



Keeping a Sketchbook: Learning to Draw Landscapes

Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) at Vanderbilt University

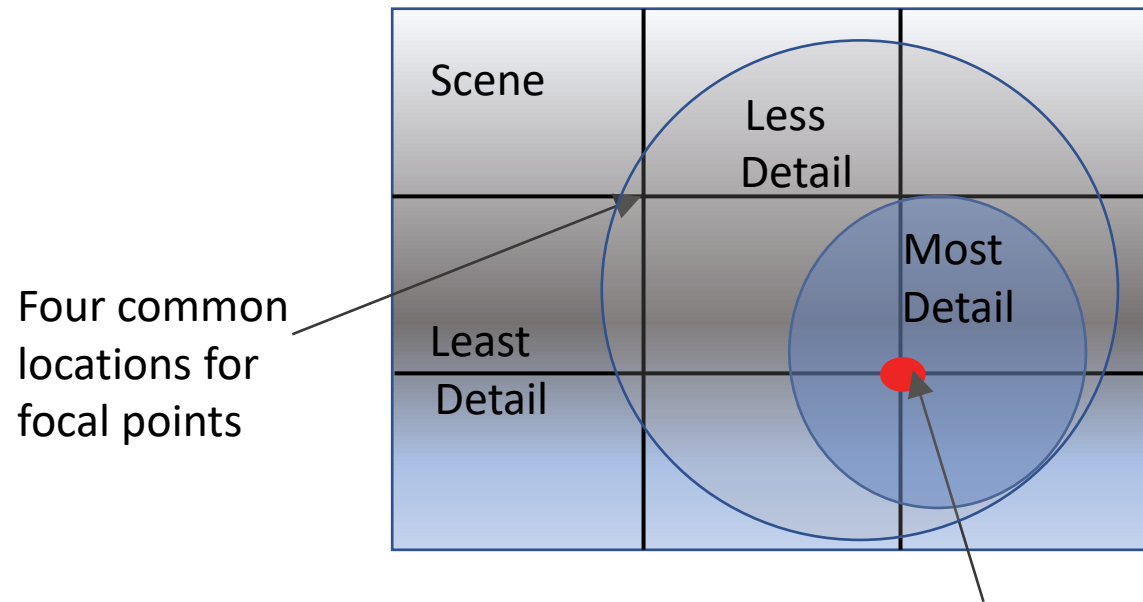
Winter 2022

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
 - Need criteria to select what to draw
 - How to measure relative size of things
