed Patrick, I received an email from his gallery, Browse and Darby, that he had sadly passed away on the weekend.



*Richard Diebenkorn, Untitled No. 10.*

# Introduction

*There is something beautiful about a melancholic cloud hovering in the sky, a moment when the light breaks through, giving clarity to a feature in the landscape. One takes a breath, looks across the distant view and stares in awe at the immensity of the space, the notion of self, disappearing into the distance. To capture that feeling, to put down on paper or canvas that emotional response to the landscape, to encapsulate all those memories and moments of experience and somehow make that concrete in paint, that is the challenge for the artists deciding to explore landscape as their motif.*

What do you think of when you look at the title, *Drawing and Painting the Landscape*? Do you think of Constable (1776–1837) or Turner (1775–1851), Gainsborough (1727–1788) or Corot (1796–1875), Monet (1840–1926) or Pissarro (1830–1903) or do you delve back further to Rembrandt (1606–1669), Rubens (1577–1640) or Joachim Patinir (1480–1524)?

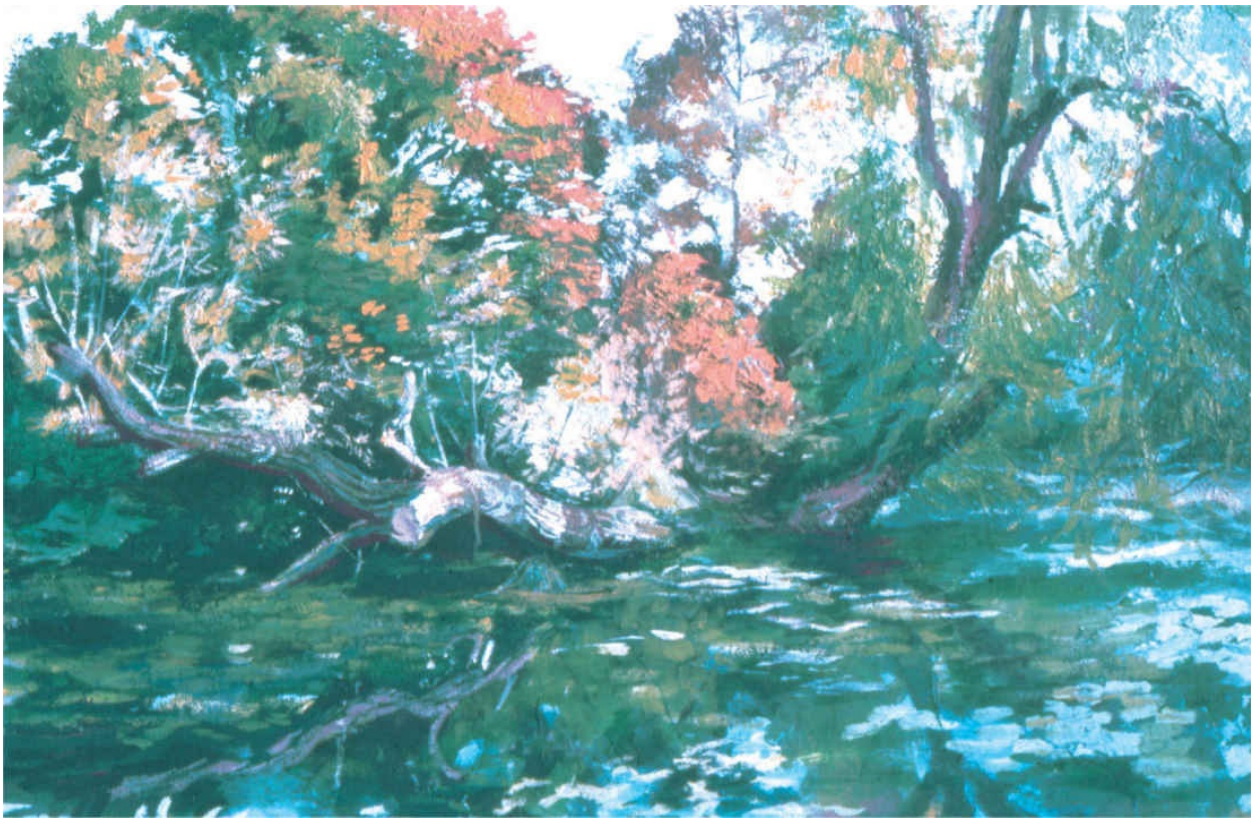
The history of landscape painting is a long one and within an eastern tradition, even longer. The Chinese scroll paintings made over a thousand years ago create a sense of majesty and awe in the viewer; a place of contemplation and wonder, yet made with an economy of means that deny the skill and mastery of the medium. The Chinese said that a painting was made with the eye, the hand and the heart.

Within a European tradition (the word landscape itself did not appear in the English language until the early seventeenth century) early Gothic landscape started off as a backdrop to a staged drama, acting out some biblical narrative. These imagined places simply create a place for the action, but eventually the landscape would become more than just generic trees and hills, the location would become imbued with character and meaning.

A painting made when I was fifteen, one of my first landscapes. Gouache on paper with airbrushed sky.

> *Mirroring the world in paint is my major preoccupation, but landscape and the bodies that inhabit it is my main subject.*
>
> — NICK BODIMEADE

One of the landscapes I made from Beacon Hill, circa 1984.



My first *plein air* painting, circa 1984.

After the Reformation, the subject of landscape painting became a genre of its own. Artists throughout the centuries have wrestled with the problem of describing space, light, atmosphere and differing weather conditions. Some found within landscape a vehicle to convey much more than a scenic inspiration. John Martin (1789–1854) could demonstrate the hand of God. Turner the

tumultuous sea and Constable the notion of heritage and place. It is interesting to note that landscape became increasingly popular during the industrial revolution. As Tim Barringer said, ‘As Britain became predominantly urban, images of the countryside came to stand as emblems of the nation itself.’

While cities rose, and country folk left behind their past, skills and way of life, the middle classes created this idyllic notion of the landscape. Trains tore a hole through the landscape, the country became smaller and remote locations became places of spiritual solace. Ruskin found beauty in the landscape and tried to capture it in exacting detail. The Pre-Raphaelites would take their canvases onto location to work directly from the landscape and their counterparts in France were doing the same. The notion of *plein air* painting might be one that we take for granted, but it was born at the end of the nineteenth century. It is important to remember that Constable worked directly in the landscape to produce oil sketches that would have never seen a gallery wall in his day. Constable’s paintings were looked on as too vulgar, too true to nature to a public used to looking at the landscape though a blackened piece of glass.

Today, in a contemporary art world full of photography, video sound and performance, why do some artists still want to put pen or brush to paper or canvas? Of course, context is everything and in a small number of high spec museum galleries, there is a lively engagement with rhetoric and theory, and art works become objects of enquiry, exploring new media, new technology, new thinking. But in a large number of commercial galleries, run by people who have their own visions of the art world (one that doesn’t necessarily resemble this bubble), private collectors buy paintings for their homes and artists struggle with the alchemical process of turning mud into place, line into distance, colour into space.

Many of the artists contained in this book are people I know personally, either through direct contact or through my experience of their work. For me, there is something quite magical about the transformation of base materials into image, which leave behind the mark of the artist who made it. The first time I saw a Rembrandt in the flesh, I was struck by the physicality of the paint. One could feel the hand that made the mark. The same can be said of a David Atkins or a Louise Balaam. So I am drawn to those artists who exhibit a certain kind of physicality in their paint application and who convey something of the majesty and emotion of the landscape of their work.

There is a romantic idea about the artist striding through the landscape, painting materials in hand, to find some magnificent vista and then transcribe it

to canvas.

For the amateur artist, the idea of a painting holiday, travelling to some beautiful location, brushes and canvas in tow, holds considerable excitement, but painting landscape presents many technical as well as philosophical challenges.

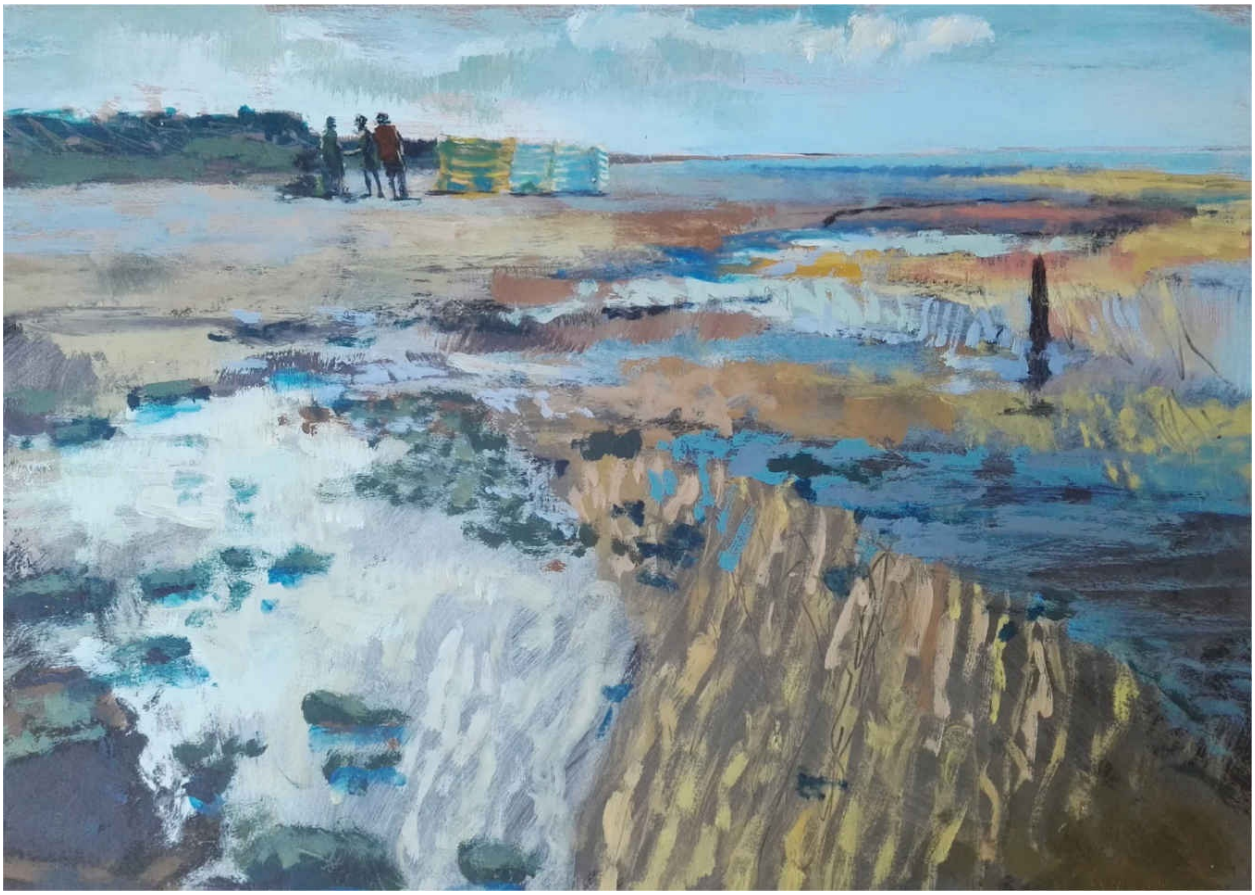
My relationship with landscape painting has been a long and circuitous one. Growing up in an urban environment meant that I knew little of the horizon as a child. Surrounded by tower blocks, their monumentality had a visual impact upon me. Studying at Loughborough College of Art and Design meant that I saw deep space for the first time. I attempted *plein air* painting, had my eyes opened to negative space by early Mondrian, but it was a student exchange to America that introduced me to the work of Richard Diebenkorn who was to have a more profound effect on me.

> *Landscape is a major preoccupation and it was the first thing that I really got excited by painting, and being involved with. It wasn't until I moved to the country that I started to look at other subjects; having been born in the city, I kind of missed city life so I started to explore that as well, but I have always been fascinated by the interpretation of landscape and what landscape stands for in terms of how it moves you and touches your soul. It can stand for very deep held feelings that come through myself as a human being and I think that landscape is the one thing that takes your breath away; it reaches a depth in me and touches something that's beyond words and that's what started my interest in landscape. From very early on I was encouraged to go for walks in parks and woods in London. It was those that I really found I responded to in a physical and spiritual way that linked itself as a subject that was appropriate for me or inspiring for me as a painter.*
>
> — DAVID ATKINS

In the early 1990s, my mother and father-in-law John and Joan Dixon, both keen amateur artists, had moved to Norfolk, very close to the north Norfolk coast. Every holiday was spent with them and my wife and eventually our children, long days on the beach at Brancaster, enjoying the vast expanse of sand, the low horizon and those skies. John introduced me to Edward Seago, his economy with watercolour and his grandeur with scale. I spent many hours

drawing and painting the views and as our children grew up, Norfolk became their playground.

My first gallery dealer was based in Norfolk, not far from where the Dixons lived. Iris Birtwistle was an amazing woman; nearly blind, an art dealer working out of a caravan, she had an immeasurable passion for her artist. Whilst her vision was diminished, she had an amazing eye and could tell good from bad. She could be forthright in her opinion and demanded the best work from me but she was an essential part of my journey to become an artist.



*Brancaster Beach*, acrylic on paper, circa 1996.

In recent times, the landscape has become my dominant obsession, in particular the terrain where I live in West Sussex, the Downs, and the effects of the weather have become important vehicles to express emotion, particularly since the death of my father. Landscape can be melancholic, brooding, uplifting and even spiritual at times, and to a certain extent I have allowed it to swallow me up. Some artists choose landscape as their major preoccupation, others as part of a much larger oeuvre. I work in a serial way, focusing on a motif and exploring that for a long period of time before moving onto another motif, rather like Nick Bodimeade.

Following on from my first book, *Drawing and Painting the Nude*, I would like to guide you through some of the technical and theoretical challenges that landscape presents.

Over the next fifty lessons, I will cover materials, techniques and approaches supported along the way by words and images of other artists who interpret the landscape in their own way.

In so doing, I hope to give you a much greater insight into how you can

interpret the landscape and find your own voice in painting or drawing it.

Mirroring the world in paint is my major preoccupation, but landscape and the bodies that inhabit it is my main subject.

– Nick Bodimeade

Landscape is a major preoccupation and it was the first thing that I really got excited by painting, and being involved with. It wasn't until I moved to the country that I started to look at other subjects; having been born in the city, I kind of missed city life so I started to explore that as well, but I have always been fascinated by the interpretation of landscape and what landscape stands for in terms of how it moves you and touches your soul. It can stand for very deep held feelings that come through myself as a human being and I think that landscape is the one thing that takes your breath away; it reaches a depth in me and touches something that's beyond words and that's what started my interest in landscape. From very early on I was encouraged to go for walks in parks and woods in London. It was those that I really found I responded to in a physical and spiritual way that linked itself as a subject that was appropriate for me or inspiring for me as a painter.'

– David Atkins

The urge is to rise to the challenge and understand pictorially what I am responding to. Sometimes it's hard to know until you're in the process and it feels right to try and make sense of it. In a sense you possess it somehow and as a result experience it deeper by seeing it.

– Julian Vilarrubi

For the past thirty years I have lived in the rolling countryside of the Oak Ridges Moraine, an ancient land form located just north of Lake Ontario. I roam this unique place in all seasons, and document my impressions. It seems very important to record both the appearance of places, and the nature of my response to them. And I have to do this on a daily basis, almost as if a record needs to be kept. I walk to locations every day and this slow process of looking reveals the character of the places I visit. I paint the landscape because it is where I see the most richness, complexity, and meaning. I love and need this beautiful place … the paintings come out of that.

– Harry Stooshinoff

Landscape could convey everything I wanted to communicate, with a power and mysterious subtlety that continues to challenge and excite me.

– James Naughton

Because it's universal. It speaks to you, landscape speaks to you, doesn't it? It's full of emotion.

– Piers Ottey

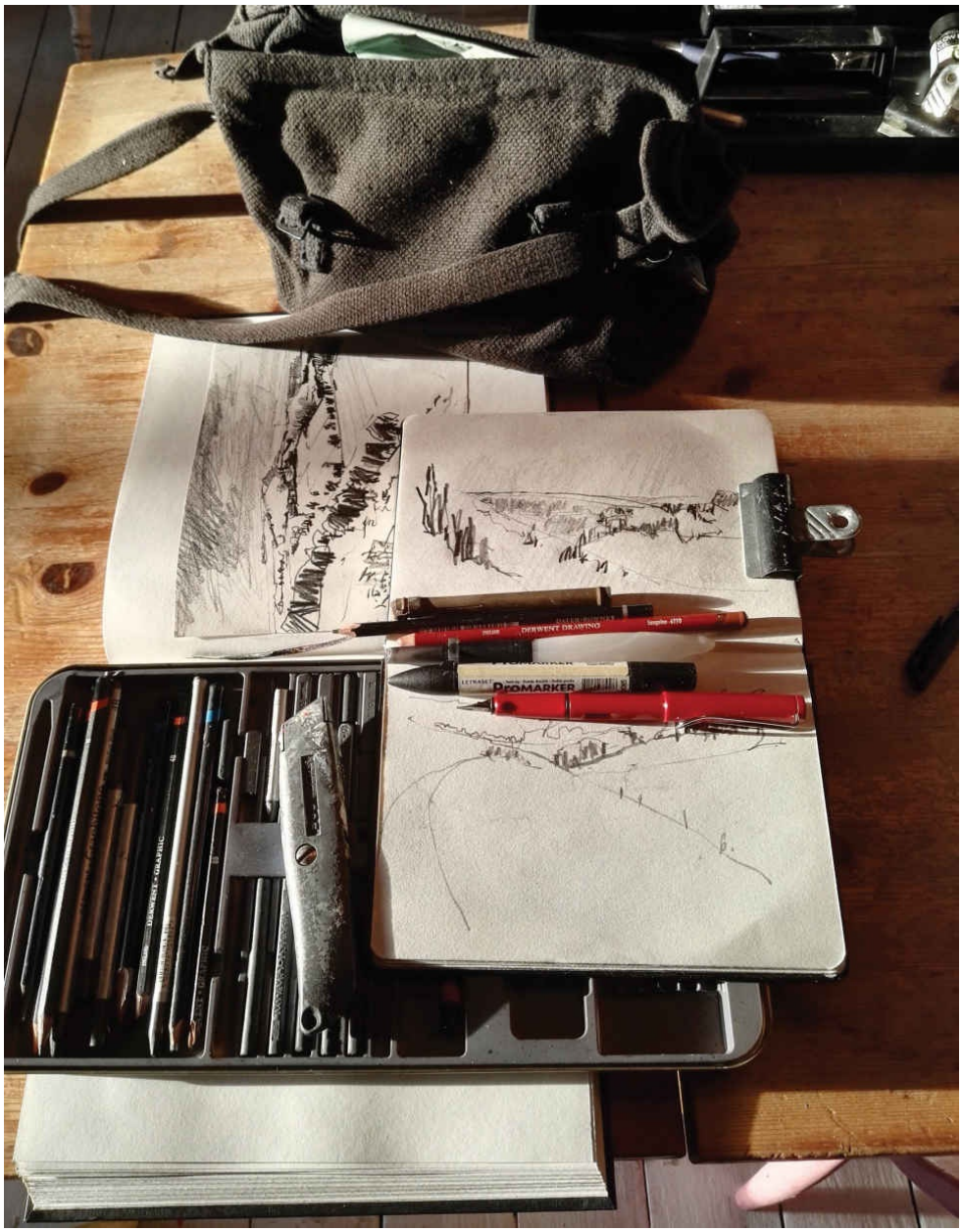
I find there's nothing like being outside – the changes in the weather, the sky and the light are endlessly fascinating and engaging for me. I love the idea of a multi-sensory experience – being extra-aware of smells, texture, sometimes the taste of salt on the breeze, as well as sound and sight, all coming together as part of that particular place. I aim to communicate these different aspects somehow in my paintings.

– Louise Balaam

CHAPTER 1

# Materials

*As one stands at some high promontory, and looks across at this vast space, at the tiny markers of human existence, the ant-like cars catching the light as they trail through country lanes, a bale of hay in a field. One ponders the problem of how one can do justice to all this space and light with a sketchbook and some simple drawing materials.*




A range of basic drawing tools and two sketchbooks of different sizes. Note the bull dog clip to stop the pages flapping around in the wind.

Many things are capable of making a mark on paper and can be used to respond to the landscape. There is an intimate relationship between the artist, the material, the support and the scale they work. You will find that one medium is better for the kind of drawing you want to make, but one needs to play with media to know how it can be used and what it can be used for. Only by challenging what you do already will you grow as an artist and become familiar with the unknown.

# DRAWING TOOL KIT

A small sketchbook, preferably one that is fairly cheap (so that you do not feel under pressure when you use it) is an absolute essential part of your basic drawing tool kit. Expensive sketchbooks can be really intimidating, so a cheap sketchbook is a great start. A scrapbook is a good idea too as they are usually made of coloured sugar paper, has a lovely texture suitable for charcoal, pencil, graphite and watercolour, as well as pastel drawing and coloured pencil studies. This will help you make coloured studies of the landscape and are also cheap. An A3 hard backed landscape format sketchbook is a great buy as they will last a very long time and will enable you to approach the landscape in lots of different ways and in a variety of different media.

Eventually it will pay dividends to buy a sketchbook of pastel paper and a watercolour pad. Look at the texture of the paper before you buy. Some pastel papers can have quite an artificial grain, which you may or may not like and some may come in a colour range that is too strong, or is not heavy enough for your needs.

Photocopy paper is useful as well as this is excellent for basic monoprint, relief prints, pen and ink, biro and compressed charcoal studies. It is good for making quick studies and great for practising mark making and experimental work. Buy yourself some fine line pens, a dip pen, a brush pen, a long clear plastic ruler and a metal rule is essential for cutting paper or card. These are usually much cheaper from a DIY store than an art shop. Biros are inexpensive, can come in a variety of basic colours to draw and are great to work with. Alcohol markers can be very effective for sketching (Promarkers come in a wide range of colour) and increasingly watercolour markers that are now available, which give you versatility of a marker with the ability to modify the colour with a brush. (Spectrum Aqua and Windsor and Newton). A small set of watercolours, soft chalk pastels, graphite, oil pastel, a range of pencils and a plastic rubber are also essential purchases.

If you intend to make larger studies in acrylic or oil, A1 sheets of 220gsm acid free cartridge paper makes for a good standard and T.N. Lawrence do a huge range of handmade and mould made papers. 220gsm is a great paper for painting as it is less likely to cockle (deform) when wet and you can get heavier papers for watercolour. You can buy individual sheets as needed from your local art shop or you could order a pack. A cheap alternative is a roll of lining paper from

shop or you could order a pack. A cheap alternative is a roll of lining paper from your local DIY store (the heaviest weight you can). These will need sticking down to a board with masking tape or gummed tape (another must if you intend to do a lot of watercolour). A craft knife is invaluable too and it is best to buy one with a retractable blade. Some knives have one long continuous blade running along its body, which can be snapped off to a sharper blade when it has gone blunt. Some have spare double-ended blades, which fit inside the metal body of the handle so that when the blade goes blunt, you open the handle, turn it around and use the other end, before disposing of the blade entirely. This type of craft knife is better and stands the test of time. Blades are used for cutting paper, card, thin board and sharpening pencils. A scalpel is also great for collage and fine cutting. If you are going to use a scalpel, it is a good idea to save a cork from a bottle of wine to put your blade into when you have finished using it, as this reduces the risk of accidentally stabbing yourself. Alternatively, some scalpels also have a retractable blade. Although a cutting mat is a luxury, it will prolong the life of your blades and makes cutting safer so it is a good buy too.

