



The Library  
of the



University of Wisconsin









**PRACTICAL  
PICTORIAL COMPOSITION**

**BOOKS BY E. G. LUTZ**

*With Illustrations by the Author*

**PRACTICAL GRAPHIC FIGURES**

The technical side of drawing for cartoons and fashions

**PRACTICAL DRAWING**

A book for the student and the general reader

**PRACTICAL ART ANATOMY**

Structural anatomy of the human figure easily understood by ingeniously drawn diagrams

**ANIMATED CARTOONS**

How they are made, their origin and development

**DRAWING MADE EASY**

A helpful book for young artists

**CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS**

# PRACTICAL PICTORIAL COMPOSITION

A GUIDE TO THE APPRECIATION OF  
PICTURES

BY

E. G. LUTZ

WITH PEN-AND-INK INTERPRETATIONS OF PAINTINGS  
AND DIAGRAMMATIC ANALYSES BY THE AUTHOR

NEW YORK  
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

1926

**COPYRIGHT, 1926, BY**  
**CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS**  

---

**Printed in the United States of America**



348658

OCT 29 1929

WP

L97

## CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. INTRODUCTORY . . . . .	3
II. PICTORIAL COMPOSITION AND THE EYE; THE REAL PROPERTIES OF PICTURES . . . . .	13
III. HOW THE EYE TAKES IN PICTURES . . . . .	27
IV. BASIC PLANS OF PICTORIAL COMPOSITIONS . . . . .	37
V. SYMMETRICAL COMPOSITIONS . . . . .	49
VI. PYRAMIDAL COMPOSITIONS . . . . .	59
VII. DIAGONAL COMPOSITIONS . . . . .	75
VIII. CIRCULAR AND ELLIPTICAL COMPOSITIONS . . . . .	91
IX. TUNNEL-LIKE COMPOSITIONS . . . . .	107
X. COMPOSITIONS OF CONVERGING LINES TO A FOCUS . . . . .	121
XI. THE SILHOUETTE . . . . .	139
XII. PATTERNS OF LIGHT AND SHADE . . . . .	153
XIII. LANDSCAPES AND SEASCAPES . . . . .	171
XIV. VARIOUS THOUGHTS ON PICTURE COMPOSITION TION . . . . .	189



**PRACTICAL  
PICTORIAL COMPOSITION**



## INTRODUCTORY



## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTORY

**T**HE endeavor in this book will be to call attention to the principles of construction in pictures, to reason upon these principles and explain how they came to be formulated. The study will have to do mainly with paintings and those pictorial works usually grouped as belonging to the fine arts. Principles of construction are, of course, brought into use in other manners of picture-making. It is only in pictures intended as informative that planning, as in a painting, may be dispensed with. If a picture, however, meant for instruction, has, besides informational force, correctness of drawing and technical skill, and an arrangement which is artistically pleasing, so much the better.

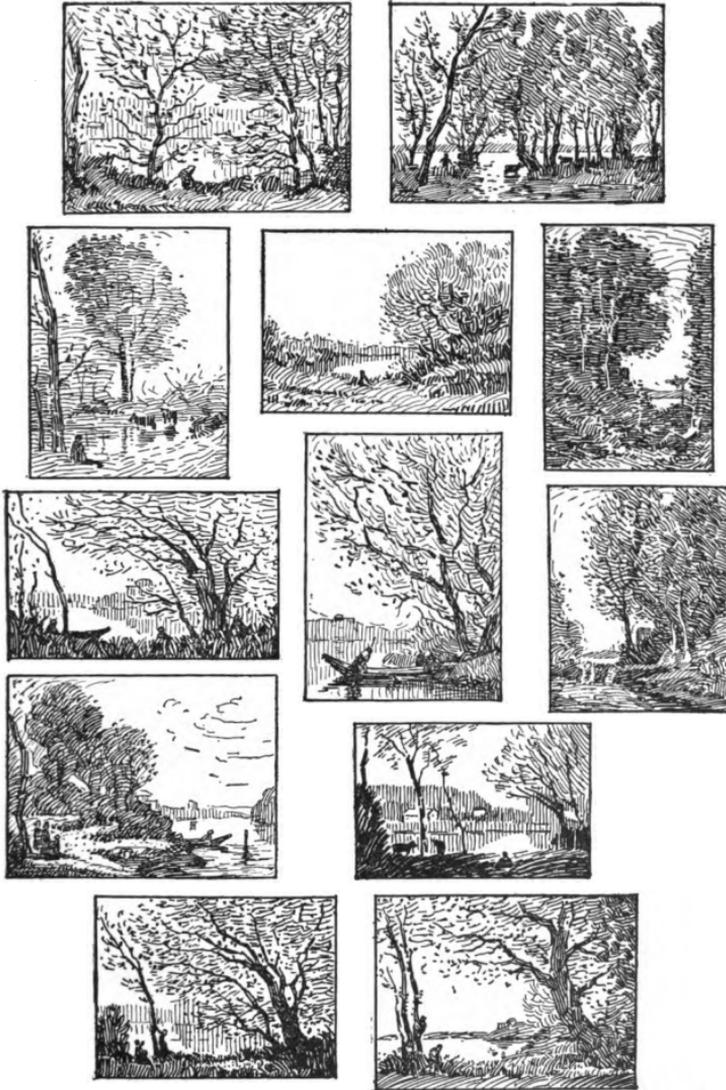
The many varieties of decorative art are all distinguished by a plainly marked ordering of the details to form designs. Certain principles are operative in the making of such designs. They are the principles underlying the formation and disposition

