

Rebecca Salsbury (Strand) James
Earth and Water
 1950
 reverse oil on glass, 19 × 15 1/2 in.
 Bequest of Helen Miller Jones, 1986 (1986.137.11).
 Photo by Blair Clark.

A landscape is an artwork whose primary focus is natural scenery such as mountains, forests, rivers, lakes, and/or trees.

Materials needed:

Three different drawing tools (light, medium, and dark) that we'll talk about in a moment.

Paper: If you have drawing paper, great! If not, typing paper or even the back of an envelope will work. Paper can make a difference in your drawing. If you have some options to choose from, experiment and see which you like best.

A landscape: This could be the view from your window, from somewhere you like to sit outside, an image from a magazine, an image from the computer, or even something from your imagination. Whatever you are the most comfortable with will work.

An eraser (optional): It's okay to make more lines than you need, and sometimes those extra lines actually help make your drawing better! If you want to be able to erase a line, try to choose an eraser that won't leave smudges, such as a kneaded eraser or a white plastic eraser. The red erasers at the end of some pencils can leave red marks, smudge your drawing, or even tear the paper.

Pencils and other things to draw with

If you have drawing pencils, great! If not, that's okay too! Drawing pencils are rated by their hardness; this makes it easier to draw lighter or darker lines. For example, a pencil with the letter H is a harder pencil, making it easier to sketch faint lines with it, while a pencil with the

letter B is softer, making it easier to draw dark lines. Drawing pencils also have a number. The larger the number is, the harder or softer the pencil. The #2 pencil you may have used in school is somewhere in the middle.

What if you don't have drawing pencils lying around? Not a problem. The idea is to have something that is good for making light, medium, and dark lines, which will help you create a range of tones. If you have a #2 pencil or a mechanical pencil, you have the medium lines covered. Your dark lines can be made with lots of different things, such as a lumber pencil, charcoal pencil, or even a black marker or crayon. For your lighter lines you can try out some of the pencils you have at home to see if one has a harder lead, such as a novelty pencil. You can also use less pressure when drawing with whatever pencil you have.

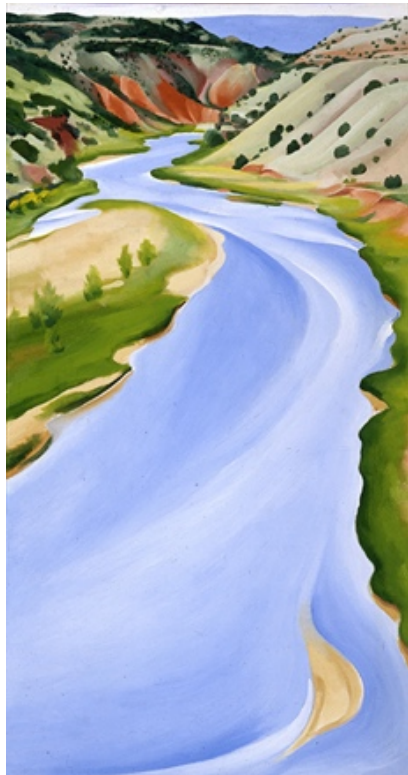


Donald Beauregard
Utah Landscape
1914

oil on canvas

31 1/8 × 38 1/8 in.

Gift of the Honorable Frank Springer
1925 (538.23P). Photo by Blair Clark



Georgia O'Keeffe
Chama River, Ghost Ranch, New Mexico (Blue River)
1937

oil on canvas

30 1/2 × 16 1/2 in.

Gift of the Georgia O'Keeffe Estate, 1987 (1987.312.1)

© New Mexico Museum of Art. Photo by Blair Clark

Warm up

It helps some people to warm up a little before starting to draw. Pick a subject other than your landscape to draw and try these two warm up exercises.