 - Light is changing quickly
 - Have foreground/middle ground/background
 - 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

Place the center of interest at focal point



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

Choosing a Focal Point

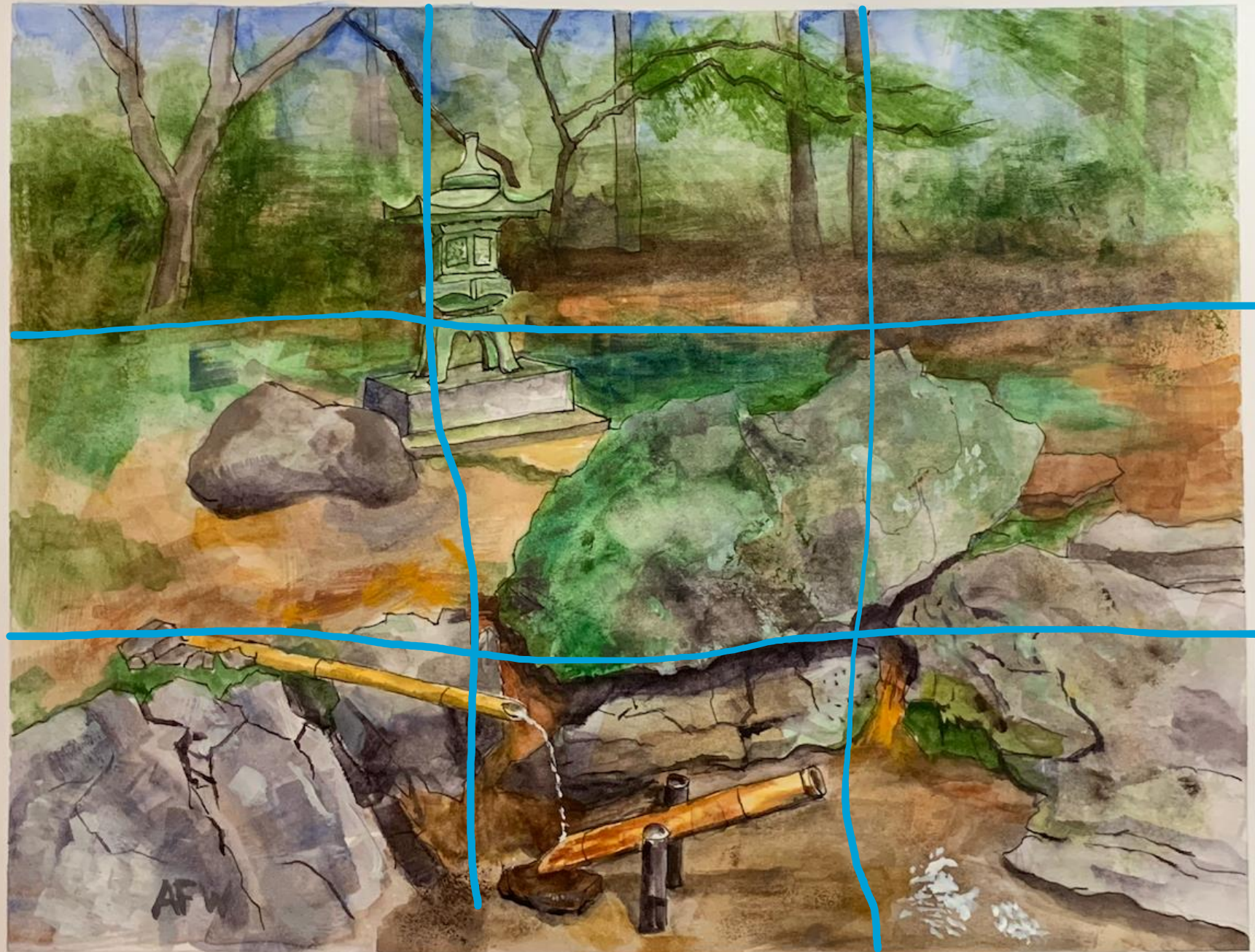
Focal point can have:

