

Components of Recession

Recession in art is the appearance or illusion of depth, nearer objects look closer and more distant ones look further away. It is a problem many beginners struggle with, I know I did. It not only effects landscapes but anything the realistic painter paints. Our paintings will look more realistic if we can achieve a sense of depth, whether it is still life animals etc. One of the reasons it can be difficult to achieve is because recession has many components. This is a big topic and I am sure we will go into more detail in subsequent weeks. Just think about how you may create that illusion of depth and space in everything you paint. (It will come with time and practice.)

Atmospheric or aerial perspective.

Objects in the foreground have a wider value range. As objects recede they get lighter and have more sky colour in them (or background colour in the case of still life). In the picture you can see how the colour of the trees and grass changes as they recede.

Linear Perspective.

Closer objects are larger than distant ones. This can be determined from observation, when drawing buildings pay particular attention to the angle of the lines as subtle errors can be very noticeably wrong. In the picture the size of the people get smaller as they recede.

Texture

Closer objects have more detail and texture than more distant ones. The people, trees and grass all demonstrate this in the picture.

Line

Close up objects have crisper edges, as they recede objects generally have soft edges.

Overlap

To give a sense of depth overlapping objects is very effective.

These are just generalisation I am sure you can find exceptions. But sometimes it is worth adapting reality in order to maintain the illusion of depth. For example if in a line of trees the furthest was largest, if you were to paint these verbatim then it could make it look like you have got the linear perspective wrong.

©Andrew Schofield