1. Start by taking a moment to look at your subject. What shapes can you see? Are those shapes connected by lines or other shapes? Set a timer for 5 minutes or less. Then, without lifting your pencil off of the paper, draw your subject without looking away from it. When you are finished, look at your drawing. What shapes can you identify? What parts of the subject did you give the most attention?
2. In this exercise, concentrate on the basic lines and shapes that will help to define your subject, because that's all you will have time for! Look at your subject and note what are the most important lines and shapes you can see. Set a timer for 1 minute and draw these to the best of your ability. You'll need to work quickly, so don't worry about stray lines. This won't look exactly like your subject, and that's okay! Try this exercise again, but with 30 second and then 15 seconds on the clock. What can you draw in five seconds? What did these drawings teach you about the lines and shapes in your subject?

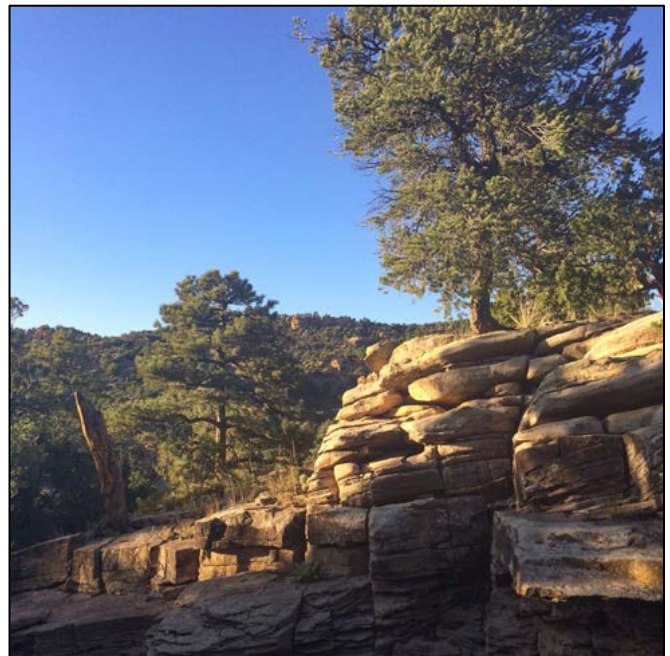
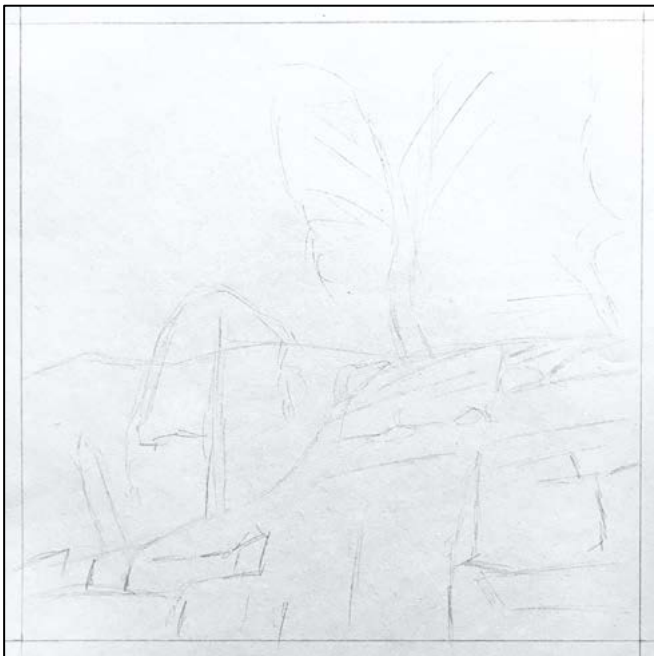
Drawing can be a very personal exercise, so there is no one “right” way to do it. This is one way to approach drawing a landscape. If you are inspired to do something a little different or to jump around a little, please do so!