Do not be put off by this list and feel intimidated to go out and spend a fortune on materials. Look at each exercise and buy what you need as you go along but eventually you may need to buy some more specialized drawing and painting media to suit your intentions and ambition.

# Charcoal

Wood that is put in a sealed container and placed in the centre of a fire, cooks and blackens. This carbonized wood is charcoal and comes in the thin and thick varieties according to the part of the branch that has been used. Commonly used is willow or vine. Charcoal can produce a wide variety of tones. One of the common mistakes is to use it like a pencil. It can be easily moved around and removed so the drawing can transform and grow in a much more organic way. The potential of charcoal is limitless, from the atmospheric gestural landscapes of Peter Prendergast to the decorative mark making of David Hockney’s drawings of Yorskhire.

# Compressed Charcoal

Mixing crushed charcoal and gum arabic produces compressed charcoal. Charcoal pencils use compressed charcoal at their centres. They have different grades of hardness, uniform in their shape and behave like pastels. They can produce a very strong black, which sticks to a wide variety of paper including smooth. The pigment is bound with gum arabic, which is the same binder as gouache and watercolour. It can be used with water to produce washes. Compressed charcoal can yield dark and emotive landscapes and light and airy ones too. It is difficult to erase and when held in the hand, transfers itself easily onto your skin.

Compressed charcoal comes in a variety of tones from black through to white where you can produce a lighter tone without needing to dilute. This works particularly well when you are drawing the landscape on toned or coloured paper. Because of its glue content, it is less likely to need fixing than normal charcoal. It can also be rubbed onto the back of photocopy paper to make transfer paper and be bought in a range of hues, and the earth palette its particularly useful.

# Clutch Pencil

Two identical clutch pencils, one with compressed charcoal and one with graphite.

These are a mechanical lead holder, holding graphite or compressed charcoal into a handle. They come in a variety of sizes, weights and costs. The very thin leads can break easily and are only really capable of very fine lines, delicate hatching and controlled detailed drawing. Ones that hold a thicker lead will

allow you to make a more expansive range of marks, which gives you greater scope to render the landscape. The weight of the tool and how it feels in the hand is an important part of the drawing symbiosis. Your mark making can be expressive, frenetic or delicate, giving a more diverse range of approaches. You can change leads easily which means that you can draw with a range of media, but it will always have the same weight and feel in your hand.


A set of Derwent compressed charcoal sticks of varying grades.

# Conte

Rather like compressed charcoal, it is a combination of pigment and gums with some waxes too, which makes it harder and easier to sharpen. Conte comes in a wide range of colours and can also be used with water. Sanguine closely resembles red chalk, which was a mined red oxide. It was used by artists such as Watteau and Rubens. Combined with black chalk, it is possible to produce a wide range of subtle tones. Look at Rembrandt’s red chalk drawings as well as Fragonard.

# Crayon


A set of water-soluble Neocolour crayons.

Wax crayons are a combination of wax and pigment. The pigment loading tends to mean that colours tend to lack in vibrancy, but chunky crayons are really good for frottage and wax resist, especially when combined with an ink wash. Using photocopy paper, experiment with capturing some of the textures in the

landscape by making rubbings. These sheets can then be used for wax resist by laying a wash over the paper. The wax repels the wash, leaving the colour of the crayon and the texture. These can then be used as collage elements in your drawing.

John Piper's (1903–1992) bombed out buildings made during the Second World War are great examples of this technique. Pencil crayons come in a much wider and richer variety of hues, and some are water-soluble. The better known brands, Caran d'Ache, Derwent, Staedtler, offer a rich and diverse range of hues with excellent pigmentation. New products continue to emerge: Inktense, pastel pencils as well as various coloured Art bars and solid watercolour.

# Eraser

A brooding stormy sky captured with charcoal and the eraser.

The eraser can be both a destructive and constructive tool, not just removing unwanted drawing but creating images. Paper can be covered with a layer of charcoal and smudged in with a rag or the back of your hand to create an overall grey. The light tones can then be erased out of the grey, making the drawing rather like a bistre study, before further tones are added to make the darks.

# Bread

A humble slice of bread can be kneaded into a small ball. Stale bread is best. This can be used as a rubber too. A Putty Rubber is a soft kneadable rubber, which can be manipulated to erase small detailed areas as well as larger expanses. You can also get electronic rubbers, which work a bit like an electric toothbrush, rotating a small rubber tip to allow fine detailed erasing.

# Graphite

A graphite stick drawing made on grey pastel paper. They were easy to erase too, enabling the light to be formed in the clouds. Study for *Murmur*.

This is found in pencils and the degree to which it is combined with clay creates the various tones available (B for black and H for hard). Graphite can also come in stick or pencil form. Soft pencils are great for immediate and tonal landscape drawing. Graphite sticks make it easier to create large areas of a drawing more economically, but are also good for fast drawings capturing the energy and dynamism of the landscape. Pencil is one of the most widely used mediums of the world and having a broad range of pencil grades extends its scope, softer Bs can yield rich blacks and a broad range of tones. Harder H pencils can yield crisp lines, which are perfect in conjunction with watercolour.

# Indian Ink

This quickly executed ink drawing tried to create the atmosphere of an oncoming storm with looming clouds overhead but intense light filtered through the veils of rain in the distance.

Indian ink is made by combining soot with shellac and it is the blackest of the inks. When dry, Indian ink is waterproof and lends itself to line and wash drawing which can produce luminous landscapes. It can also be used in conjunction with a stick or a reed pen where you can make expressive drawings and mark making studies. Van Gogh demonstrated the potential of thinking across the various textures of the landscape, translating that into reed pen marks, of dot, line and dash. Indian ink is diluted with water, although the texts suggest that you use distilled water (if you have a condenser tumble drier at home you will have a lot of distilled water) as normal water causes the pigment to break down and scatter into the wash. Indian ink was a standard medium for illustrators using a dip pen at the turn of the century. Coloured inks are made with soluble dyes mixed with shellac so they are often very bright, transparent and water-resistant once dry.

# Iron Gall Ink

An ink used in the Renaissance, which is made from crushed oak galls, rainwater and rust with a little vinegar. It produces an ink, which gradually darkens with age, becoming a blue black.

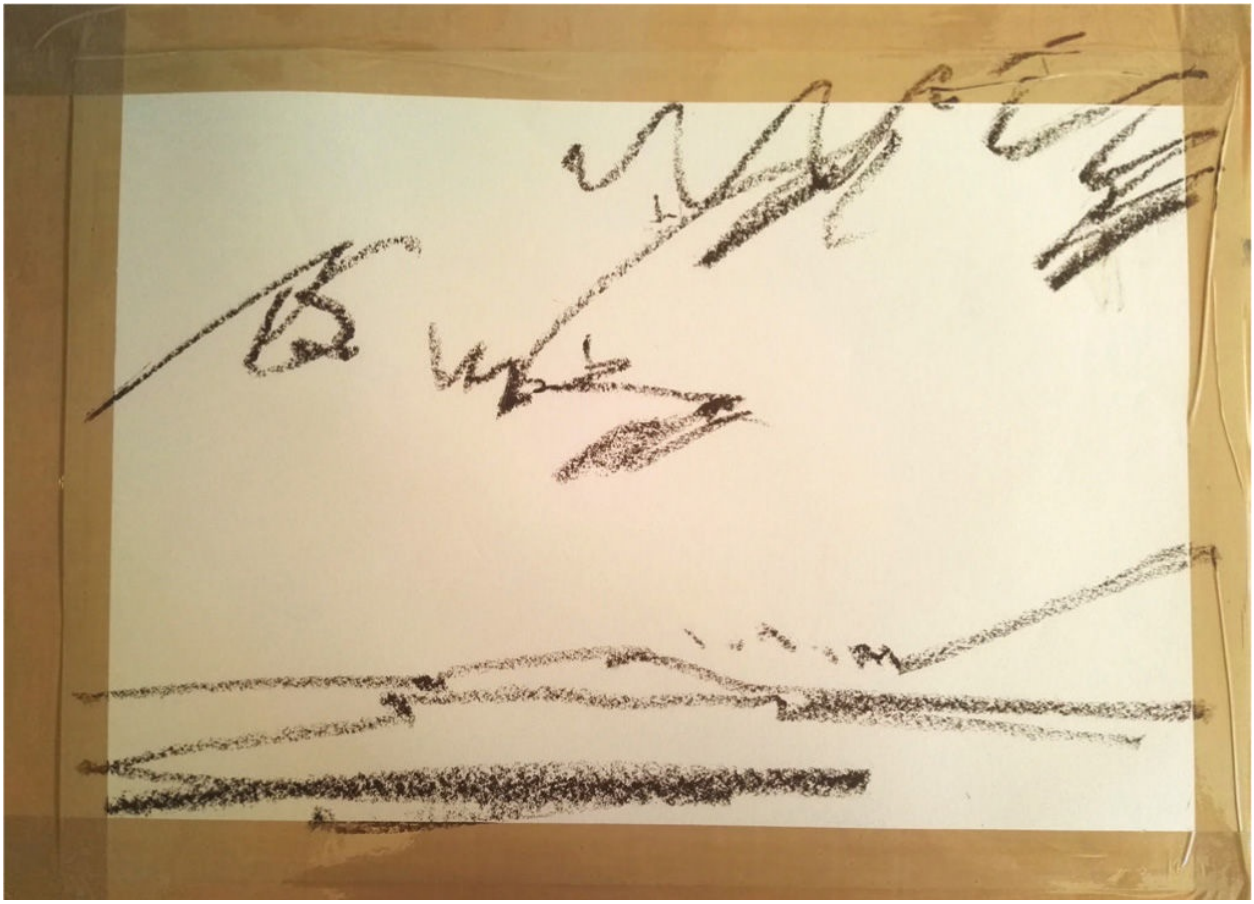
### Oil Bar

Rather like an oil pastel but somewhat larger, the oil bar leaves a wet mark on the support, which can be worked like oil paint with a brush and solvent. This can lead to exciting gestural and painterly marks, which lean toward a more expressive interpretation of the landscape. An oil bar is halfway between oil pastel and oil paint, and it comes in thick tubes, like an overlarge pastel but it has a very soft, fluid touch. The bar tends to form an outer skin much like oil paint when it dries. This has to be broken and can be done with a knife to create a finer edge.

It can be useful to store these in a takeaway plastic tray once opened, as they can spread everywhere.

# Oil Pastel

The combination of pigment and oil. Oil Pastel comes in small stick form, which is usually covered in paper, making it easier to handle. The variety of colours can be quite widespread depending on the brand and they can vary in consistency too. They can be mixed with white spirit or turpentine to produce more painterly effects, but equally they can be used either flat, blended or mixed using hatching, cross-hatching or stippling. The range of the medium and the scope for its manipulation can yield a wide range of landscape interpretations. As with all pastels, you can go larger, working on bigger paper, especially coloured paper which gives you more scope to build up detail and subtle rendering of form and colour nuances.



Whilst oil bar has similar qualities to oil pastel, it is a much more fluid medium. Once the surface of the paper is covered, you can continue to build up and manipulate layers of colour to create incredible richness and painterly effects. This drawing started off on grey paper with a series of linear marks to describe the main areas of the large storm cloud as well as the landscape structures.

In this drawing, Raw Umber and blue were applied, building the dark cloud masses overhead, as well as the leaving areas of paper for the intense light that would break through these clouds.

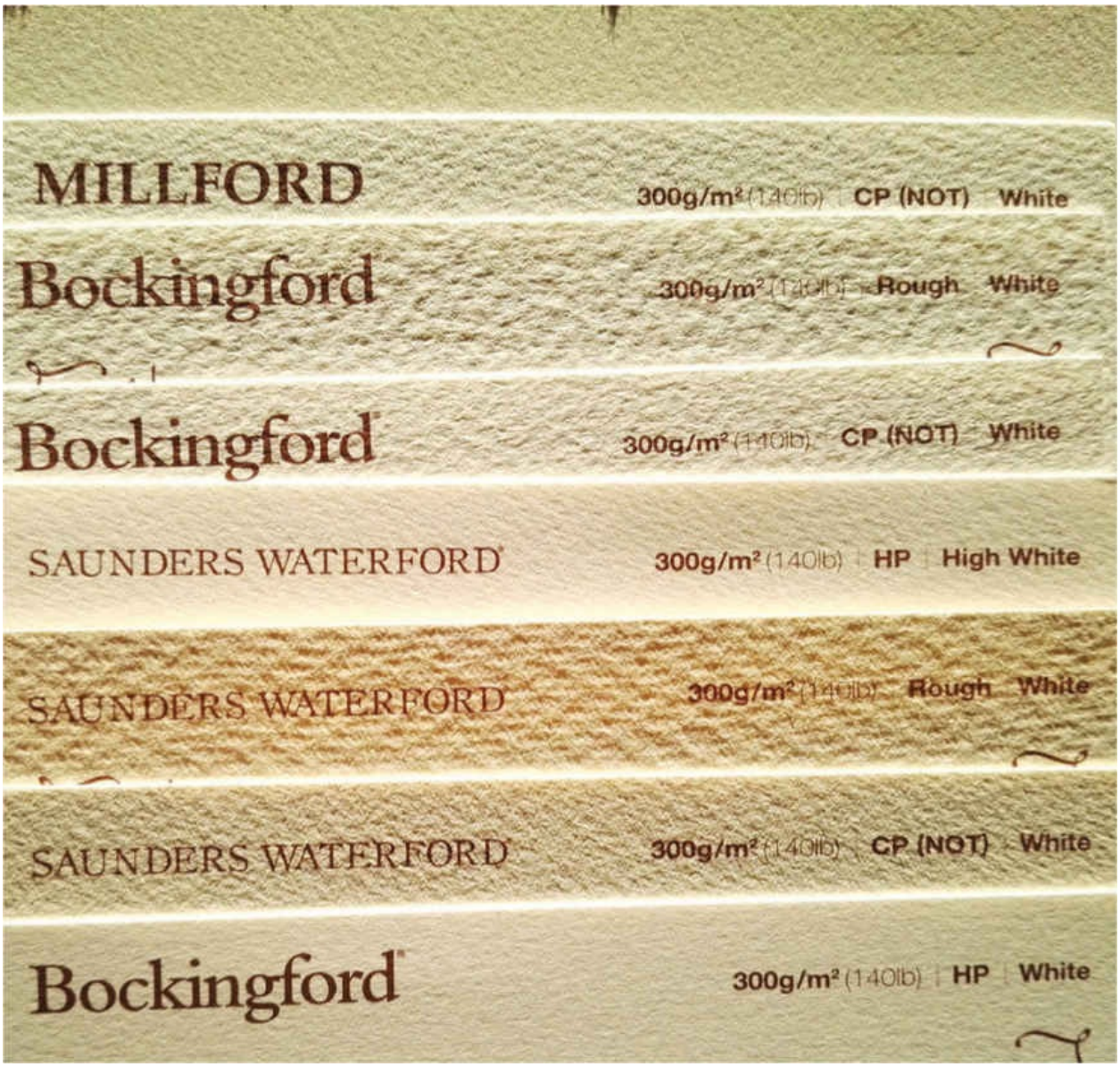
Some kitchen roll (as well as the thumb) was used to move the oil bar, blending the colours together, moving the material as one would do with painting, creating a much greater variety of texture and form both soft and hard. This is much easier to achieve than with oil pastel.

More colour has been added, introducing white into the equation as well as bright strokes of yellow and green. A limited range of all bars have to be experimented with to yield the right range of colour. At the moment, the drawing is still quite coarse, keeping the weave of the paper open.

In the final stage, much more layering has taken place: working blues into Raw Umber, manipulating subtle areas of colour into the whites, establishing the main drives of the foreground landscape which was shrouded in a rain nest but which also had this incredible luminosity.

# Paper

Paper can be made from many materials but commonly it can be made from either wood (pulp) or cotton (rag). Paper made from wood has an acidic content which eventually causes the fibres of the paper to rot and discolour, becoming brittle with age (think an old paperback book). Paper made from rag does not have this acid content and therefore does not deteriorate with age (acid free). Archival work, watercolours, gouaches, drawing and prints should be made on acid free paper in order to secure their longevity. Paper has a texture depending on how it has been processed. Paper also has a size (glue) content, which holds the fibres of the paper together. A waterleaf paper has no size, making it very absorbent. The same is true of blotting paper, making it soak up moisture. The greater the size content, the less absorbent it becomes, making colour sit on the surface. Etching paper will have little size, ensuring that it has the flexibility and absorbency to remove the ink from the etched line, whereas watercolour paper will have a lot of size in it. These are of course personal choices, but it is important to explore the variables to help you achieve the results you want. Some paper manufacturers sell offcuts of sample packs. These can at least give you an affordable, easy way of trying out approaches.




A range of free watercolour paper samples which came from one edition of the *Artists and Illustrators* magazine.

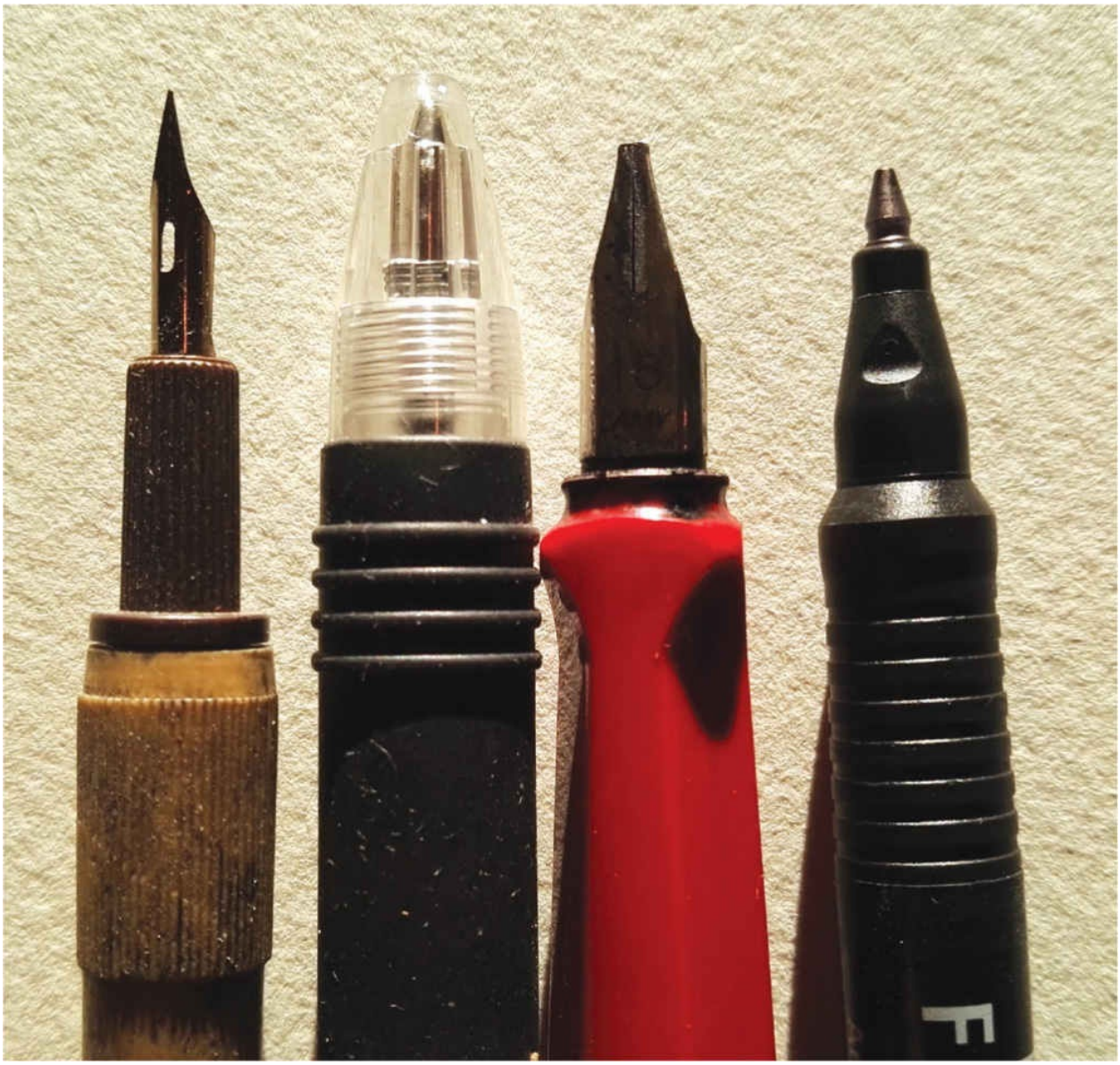
The key to the whole image was the desire to describe the incredible light in the scene. Pastel was used in layers and built up on a coloured ground.

# Pastel

Chalk pastel is pigment mixed with gum acacia and is dry and powdery to touch. Chalk pastel can be blended or mixed together using hatching, cross-hatching, or by rubbing the pigments together. Unlike oil pastel, chalk pastel can be erased, which means that they can be transformed much more easily than oil pastel. Like oil pastel, the scope of chalk pastel is immense. Degas demonstrates the true mastery of the medium and it is worthy of note that pastels are often referred to as paintings (have a look at James Crittenden’s pastels too). As with most dry media, colours are mixed through layering, either blended together on the paper support, or optically mixed. It is important to retain the integrity of the paper surface for as long as possible. Keeping the weave of the drawing as open as possible will retain its vivacity of hue. Build up your layers and remember that your drawing has to be fixed or mounted behind glass.

A five tone promarker study of storm clouds.

# Pens




From L-R, a dip pen, a biro, an italic nibbed Lamy fountain pen and a fine line pen.

Before the creation of the fountain pen, a dip pen was the most prevalent form of writing implement. These are incredibly sensitive tools, made from steel. They have a small split end, connected to a reservoir, which will hold ink, food colouring, bleach and other fluid media. They are pressure sensitive, so you can make a variety of line widths as well as more gestural mark making, and the opportunity to create different dilutions to dip into and a sense of space in your landscapes.

A biro or ballpoint pen was an invention of the late nineteenth century and has a greasy viscous ink that is transferred onto the paper with a steel ball. A fibre

tip pen and felt tip pen transfer a more solvent-based ink through capillary action (the ink is drawn through the fibre or fabric, which dries quickly.

A fountain pen can make a beautiful addition to your drawing and you can choose from a variety of nibs to suit your hand, but a fine point can be used to produce eloquent hatching and cross-hatching.

Some use a bladder, which means that you refill your pen by immersing it in ink and squeezing it. Some use a plastic cartridge that will allow you to draw for quite some time without the need to refill. The ink used in fountain pens tends to be a water-soluble ink, which means that after an initial drawing is made, the ink can be lifted with water to create washes.

