



Learning to Compose Landscapes

Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) at Vanderbilt University

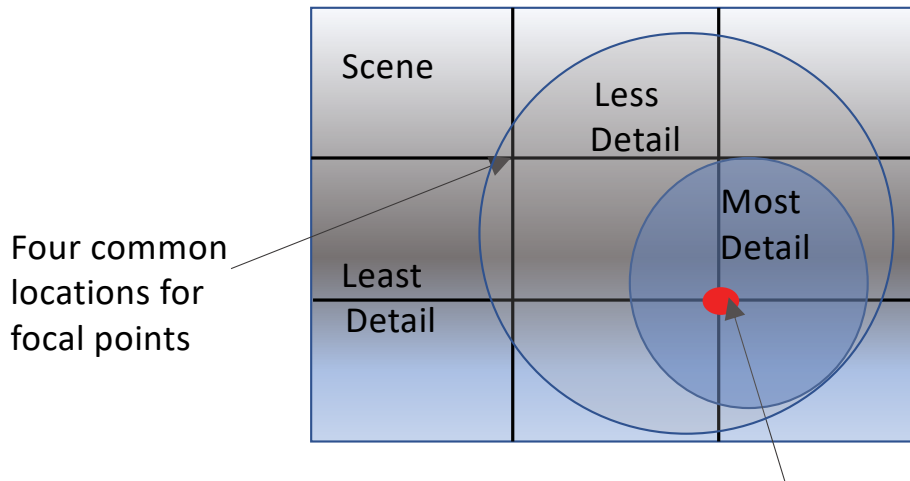
Winter 2023

Arthur Witulski

Notes about Landscapes or Outside Scenes

- Abundance of visual information-hard to choose a scene
- Example-my first attempt to paint outside at Percy Warner Park
- Lessons Learned since then:
 - Have to simplify the scene considerably
 - Make a thumbnail sketch
 - How to measure relative size of things
 - Have foreground/middle ground/background
 - Smaller is better for quick paintings
 - Important to choose a focal point or center of interest

Choosing a Focal Point



- Focal point can have:
 - Greatest detail
 - Darkest dark, lightest light
 - Brightest colors
 - Human figure



Nice explanation of focal point:
<https://debpero.blogspot.com/2011/10/placing-your-focal-point.html>

Choosing a Focal Point

Focal point can have:

- Greatest detail
- Darkest dark, lightest light
- Brightest colors
- Human figure
- Where is the focal point?



Choosing a Focal Point

- Painting can have
 - Multiple centers of interest
 - Try to get the eye to move in a circle
 - Finished Painting took a lot more time than a sketch



Things to look for in choosing a scene

- Look for a scene that has:
 - Interesting shapes
 - Variety of shapes, 2-3 large, 2-3 medium, 2-3 small
 - Interesting Light patterns
 - Contrast between shapes
 - In watercolor it is important to group dark and light shapes together



Find the shapes in this Scene: Good to Paint?

- Look for a scene that has:
 - Interesting shapes
 - Variety of shapes, 2-3 large, 2-3 medium, 2-3 small
 - Interesting Light patterns
 - Contrast between shapes
 - In watercolor it is important to group dark and light shapes together
 - Summary, see the shapes



Is this a good scene to paint?



Is this a good scene to paint?

Has some natural beauty

Problems:

Not clearly defined shapes

Not much contrast between shapes

No outstanding centers of interest



Is this a good scene to paint?

Not bad

Problem is that the interesting stuff to paint would be very small in scale in the painting



You can change the photo!

Problem is that the interesting stuff to paint would be very small in scale in the painting
Edit/crop function
Zoom in or out,
move around the picture to get more interesting subject



Atmospheric Perspective

1. Color Temperature:
warm colors
advance, cool color
recede
2. Objects in distance
tend to be lighter in
value, bluer and
grayer
3. As objects recede,
there is less
contrast and less
detail



Atmospheric Perspective

Smokey Mountains NC
2020



Main Point:

- Just a few minutes of thought before you paint to select the important shapes and compose your picture can significantly improve your final painting!

Bibliography



- Great book on basic principles of art
- By Greg Albert
- Covers many of things I've discussed, and more