- 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



Where is the focal point?



Where is the focal point?



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



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Things to look for in choosing a scene

- What shapes do you identify?



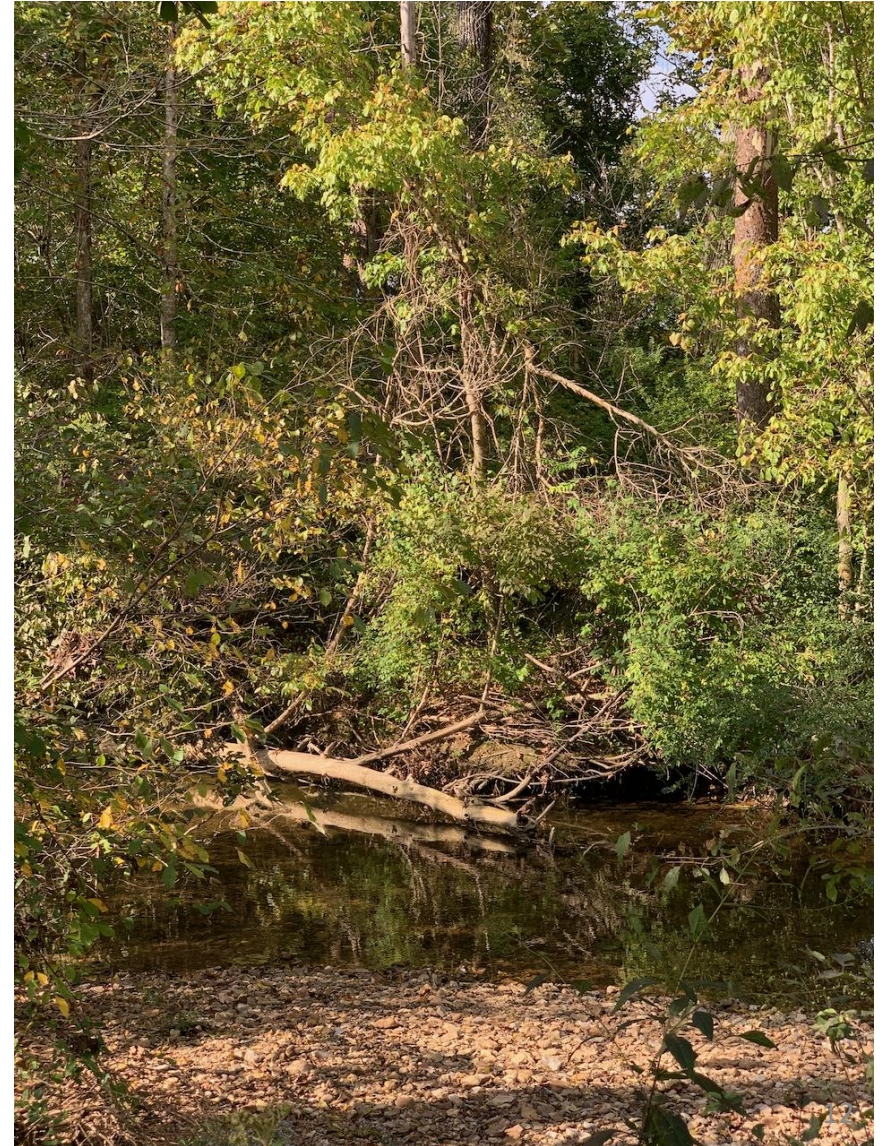
Things to look for in choosing a scene

- Lots of interesting shapes
- Variety of sizes
- Organic and geometric
- Less detail in distance



Things to look for in choosing a scene

- Which is a better scene to sketch?

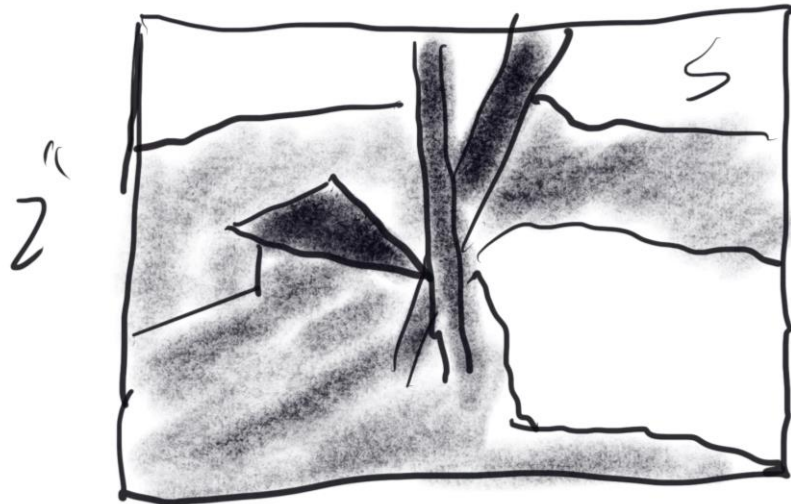


Zoom in and Pan Around to Improve Subject



Make a Thumbnail Sketch

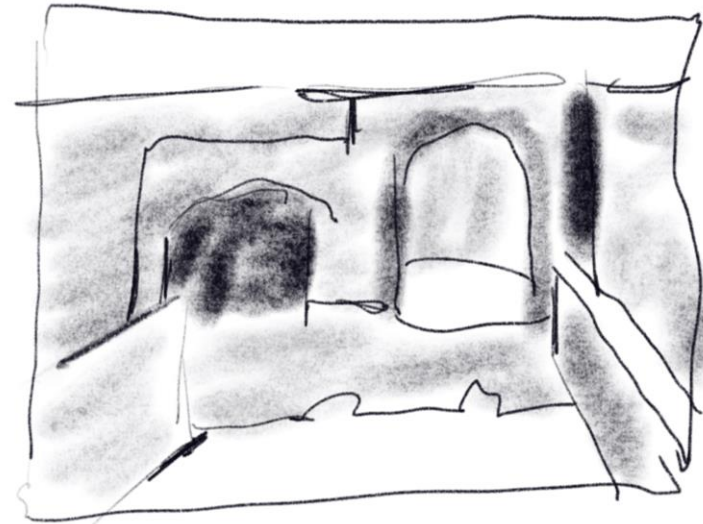
Just 2 or 3 inches on a side
Put in the main shapes
Do lightest, darkest, and medium values



2"
2"

3"