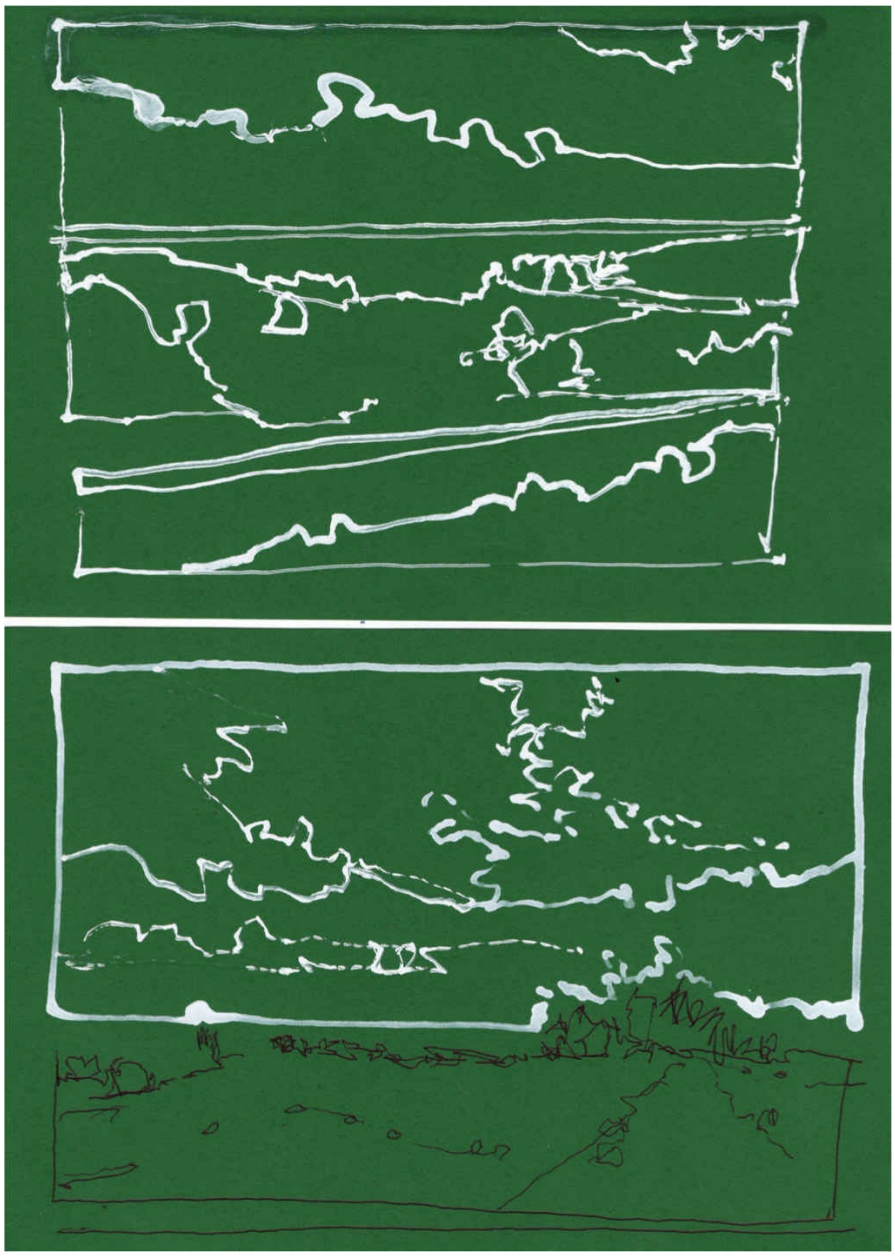
The language of pen and ink resembles that of hard ground etching and it is worth looking at some fine examples by Whistler or Rembrandt, in particular at how line is manipulated to describe space and form.

# Quink Ink

Quink is a brand of ink, which is used with fountain pens. It is trichromatic ink, which means that it is made up of colour. Diluted in water, these colours reveal themselves when the ink pools. The combination of the line and the dispersion of colour into water from the black makes for sumptuous and evocative landscapes. The ink can also be bleached so areas of a drawing can be blocked in and worked back into with bleach applied with stick, dip pen or brush. It works well with wax resist and can also be combined with other water-soluble media. The nature of its solvent base means that it will come through layers of paint.

This is an acrylic painting of the Downs, trying to capture the space and the dynamic movement of clouds.

## Tipp-Ex



Using a Tipp-Ex pen to make a drawing. The pen handle is flexible and is squeezed to release the Tipp-Ex. The varying width of line makes it somewhat ambiguous as to what is the landscape and what is the sky. Invert the image and it reads as another landscape.

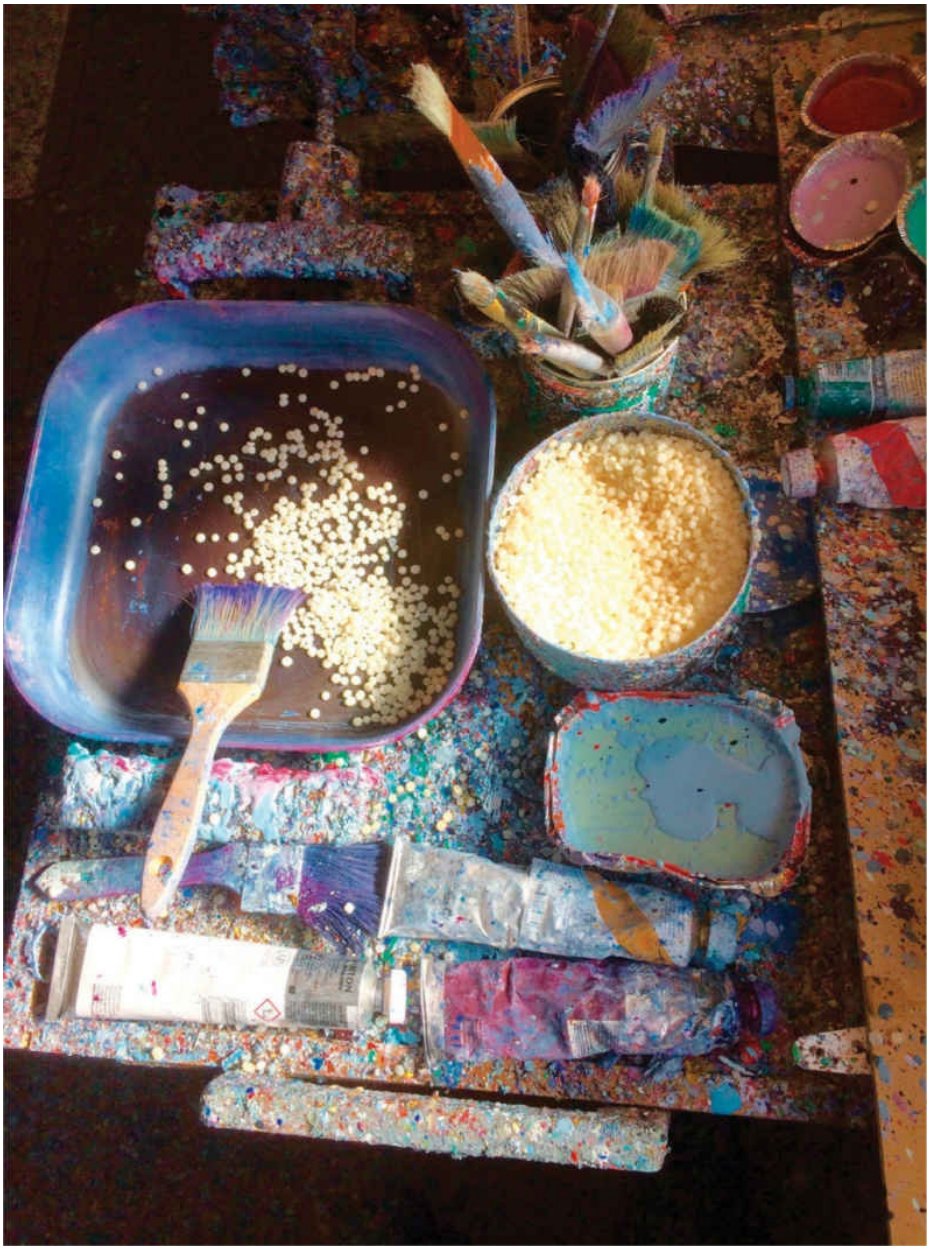
Tipp-Ex is a brand name for a correction fluid, which was originally developed to correct errors in typing when manual typewriters were commonly used. This white opaque medium can be used to cover over errors in pen and ink drawings, as well as for drawing purposes. It comes as a bottle with a sponge brush applicator, which can be mixed with oil pastel to produce delicate pale colours, and in a pen form. The pen can be used to make drawings on coloured paper.

# Wire Brush

Used on the surface of the paper or board, the wire brush can create rough textural effects. These alterations of surface can be used prior to the application of media, or after to reveal previous layers. Craft knifes, sandpaper and scourers can also be used in the same way.

Wax pellets being melted into a tray to be decanted into tins with oil paint. (Courtesy of David Hayward)

Some of the tools used to manipulate an encaustic painting. (Courtesy of David Hayward)



A wide variety of painting tools. (Courtesy of David Hayward)

# PAINTING MATERIALS

All paints are effectively made of three constituent parts: pigment (material which gives the paint a colour) whiting (which gives the paint opacity) and binder, the material that causes the paint to adhere to the support. Not all pigments work with different binders, so subsequently the range of hues available in oil paint differ from those in acrylic and watercolour. The combination of pure pigment and the binder gum arabic – or gum acacia – forms watercolour. Watercolour is the purest of the paints and the best quality watercolour is in pan form as this is the purest combination of pigment and binder. Tube watercolour will have other things mixed into it to reduce the possibility of drying in the tube; this can include things like honey, which will reduce the quality. Tube watercolour can go off, especially if the lid is left off the tube. Pan colour will last a long time and will go a long way, but it is more difficult to create large expensive watercolours just by using pans.

Pigment mixed with gum acacia and whiting produces gouache, poster paint and powder colour. These paints are effectively the same; the differences between them will be in the choice of pigment (you will find that the better quality pigments are in gouache) Gouache is ground to a much finer consistency than poster paint or powder paint. The amount of whiting involved will also vary between types (cheaper paints will use more of it). Whiting is unbleached chalk and is relatively cheap, so the more whiting in your paint, the more opaque your paint but also the more chalky the paint can appear.

Pigment and whiting mixed with acrylic resin produces acrylic paint; pigment and whiting combined with linseed oil will produce oil paint; mixed with egg yolk: egg tempera painting; and combining pigment whiting and wax will produce encaustic.

# Encaustic

Encaustic can come into main types, hot or cold. With hot encaustic, beeswax is melted in tins, using a hot plate (a camping stove works) and the liquid molten wax is added to the paint, which dries as soon as it cools. This means that colour mixing has to be done on the hot plate or in different tins sitting on the hot plate (used canned food containers are great for this).

When pigment and whiting are added to rabbit skin glue size (which is usually heated in a double boiler) this produces distemper, which also dries really quickly. All water-soluble paints are inter-mixable. Oil paint can be painted on top of egg, tempera and acrylic paintings, which mean that these mediums can be used for underpainting, with the advantage of faster drying, a lot of colour blocking, and drawing and tonal balancing can be done before more refined oil blending can be applied on top. Acrylic cannot be painted on top of oil, the constantly shrinking surface causes the acrylic paintings to peel off. However, egg tempera can be painted over wet oil painting.

# WORKING IN ENCAUSTIC

David Hayward works in encaustic and writes:

Encaustic is an ancient medium used by the Egyptians and Romans. It re-emerged early in the twentieth century and was used by artists such as James Ensor, Diego Rivera and Jasper Johns. The process involves dissolving pigment into molten wax (most often oil paint into beeswax). Other oils and resins can be added to alter consistency, luminosity and surface finish. Some artists include other materials encased in the wax to create mixed-media images. Wax and oil colours are mixed using a hot plate or electric palette and are then applied quickly to the painting surface (usually board). The medium cools and sets almost immediately which allows more layers to be applied without waiting for the underpainting to ‘dry’. If necessary, a hot air gun can be used to soften the surface and various tools can be used to manipulate textural qualities, apply detail or remove unwanted layers.

I work mainly in encaustic – a very physical, often messy process of dissolving oil paint in heated beeswax – it is a medium that tolerates trial, error and change. Encaustic surfaces can be manipulated in various ways – sometimes by burning, cutting and scraping away layers to reveal underpainting or by embedding discarded fragments from earlier work into a painting’s surface. These acts of burying and excavating, revealing and embedding offer a kind of parallel to the way landscape contains geological and archaeological evidence of its own past.

# Acrylic

Acrylic has a bad reputation, this is partly due to it being relatively new, as it was only really being used by artists from the 1970s onwards. It is also partly because of some of the poor performance of some of these paintings in terms of conservation. There were some issues with David Hockney's work from that period, where Hockney modified the medium to try to slow the drying time down. It was these modifications that later caused problems with the longevity of the paintings. However, according to the experts, the chemists state that acrylic is probably one of the most durable paints available to artists today and certainly should last equally as long as oil paint.

To a certain extent, you get what you pay for. Some cheap acrylics tend to be very poor indeed, watery, lacking quality pigment and so on, and the cheaper brands tend to dry to a more plastic finish. Spending a bit more money will certainly yield better quality pigment, greater opacity and coverage as well as a more matte finish. Winsor and Newton, Lascaux, Golden all do acrylic ranges for both the student and the artist.

Daler-Rowney's Cryla has one of the densest pigment loading and has a thick buttery consistency which lends well to impasto approaches, but can also be watered down to produce delicate glazes. Daler-Rowney also has the System 3 range, which is a much more affordable paint coming in a range of sizes. The 500ml tubs are useful if you intend to do a lot of painting or work on a larger scale. They are flow formula, which means that they have a softer feel and can be used to create larger expanses of colour, used in an airbrush, diluted more readily and can also be combined with mediums that can transform them into screen printing or relief printing ink. The medium slows the drying time down, allowing time to pass through the screen or be inked on the block without drying out first. Other mediums can be added to acrylic to aid glazing or stiffen the paint as well as altering the surface (matte, gloss). System 3 also has a heavy bodied version, which is certainly denser than normal System 3, but is nowhere near as dense as Cryla. A good compromise which is certainly more economical is to buy System 3 colour but to use it in conjunction with Cryla white.

Acrylic paint is a water-soluble material, which dries to become waterproof. Acrylic medium is rather like PVA, white when wet, but becomes transparent and waterproof when dry. This means that when you paint, your colour changes as it dries, often darkening in hue. More expensive artist quality acrylics do not

as it dries, often darkening in hue. More expensive artist quality acrylics do not tend to do this as much. Its flexibility means that it is an excellent paint if you are trying to paint using impasto, but it can also be thinned down to produce delicate glazes. Although one can use water to do this, you stand the risk of undermining the paint's adhesion to the ground, meaning that colour can be lifted off.

Recently acrylics have been created which have slower drying times, enabling them to be manipulated more like oil paint. These are sometimes referred to as open or interactive ranges. Additionally, the drying time of acrylic can be slowed by keeping the surface of the paint damp with the use of a water spray.

Acrylic can be a fantastic medium. It is fast drying which means you can paint quickly in lots of layers, perfect for *plein air* painting when the weather changes constantly. You can break all the rules associated with oils and can combine many techniques in the same image. It is capable of a broad range of approaches from expressive and gestural studies to meticulous rendering of the landscape.

# Acrylic Ink


A set of six Daler-Rowney FW acrylic inks.

Daler-Rowney produce the FW range, which are acrylic mixed to a very fluid state. They come in small jars with an eyedropper, which makes them easy to dispense and allows for greater consistency of colour mixing. Their fluidity makes them perfect for dip pen and mapping pen usage, running through an airbrush or used like watercolour.

# Alkyd

Alkyd is an oil paint, which has been modified with the use of resins to enable it to dry much more quickly than traditional oil paint. The resin in the paint means that it handles pretty much the same way that oil behaves, however, coming out of the tube, it is somewhat softer in feel. Alkyd can be particularly useful when working *plein air*, where the increased drying time can be advantageous. Both Alkyd and traditional oil can be mixed, so it is sometimes useful to mix an Alkyd white with traditional oils as this will often speed up the drying time of the oils.


Liquin is an alkyd medium which increases the drying time of oil paint by 50 per cent. It can come in a variety of different viscosities: original, fine detail, Oleopasto, each of which creates different painting textures from transparent glazes to richly impastoed. Lucas number 5 is another painting medium and there are many on the market, and many that can be made by the artists to suit their individual needs.

# Brushes

A flat is square ended, producing a blunt blocky mark. The Glasgow boys and some of the coastal painters around Staithes, Newlyn and Dorset advocated the use of the square brush technique.

Three different sized rounds.

A bright is like a tapered flat.

A fan brush is shaped like a fan and was traditionally used as a blending tool to mix together adjacent colours, producing a subtle mix, but can also be used in a landscape painting to create tree and branch textures (*See* Chapter 5, Mark making).

You can spend a lot of money on brushes, but equally some inexpensive brushes can do the same job that expensive ones can do. You need a brush, which has resistance, so that you are not fighting against the paint. If your paint is stiff and buttery you need a stiff brush. If you want to work with more fluid paint, then you need to use softer brushes, but you still need that tension in the bristles. Large brushes can hold a small point and can give you a good reservoir of paint, but a small brush cannot yield a big mark. So it is better to aim for larger brushes, when selecting them. DIY stores can be a real solution for very large brushes and the choice and quality of bristle can vary considerably.

Brushes are described according to their shape and the type of hair used in their construction.

A brush can be made out of different fibres: hog, sable, squirrel hairs as well as synthetic nylon ones

as synthetic nylon ones.

It is true to say that different brushes work best with different paints and techniques. You need to experiment to find out how to use these tools, understand the variables to begin to discover for yourself what works.

Piers Ottey once said that he never made an oil painting with less than thirteen brushes. It’s better to have a large number of brushes dedicated to different puddles of colour than frequent visits to the sink to clean one brush. Keeping your colour fresh is easy if you know how.

# Gesso

Gesso is the traditional way of priming boards for oil painting. The combination of whiting (unbleached chalk) and rabbit skin glue size. Pellets or size are dissolved in water overnight and then heated in a bain-marie to make it more fluid. Whiting is then added to this hot size to form a creamy gesso, which is then applied to the panel. This is usually done over time, sanding between each successive layer with wet and dry, forming a sealed smooth surface. In recent times this has been largely replaced with acrylic gesso, where whiting is added to acrylic resin and applied to the board. As the acrylic gesso is more flexible than traditional gesso, it can also be used to prime canvas as well.

# Oil Paint

The history of oil painting is long and well documented, dating back as far as the fifteenth century in Europe, but it was during the Renaissance that the medium came into its own. The fact that it is slow drying means colour is workable for many hours/days, which allows for seamless transitions of colour and tone, particularly when the surface of the damp painting is feathered, blending damp paint patches together. They say the oil painting was developed to paint flesh but its flexibility and longevity demonstrates that a wide variety of pictorial surfaces can be created using it. One of the basic working processes of oil paint can be summarized in the phrase fat over lean. This essentially means that initial painting layers should be relatively oil-free, and subsequent layers should have increasing amounts of oil content. So initially, painting starts with oil paint mixed with turpentine applied thinly, rather like a series of washes, new layers might have more tube consistency and as more layers go on top of that, you might begin to add oil content to your paint, creating more flexible paint films. Following this principle will also reveal that each layer will have a different drying rate. The lean solventy turps layer will dry fairly quickly, making it useful for *imprimatura* (a thin transparent staining layer of the primed canvas to give it a coloured ground), and can be used for underpainting (*grisaille*, *verdaccio* or *bistre*). More oil paint added to the turps will create a more creamy paint, which will take longer to dry. Less solvent but adding mediums will increase the drying time and medium rich, oily glazes form the final top layers. There are numerous mediums that can be made which combine oils, solvents, resins and waxes. Each medium will have their own properties and will feel different on the brush. Only experience will give you insight into your preferred medium of choice. Liquin is a very popular alkyd based medium which speeds up the drying time of oil. It comes in a variety of viscosities which enables you to make both thick impasto and thin transparent glazes or fine detail.

Depending on the scale of the work, a medium size painting can take anywhere between two to four hours to construct if one is working *alla prima*. A small oil study could take about an hour to an hour and a half so the nature of the scene needs to have this taken into consideration.

*Fold*, oil on canvas, 100 × 100cm. *Alla Prima* painting which attempted to capture the drama of an oncoming storm.

# Medium

Oil paint and acrylic paint can be modified with the addition of different painting mediums. Turpentine will act as both a solvent and a medium. Thinly applied oil paint (lean) would generally have a high degree of turpentine, which quickly evaporates, making it a quick drying solution to underpainting. Linseed oil is another slowing the drying time down and is used generally for creating glazes. Mixing turpentine and linseed oil together with the addition of damar varnish can also create another medium and there are various different permutations and combinations of solvent oils and waxes. Liquin is an alkyd medium which increases the drying time of oil paint by 50 per cent. Liquin can come in a variety of different viscosities, each of which create different painting textures from semi-transparent glazes to richly impastoed. Lucas number 5 is another painting medium and there are many on the market.

# Palette

A palette should be the size of your painting. A large painting requires a large amount of space to place your paints, brushes and solvents, leaving you sufficient room to mix your colour. Your palette should be non-absorbent, its colour should relate to the colour of the ground that you are working on and it should be easy to clean. You can buy off the shelf palettes, which are often well type; these are suitable for watery paint like gouache and watercolour, where you need to hold the watery material in one place. They are not so useful for working with acrylic or oil painting, unless you want to mix up large quantities (Albert Irvin used old food cans for his colours).

Plastic trays that come with some takeaways, are really handy for mixing big washes applied with large brushes. Plastic egg boxes can also be used as an improvised palette for watery paints. The fact that some of these palettes can be discarded quickly and replaced is quite convenient when you're working on location. Just make sure that you don't throw your rubbish away in the landscape and recycle where you can.

Tear off pallets are available; made from a thick greaseproof paper, these are useful as once they are covered with paint mixtures, they can be thrown away and replaced with a fresh sheet. Tin foil or a roll of cellophane offer a practical solution when you need to make a very large palette. A small amount of moisture under the cellophane will cause it to adhere to a melamine top, keeping it in place while you are painting. As cellophane is transparent, paper can be painted up to the same colour as the ground you are working on and placed underneath. Tin foil can be taped down with masking tape again once the palette is full of colour, it can be thrown away and freshly replaced.

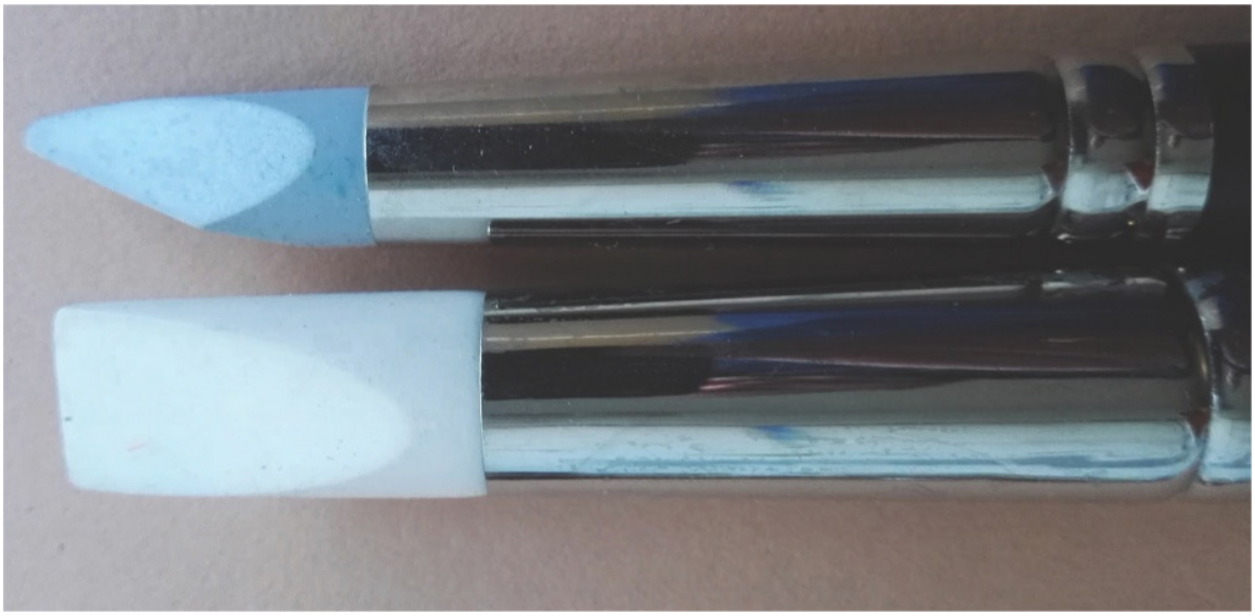
# Palettes for Acrylic

Whilst cellophane provides a very practical solution to a painting palette, it should only be used for fresh acrylic. The nature of this fast drying medium means that the paint forms a skin on the surface of the cellophane, which slides and mixes with your colour.

