

## **COURSE OUTLINE**

We start by acknowledging the artist – you and your relation to the landscape, which is a recurring theme throughout the course. We look at how in a day, the course of the sun affects the subject in terms of light and mood: doing some sky studies to begin with. We also look at time in terms of the seasons, which in the UK are markedly different from each other but this isn't so apparent in other regions of the World. We transfer our attention from the effects of light to those of colour, again paying attention to mood and emotional outcomes. After this, because it is always asked for and popular, the course deals with water and painting it. This leads on to seascapes. Central to the theme of landscape painting is the concept of 'the lie of the land'. It means how the surface of the earth opens out before the viewer. How the viewer perceives every little nuance of level and undulation of the earth as it appears from where they are stationed and the viewer's relation to it. Urban subjects, including buildings and architecture with a salutary mention of perspective follow this. Because they can be linked, animals and the human figure are adjoined to urban subjects. Animals tend to feature in rustic and picturesque landscapes so the course incorporates a section on drawing and painting sheep, horses, cows, goats etc. The figure gives us a system of scale to use in relation to the landscape; to follow this we look at pictorial design and format, including use of photo reference. A vital concept is that of pictorial space in the landscape, this part of the course addresses issues pertaining to it. Ultimately, we end up looking at visionary landscapes, those done by the likes of Blake and Palmer (English visionaries) and the notion of fantasy landscapes such as the ones made by metaphysical artists and the Surrealists. There is a final section on how to maintain your stock of work and some advice about selling your work. We include a section on materials to guide you regarding what you require and what you choose to work with.

You will be asked to give your feedback at the end of the course.

# Study Unit 2

## Time

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To be in control of anything, especially yourself, you must command time! But, remember, time is only a human 'thought construct'. We have to count things, list them and observe the way they happen, so it seems. We do this with the rising and setting of the sun. In some cultures, Aboriginal for example, there isn't such a rigid concept of time and lifespan.

"Aboriginals believe in two forms of time; two parallel streams of activity. One is the daily objective activity, the other is an infinite spiritual cycle called the 'dreamtime', more real than reality itself. Whatever happens in the dreamtime establishes the values, symbols, and laws of Aboriginal society. It was believed that some people of unusual spiritual powers had contact with the dreamtime." (Fred Alan Wolf). This concept of time demonstrates how the fundamental beliefs of a society will affect the outlook of its people. When you paint the landscape, you commune with nature and if you are just a little bit sensitive, you will 'know' the vastness of time and space and the minuteness of humans and their affairs.

Landscape painting and drawing happens as a result of the artist's performance in 'time'. In Western civilisation there is time in terms of the 24 hr day (the earth's revolution before sun and moon) and time in relation to the movement of the earth around the sun, the 365 day year; and there is time in terms of anticipated lifespan. A sense of time and 'the timeless' has always characterised good or great art. At the very end of this course we look at visionary landscapes by the likes of Samuel Palmer and latterly, Paul Nash. A good painting of the landscape will always suggest something more than the literal; it will allude to the mysteries of the universe.

### Time of day

The French landscape painter, Camille Corot, known as 'Father Corot' is always a good exemplar when looking at the effects of the passing hours on a particular landscape. Corot lived an enviable life if you enjoy landscape painting. He would get up before daybreak and do a painting till about ten or eleven am. Then he would do another painting for the midday period until two-ish and an afternoon painting and an evening painting. This he could afford to do, because he remained unmarried and was from a wealthy background, so there never was any pressure for him to generate income from his art. Below is an example of a typical scene by Corot titled 'Peasants under trees at dawn'. The painting is about the atmosphere created by the light effects at a particular time of day.

## Linear Perspective for Landscapes

Linear perspective is important in Landscapes as it helps create an impression of space and depth. Any parallel lines or rows, sides of a road, row of trees etc. will appear to converge at a vanishing point on the horizon as they recede into the distance. The accurate placing of the horizontal features is crucial and needs careful observation. Take measurements by holding up a pencil at arm's length and sliding your thumb up and down it. The size of a figure must also be carefully measured in relation to elements within the landscape. Figures can often determine scale within a picture.

The other important consideration in perspective is that of colour change, usually called *aerial or atmospheric perspective*. As a view recedes into the distance colours become paler and cooler, details become hazier and tonal contrasts less distinct. Depth can be accurately depicted by making foreground colours stronger and perhaps warmer or darker in tone. Colours will progressively from middle to foreground.

Skies are also subject to the laws of perspective and clouds appear larger overhead than at the horizon, where they will be bunched together. They also become less distinct in colour and contrast in the distance, compared to 'foreground' or overhead sky. Even blue skies are not the same depth of blue all over, but will be paler as they recede towards the horizon.

Now that you have been shown the essentials about two point perspective, you need to cement the learning in place, in your mind.

### Exercise (14)

Return to the subject you sketched earlier and re-sketch it, only this time see if you can make a better job and test your understanding of what you have just learned. Keep this sketch; label it with the place and date. Send this in, at a later point, with the other material from this unit.

