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Landscapes: Creating an Atmosphere



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Creating an Atmosphere
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The serenity of early morning, the surrealism of a foggy backdrop, the theatricality of a stormy scene? A memorable landscape is characterized first and foremost by an identifiable atmosphere.

What You Need to Know

- In sunny weather, the clarity of the sky contrasts sharply with the vivid colors of the subjects. If you prefer intermediate lighting (mid-morning or afternoon), define soft shadows and light contrasts.
- Save the harsh and overwhelming midday sun, for subjects that deserve it: white walls against a blue sea, for example.
- To create a dramatic scene, opt for extreme lighting (sunsets, storms) and accentuate a maximum of contrasts, up to the point of *chiaroscuro*



1. How to Create a Dramatic Scene

- Dare unexpected treatments (a nocturnal scene, for examples), by drawing a negative on dark paper.
- Stage your subjects: choose a low-angle point of view or introduce a very strong foreground.
- Accentuate the raised areas of your points of interest with important *impasto*, or a density of intense pigments if you are working with dry media.
- Highlight the contours of subjects with a dark line, saturating and darkening their colors.
- Reinforce all contrasts.



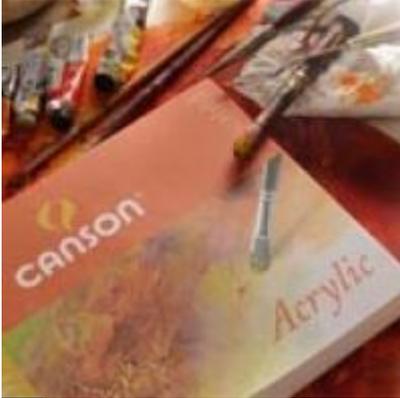
2. Working with *Chiaroscuro*

Whatever the number of colors involved, contrast is a result of the opposition between clear and dark tones. The more radical the opposition between background and subject, the more the subject gains in relief and importance in a decidedly theatrical composition.

- In an entirely somber scene, a very bright subject, bathed in an almost supernatural light, attracts the eye: this is the essence of *chiaroscuro*, as it was defined by Rembrandt. In the Matthias Braun watercolor, opposite: The foam and the clear part of the sky are created with a sparing technique (the paper is left blank).
- You can achieve the opposite effect by strongly darkening your subjects to underscore the richness and luminosity of the background. In the work of Mathias Braun, opposite: the cloudy mass or the waves.
- Work carefully with intermediate nuances, because contrast does not equal rupture. In the work of Mathias Braun, opposite: The green of the sea is composed of several shades. For the first layer of green, which is rather diluted, he has added less-diluted points of color.
- Consider decreasing color density and the strength of their opposition as you approach the horizon.

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An atmosphere-based theme, like a port at dawn, done in a large format, affords the ideal opportunity for you to get used to and play around with the chromatic possibilities of acrylics.

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