It is better if you have a flat palette made of MDF or marine ply. These can be sealed with varnish if you intend to use them for a long time. As acrylic dries quickly, you end up getting quite a heavy build-up of dried paint. Large plastic trays or plastic plates are quite useful too. Air causes acrylic to dry, so at the end of a painting session, you can cover your acrylic with cling film as this will keep the paint wet for days rather than hours. You can use a large Tupperware box or a stay wet palette, which both have sealable lids to keep the air out, but this can cause the acrylic to smell.

# Palette Knife

The palette knife and painting knife are incredibly useful tools to have in the studio. The painting knife is usually shaped like a triangle and comes in a variety of sizes. A palette knife is usually more like a rounded blade and can be straight or cranked.



A few years ago, shapers were introduced which were like rubberized palette knives on a brush handle. Their popularity waned and they can be picked up in art shops quite cheaply, but these can be used to apply

Their popularity waned and they can be picked up in art shops quite cheaply, but these can be used to apply or manipulate paint like a flexible palette knife. They can also be used for other jobs (see masking fluid and watercolour).

The palette knife is used to apply paint to the palette when the paint comes in a tin, as well as scrape up the residue paint from the palette to aid cleaning. It helps to mix colour cleanly and can be used to make a painting. Colour is best mixed up on a flat palette and applied directly to the board or canvas to establish a plane of colour. Painting knives come in a variety of sizes and can enable you to make broad sweeping gestures or small patches of colour. Acrylic dries quickly, so layers can be applied on top of each other. A rich textural surface can be created and scrapped away. The point of the painting blade can be used to create sgraffito effects. The same can be done with oil, but because of the increased drying time, the technique used must be more affirmative, making a direct statement without too much subsequent reworking, otherwise the result will become muddy. Wall paper scrapers, kitchen spatulas, old credit cards and offcuts of card can all be used as makeshift painting implements.

## Watercolour

If you are using watercolour, the box has its own built-in palette. This is perfectly adequate for most painting on the spot, but if you are working in the studio on larger studies, it is useful to supplement this with a well palette.

With the highest concentration of pigment, watercolour is applied as a thin wash and colour can be manipulated through subsequent glazes. If too many are applied, the colour becomes muddy as subsequent layers will mix together. Although the basic watercolour sets seem relatively simple, watercolour is one of the hardest mediums to perfect because you cannot cover up your mistakes. Watercolour can be used broadly to document the transitory light conditions, the subtleties of cloud, mist, rain, as well as the intensity of light. The potential of the medium can be beautifully demonstrated in the studies of Turner, Leslie Worth, Ian Pots and the highly resolved paintings by William Holman Hunt.

Whilst traditional watercolour relies on transparency and white paper, a derivation of this medium is body colour. Body colour is the addition of white gouache or Chinese white into the mix, which allows you the possibility of both transparency and opacity with your techniques.

# Gouache

Gouache is ground to a very fine consistency, which enables you to achieve a very flat result, however, it can also be thinned down to become a wash. You will find that the luminosity of this colour is not the same as a watercolour. Gouache can also be used through an airbrush and a wide range of painting techniques can be used with it, from washes, dabs, dashes, dry brush and scumbling, all of which will be discussed later on in Chapter 7.


Four tubes of designer's gouache. These will enable you to produce a very flat colour. They are opaque and use the best quality pigments, which is why they are very expensive. Cheaper versions do not have the same covering power or feel. Have a look at Mike Hernandez's gouache landscapes to give you some idea of the medium's vibrancy.

As a point of note, on a bright summer's day, light reflects off the white paper shining directly into your eyes. This can cause some damage to your eyesight. Be careful and consider the use of polarized sunglasses; whilst this may alter

your perception of colour, it would be much better to protect your sight or consider the use of coloured paper which will be less harmful to your eyes as it will not reflect as much light back into them.

## Water-soluble Oil Paint

In recent years, particularly with the growing awareness of health and safety and the impact that solvent can have on the body, water-soluble oil paint has become readily available. Whilst it is still oil paint, the chemists have altered the chemical structure of the oil to make it accept water, which means that the paints can be thinned with water (or turps) and brushes can be cleaned with soap and water. By removing the need for solvent, there is a dramatic reduction in the hazards associated with the use of white spirit and turpentine, which include irritation of eyes, headaches, nausea and developing dermatitis. If you have a studio with good ventilation and you reduce your exposure to these materials by using surgical gloves, many of these problems can be reduced, but if you have a small studio in your home, then the smell and proximity of these materials can become quite problematic. Water-soluble paints provide an excellent substitute. There is little difference between the handling properties of water-soluble oil paint, however, it is true to say that it is not as widely available as traditional oils and does not have the full range of pigments that traditional oil paint has. Water-soluble can be mixed with traditional oil paint quite successfully and mediums intended for oil paint too, as long as you are not introducing water into the thinning of the paint. Once you do this, you have to treat the paint like traditional oils and you will also have to clean your brushes with solvent.

# CLEANING

For cleaning purposes, it is really useful to use a brush cleaning kit from a local DIY store. There are a few different designs, but essentially they perform the same task. Brushes are held in a bath of solvent and raised above the floor of the container so that the sludge of paint falls off the bristles.

Because of the different viscosity of material, the solvent sits on top of this sludge and can be poured through coffee filter paper, cleaning it further so that it can be reused and the resultant sludge removed with kitchen roll and disposed of safely. It is therefore useful to have a lot of brushes when working in oil.

## SUPPORTS

# Board

There are lots of different types of board you can paint on, though Chipboard is not a suitable wood for painting. Cardboard is readily available and is generally free (and you can get quite big sheets of it). Depending on the number of corrugated layers, it can give you a more substantial surface to paint on, but it is very absorbent. It can be primed with acrylic or household emulsion but this will cause the board to warp, so painting a large cross on the back of the board should even out the tension. If not enough primer is applied, the surface of the painting will become patchy.

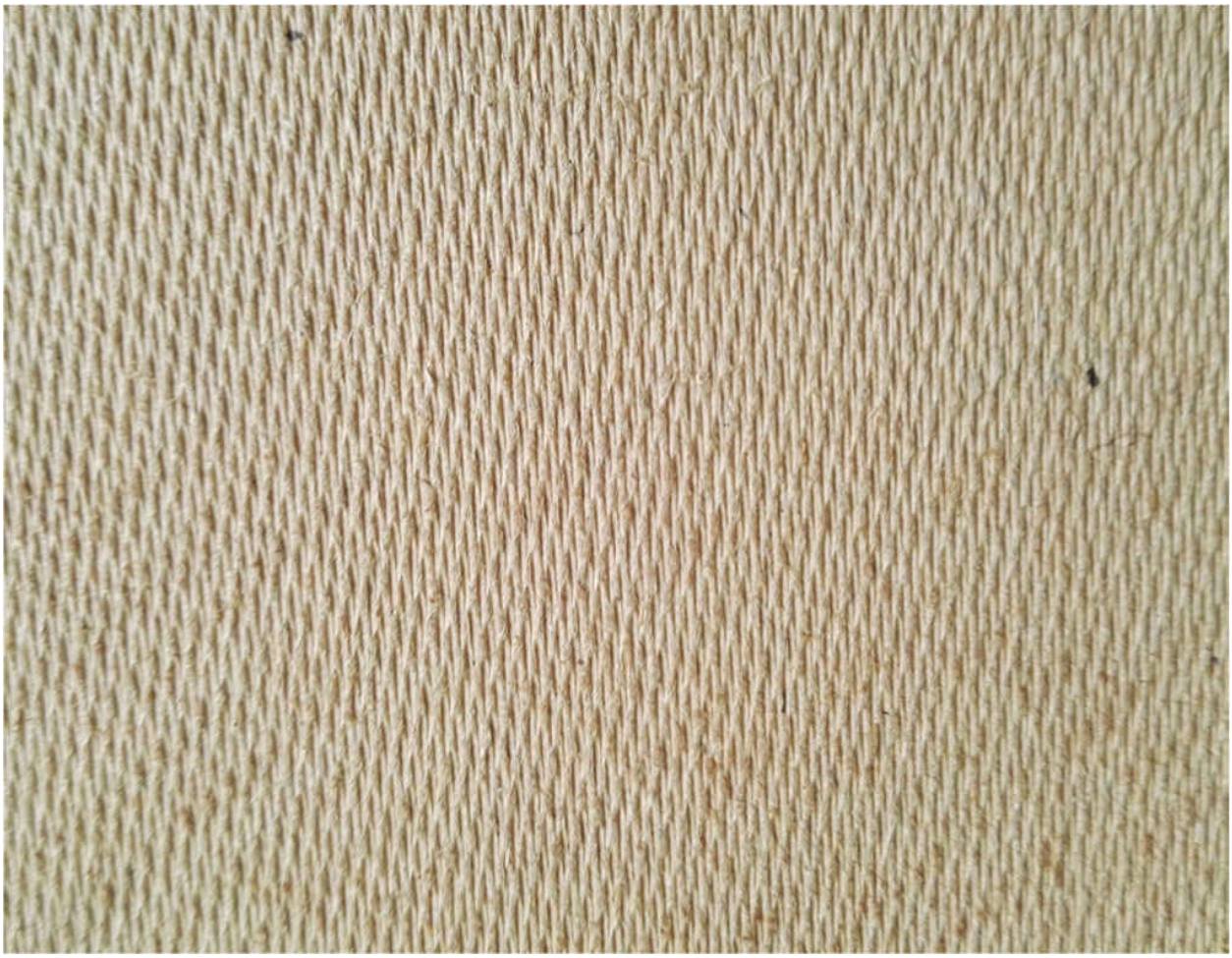
# Greyboard

Greyboard is an inexpensive card support and it is a fairly good surface to work on directly with acrylic but it does have an acidic content. This is OK if you are experimenting but not great if you intend to sell your work as it will become brittle and yellow with age.

# Mountboard

Mountboard is used for mounting up artwork and comes in large sheet sizes, generally A1 in most art shops but can be purchased larger from some art suppliers. It comes in a number of colours which are lightfast but it is more expensive as it is a soft material and can be easily damaged, especially the corners. Many framing shops often sell their offcuts as these tend to be the bits of card cut out of window mounts.

# Hardboard

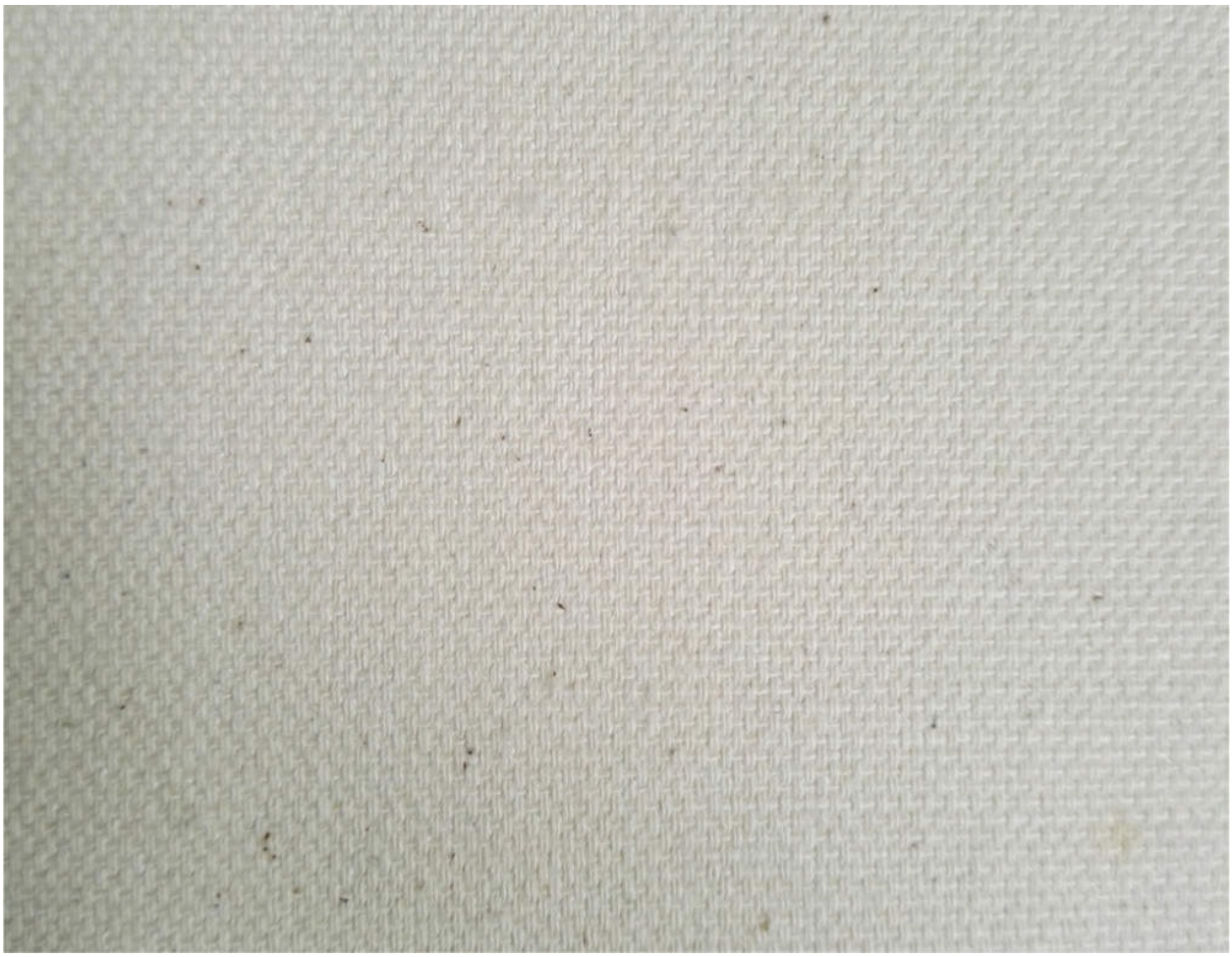


Hardboard. Here, the textured side is shown.

In America it is called Masonite. Its cost and widespread availability means that it makes it much less intimidating to paint on as a support. Hardboard is made from layers of paper compressed together. It comes in sheets 120 × 240cm, but some stores only sell boards half that size. Some wood yards will cut your boards to size using an industrial machine cutter which can take a matter of minutes, but you will pay extra for every cut. So, one sheet of wood could give you eighteen 40 × 40cm boards to paint on, coming in at approximately £1.00 per sheet. Hardboard comes in 5mm thickness and has both a textured and smooth side. The textured side can be painted on but the surface is quite coarse and artificial with a strong grain pattern, but it can suit more scumbled dry brush

techniques as this side is much more absorbent than the verso side. This opposite side is very smooth and paint has a tendency to slide off it, which can be useful for initial underpainting. This is improved, however, with priming, especially if one uses a gesso ground. Hardboard can be trimmed down with a sharp craft knife and a steel edge.

# Canvas



Canvas. In the early history of easel painting, oils were made on wooden panels (sometime a number joined together to make larger panels). Canvas was developed to enable artists to make larger paintings, which were not so heavy.

In the early history of easel painting, oils were made on wooden panels (sometimes a number joined together to make larger panels). Canvas was developed to enable artists to make larger paintings, which were not so heavy. Oil paint eventually rots canvas, so it has to be prepared with primer to allow the paint to sit on the surface of the painting away from the support. Loose canvas needs to be stretched over a wooden frame to create a flat surface to work on. This framework is called a stretcher or a strainer, depending on whether the corners can be pushed outward to restretch the canvas (if it goes saggy) or whether its dimensions are fixed. You can buy ready-made canvases that are

whether its dimensions are fixed. You can buy ready-made canvases that are already primed. They do vary considerably in quality and some of the cheapest are more primer than fabric. The cheap ones are usually very lightweight and can warp and break easily on the larger scale. The artist's quality ones are usually better made with heavier wood and denser canvas or linen. Some stretchers are made of aluminium rather than wood, which are more or less museum quality and do not warp. Alustretch produce stretchers for some of the top artists in the world.

# Linen

This is a much finer fabric and is often used in portrait painting but equally it is more expensive than cotton duck canvas.

Canvas bought on the roll can have a certain amount of resistance to priming. Which means that the primer sits on top of the canvas rather than integrating into it. This can be alleviated by washing the canvas first, but care has to be taken that the canvas does not become creased. The best way to do this is to place canvas into a bath of water and then hang it out to dry. This not only reduces the starch and makes the canvas more readily absorb the primer, it also causes the canvas to shrink a little. Warped canvases are often caused by too much tension on the stretcher due to the shrinkage of the canvas. When making your own canvases, ensure that your canvas is approximately 25cm bigger in both dimensions than your stretcher or strainer. This will allow for enough room to pull the canvas over the stretcher bars on the other side.

Rabbit skin glue size is the traditional preparation of canvas, which causes the canvas to shrink. Acrylic gesso and acrylic can also be used on canvas, but do not use household emulsion paint as this will crack due to the flexibility of canvas and the brittleness of the paint.

# MDF

MDF (medium density fibreboard) has many of the properties of hardboard although it has a matte surface on both sides.

Medium density fibreboard (MDF) comes in a variety of thickness; 3mm is a good thickness in that it is very similar to card in terms of weight and how much space it will take up in the studio but has the added advantage that if it does warp, it can be easily bent back into shape when framed. Thicker boards are available but they are much more difficult to bend back into shape once bowed, so they need to be cradled on the back to prevent them warping. This involves gluing and screwing (or using panel pins) a wooden frame like a strainer to the back of the board.

# Paper

Paper can be machine made, mould made or handmade. The edge will usually give you a clue to the origin. Cut clean edges machine made, deckled (thinning out) on two sides mould and on all four sides handmade.

Marine ply is an excellent support. The cross ply nature of the thin veneers of wood tends toward counter warping and it will be able to handle the moisture in the air. Blockboard can be used successfully as well.

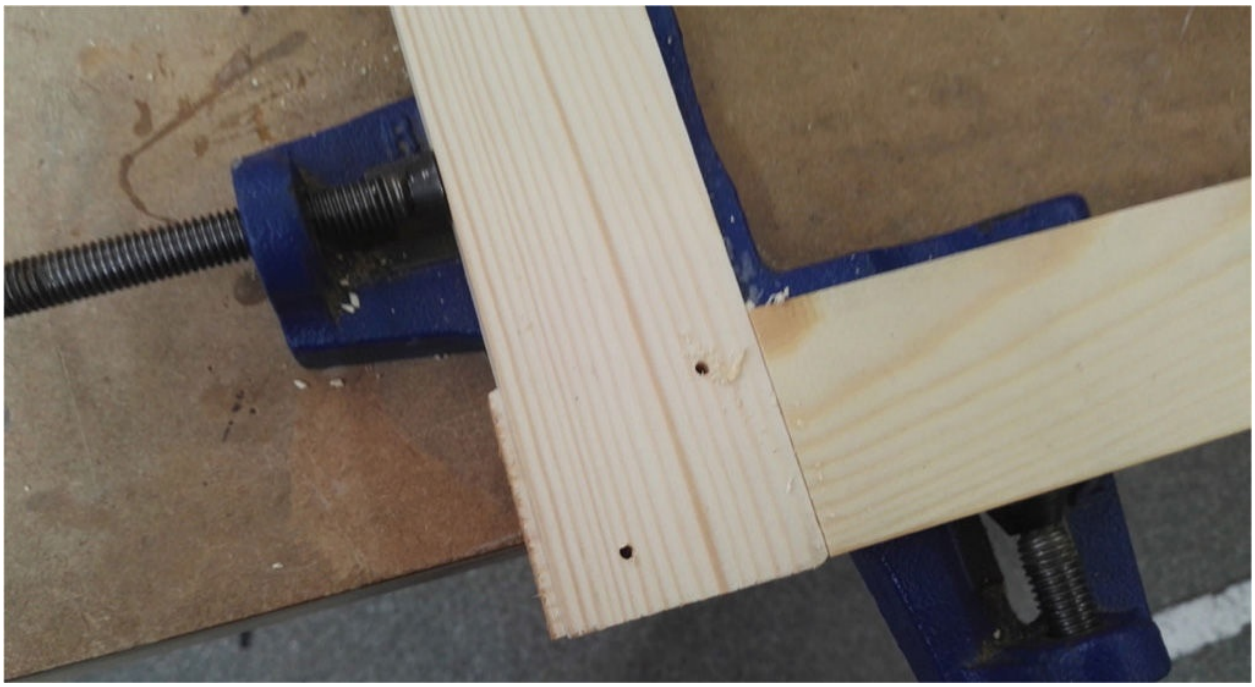
Most fibrous material can be beaten, liquidized and boiled in water to form a kind of soup.

A wooden frame (with a fine mesh stretched across) is immersed into this, collecting the assorted fibres, which knit themselves together. As the water content is removed by draining and pressing between absorbents' cloths, a sheet of paper is formed. The texture of the mesh has an impact on the surface of the paper but also how it is processed afterwards. Paper can be smooth (hot pressed),

rough or semi textural (not). Some surfaces can feel heavy and artificial, others will take you drawing and painting media well; the rougher the paper, the more textural the result. A gouache stroke will become more fragmented. A watercolour wash will sit in the recessed texture, charcoal or chalk will slide off smooth paper. These are, of course, personal choices, but it is important to explore the variables to help you achieve the results you want.

# Strainers

2 × 1 are cut to length and a half lap joint has been made in each end.



Two lengths are held at right angles to each other, and pilot holes drilled to stop the wood from splitting. These are then screwed together.

Strainers are fairly easy to make as long as you have some basic tools: a tape measure, a carpenter's square, a saw, a G clamp, a drill and bit, and some screws about 2cm deep.

