

LANDSCAPE MAKING SPACE

Landscape is the term used to describe paintings of the outdoors. This subject for paintings and the use of the term developed in the late 16th century. By the 17th century it became a recognisable subject for painters and continues to be popular today. The term landscape conjures up images of nature and the countryside, giving us a sweeping view of the outside world.

In order to construct the illusion of depth on the flat surface of the painting (the canvas, wooden panels or paper), artists use techniques to create the perception of 3D space. This section will explore this art of perspective.

KEY WORDS AND CONCEPTS

Perspective, linear perspective, aerial perspective, scale

KEY WORKS



Jacob van Ruisdael, *Landscape with a Village*, c. 1650-55



Canaletto, *Venice: the Grand Canal from the Palazzo Foscari to the Carità*, c. 1740-50



Jan Hackaert, *An Avenue in a Wood*, 1675

LANDSCAPE WITH A VILLAGE

LANDSCAPE
MAKING SPACE



TITLE Landscape with a Village
DATE c. 1650–55
SIZE 72 x 90 cm
MATERIALS Oil on canvas

ARTIST Jacob van Ruisdael
DATES 1628–1682
PLACE The Netherlands

THE PAINTING

This sweeping open view includes a welcoming path in the foreground which leads your eyes (and feet) to the centre and focal point of the composition: a castle and its surrounding village. It is probably a view of Steinfurt Castle in Burgsteinfurt, in the German region of Westphalia.

While the castle and buildings are central to the composition, and would have been recognised as a symbol of strength and steadfastness, nearly two thirds of the canvas is filled with sky and billowing clouds. A pair of figures – one in red to attract our attention and pointing towards the view to draw us into the focus of the picture – are dwarfed by the vastness of the landscape.

THE ARTIST

Trained by his father and uncle who were also artists, Jacob van Ruisdael became specialised in and renowned for painting the outdoors. Landscapes were relatively new subjects for painters and flourished in the new Dutch Republic at a time when the church was no longer commissioning paintings for worship and the growing number of wealthy merchants favoured pictures of more everyday subjects such as portraits, still lifes and landscapes.

It is thought the artist visited this location when travelling in 1650. On his travels, van Ruisdael would have made numerous sketches of views and landmarks which he incorporated into later paintings. Van Ruisdael's drawing of this same view can be found here:

<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/337493>

AERIAL PERSPECTIVE

This landscape, like many others, achieves the illusion of depth by systematically using colder colours to depict land which is further away. Note that the very last hill on the horizon is painted a bright shade of blue. As you move into the foreground, the colours used go from blue, to green, to yellow, and finally to brown – from cold colours to warm colours.

This effect had first been observed and recorded by Leonardo da Vinci in the 15th century, who theorised that artists should use this strategy of aerial perspective to help create paintings of realistic and extensive landscapes.

DISCUSS



- Where are we? Indoors, outdoors? How do we tell?
- Is it a wild place? Or one where there are people? Where might it be?
- What time of day might it be? How can you tell?
- What is the weather like? What season is this?
- Would you be able to hear or smell anything in this landscape?
- Where would you like to go in this landscape? Where would you sit for a rest?
- Does anyone live in this landscape? How can you tell? Is anyone outside?
- What is this land used for? Is anyone working in this landscape?
- Why would you go out in this landscape? Where might you be going?
- How do you get to the village?
- What would you be wearing to be out in this landscape?

ACTIVITIES



- Arrange colours from cold to warm to make a collage landscape (see animation on page 9).
- Make a black and white photocopy of this painting and turn it into a different season by colouring it in using different colours.
- What can be made from all the materials available in the landscape? Imagine a marketplace; what would everyone be selling?

LANDSCAPE WITH A VILLAGE



IN DETAIL



LANDSCAPE WITH A VILLAGE



IN DETAIL



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IN DETAIL



LANDSCAPE WITH A VILLAGE



IN DETAIL



ANIMATION > AERIAL LANDSCAPE ACTIVITY

[HTTPS://YOUTU.BE/V7IP14GAQ8I](https://youtu.be/v7ip14gaq8i)



AN AVENUE IN A WOOD

LANDSCAPE
MAKING SPACE



TITLE An Avenue in a Wood
DATE c. 1675
SIZE 60 x 50 cm
MATERIALS Oil on canvas

ARTIST Jan Hackaert
DATES 1628-1685
PLACE The Netherlands

THE PAINTING

This landscape invites you to journey through it by placing the open road right in the foreground of the picture, and by making the winding road the central subject of the image.

A sense of atmosphere is created by the light, which casts strong golden colours and shadows across the composition.

