LANDSCAPE VALUE DISTRIBUTION

Let's explore landscape value distribution this month. Generally speaking, the landscape can be divided into four planes: sky, ground, hill and trees. In order for these planes to have identities distinct from each other, they need to be assigned a value that doesn't infringe on the values of other planes. A shape only has meaning when there is a value shift from one shape to the next. If the ground plane is assigned the same value as the sky for example, it can be confusing because there is no visual separation between the two planes.

The sky is most often assigned the lightest value. Second lightest value is the ground plane because it receives the full impact of the light source from overhead. Hills will be assigned the third darkest value. The hill does not receive overhead light as directly as a horizontal plane. Finally, the darkest value is reserved for verticals (trees, walls), they are in the shadow and only receive reflected light off the ground.

There are many variations of this model. For example, dusk or dawn, snow or sand and sometimes water. The important thing to remember is that in order to paint an effective realistic landscape, these value masses need to be in the right relationship to each other. However, all of this may be set aside if the artist is more conceptual and chooses to select their own value distribution. In this case, other tools, such as perspective construction, may be employed to keep the landscape planes in proper relationship. I often use a combination of both conceptual and landscape value assignments. If I'm torn between the two, the conceptual side always wins out!

For more information check out my video on Landscape Theory. You will learn much more about these concepts and have them to refer back to whenever you need a refresher. DVD or Streaming

Keep your brush wet!

Eric

AWS Gold Medal of Honor