

Study Unit 5

Seascapes

We have now covered the topics of water and skies, so the next thing we will turn our attention to is a sub-genre of landscape painting, the seascape. Putting it simply, now we place some land in front of or between sea (water) and sky.



Ilfracombe by George Robert Lewis.

Lewis studied at the Royal Academy Schools under Henry Fuseli R.A. (1741-1825) and became a topographical artist. This carefully wrought painting shows good command of colour, detailed drawing and an eye for a striking composition. The figures help give a sense of space and perspective.



This image of loading cranes and a railway at a dockside, demonstrates the vastness and power of American industry. The smoking chimney creates a harmonious divide (see Golden Section in Design and Format) where its reflection gently adds to its pictorial function. The only other sign of life in this scene is a tiny figure on the dockside near the railway which imparts a sense of scale to the whole image. The cropped foreground, showing decking, a wooden structure and a ladder helps the viewer to 'read' the picture.



This painting, by Camille Pissarro, titled *Bords de la Seine à Bougival*, painted in 1872, again uses smoking chimneys as a central motif – this time the chimneys are on the barges Pissarro has chosen to paint. Pissarro's technique is much looser and seemingly more spontaneous than Sheeler's. Like Lowry, he is concerned with capturing a feeling of time and place. Figures help the composition.

EXERCISE (16): A PAINTING AT HOME

For your subject matter find a part of your nearby or local environment that has a prominent chimney or upright structure in it which is part of industry, docks a railway or factory or warehouses etc. If the buildings are no longer in use, you can still make them your subject matter. Do two sketches: one to sort out what you like about the composition, so alter the size of rectangle to suit the subject matter and one to get a sense of the atmosphere by using colour, focusing on light effects. You can use paints for this or pastels. Take reference photo's to add to your information. Work with the camera to help develop the composition. Camera's can aid composition especially with cropping a subject.

Once you have gathered your information, make a painting at home which is based on what you have sketched and the photo's you have taken. This painting needn't be small. If you choose to paint on a larger scale you will have to send in photo prints of your work or upload it to the LAC website. The purpose of this exercise is to show you how to work with reference material, away from the subject.

WORKING FROM PHOTOS

A camera is an invaluable tool, useful for recording images, details and scenes where an instant visual record is needed. It is best used in conjunction with your sketchbook as a reference aid, rather than as an image to be copied exactly. Having several reference points is essential; perhaps even a choice of format - landscape or portrait.

Degas, the French painter working at the time of the Impressionists, used his camera to record the ballerinas, and Cezanne, another French painter used his camera to document his native Provence. Both were innovative artists.

It can be said that *good* photos can actually make *bad* paintings, sometimes giving a flat image. Photos should give the basic shape to work with, being used to build imaginative compositions. Try looking at the photos upside down to judge the composition possibilities, possibly taking a black and white photocopy to show the tonal composition. Work from this in order to get to know the subject thoroughly.

If you have a zoom lens for your camera this can be useful for details. I would also recommend using prints size 5" x 7" as this gives better detail than the average size.

As you are working out your composition make sure that any changes are still in the correct scale and on the right eye level. If a figure, for instance, is facing the wrong direction trace it off and turn it around for the finished work. Once the composition is drawn put away the photos and trust to visual memory and your own creativity. You want to create a unique expression of the scene, your own emotional response.