Sheldon Parsons
Aspens Near Santa Fe
circa 1922
oil on Masonite, 35 1/2 × 35 3/4 in.
Museum acquisition, 1976 (18.23P)
Photo by Cameron Gay

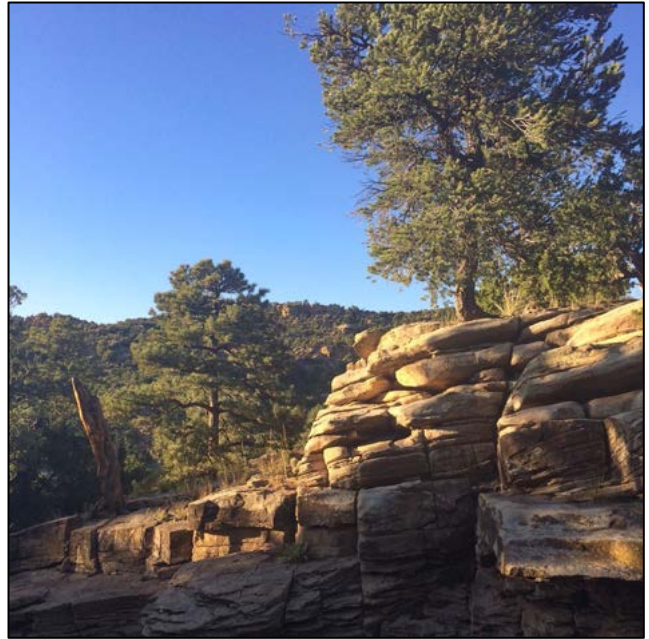
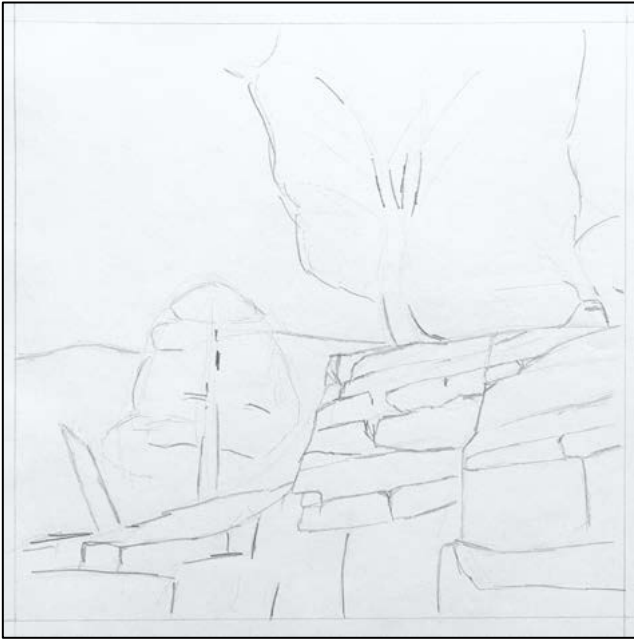
Rough Sketch

Start by drawing the basic lines and shapes in your landscape using very light lines. Don't worry about making these lines perfect or including a lot of details; you'll take care of that later.



