

Composition Motifs for Landscape Paintings

Taken from Edgar Payne's "Composition of Outdoor Painting"

There are a variety of ways a painter can arrange the elements in a landscape painting to create a unified and appealing image. The following eleven are all ways to organize a painting. Each uses the arrangement of basic elements to lead the viewer to the points of interest.

1. **S-Curve:** Your eye follows an S pattern as it moves through the picture plane.
2. **Circle:** the elements in the painting guide the eye around in a circular direction.
3. **Triangle:** The main shapes are triangular in design, or the important shapes are arranged in a triangular pattern.
4. **Radiating or Converging Lines:** Lines come into a point of interest in the painting.
5. **Ell or Rectangle:** The positive objects and the horizon form an L shape
6. **Cross:** The elements of the painting form a cross on the picture plane.
7. **Tunnel:** There is a tunnel that leads your eye into the space of the picture.
8. **Steel Yard or Balance Beam:** Large elements on one side of the canvas are balanced by a smaller element of the far edge of the opposite side. Like a small person balancing a larger person on a see-saw.
9. **Silhouette:** Objects are silhouetted against the sky
10. **Pattern:** There is a repetition of similar shapes throughout the painting.
11. **Grouped Mass:** all the large elements are grouped together to form one shape.

- Michele Hausman