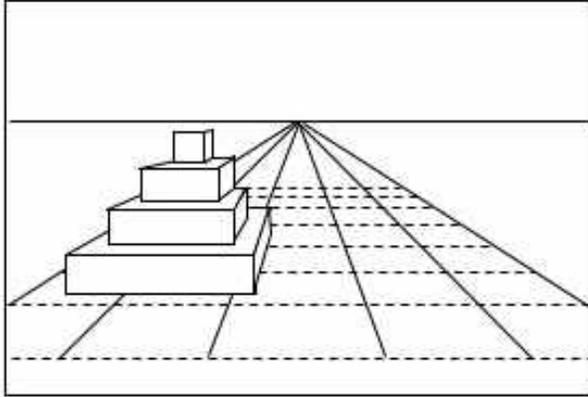# Aerial Perspective Landscape

You might be familiar with linear perspective, where objects appear to get smaller as they recede into the distance. This drawing from webexhibits.org shows a series of lines and boxes that converge in the distance in what is known as a "vanishing point," where your eye can no longer follow them.

Aerial perspective, also known as atmospheric perspective, is different. This kind of perspective shows what objects—usually landscapes—look like as the atmosphere affects them in the distance. It's interesting that things that are far away seem to get lighter and lighter. Their colors grow less intense and detail is harder to see.

Leonardo da Vinci used aerial perspective in many of the landscape backgrounds of his paintings. This detail from his *Virgin of the Rocks* painted between 1483–1486 clearly shows how the far rocks look much paler than those that are close up.
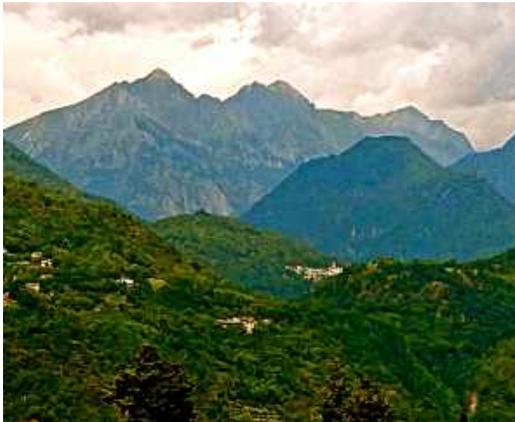
The photo to the left shows mountains in the Italian Alps.

This picture from Brigham Young University's art department depicts mountains getting lighter in the distance and also shows the difference in scale between close-up trees (note also how dark they look) and those far off that just look like textured wool.

This week we will create a landscape that demonstrates aerial perspective.

Supplies:

Newspaper to cover your work surface
White matt board (or cardboard painted white with acrylic paint)
3 pieces of white tissue paper that are wide enough to stretch across your
        background
Blue, blue-green or purple watercolor paint
Brush
Water cup
Scissors
Glue stick
Optional: hole puncher; dark construction paper or magazine paper to make
        trees

Procedure:

Ball up your white tissue paper to create wrinkles, which will make the mountains look textured.

Then open them up and smooth out.

You will need a full range of tones (also called "values" in art) from dark to light of your chosen color. Wet your brush thoroughly and moisten your watercolor repeatedly until you get a soupy consistency. Make sure you have enough paint to evenly cover one piece of your tissue paper. Paint this piece and set aside to dry.

Add a little water to your base color until it is noticeably lighter. Make sure you have enough to evenly cover the second piece of your tissue paper. Paint this piece and set aside to dry.

Add a little water to your second color until it is noticeably lighter. Make sure you have enough to cover the third piece of your tissue paper. Paint this piece and set aside to dry.

You should now have papers with three distinct tones.

Paint the sky on your background matt board the lightest tone. It's okay if this is the same tone as your third piece of tissue paper because distant mountains often seem to merge with the sky. Note that you do not need to paint more than halfway down because the bottom of your board will be covered with the tissue paper sheets. Let dry.

Cut and/or tear across each piece of paper to create your mountains' curves and peaks. Place your papers on top of your background and arrange them until you have a composition that you like. Make sure to overlap them. Keep in mind that the darkest mountains will be closest to the bottom of your background, your middle tone will go in the middle, and your lightest tone will be against the sky.

Remove the layers closest to the bottom (the darkest and the middle value) carefully and set aside. Make a light pencil notation along the **bottom** of your top piece so that when you remove it to add glue you will be able to place it back where you want it. Carefully turn this paper over onto a piece of scrap paper and gently but thoroughly add glue to the entire back. Flip it onto the background, lining the bottom up with your pencil mark. Use the tip of your finger to carefully smooth out the paper. It's okay to leave a few wrinkles if you want to add texture. You can trim the side edges when you are done or wrap them around to the back.

Follow the same steps with your middle and lower layers. Note that your bottom layer should align with the bottom of your background sheet.

Options:

Add some extra dark color to a leftover scrap of paper and add some more mountains towards the bottom of the paper.

Make a moon with a hole puncher using white paper. If you want to use leftover tissue paper, fold it three times so that it is triple thick; otherwise, it might not punch through easily. When you glue your moon down, the extra layers will make your moon look luminous. You can also add some clouds if you like.

Use dark colored construction paper or find some pages in a magazine that are a dark color and create trees. Note that trees should be against the very bottom of your picture because you won't be able to see enough detail on any mountains behind.