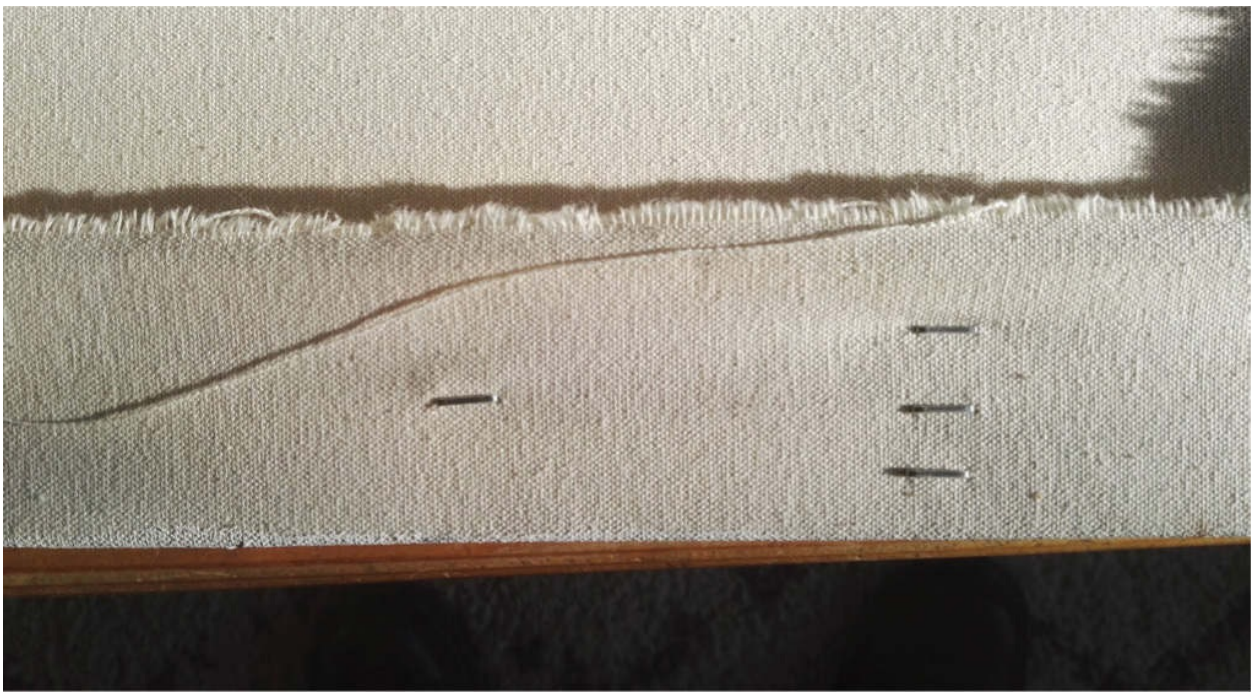
2 × 1 inches of wood from the wood yard can be purchased although it is better if this is seasoned and planned as this will be less likely to warp. Green (new) wood can twist and bend, especially if it sits inside someone's centrally heated home. Depending on your woodworking skills, you can make mitre joints or a half lap joint. You will need to decide on the dimensions of your painting first and then cut two lengths of 2 × 1 to the shortest dimensions and two to the longest. Depending on the size of your strainer, you may need another one of two lengths for cross bars. This becomes more important when you are working on a strainer, which is more than 3ft across.

Cross bars are inserted into the middle of the frame away from the top edge. These were butt jointed and secured by drilling through the strainer bars into the cross bar and then screwed together.

Care is taken to measure the diagonals to ensure that the strainer is square.

MDF sections are cut deeper than the depth of the strainer bars. This ensures that the canvas sits above the frame

You need to ensure that you do not overstretch your canvas as it will tighten anyway with the application of primer. Apply even pressure throughout the process otherwise you can cause the bars to shift out of square.



Start at the middle and place three staples through the canvas into the frame and repeat on the opposite side, pulling the canvas toward you. Then turn the stretcher through 90 degrees and repeat the exercise, pulling the canvas toward yourself as you do so, creating tension. Move to the opposite side and repeat, pulling the canvas toward you again and bringing it over the stretcher to create tension. You can use canvas pliers if you want as this levers over the stretcher bars to stretch the canvas, pulling the pliers away from you, or you can use your hand to do this but be careful with your knuckles as they can chafe against the canvas. Now

can use your hand to do this but be careful with your knuckles as they can chafe against the canvas. Now move slightly to the left of your middle staples and do the same, then go to the point opposite side and repeat. After that, move to the right hand side of the middle staples and repeat and next turn to the adjacent side, gradually working from the middle outward toward the corners on all sides.

You can leave the staples approximately 10cm apart, leaving a gap of about 15cm away from the corners. Try to fold the canvas neatly around the edge of the canvas, pulling the corners out diagonally. Keeping any seams in line with the edge of the stretcher bar makes it easier to frame later as you do not have a bump in the canvas.

You can follow the old carpenter's rule: measure thrice, check twice, cut once to make sure that everything is the right size.

To establish the size of the cut, place an offcut of 2 × 1 at right angles to the end of the strainer bar. Mark off the width onto this wood, and mark off the mid-point of the wood's thickness. Cut the wood down to half its depth and then turn the wood end grain up and cut down this halfway to meet the first cut forming your lap joint. If you intend to make a lot of your own strainers, it is useful to purchase a mitre cutting saw, which holds the saw at specific angles to your wood. This will help you cut perfect 90 and 45 degree angles.

You can make a mitre joint which involves cutting the wood at 45 degrees. The wood has a tendency to split near the end so it is better to drill pilot holes for your screws. A couple of screws in each corner will suffice. Check that your two lengths are at right angles when you screw them together and measure the diagonals to ensure that these are the same size. It is a good idea to attach beading to the top outer edge of the strainer once it’s made so that when you stretch your canvas, it is not in contact with the frame, otherwise you will get the impression of the stretcher bars on the painting.

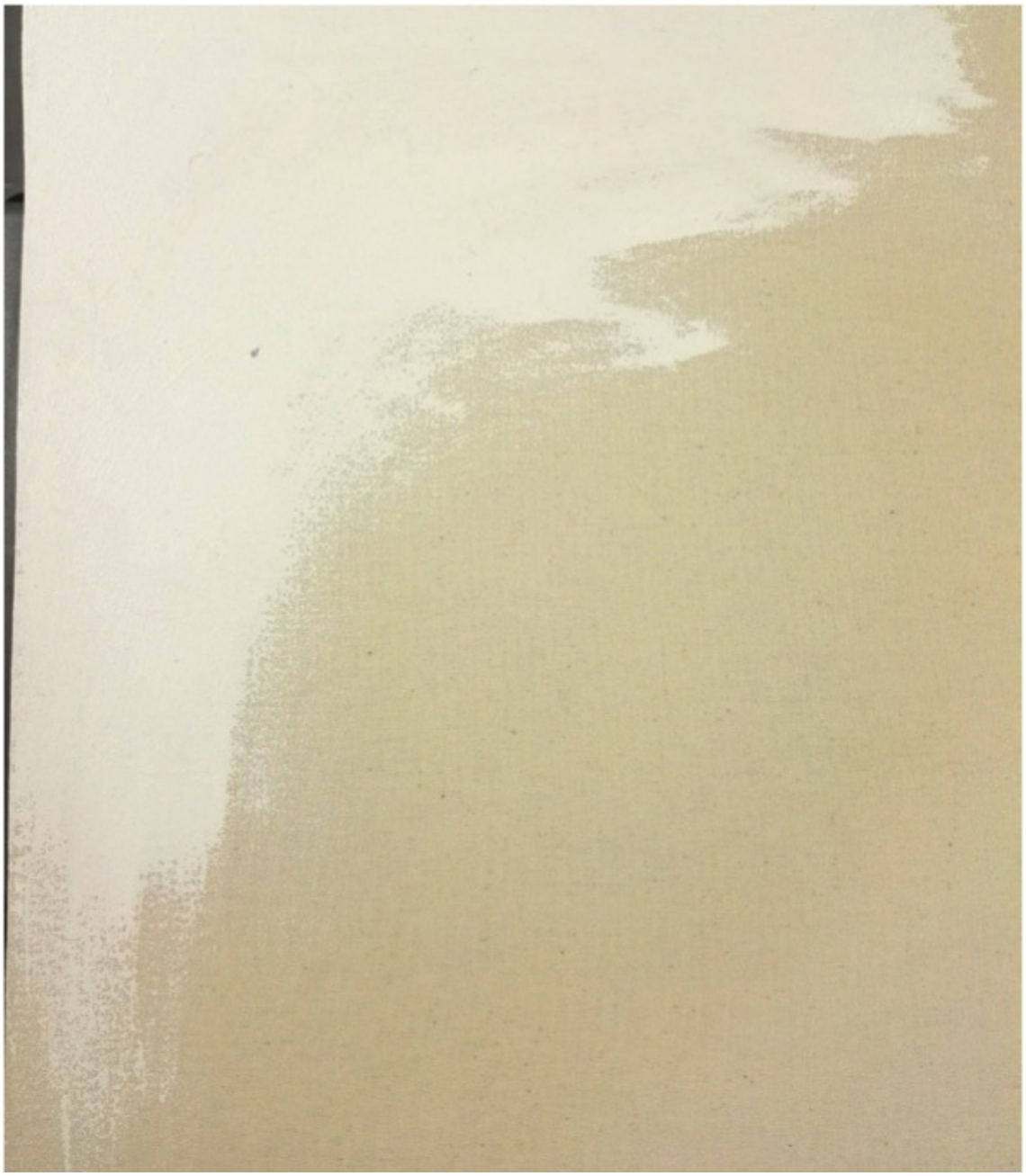
# Stretcher Bars

Ready-made stretcher bars have tongue and groove joints which makes them easy to slot together, but it means that they are not permanently attached. Once stretched, if the painting loses tension, wedges can be pushed into the corners and hammered outward, increasing the tension. When piecing together the stretcher, you still need to make sure the joint is at right angles by resting the joint against a carpenter’s square. As these can fall out of square as you stretch, it is a good idea to tack them together with a length of wood running diagonally across the strainer, holding the two corners at right angles. If you buy ready-made stretcher bars, these have a raised bevelled edge cut into them, which raises the canvas above the bars so that they are not left with the impression of the bar on the finished painting.

# Ground Colour

Once you have primed your canvas or board, you will need to consider the colour that your painting is going to be painting against. Do you use white? Would it be more appropriate to choose the dominant colour of the painting and colour your canvas or board that hue? The Impressionists would sometimes paint their landscapes on a red ground (the complimentary colour to the greens that they would be predominantly using).

The colour of the ground can have a significant impact on the painting so experiment with the following: grey, Yellow Ochre, pink, blue, green and black grounds. Dirty muddy colours come to life on a black ground. Try to make two paintings at the same time with two radically different coloured grounds. When you make your mark on one painting, make the same mark on the other and see how the same colour appears to be quite different according to its background. The underlying colour of the ground creates a unifying effect, meshing your image together. Matthew Burrows swears by a half oiled ground, Piers Ottey on rabbit skin glue size and traditional gesso; each person wants something different and you will have to explore the permutations to find something that suits your needs.



Oil paint is detrimental to the canvas support so it needs to be primed. Once the canvas is stretched, it can be primed with acrylic primer, acrylic gesso, primer or rabbit skin glue size. Traditional gesso should not be put onto the canvas as the movement of the support will cause it to crack but acrylic gesso is more flexible. You can apply your primer with a stiff decorator's brush to ensure that you get the primer into the warp and weft of the canvas. Once covered, you can use a thin scraper to drag the gesso into the surface more, filling up the crevices and sanding in between coats to create a smoother surface if you wish. Alternatively, you might want to use a much coarser canvas for the texture. Painting on canvas can be really exciting, especially if working on a larger scale. However, the cost and effort that goes into making it can be quite intimidating as you will feel under pressure to do something good on it.

Marouflage is a technique where the canvas is glued to a wooden support, giving you the texture of canvas but the rigidity of board. PVA will adhere your canvas fairly well to the board and rabbit skin glue is used for oil painting. Instead of using canvas, muslin can also be applied to the board, creating the same effect.

Oiled paper can be bought which already has an oil content and an overall colour. Along with priming and sizing, the surface quality of the support has a massive impact on how the paint behaves once it's on there and the kind of marks you can make.

Your budget may be an important consideration but in many instances, you can buy one of two colours, look for offcuts, find materials that might be used for the purpose of painting and drawing. Nothing can exaggerate the importance of personal experience. All the things that go wrong along the way are vital parts of the learning process and help you on your way to true mastery of a medium.

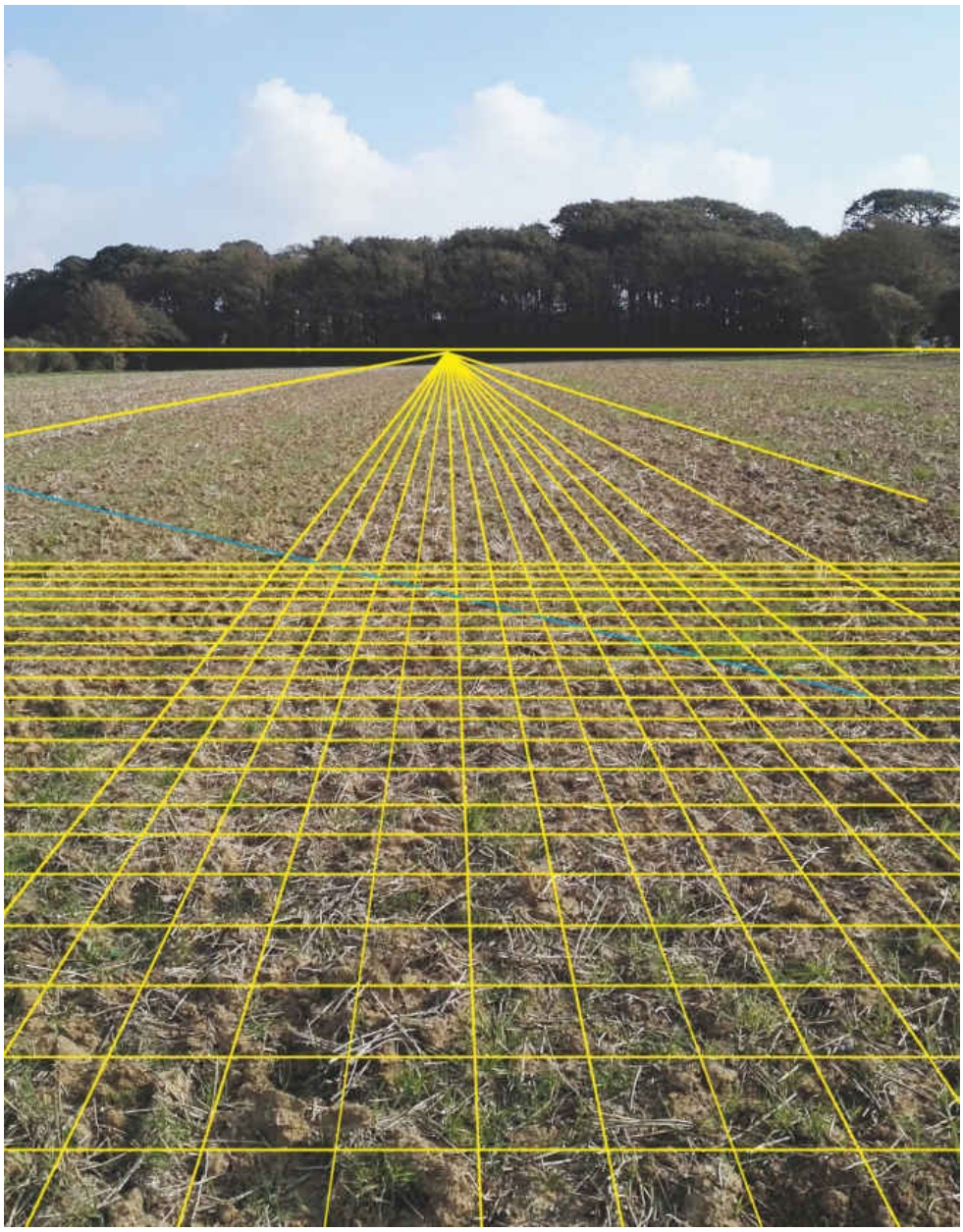
David Atkins. *Autumn Light Lake District*.

Louise Balaam. *Looking out to sea*, Ullapool.

# CHAPTER 3

# Perspective

*Like a conjuring trick, there is a moment when the simple drawing of a triangle, a straight line and some verticals transforms itself from a series flat shapes into a deep recessional space, and from that moment you know that the surface of the paper can become a place that you can disappear into.*



A single vanishing point drawing of a field.

The use of linear perspective in painting has its roots in fifteenth-century Italy during the Renaissance. It was invented by Filippo Brunelleschi and Masaccio and was used for almost 500 years before artists such as Cézanne, Picasso and Braque began at the turn of the twentieth century to challenge this as the sole means of representing space in European Art. The Chinese did not use perspective at all, instead using parallel projection to represent space, from the second until the eighteenth century.

Linear perspective gives you an understanding of how objects behave in space. It is not a set of hard and fast rules that have to be adhered to, but a little bit of knowledge will go a long way and will certainly help you create a convincing depth in your landscapes, and help clarify how man-made objects, like buildings, recede and converge, making them seem more three dimensional.

# RULES

There really are only two rules you need to know. Try to remember these and apply the knowledge when you are confronted with a visual problem.

- You are the centre of this universe. The world transforms according to your position within it.
- All parallel lines appear to converge on a common point as they move away from you.

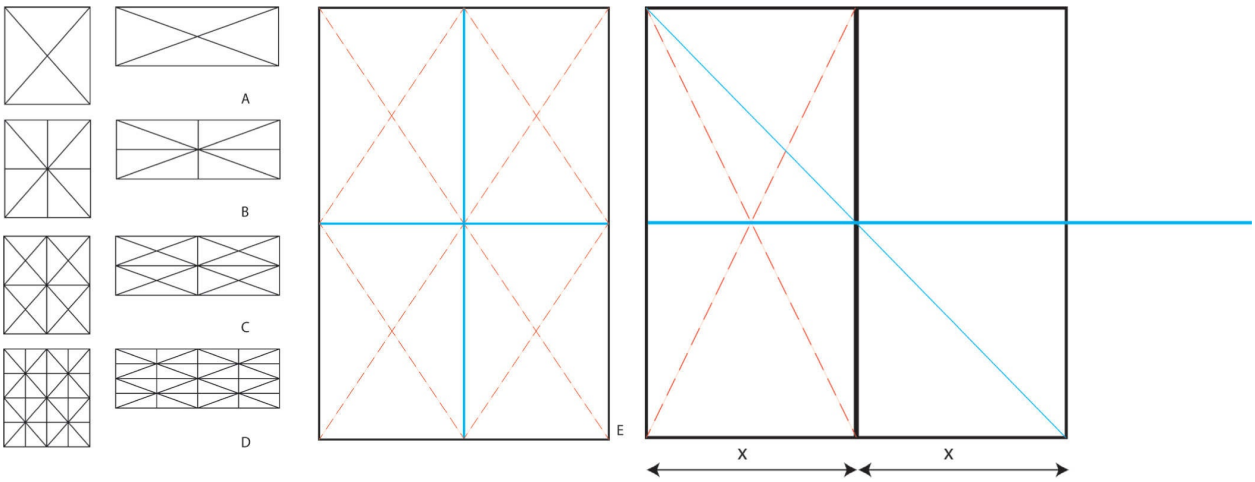
Try to think about what this means. Consider where you are, and what height, distance and angle of view you have of whatever you are trying to draw. The object will look different if you move.

# TERMS OF REFERENCE

Perspective means to see through. If you were to draw on a window the view you saw through it, you would have made a perspective drawing.

How big your drawing is depends upon two factors: how far away from the subject you are and how far away from the glass you are. In perspective drawing, we refer to the picture plane (PP), which you can think of as the window.

All the lines and angles of your drawing would change if you moved, and you have two slightly different views of the same view from each eye. So perspective drawing requires that your eye remains fixed and you only record the view of one eye, preferably your dominant one.




**Gridding A**

Draw a couple of rectangles of different proportions. Draw through each vertex so that you form a cross inside the rectangle. This identifies the centre of the rectangle.

# Gridding B

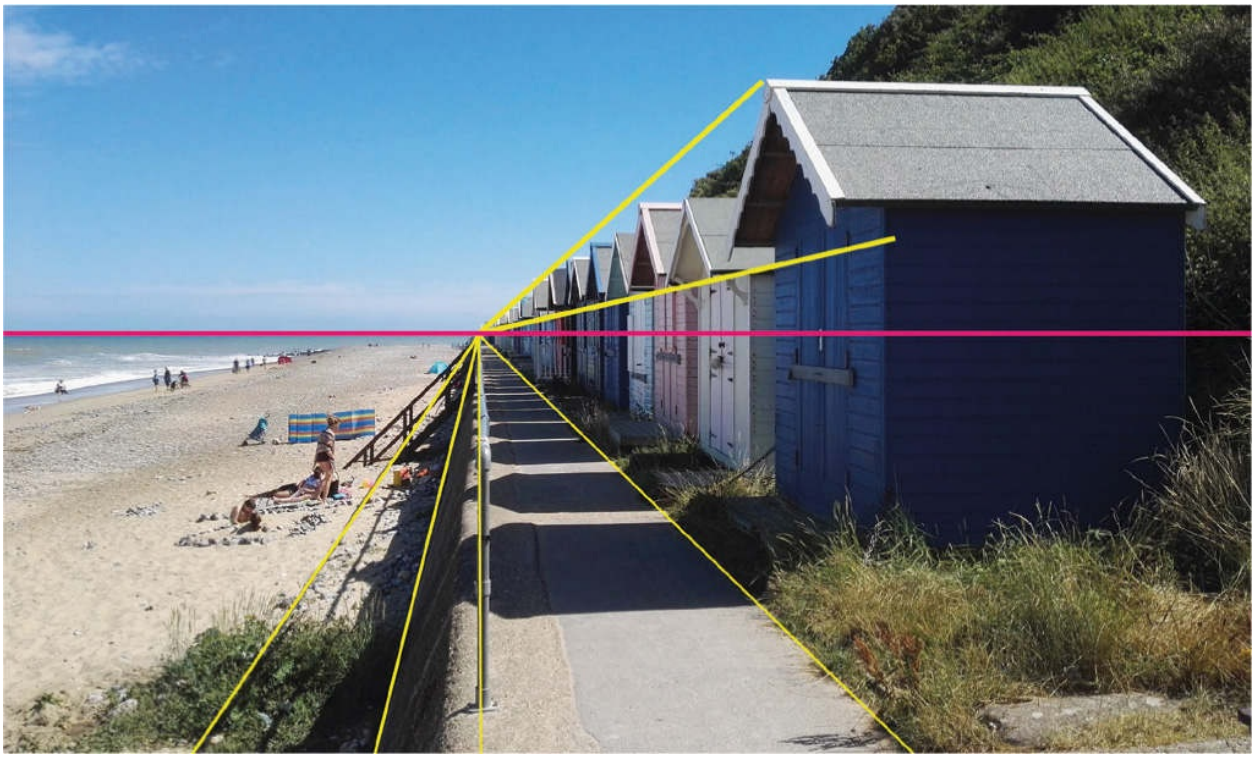
Construct a vertical and horizontal division of this rectangle through this cross. You will now have divided each rectangle into four rectangles, each of which is in the same proportion as the original.

# Gridding C and D

Repeat this exercise with each of these rectangles until you have divided the rectangles into sixteen boxes.

# Repeated distances.

You will notice that each time when you create a vertical divide, you find a halfway point of the original. So conversely, if you have a rectangle and you know the mid-way point of one side, if you draw a diagonal through the vertex on one side and through this mid-point on the opposite side, by projecting this distance outwards, you can find the same distance again. This can be a useful discovery if you are trying to calculate the location of regular distances in your landscape, for instance, fence posts, telegraph poles or electrical pylons.



Single vanishing point 1. Here a line on beach huts stretch out along a concrete walkway at Cromer. The beach huts, path, railings and shadow are all parallel to the LoS and converge directly in front of the viewer, producing a single vanishing point.

Single vanishing point 2. In this view of Murano a similar thing can be seen. The tiled floor is not completely level so instead slopes toward the shops.

# Dominant eye

Look at any object in the distance and point at it. Shut one eye and then open it. Do the same with the other eye. With one eye open your finger stays in the same position. This is your dominant eye.