THE ARTIST

Like Jacob van Ruisdael, Jan Hackaert was one of a growing number of painters in the so-called Dutch Golden Age of the 17th century who specialised in depicting landscapes.

Specialising as a landscape painter, he would often collaborate with other artists. In this example, Hackaert painted the landscape but another painter may be responsible for the figures.

DIMINISHING SCALE

The extent and distance of the road is described by using the perspective device of diminishing scale: the trees that line the road are systematically reduced in size to give the impression of depth.

DISCUSS



- Do you feel you are being welcomed into this painting? How?
- What would you feel like doing in this landscape? Sit down for a picnic or go for a walk?
- Where does the road lead? Can you see a destination, or are people just passing through?
- How would you have travelled along this road in the past? How would you travel along it today?
- Where might the people in the painting be going? What might they be doing?
- What are the dogs doing?
- Where is the furthest point along the road?
- Do you think the trees at the back are shorter in real life or just in the painting?
- Why has the artist painted the trees that are far away so much smaller?

ACTIVITIES



- Use a ruler to measure the trunks of the trees to show how much taller or shorter the trees are at the front and back of the painting.
- Line children up along the playground and take a picture of them; notice how those further away appear smaller even if they are not shorter than their peers.
- Use gridded paper to draw a shape and then repeat that shape on a smaller and bigger scale (see page 16).

