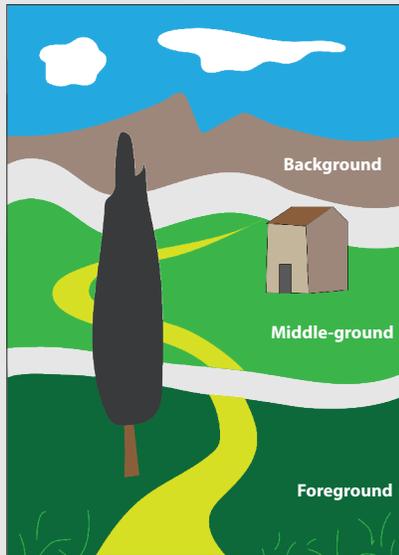


Space

Over the years, artists have tried to suggest space (distance and depth) in their work. They place things closest to us in the foreground, things farthest from us in the background, and things in between in the middle-ground. Some have been successful, while others have had a more difficult time showing space convincingly.



Background: The part of a two-dimensional artwork that seems farthest from the spectator. Objects in the background seem smaller than those in the middle-ground and foreground and they are usually located toward the top of the artwork.

Middle-ground: The space between the foreground and background in a two-dimensional artwork. Objects in the middle-ground seem smaller than those in the foreground and larger than those in the background. They are usually located in the center of the artwork.

Foreground: The part of a two-dimensional artwork that appears nearest to the spectator. Objects in the foreground seem larger than those in the middle-ground and background and they are usually located toward the bottom of the artwork.

Putting Things in Perspective

When we speak of "putting things in perspective" we mean trying to see things in relation to one another, rather than separately. In ancient Greece, Protagoras (481-411 BCE) said, "Man is the scale and measure of all things." His words helped artists realize they should see and judge the sizes of objects by comparing them with their own size. By showing things in perspective, the object being looked at and the person doing the looking were connected.

There are six major techniques artists use to show three-dimensional space in their work. The activity on the back of this page will help you notice these techniques in artwork.

The whole arrangement of my picture is expressive. The place occupied by the figures or objects, the empty spaces around them, the proportions, everything plays a part.

Henri Matisse



Flint Institute of Arts
Education Department
1120 E Kearsley Street, Flint MI 48503
810-237-7314 • flintarts.org



Showing the Real World

Instructions

Visit the Flint Institute of Arts and find three artworks that show space. For each of the techniques below, rate each artwork using a scale of 1 to 10: 1 = not used very much 10 = used a lot

<p style="text-align: right;">Title of Artwork</p> 			
<p>Accurate Drawing: Things in the foreground are bigger than the same things in the background (no one part is too large or too small).</p>			
<p>Light & Shadow: Makes things look three-dimensional. For example:</p> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center; gap: 20px;"> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>No Shadow</p>  </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>With Shadow</p> </div> </div>			
<p>Atmospheric Space: Colors fade as things get farther away; the most distant area is pale blue.</p>			
<p>Linear Perspective: Parallel lines are made to come together so they look like they are fading into the distance (the "railroad track effect.")</p> 			
<p>Detail: Detail in textures like grass, fur, or stony ground are clear and recognizable in the foreground, but become fuzzy in the background.</p>			
<p>Overlapping: Objects in the foreground block out part of objects in the background.</p>			