### GRIDDING

# Materials

- Pencil
- Sketchbook
- Ruler
- Set square

Whilst perspective drawings can seem really complicated at first, they rely on some very simple ideas. Before getting complex, you are going to construct some basic drawings, which will be useful for some of the later exercises and will be useful to refer back to.

LESSON 7

# *Simple perspective*

# Materials

- Pencil
- Ruler
- Paper

# Converging lines

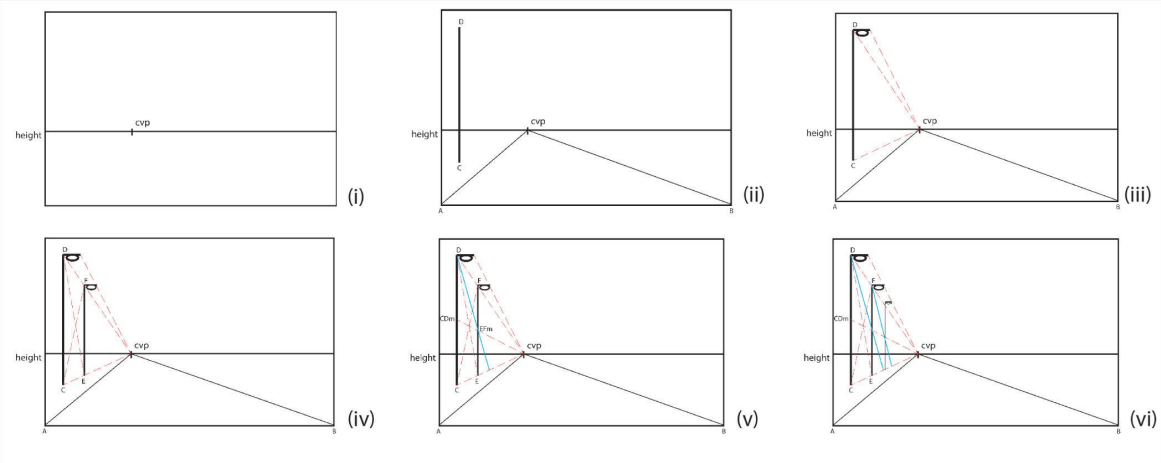
Imagine a spear driven through the back of your head, so that its shaft points out toward the subject and travels through your dominant eye. Gruesome as it may seem, this will be known as the line of sight (LoS). Whenever you turn your head, the line of sight moves giving you the direction of your vision.

If you were standing in the middle of a very long and flat road, the sides of the road will eventually converge, meeting at a point in space. This is called the vanishing point (VP). As your line of sight is parallel to the sides of the road and all parallel lines converge to a common point, the vanishing point will be directly in front of you. Stand to the side of the road and, if your line of sight is still parallel, the vanishing point is still directly in front of you. But roads are invariably not straight nor infinitely flat. Roads go uphill and downhill, sway to both the left and right. The key to understanding how they conform to perspective is to go back to the rules.

We are going to draw a very simple diagram of a road in perspective with a pavement to the left and a line of telegraph poles running off into the distance.

It will be assumed that a line of telegraph poles are of equal height and are equidistant away from each other. As such, if we were to imagine running a thread across the tops of all the telegraph poles and along all the bottoms too, these threads would be parallel to our road.

While this is a very simple exercise, it begins to give you some insight into a basic method of construction of recessional space.



# A Road pt i

Draw a rectangle in your sketchbook. Draw a horizon line and locate a point on it (cvp: central vanishing point).

# A Road pt ii

From this point, draw two diagonals to the lower corners of your rectangle (Acvp and Bcvp). You have drawn a road.

# A Road pt iii

From the point (cvp) draw another line, a small distance away from the A. You now have drawn a pavement by the side of the road.

On the pavement draw a vertical line (CD), so that it is above the horizon. You have drawn a telegraph pole.

# A Road pt iv

Mark a line from the apex D and bottom C back to cvp. These lines will be our threads running off into the distance sharing the same vanishing point. This will tell us how high the telegraph pole will appear to be as it recedes into space.

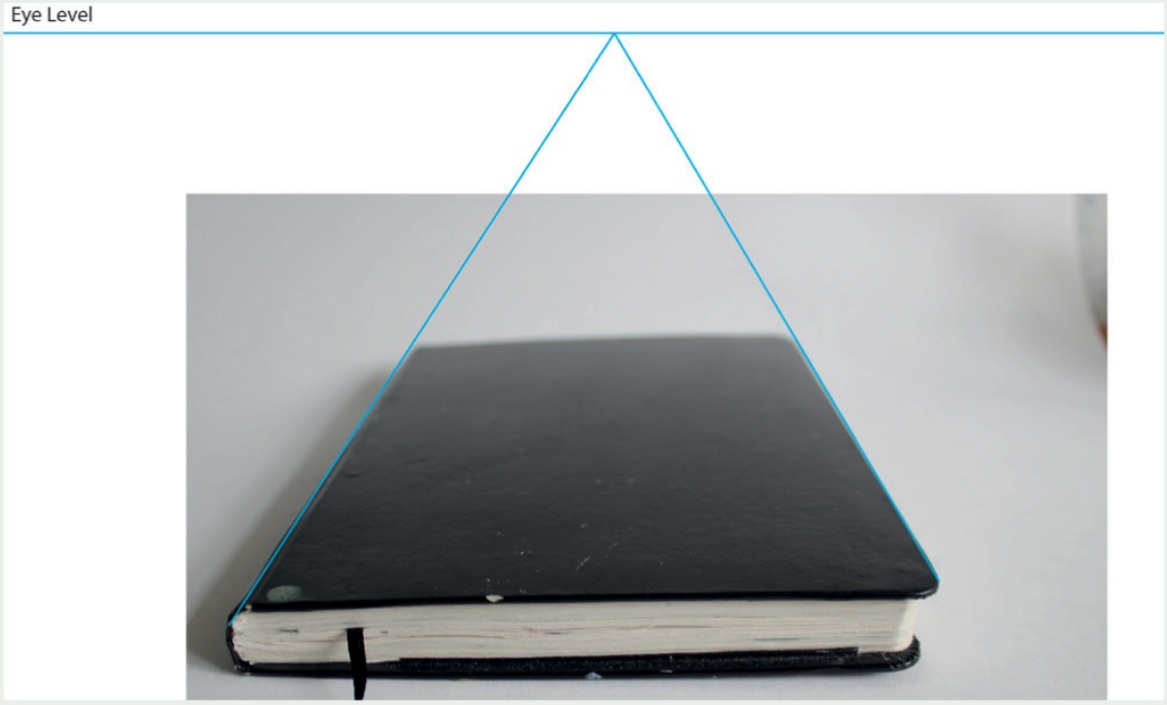
# A Road pt v

Now construct another vertical line a little distance away from the first (EF). The height of this line will be governed by the diagonal lines Dcvp and Ecvp.

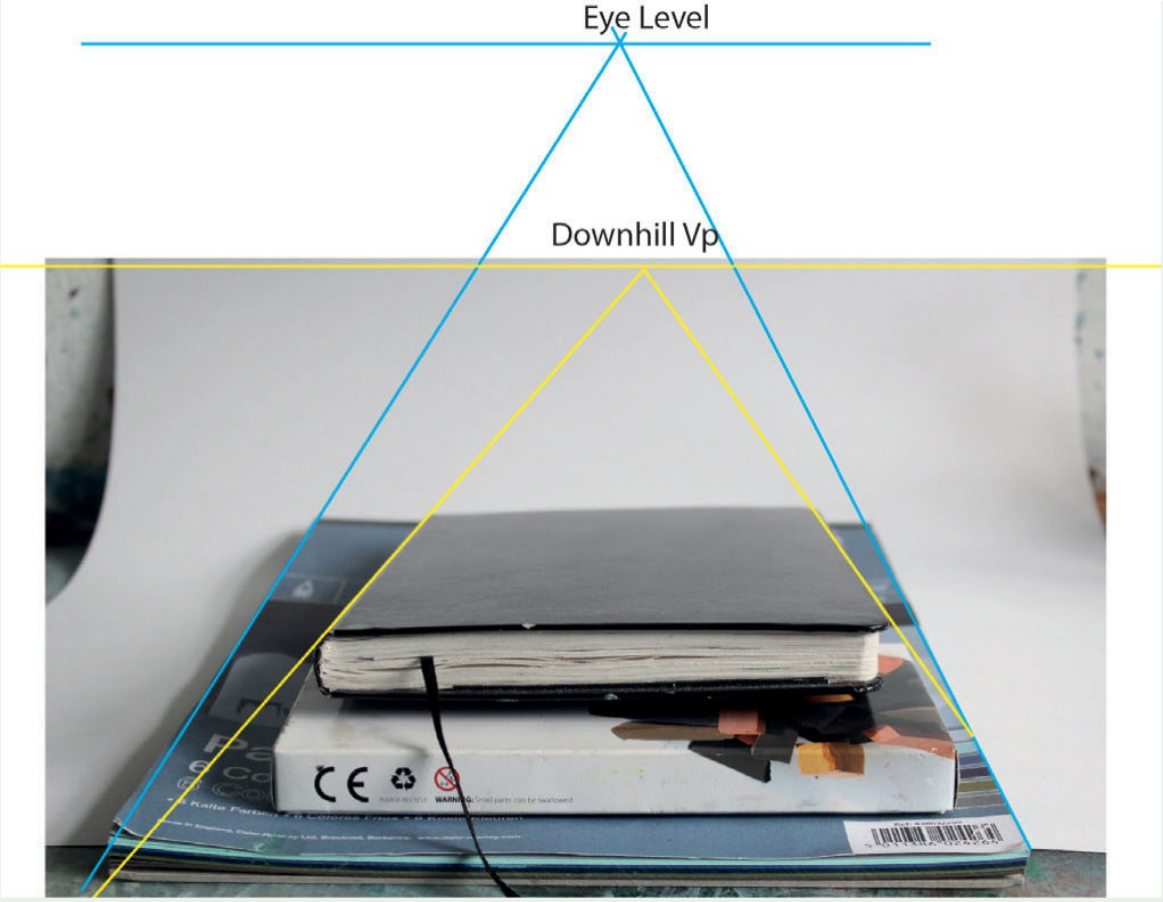
Now measure CD to find its mid-point CDm. If a piece of thread was attached to all the mid points of all the telegraph poles, this would also be parallel to the road and the top and bottom threads so it will also recede to cvp. Draw a line through the mid-point CDm back to cvp. This will indicate where all the middles of all the telegraph poles will be (EFm and beyond).

# A Road pt vi

Now using the exercise from before, a line drawn from D through EFm will cross the line Ccvp. This will indicate where the next telegraph pole will appear and this will go on continuously allowing you to produce an infinite number of equidistant telegraph poles

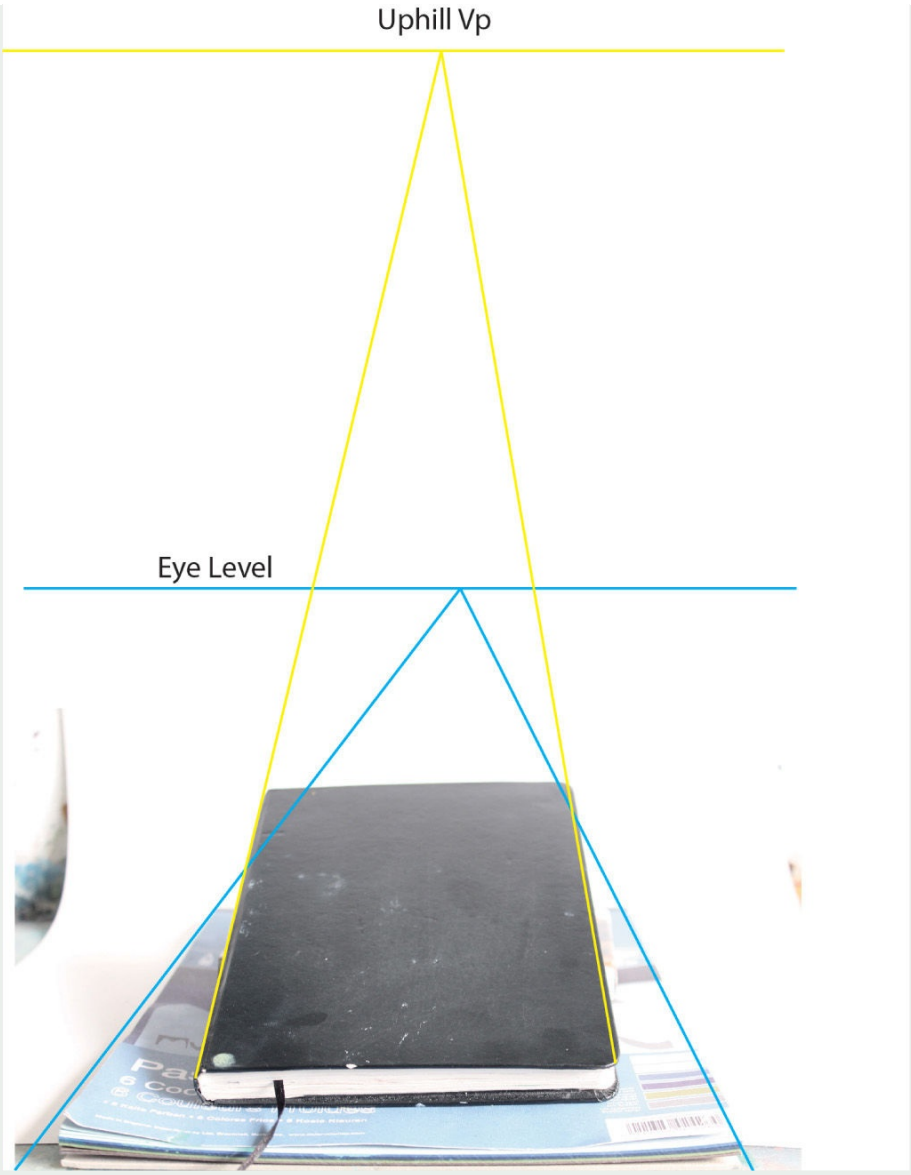



Seeing it. Lay your sketchbook on a table flat; while you know that nothing has changed, the sketchbook no longer looks the same. The edge that is closer to you will appear larger than the edge furthest away. The sides of the sketchbook are visually no longer parallel; instead they look more like a trapezium. While your brain may tell you otherwise, look at the sketchbook with a pencil held vertically in your hand to make a comparison. Look at how the angle of the sketchbook is different to the vertical referent. Compare this to the other side and see how these angles appear to converge.




Take digital photos of a sketchbook (or any book for that matter) from a number of different angles and print these off (A6 size images will be fine). Place each one of these into the centre of sketchbook pages so that you have plenty of room around each image. With your ruler, rest this against the two opposite sides of the sketchbook. Draw a line so that it extends the edge of the sketchbook into the space behind it. Extend it enough so that the lines cross (if they fit on your page). Where do these lines cross? They actually cross at your eye level.


A series of sketchbooks demonstrates multiple vanishing points on the same horizon.




Put something under the sketchbook so that it slopes. Once again, the sides will appear to come together (converge). This time the angles will be steeper or shallower depending on whether the slope goes uphill or downhill.

# Perspective

Hold a sketchbook in your hands so that you are looking directly at the centre of the front cover with your hands holding both sides. The front of the sketchbook appears to be a rectangle, with top and bottom edges parallel to each other and the sides the same.

# Materials

• Pencil
• Sketchbook
• Digital camera
• Printer
• Ruler

Only when held at right angles to your line of sight, will the sides of the sketchbook appear to be parallel (whatever the orientation), but in any other plane they appear to come together. So any plane, which has parallel sides, will appear to converge into space, and if these are on a flat plane, *i.e.* parallel to sea level, these will converge on the horizon, which is at your eye level.

LESSON 8

# *Cubes*

# Materials

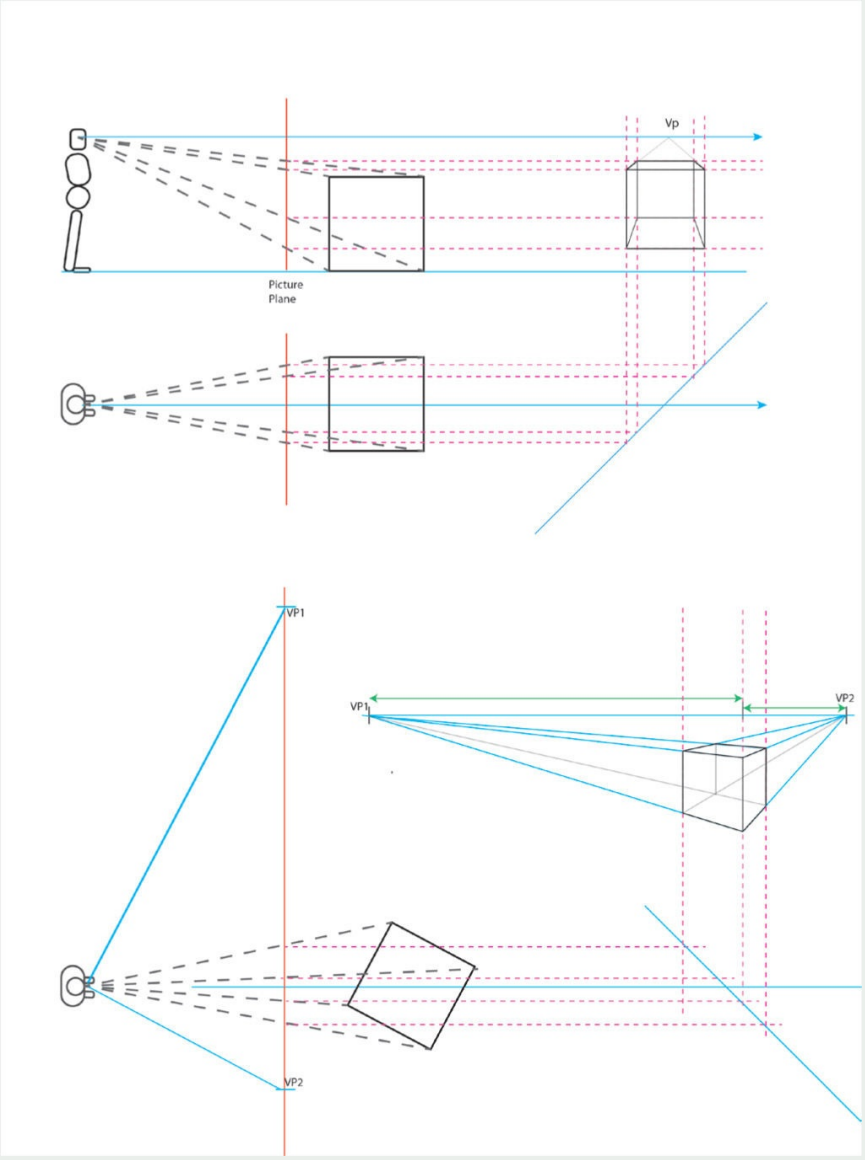
• Pencil (H)
• Fine line pen
• Sketchbook
• Ruler
• Cardboard box

If you had a cardboard box in front of you, so that the front and back planes of the box were at right angles to this line of sight, the imaginary spear would run parallel to the left and right planes. If you were looking straight ahead of you and not looking down at the box then the spear would also be parallel to the top and bottom planes, as well as the top and bottom planes as well. If you could trace all the different angles that you see on the receding planes, they would all meet in the same place, right in front of you.

If you were looking at the corner of a box, all the planes would no longer be parallel to your line of sight. This means that none of the sides recede to a common point in front of you. Instead each plane of the cube either recedes to the left or the right of your line of sight. By turning so that your line of sight is parallel to those planes, you can now identify where the vanishing points are on the horizon.

Imagine turning your body so that your line of sight is now pointing in the direction of the road. If the road turns right then the imaginary spear points in that direction too, as it turns to the left it points in that direction, so that it is always parallel to the road. The spear will point at the VP for the road. If the road slopes uphill then your head would be tilted backwards until it is parallel with that inclined plane, so the VP will now be in the sky, above the horizon; and if it slopes downhill, the spear drops so that it is parallel to this slope, establishing a VP below the horizon.

The floor that you are standing on will be referred to as the Ground Line (GL).




Different directions. When you are looking at an object from the side you are no longer looking at it in line with your line of sight. The vanishing points are found by turning your self so that your line of sight is parallel with each side.

**Horizon (height)?**

The next time you visit a high vantage point, an Iron Age fort, a castle, a hillside, look across to the distance and rest your finger across the bridge of your nose. The horizon is at your eye level. Visit the sea and repeat the exercise, from the moment you first see the sea to the moment you lie on the sand to make sand castles, the horizon is still at your eye level. So your view of the landscape depends upon your height above it – makes sense, doesn't it? That is why when you are at some high vantage point you may see tower blocks lower than the horizon; that is because you are physically higher than they are.

Eye level. In this photograph the tower blocks are clearly below the horizon

Where has the horizon gone? You cannot always see the horizon. So how do you know where it is? Hold a coin on one finger. Lift it toward your eye level. At a certain height, you will see the top of the coin. Keep going and you will see less of the top until eventually the coin becomes a straight line. Now it’s at your eye level (above that point and you will see below it.) Look at where this straight-line coin is in relation to the landscape you are drawing. You can now know where the horizon should be even if you cannot see it behind a hill.

# Inclined planes

Not only will you look at objects in the landscape that are at an angle to your line of sight, they may also be inclined, either going uphill or downhill. You might be walking along a path that goes up and down hill. You might see a road in the distance, a waterfall, the beach, sand dunes; all of these planes that will not be parallel to the ground line.

Rex Vicat Cole wrote a great book called *Perspective for Artists*, published in the early twentieth century. Cole describes how you can translate what you see in nature, as well as the buildings found within it, into effective drawings with the application of perspective. He advocated the use of an old carpenter's rule, which is hinged to capture the angles you are trying to draw. You can use this idea and make your own. A simple measuring tool can be made from two plant labels, joined with a paper fastener. This can be opened up so that one arm is on a horizontal or vertical, and the other on the angle being measured. If the ends are cut to form two points that meet, then this can also be used to measure and scale distances.

All buildings are built on level foundations. All buildings will have a vanishing point on the horizon. Not all buildings share the same vanishing point, but all parallel ones do. Understanding this can help you draw farmhouses, barns and other man-made structures you will see in the landscape. Most mistakes are made by drawing what you think you can see. You might be drawing the corner of a building and assume that the roof slopes off in different directions, but it may just be that the corner is at your eye level and both fall on a straight horizontal line.

