



Published on *L'atelier Canson* (<https://www.cansonstudio.com>)

[Home](#) > [Composing Landscapes](#)

[Return to article list](#) ^[1]

Composing Landscapes



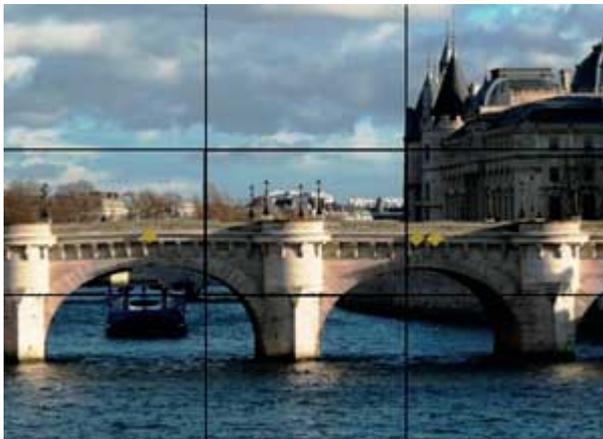
[Professional Tips](#) ^[5]

Rate this article

Give Composing
Landscapes 4/5 ?

Rate

Framing, organization, exhibition? Composing a landscape requires knowing how to observe, but also how to make the best decisions at the right moment.



1. Finding the Best Frame

- **Choose Your Viewing Angle:** Don't hesitate to move several feet away or look for a dominant position to get a bit of height.
- **Define Your Format:**

--Vertical: To highlight the verticality of certain lines

--Horizontal: To reproduce a landscape with few reliefs (beach, plain), abandon the classic rectangle in favor of a more panoramic format.

- **Frame Your Composition:** You will reproduce only part of your visual field.

--To limit your gaze, use an empty cardboard box.

--Avoid centering the line of the horizon.

- **Design with Nature:** Choose elements that distinguish your work (cliffs, trees, paths?) and define points of interest (perched villages, people, etc.). Be Careful: Never center them, because your work will lack life and depth!
- **Prioritize:** Eliminate superfluous elements; use your imagination to create additional points of interest.

Trick of the Trade: Guide the Viewer's Eye

A successful landscape gives the impression that one might go for a walk there, from the foreground to points of interest in the background.

- Exploit natural, directing lines: the furrows of plowed fields, rows of vines?
- Avoid filling up the foreground with horizontal masses (fallen tree trunks, for example) that will cause the viewer to pause. If necessary, create a series of objects that the eye will take in one after another.



2. Organizing Space

- **The Foreground** is very important to the final composition. If your principal point of interest is in the background, avoid putting large subjects in front of it. It's simply a question of activity (a field of flowers, for example). And it should not necessarily be placed in the foreground of the work. A scene bordered vertically by a tree makes for a strong foreground, but it also invites one to look behind it.
- **Distance** is generally confused with the horizon. There, the colors are more somber and bluish; shapes dissolve and contrasts fade. It's the best way to suggest distance.

- **Intermediate Planes:** They harbor and structure the points of interest, notably in function of their proportions.

3. Conveying Proportions

A large space in the background seems tiny compared to a bland rock placed just in front of you. This evidence is, however, one of the principal pitfalls encountered by the landscape artist. To avoid making mistakes:

- Confirm the relative volume of different subjects. Hold a pencil at arm's length and measure the height and breadth of each element: put the point of the pencil at one end, and your finger at the other end.
- Transfer these proportions to your sketch.



4. Successful Perspectives

- Position a point on the horizon (called a ?vanishing point?) and imagine a body of lines converging towards this vanishing point.
- Place your subjects within these lines, using dimensions that are significantly smaller as they move away from the vanishing point.
- This simple, conical perspective suggests how we perceive the subject when facing it. For more complex points of view (from the side or from a high angle, for example), you may need to employ two or three vanishing points.

5. Choosing the Light

A landscape?s interest also depends on its exhibition.

- Choose a time of day and choose, once and for all, the luminosity of your work: colors, orientation, density, and volume of shadow.
- If needed, take a photo? because the situation will surely have changed the next time that you take your eyes off the easel.

Trick of the Trade: Work Progressively with the Light

Including shadows and touches of light is the best way to bring your landscape alive and highlight the principal subjects. To avoid major errors, save strong contrasts for the foreground, and decrease them little by little as you approach the horizon.

7. Three Traps to Avoid

- **Overemphasizing the Foreground**, at the risk of forgetting the rest. A landscape is a balanced composition, not a subject surrounded by a décor.
- **Keeping your Eyes on the Easel**: Confirm proportions and perspective by regularly taking a few steps back. You can even look at your work with your back to it, using a mirror. This way, you will frequently see small anomalies to correct.
- **Reproducing Objects as They Should Be**: The leaves of a plane tree are bright green and the hills are immense? But light and proportions permanently change these

realities. Observe? and draw what your eye shows you. Don?t confine yourself to absolute truth!

Suggested products

Canson® Figueras®



[VIEW THIS PRODUCT](#) [6]

See also

A street in the Mediterranean - oil painting



Eric Préteselle shows you how to easily paint a Mediterranean street with oil.

[DISCOVER](#) [7]

Jalleau - a landscape pastel



F. Jalleau shows you how to make easily a provencal landscape oil pastel.

[DISCOVER](#) [8]

Links

- [1] <https://www.cansonstudio.com/technique/drawing>
- [2] [//twitter.com/share?url=https://www.cansonstudio.com/printpdf/669&text=Composing Landscapes](https://twitter.com/share?url=https://www.cansonstudio.com/printpdf/669&text=Composing%20Landscapes)
<https://www.cansonstudio.com/printpdf/669> via @CansonPaper
- [3] <https://www.cansonstudio.com/printpdf/669>
- [4] <https://www.cansonstudio.com/print/669>
- [5] <https://www.cansonstudio.com/professional-tips>
- [6] <http://en.canson.com/oil-acrylic/canson-figueras>
- [7] <https://www.cansonstudio.com/street-mediterranean-oil-painting>
- [8] <https://www.cansonstudio.com/jalleau-landscape-pastel>