### CREATING SCALE - THE 'SMOKE STACK'

A regular feature of urban and industrial images is the chimney or smoke stack. Always present in Lowry's work where they emit trails of thick black, white and grey smoke. A form of pollution made picturesque. In View from a window of the Royal Technical College, Salford, we can see how Lowry uses scale to impart a sense of distance in a picture. He draws one chimney stack up close, without showing its top – this makes us feel as if we are looking out of the window with him; in the distance we see four other chimneys, faded amongst the smog of aerial perspective.

## Exercise (20)

Make a painting of a scene which includes livestock but which isn't solely about animals. Use sketches and photo reference to help build up your image – but whether you choose to work on location or at home, is up to you. Make your image about the beauty of rural scenery and animals in nature. Just to assist you here is an etching by Samuel Palmer. Done later in his life (1857) and called *'The rising moon'* or *'An English pastoral'* it shows a scene of a shepherd tending his flock as the moon rises from behind a hill, shedding its light on nearby buildings including a church.



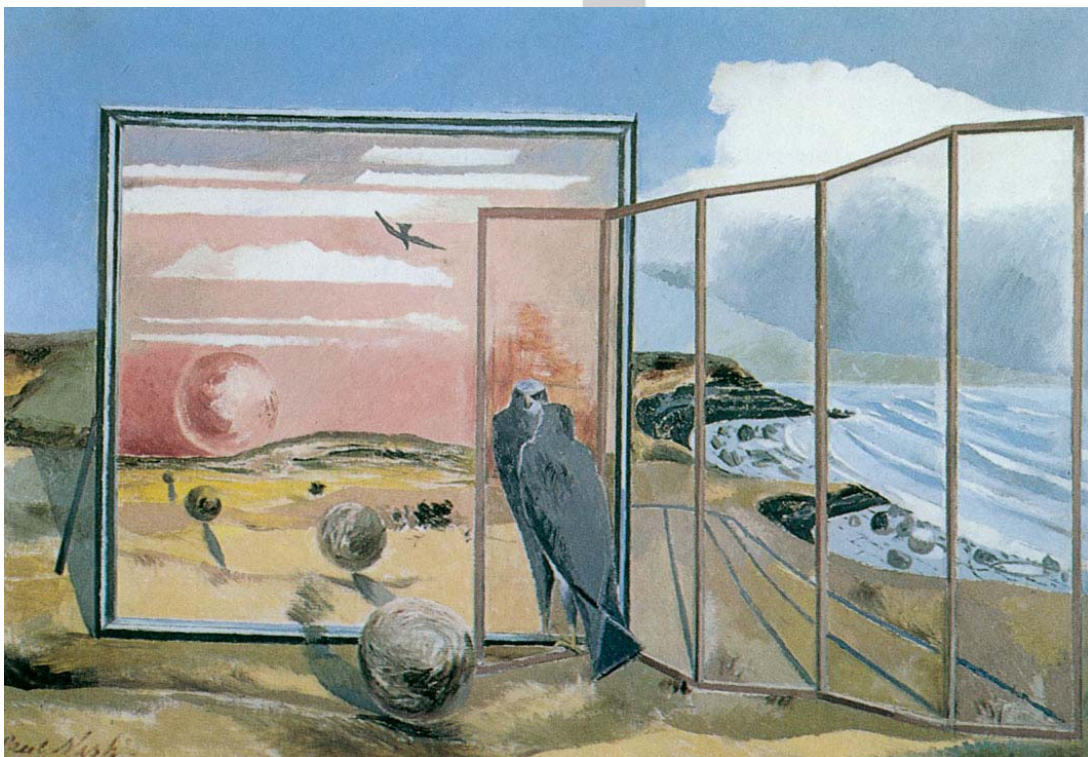
*'The rising moon' or 'An English pastoral' by Samuel Palmer*

Because Palmer was a devout Christian, there is little doubt that the sheep here represent a notional flock or congregation in relation to the church. His landscapes were often infused with such meaning, giving them a distinctly spiritual dimension. Of course, in this image we see 'staffage' in the form of the shepherd. We will look at how figures are represented in the landscape next. When you've done this, send it and all relevant studies in to your tutor along with the work you have done for the section on the figure.

Please send exercise 20 in with the exercises from Study Unit 10.

## Surreal landscapes

Paul Nash (1889-1946) is a more recent example of this. In particular, Nash developed as an artist throughout the tumultuous years of the first and second World Wars. He came from an upper-middle class background, (though wasn't as financially secure as that would imply). Nash was working as an artist during the time when the Surrealist movement developed and became significant. It is the Surreal properties in his work we shall concern ourselves with here. Surrealism in its purest form was concerned with leftist ideology. The Surrealists sought the overthrow of forces they considered to be socially and materially oppressive. They believed their art was a means towards this end. Nash was involved with the International Surrealist Exhibition in London in 1936, as a committee member. The result was an increased influence of Surrealism in his work.



*Landscape from a dream by Paul Nash, 1936-8.*

In this painting, Nash has used a mirror, spheres, a hawk and its reflection and a screen, set against a backdrop of the Dorset coastline. Dreams were a significant source of inspiration and imagery to the Surrealists. By mixing up still-life elements and mythical subjects (hawk and sphere) with the landscape, the artist articulates a potentially deeper meaning to the viewer, depending on how they take it.