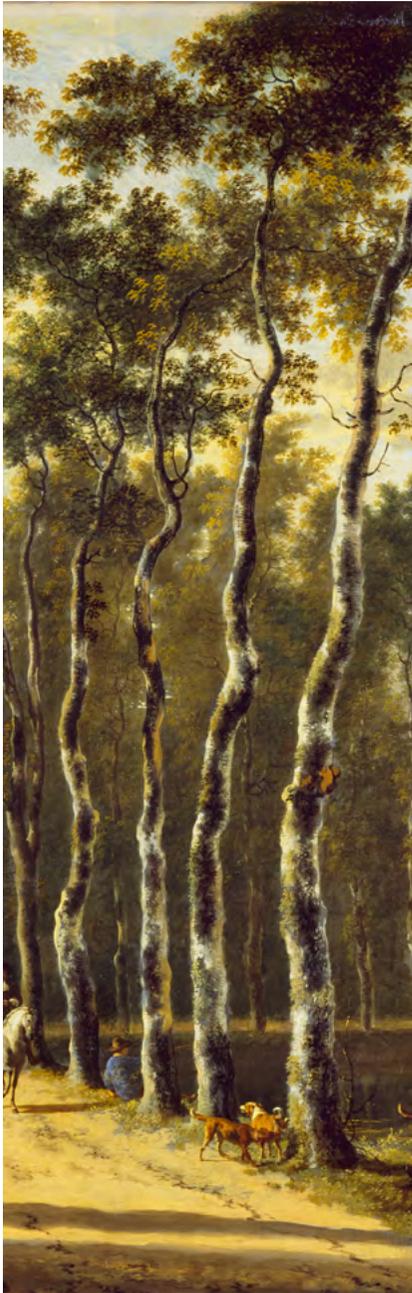
AN AVENUE IN A WOOD



IN DETAIL



AN AVENUE IN A WOOD



IN DETAIL



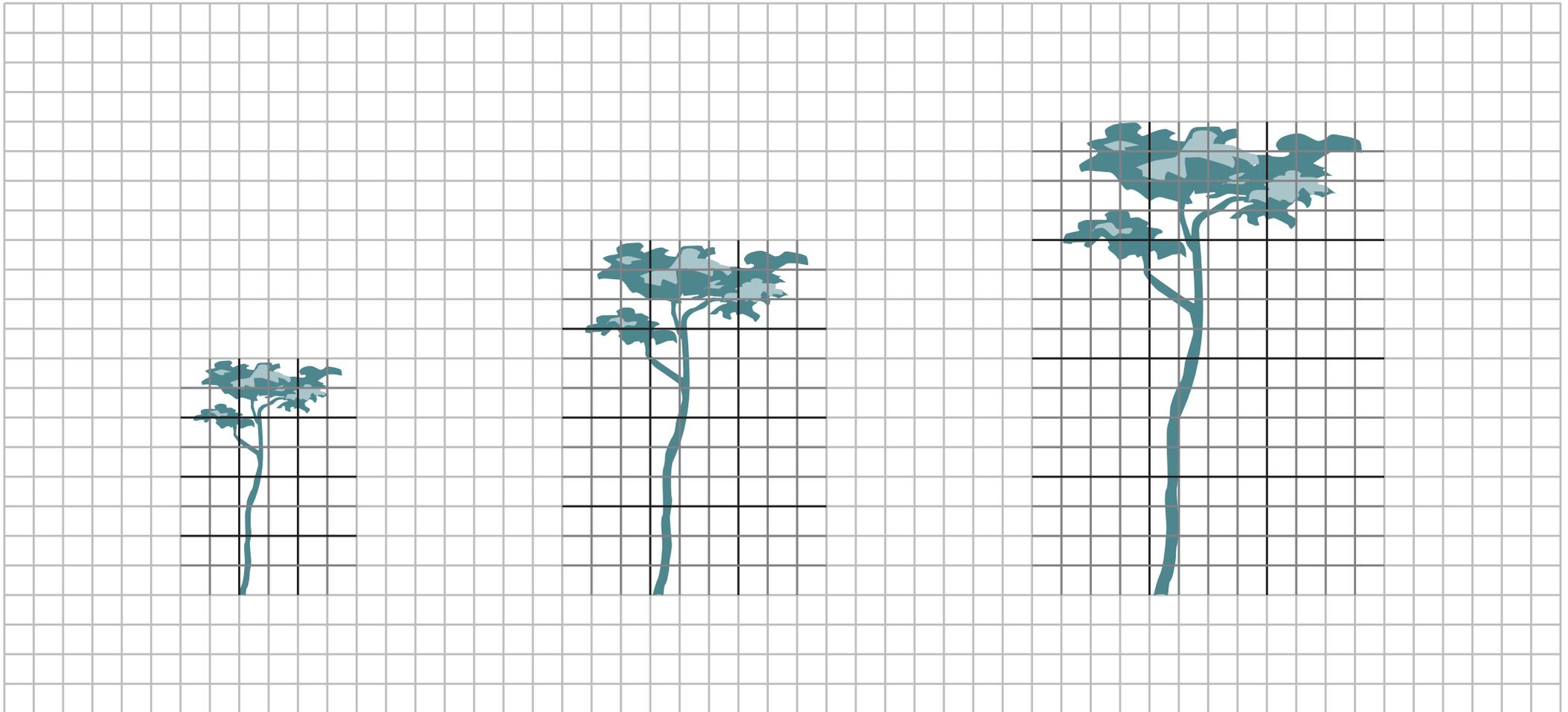
AN AVENUE IN A WOOD



IN DETAIL



ACTIVITY Increasing scale using a grid





TITLE Venice: the Grand Canal from the Palazzo Foscari to the Carità
DATE c. 1740-50
SIZE 44 x 77 cm
MATERIALS Oil on canvas

ARTIST Canaletto (Giovanni Antonio Canal)
DATES 1697-1768
PLACE Venice, Italy

THE PAINTING

This is a sweeping and seemingly accurate representation of the Grand Canal in Venice.

Painted in the 18th century when Venice was a popular tourist destination for European travellers, it depicts the motifs most associated with the city: the sunlight reflected on the waters of the canal, the chimney pots against the skyline, the gondolas carrying visitors and the city's churches and bell towers.

THE ARTIST

Like so many artists before him, Canaletto was trained by his father, a successful painter of theatrical scenery. Known professionally by his nickname 'little canal', Giovanni Antonio Canal (1697-1768) is best remembered as a painter of his home city of Venice, which he depicted with detail and precision.

These views of the famed city were very much prized by wealthy gentleman tourists who visited Venice from England on their 'grand tour' - the equivalent of a gap year for the noble and wealthy of the 18th century. As a result, the majority of Canaletto's work is in British collections today and the Wallace Collection has many examples.

LINEAR PERSPECTIVE

This landscape, or more specifically cityscape, is constructed using linear perspective. This system was used and theorised by artists from the Renaissance onwards to create the illusion of 3D space.

Linear perspective uses a fictitious 'vanishing point', placed along the line of the horizon (here in the centre of the composition) at which all parallel lines or 'orthogonals' in the composition converge or meet.

DISCUSS



- Where are we? Do you know what this city is called?
- Is this a landscape? Or a cityscape?
- Do you think this is a real place or imaginary?
- What helps us recognise a famous city? What is a landmark?
- How do people get around in this city? What are these boats called?
- What makes this city unusual?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of a city on water?
- Is it busy? What are people doing?

ACTIVITIES



- Use Google Street View to have a look at this view of the city of Venice today.
- Research how global warming and the rising water levels are affecting the city.
- Research other places where people live over water.
- Make a simple one-point perspective drawing (see page 23).

VENICE: THE GRAND CANAL



IN DETAIL



VENICE: THE GRAND CANAL



IN DETAIL



VENICE: THE GRAND CANAL



IN DETAIL



ACTIVITY How to draw a simple one-point linear perspective