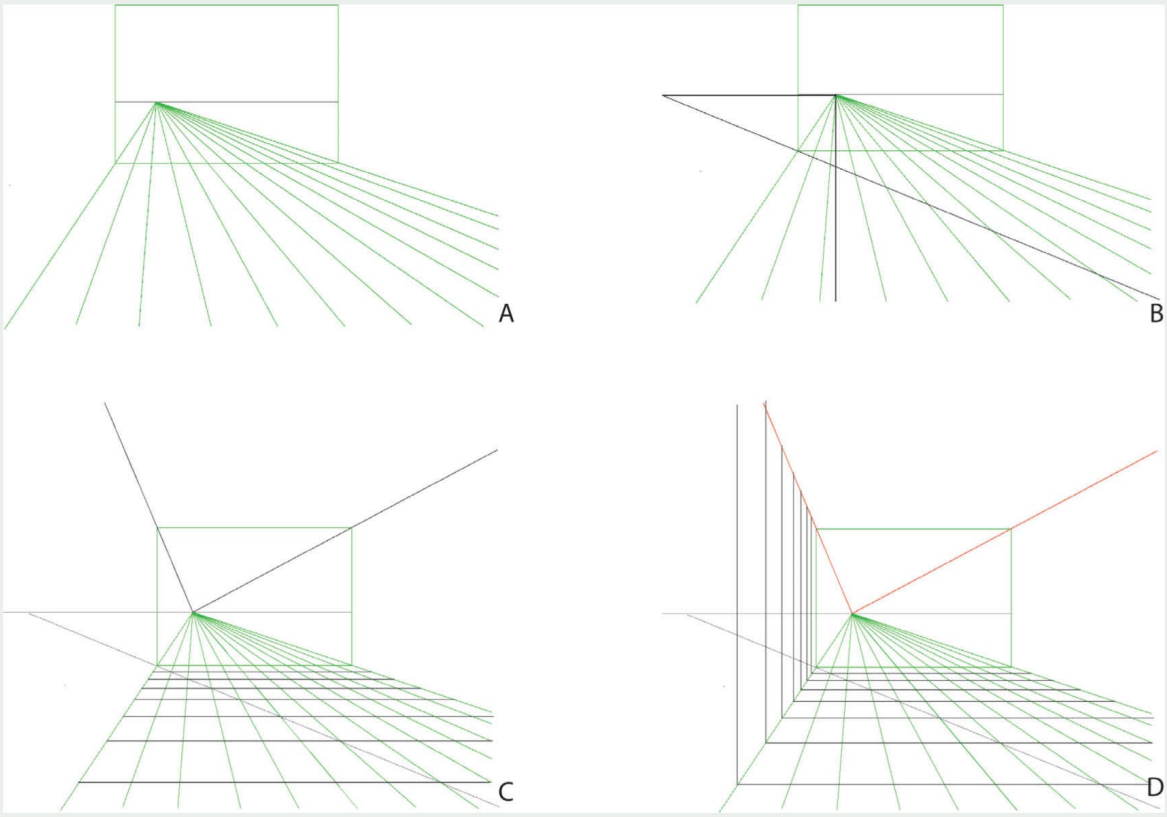

Farm buildings. Seen from a high vantage point, these farm buildings may converge way off the picture, but they will converge on the horizon. The road, however, is sloping downhill to the left.

LESSON 9

# *Constructing space*

# Materials

- Pencil (H)
- Sketchbook
- Ruler



# Constructing space A

Draw a rectangle about 8cm × 12cm in the middle of your sketchbook page. Imagine you have drawn a glass wall in front of the landscape. How high are you in relationship to this wall? Draw a horizontal line across this rectangle at your height (you choose a scale for this drawing). What part of this wall are you in front of? Mark that position on your horizon and draw lines from that point, through the corners of the rectangle as if you were drawing the inside of a box. On the lower edge of your rectangle, mark off 1cm divisions. From your central vanishing point (cvp), draw through each of these points to create a recessional plane.

Now measure from the central vanishing point down to the bottom of your sketchbook page. Transfer this measurement on your horizon, measuring from the cvp. You have measured off two sides of a square. The diagonal of a square is forty-five degrees. You have identified on the horizon the Vp for all things at forty-five degrees to your line of sight.

# Constructing space B

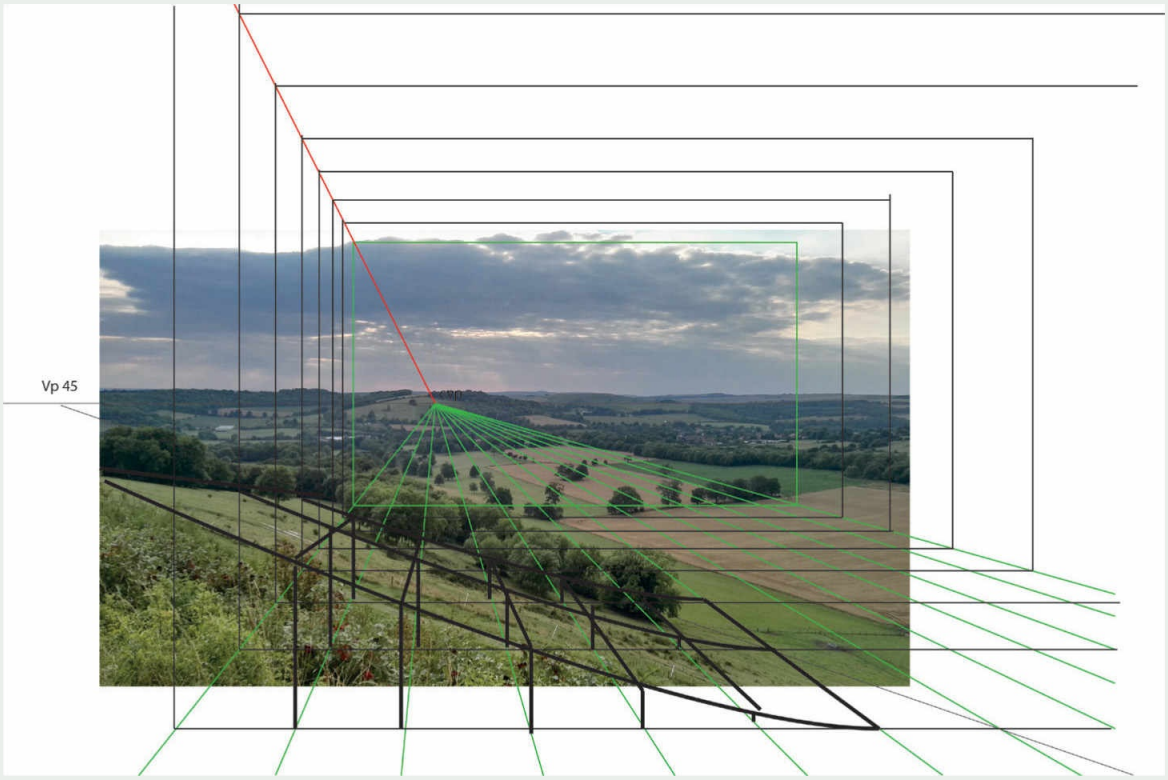
Draw from this point to the corner of your rectangle and continue so the line bisects the recessional diagonals emanating from the cvp. At each intersection draw a horizontal. You have now drawn the inside of a room with square floor tiles. This space can be made to recede further, behind the glass wall. Draw a diagonal from the forty-five Vp to the other corner of the rectangle. These will bisect more diagonals from which you can draw further horizontals.

# Constructing space C

Where each horizontal touches the wall, you can construct a series of verticals. Any height can be calculated against the initial rectangle which is measured to scale.

# Constructing space D

It is useful to know how to construct depth in your picture. The following sequence of images shows you how to do this.



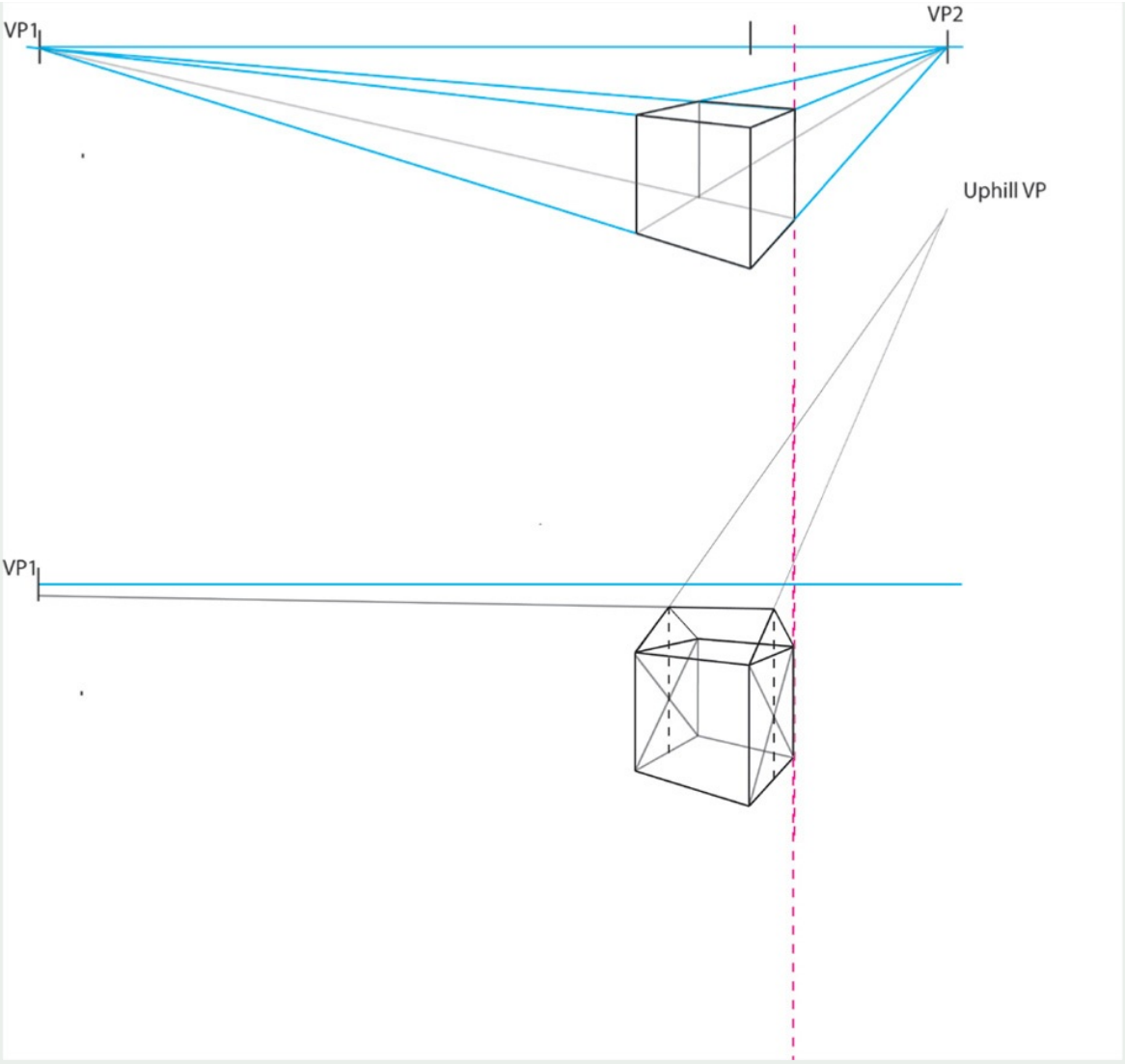

This recessional space can be used as a frame of reference for the mindscape itself, allowing you to see the rise and the fall of the landscape.

You have effectively created a frame of reference, the interior of a room, with walls, ceiling and floor receding away from you describing how the space behaves. While this room is rectilinear in its construction, its basic principle gives you a template, a grid that you can use to map more complicated spaces.

# Turning theory into practice

Having built a convincing floor and understood the changes in space as the plane recedes into the far distance, it is possible to use this to map the undulations of the land. So how can this help you with your landscape drawing?

The next time you walk through a ploughed field, you will see a series of parallel lines converging to a horizon. You may not see the vanishing point, as a hedgerow may obscure this. A road at the side of a field may have hedges, which are of a similar height. Even though the road rises and falls, these conform to a basic perspective. A river snaking away into the distance can be thought of as an aerial view. This can be mapped onto a grid, which can then be put into perspective to help understand the way these curves move and compress through space.




A rectangle in perspective divided through the diagonals will locate the central apex of a building. Here the building converges mostly to the right with the eye level quite low as the view was from a slope.


High above the buildings, the angles might be slight but they will still converge on the horizon.

# Drawing a Pier

It is often surprising to see how a simple object like a pier can drawn incorrectly. To help you understand its construction, think about it as a very long cube. What orientation is the cube to you? Are you above it and is it almost at right angles to you? Here the vanishing point will be way off either to the left or the right.

It is always really useful to think of complex buildings as simple structures first. Here the cube of the hut is above our eye level so will converge to meet our eye level.

The pier is almost at right angles to your line of sight. From this high viewpoint it gently slopes upward to meet the horizon. Are you getting very close to the pier and as such looking along its length parallel to its direction out to sea, but still above it so that you can see the deck and people on it? Here the vanishing point will be in front of you.

Now you are almost in line with it, with a lot of foreshortening in evidence. Care needs to be taking when looking at the length so as not to over exaggerate it. Measurement will be useful here. Are you on the beach, with the pier above you? Now the deck will appear to come down toward the horizon, and the supporting struts up to meet the same vanishing point in front of you.

Another pier, this time from below, still converging to the horizon. Here the movements of the sand have also created perspective lines

This view of the harbour observation tower at Wells-next-the Sea in Norfolk is seen from below. The steps nearby provide an uphill vanishing point.

# Clouds

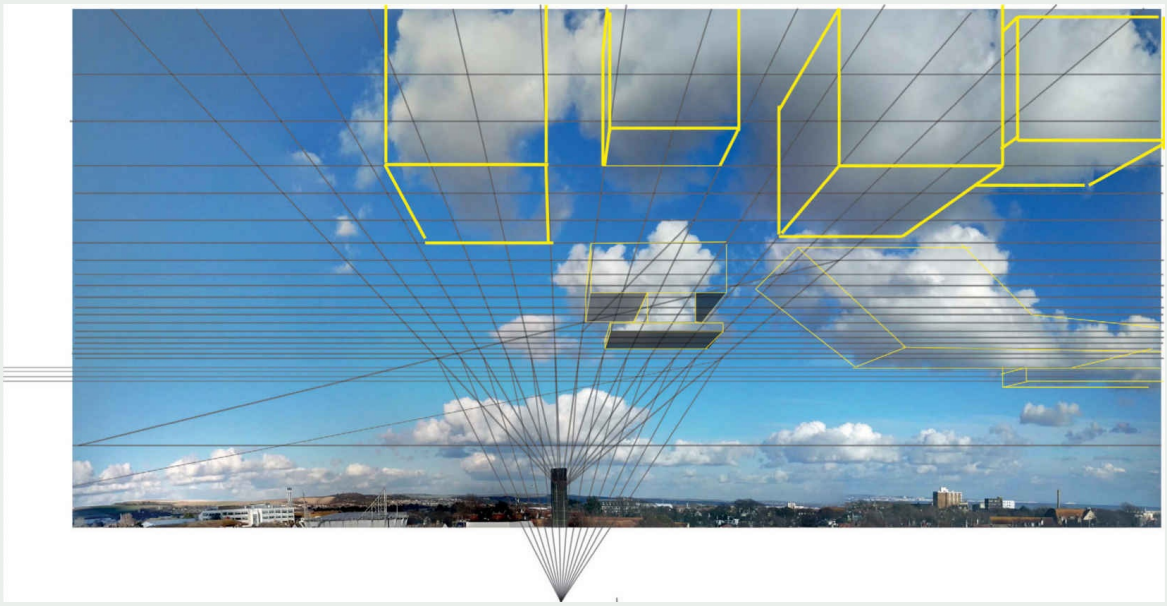
While buildings can be thought of as cubic, so too can clouds. They have a variety of shapes, sizes and forms, but can still be thought of converging to a vanishing point.

Generally speaking, for most of the day, this cube will be illuminated from above, and it will only be early evening or sunset where light will reach the bottom. Clouds nearest to you will recede to the horizon, but as they get much further away their vanishing points will be below the horizon. Of course clouds are not perfectly cubic, but one can think of a Lego brick approach to cumulous clouds – lumps and bumps of cubic structures giving at least a simplified version of their form. Of course different clouds cover the sky in different ways, some creating long thin streaks, some large masses.

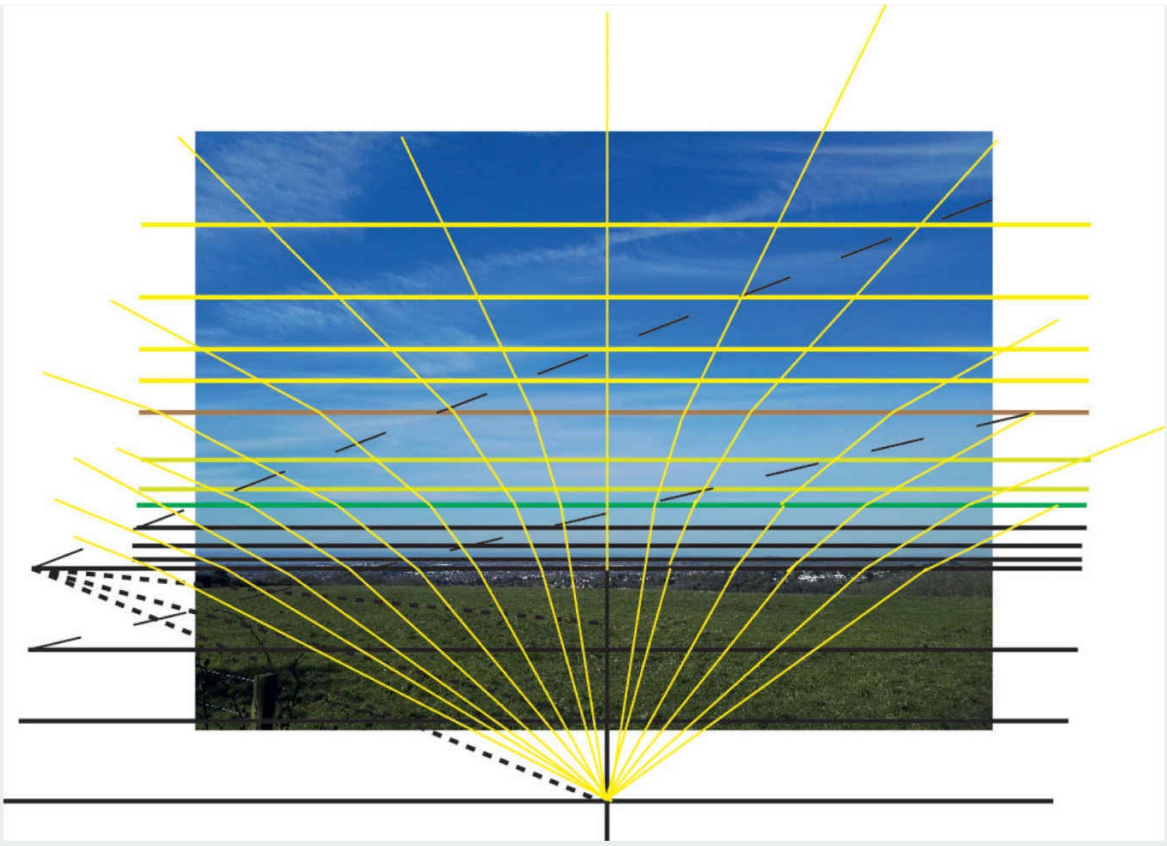
One has to remember though that wherever you look, you see everything in focus. You need to decide which parts of the sky are given clarity and which are not, in order for you to have a space that appears to recede. Generally the clouds that are near you will appear more diffuse and softer-edged than those in the middle distance.

# The sky

It may not seem apparent at first, but the sky has its own perspective. Rather than thinking of the sky as a flat plane, it is much better to think that you are looking up at inside of a massive dome.



Clouds can be thought of as cubic forms and by so doing, it makes their structure easier to understand. Drawing a cube above the horizon will yield a structure that has a front, a side, as well as an underside plane.



The sky is not quite the same as the land. Whilst the earth or the sea moves towards the horizon, the sky curls behind it; as it nears the horizon, the sky becomes an inclined plane, getting steeper and steeper until at the point of the horizon it disappears.

LESSON 10

# *The figure in the landscape*

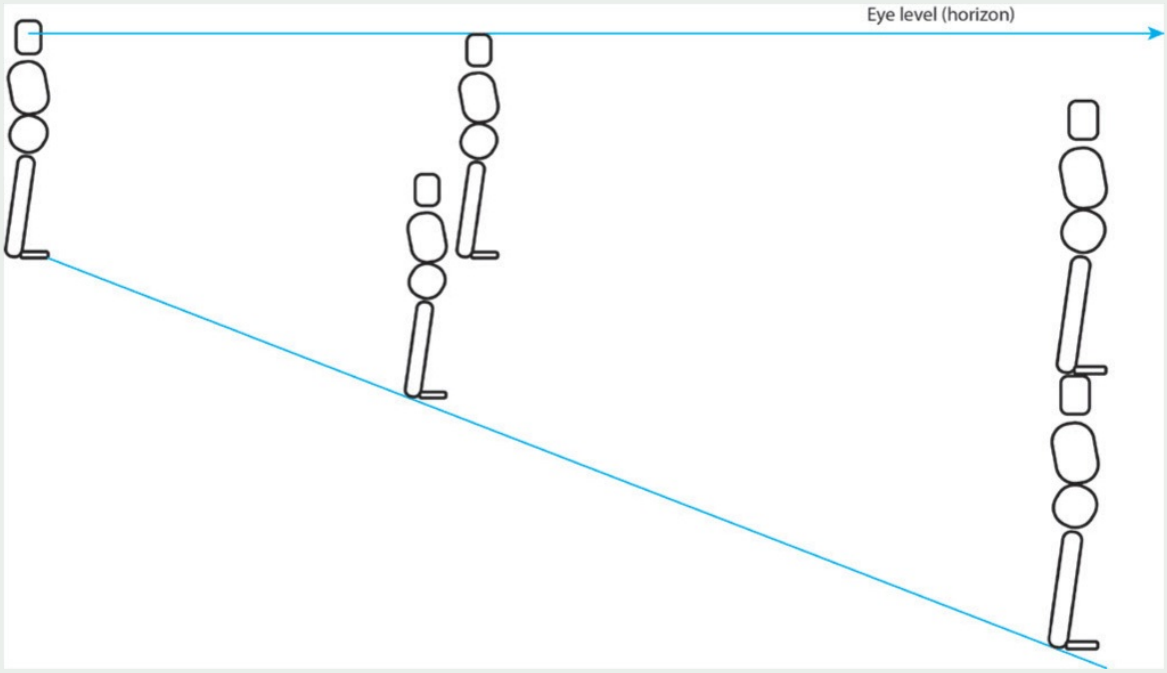
# Materials

• Pencil
• Tracing paper
• Photos of people in the landscape

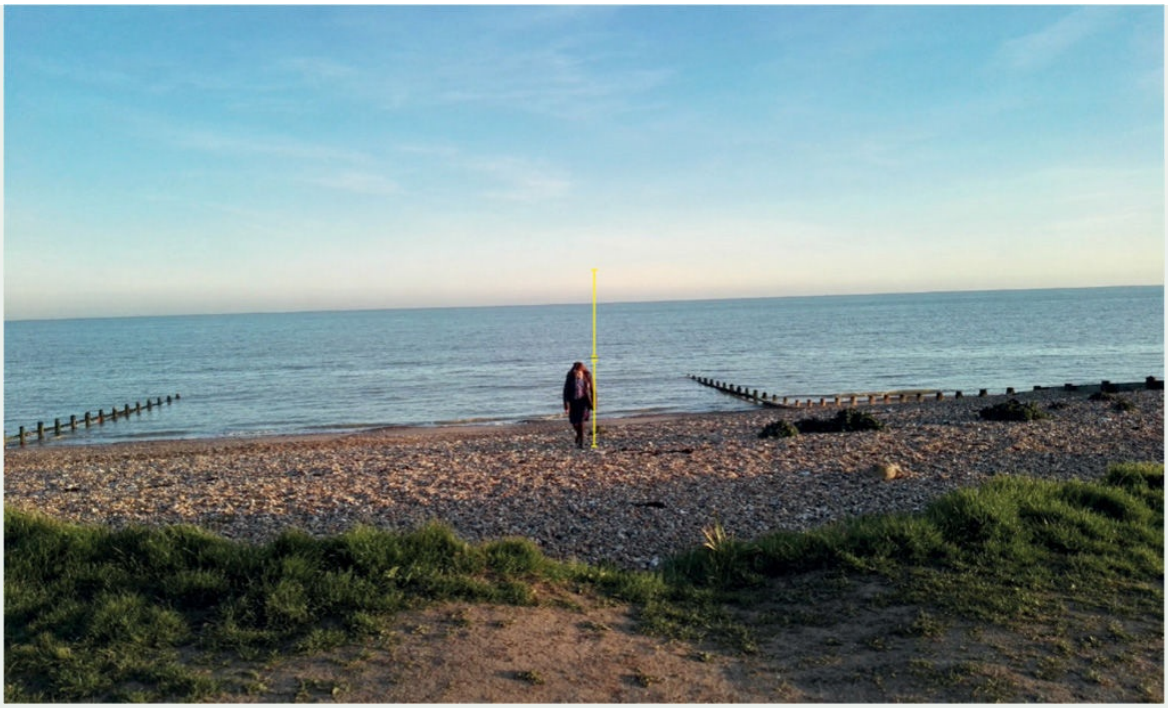
Of course perspective is all about space, but when looking at the landscape it is not always easy to see just how big it is. Only when you see people climbing up a hill, standing near a river's edge, or looking out from some high prominence, do you get a true sense of just how big it is. It is therefore really useful to understand how the scale of people changes in the landscape. They too recede to the horizon.