Forest/Rock/Shelter Scene



Lightest
Light



Mid-tone



Darkest
Dark

Castle Gate Scene

Putting a boundary around a scene



Arms extended-small field of view



Arms close to eye-large field of view

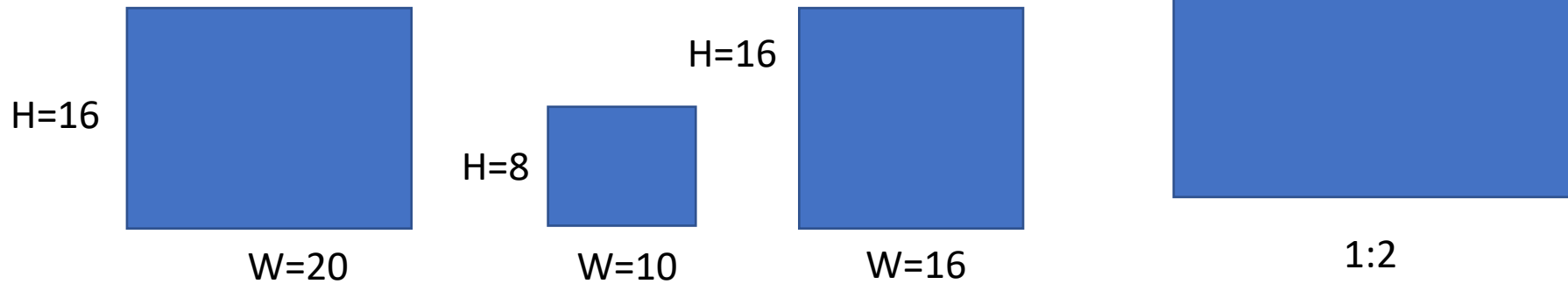


“View Catcher”

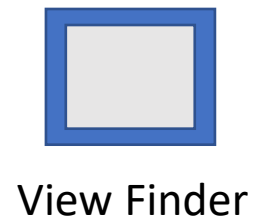
Now try this yourself –frame some scenes with your hands

Aspect Ratio of a Drawing

Aspect ratio is just the height-to-width ratio, e.g., 16 x 20 in is same as 8 x10 inch
 $AR=H/W=16/20=0.8=8/10$



The aspect ratio of your view finder should match the aspect ratio of your drawing area.

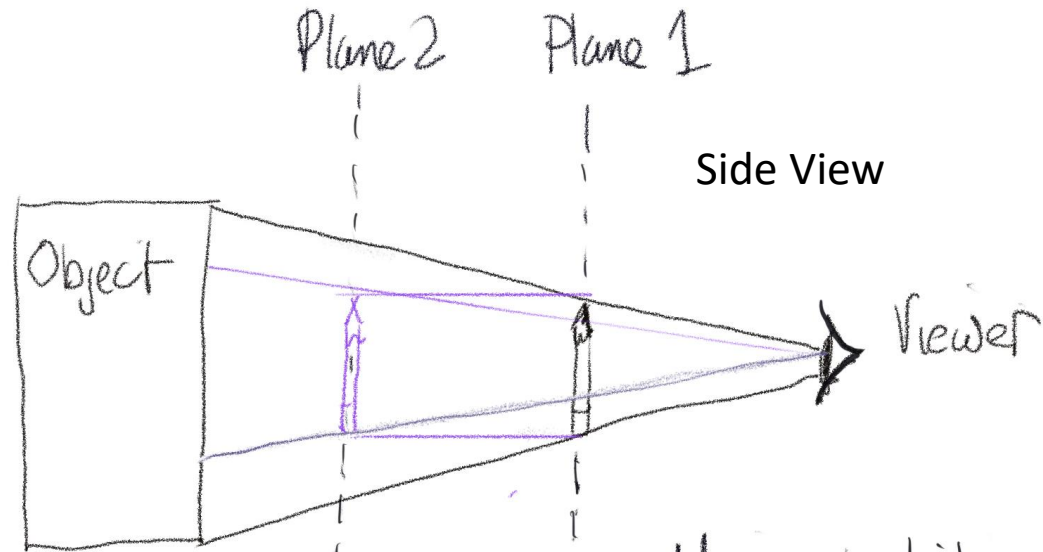


Look at some objects around you and try to estimate the aspect ratio

Advanced
Measuring
Tool

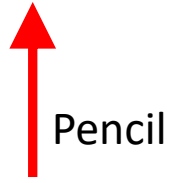


Measuring Relative Proportions in a Scene



Same size pencil - different distances
from the eye will give different
measurements

- Always return to the same
plane to make a measurement
- Can rotate pen in the plane
- Find a reference dimension
on the image you can always
return to



Finding a reference distance to measure by

Every time you make a measurement, you return to the same dimension in the scene and align your pencil with it before measuring something else

Just need a few measurements to get started

Measure some objects nearby





Pencil

Pinkerton Park Franklin

Why does this make a good
scene to sketch?



Pinkerton Park Franklin

- Almost real time
- Parks are good places to sketch-
have a collection of
objects of interest



Final Thoughts

- Practice on some landscape photos this week
- When it gets warm, go outside and sketch
- Tools in the tool box:
 - Frame the picture
 - Make a thumbnail
 - Find a focal point
 - Look for good shapes, simplify if there are too many shapes
 - Make the aspect ration of your view finder the same shape as your paper, or vice versa
 - Use a measuring reference in the scene to get relative sizes right
- Remember, your sketchbook is not the boss of you-you are the boss of your sketchbook

Bibliography



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