Refine

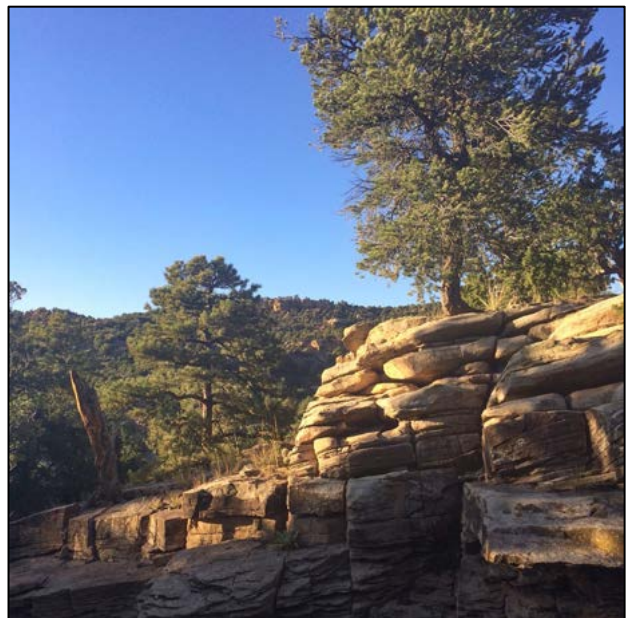
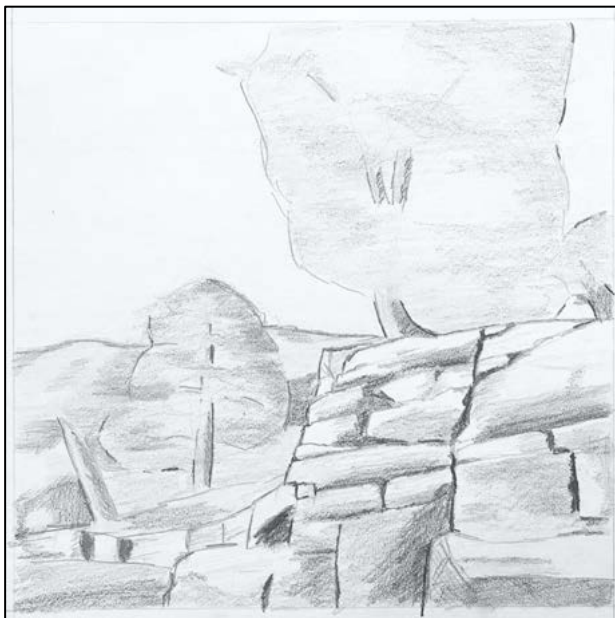
Using your rough sketch as a guide, define your shapes and lines to more closely reflect your subject.



Shading

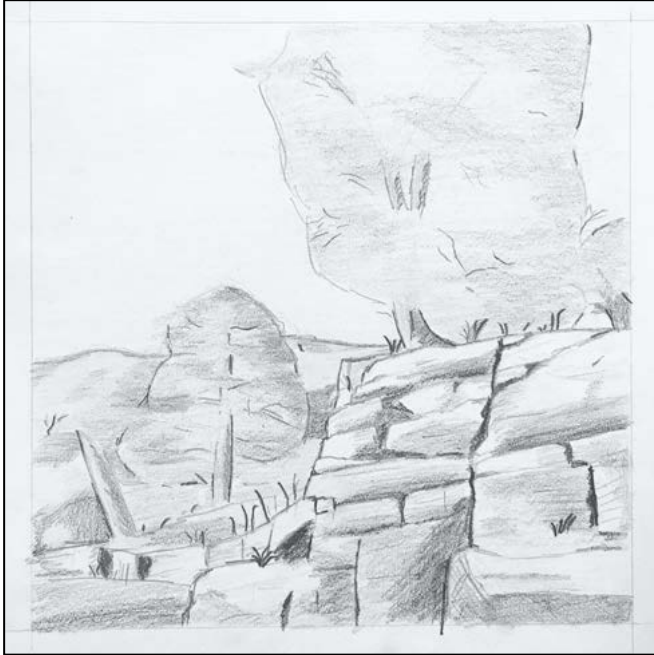
Now that you have your basic composition of shapes and lines worked out, it's time to add some shading. This can add depth to your drawing. It can be tempting to start with the darkest shadows, but shading isn't just about shadows; it's about how shadows and highlights relate to each other. Start with the lightest areas of your drawing and build towards the shadows. It's easier to make an area progressively darker.

You can change the lightness or darkness of your drawing by changing the kind of pencil you are using and by changing the pressure you apply to those pencils. You can also build up the density of your lines by using the technique of hatching and cross hatching. Hatching is when you draw a series of parallel lines that create a base tone. You can make this tone darker by adding cross hatching, or lines that cross the original lines at an angle.



Details

Finally, add in details of the landscape. Like when you were shading, try building these up gradually. Trying to add every branch on a tree may not be necessary to give the idea of the tree. What are the most important details that you see in your landscape? What details do you think will help communicate your feelings about this place?



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