Most people's bodies are approximately the same size. Standing in a public space, resting your hand (not too conspicuously) on the bridge of your nose, you would realize that everybody's eye level is approximately the same. When people stand, the difference between head heights is governed by the size of the femur; tall people have tall in their legs! Standing in a room, people's head heights are roughly the same give or take a few inches. If your horizon is at your eye level, then most people's eye levels are the same sharing the same horizon.

If you are drawing figures in a landscape, with a small amount of variation on a flat ground, most people's heads will be at the same point on the horizon. You will have a pretty good idea of where their head would be in relationship to that landscape.



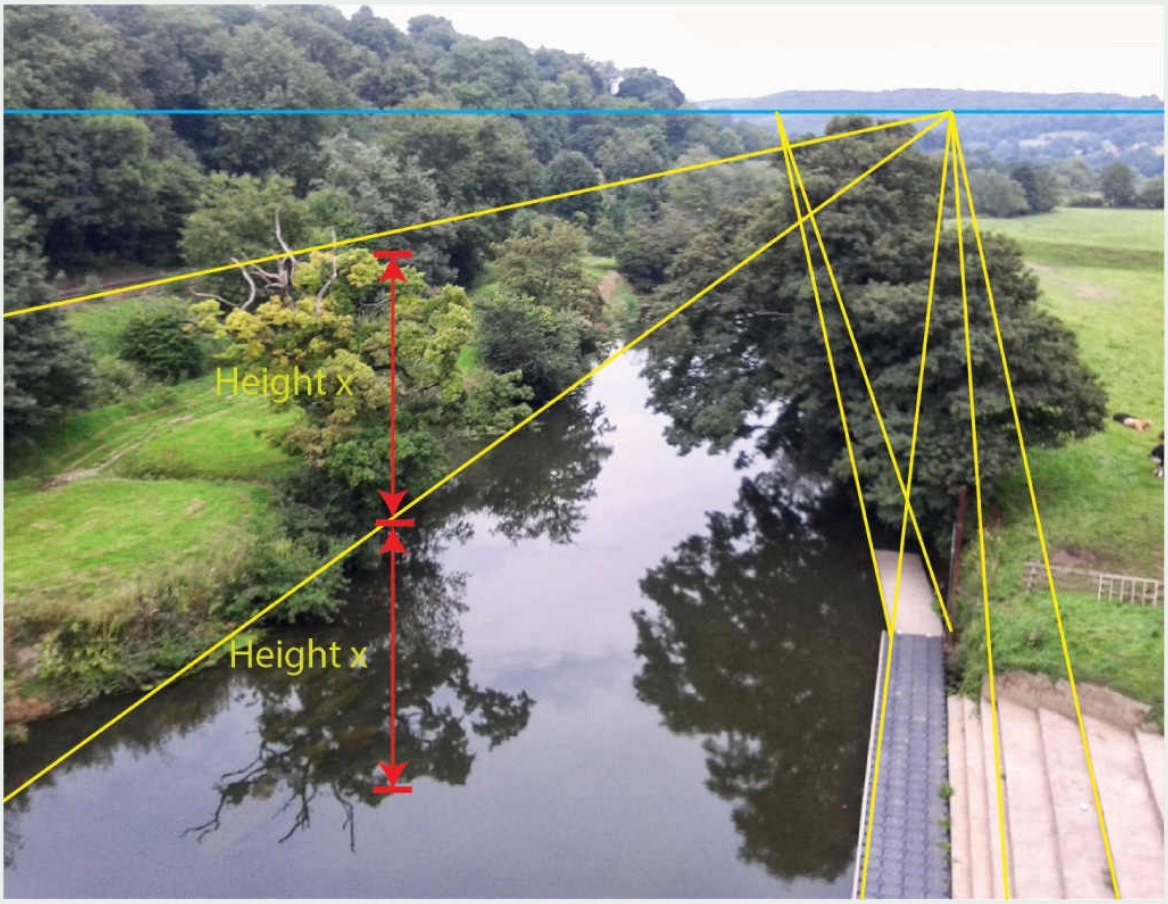

A useful trick is to understand how many body heights need to be stacked on top of each other to reach your eye level.



If you were to measure the height of a person in the distance and take that measurement and place it on their head, how many more of those measurements would it take to get to your eye level? If three people needed to be stacked up on top of each other to get to your eye level, then you can use that knowledge to create people of different sizes that will all look as if there are standing on the same plane. The key thing to think about is the idea of the scale of the figure in relationship to something else that you drawn. That way you will not produce and incorrectly scaled figures in your landscapes.

Looking across towards the beach at right angles to the sea, most people's head heights will be in the similar position to the horizon. As they walk towards the sea they are on a shallow slope, their head heights will gradually lower below the horizon. Standing on higher ground, people will appear smaller and their heads well below the horizon. People above you will clearly be above the horizon. Once again it is important that you use proportional measurement to calculate their relative scale.

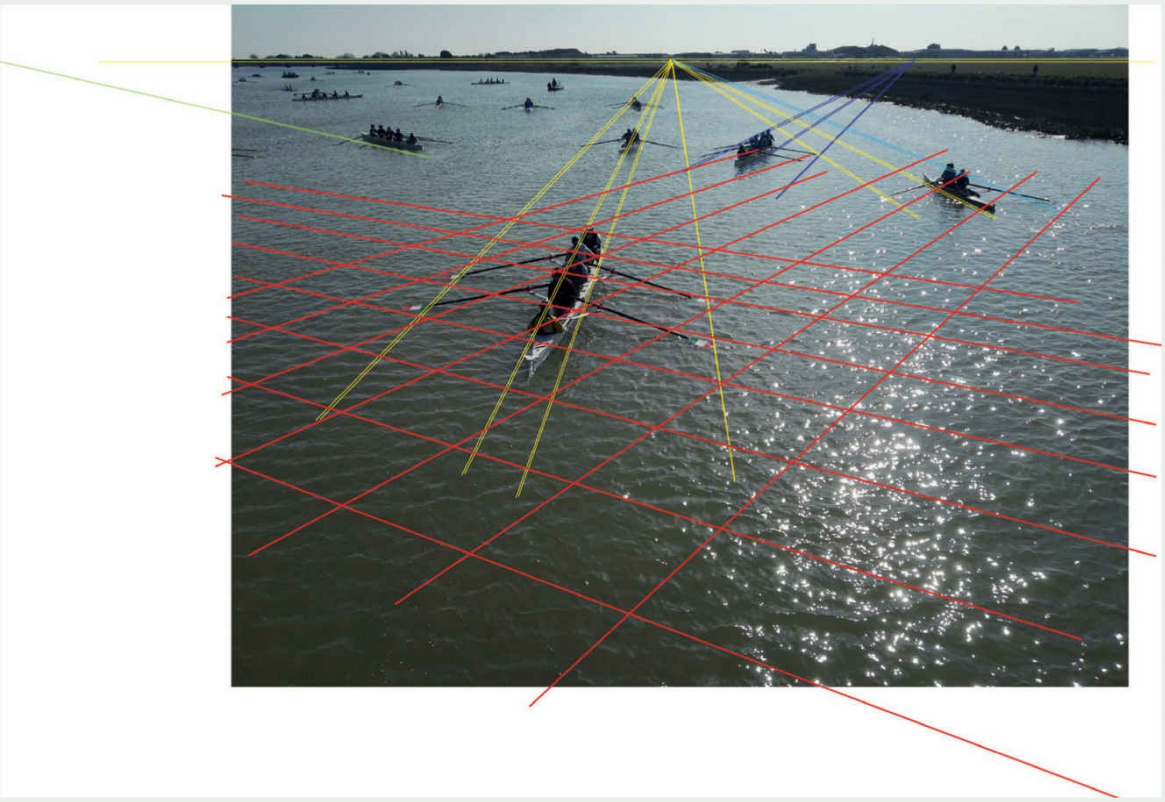
# Reflections



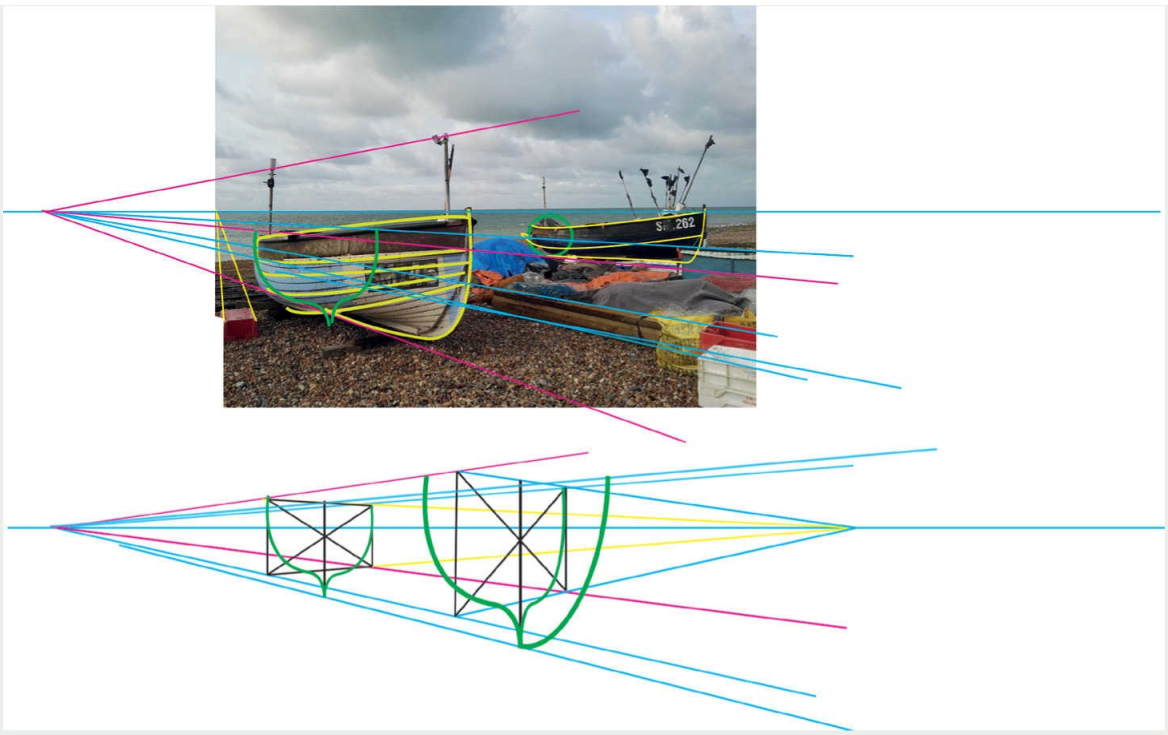

When one looks at still water, then you can be sure that you are looking at a flat plane. Flat water will reflect the surroundings and the height of an object above the water line will be the same in reflection. The reflections of objects will share the same vanishing points as their counterparts.

Whether you are looking at a glass-fronted building, a wet pavement, a river or a lake, the reflection of the landscape and the objects seen in the reflections share the same vanishing points as their original sources. This is useful to know and can help speed up the construction of your drawing. Water, however can move, and tides, waves and ripples will distort the reflection of the objects seen in it.

# Boats



A gentle breeze may reveal undulations in the water and these will usually be at right angles to the direction of the wind. These movements of water, plus your own height above the water will quickly identify the vanishing points of this plane. This high vantage point from the old Shoreham Toll bridge provided an aerial view of rowers, each creating their own vanishing points on the horizon.

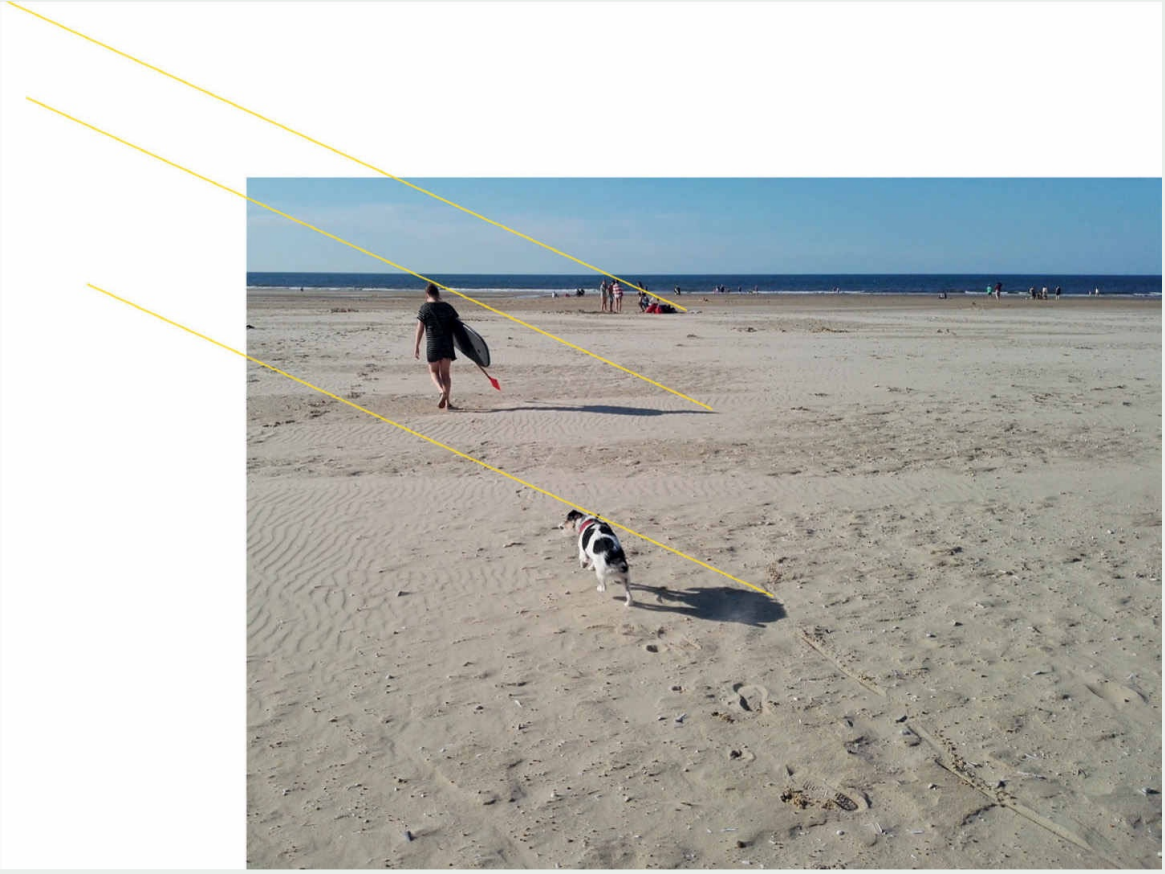


Plotting the vanishing points of the boats and understanding their construction within a box can help with drawing them correctly.

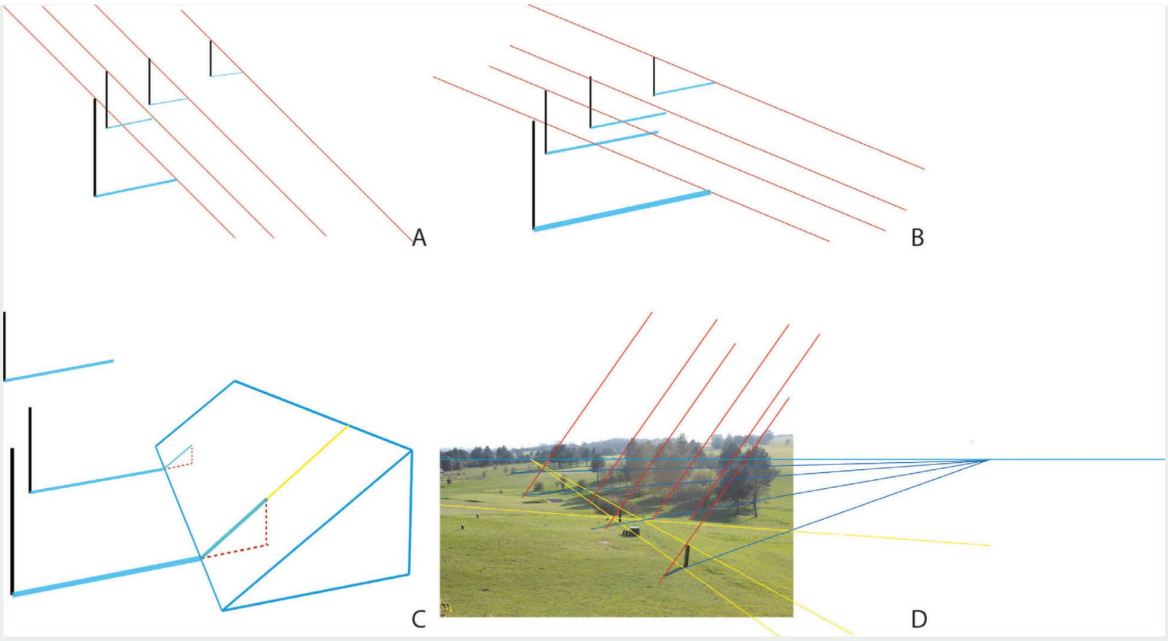
Boats and buildings can add narrative content to your landscape studies. You begin to think about the journey you are about to embark on or the home that you long to possess. By thinking about the boat initially as a cubic box, and plotting the direction of the curved planes as they move through the box, it can help with their construction.

# Shadows

As the sun moves across the sky, so the objects within the landscape cast different lengths of shadow. The nature of the shadow is a distorted version of the object itself. By carefully looking at cast shadows, it becomes apparent that the same sun is illuminating all the objects so, generally speaking, as the sun is approximately ninety-three million miles away one can think that the rays of the sun are parallel. The sun's rays taken through the height of the object onto the floor plan will predict their length.



The changing scale of people will cause different sizes of shadow and the position of the sun in the sky will also influence the direction of the shadow.


A
B
C
D

# Shadow diagram A

It can be assumed that the rays of light from the sun are parallel.

# Shadow diagram B

The changing scale of people will cause different sizes of shadow and the position of the sun in the sky will also influence the direction of the shadow.

By looking at the angle of the sun in the sky, it is relatively easy to see how one can calculate the length of a shadow. In the early evening, shadows are longer and clearly defined. On an overcast day, shadows are invisible.

# Shadow diagram C

The floor plane will also affect the length of the shadow. If the shadow hits an inclined plane it will shorten or elongate the shadow, depending on whether the plane goes uphill or downhill.

# Changing planes D

Here the golf course is far from flat, and the high position of the sun and the changing planes affect the length of the shadow.

Curvature. Google Images stitch together individual photographs that have been taken of the same scene, but with different viewpoints creating a panorama. This illustrates the curvature of vision, which can be seen in the line of beach huts.

**Distortion and the cone of vision**

Perspective relies on the idea of a small cone of vision. How big is that cone of vision? As we learned from the drawing chapter, it takes approximately five pencil distances from the extreme left to right. This gives you a sense of the panorama (that distance is also the same for the space between the sky and the foreground literally a circle of vision). If you are drawing the landscape, you will need to draw much smaller than you are used to doing if you want to fit everything in.

The laws of perspective start to break down when the cone of vision is too great. If you were seated in a large room and you looked straight at an end wall, you would notice that the line where the end wall meets the ceiling is not straight at all and curves downwards forming a gentle arc. Similarly, the line formed by the wall and the floor curves gently upwards. Your retina is curved and you will realize that straight lines begin to curve subtly according to their position on your retina. This is a very subtle change but you soon realize that perspective needs to be treated lightly. It will give you a fairly convincing space but, on the peripherals of your vision, you need to use your eyes rather than rely on the theory.

If you were to follow the rules too rigidly, you would begin to produce visual distortions. The theory is, after all, theory and a little bit of perspective knowledge will help you in the construction of recessional space. It will certainly help you construct realistic buildings, fields, roads and lanes, and place people in the landscape with the right scale.

# Aerial perspective

Look into the far distance in the northern hemisphere and it becomes obvious that the distant hills are indeed blue. Or rather they are not, but the light coming from those hills has been seen through successive layers of moisture in the air (about 80 per cent) and the various wavelengths of light have been filtered out apart from the blue ones. So the landscape become bluer in the distance, the saturation of the hues becomes reduced, the visual contrast between the tone becomes narrower as objects move away, and our perception of detail diminishes. So without the need for receding parallels converging off to a vanishing point, changing the weight or tonality of a line, the visual contrast of the lines in a drawing can be a way of creating space and, as we will go on to see, the use of mark making and colour can do the same.


**Cezanne**

When Cezanne began as an impressionist, he, like his Impressionist contemporaries, was trying to forge a new pictorial language. Light became the subject matter of their paintings. The changing nature of light meant that Monet would start making numerous paintings of the same subject, in order to capture the transitory nature of the changing light conditions. Pissarro would use dashes of colour to capture the sparkling light and the use of perspectival space would be abandoned. As colour became the dominant formal element of the work, so the pictorial space of these pictures would decrease.

When Cezanne left the impressionists, and returned to his native Aix-en-Provence, he would stare at Montagne Sainte-Victoire and realize that he did see two different views of the same scene. Each of his eyes would yield a different view, a different piece of the puzzle, and so he recorded both of those views in his paintings and drawings.

Picasso and Braque would take this one stage further and include multiple views of the same landscape and Cubism would herald a complete transformation of pictorial space. Perpective can help you make realistic space, but perfectly realized paintings do not necessarily need perspective.

## ARTISTS' WEBSITES

Louise Balaam
www.louisebalaam.co.uk

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www.david-atkins.com

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David Hayward
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A massive thank you goes out to The Richard Diebenkorn Foundation for letting me reproduce his work, as well as Antonia Johnson and all at Browse and Darby Gallery for helping arrange my visit to Patrick and to Susan Engledow for the soup and the technical support when I needed to get a bit more information about Patrick's work.

I would also like to thank the University of Brighton for their support and encouragement, and allowing me the research time to undertake such a big project.

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