#### 4 PRACTICAL PICTORIAL COMPOSITION

of patterns, masses, and the harmonious placing of associated lines. In large, they are the laws of unity, repetition, balance, and symmetry, and are applied—to instance but two cases—in the designing of a surface pattern and in planning the façade of a building.

When ornamental or decorative designs are viewed they arouse contradictory phases of mental excitations. Repetition is expected, yet there is an abhorrence of monotony; balance and symmetry are looked for, yet there is a dislike if the equipoise and arrangement are too obvious; and unity is demanded, but there is a resentment if crudely produced. These same general notions also hold in the observation of works classed as pictorial.

But now the application of the principles must be somewhat differently managed. In picture-making, the qualities noted above must be adroitly applied and expressed. Where repetition is used it must not be glaringly evident, as it is in a “repeat” pattern. Instead, it must be felt as a quiet presence. Balance and symmetry in a picture must influence the vision in a subtle, almost unrealized way, and



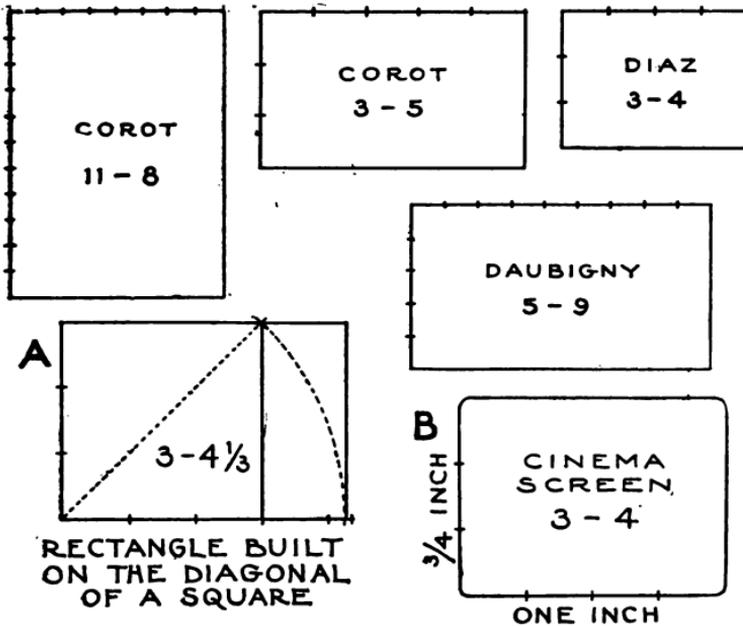
Pen and Ink Impressions of Corot Landscapes

not strongly as a reversed pattern does. Although an obvious quality of unity is to pervade the picture, it must almost verge on disunity.

The first thing to notice in the kind of pictorial works which we are studying in this book, namely, paintings, is that they are enclosed, or intended to be enclosed, within frames. Often, too, they have a mat or margin around the composition besides the frame. Now the enclosing forms—frames, mats, or margins—important as they are, do not greatly interest us here. But what does concern us as students of pictorial works is the shapes of the canvases on which pictures are painted.

There has been a great deal of discussion, as a matter of æsthetics, on the relation of the sides of oblongs best fitted for arousing emotions of beauty. With regard to this—what particular proportion is proper for a canvas—promenades made through art galleries will show that there are a variety of ratios. Ordinarily this is something which we pay little attention to. It is only when a proportion is before us different from the kind to which we have been accustomed that we take any special notice of it.

In five paintings by Corot coming under the author's notice, in which the longest dimensions of the rectangles are horizontal, the ratio is an average



Average proportions of the canvases of Four French Landscapists.

**A**-Harmoniously proportioned area.

**B**-Shape of a rectangle with which we are becoming familiar.

one of 3 to 5. This conforms to a ratio often stated as pleasing. The ratio of 5 to 8, which approximates the one just given, is also cited as one giving a

sense of the beautiful. In five upright pictures by Corot the average proportions were 11 to 8. Daubigny, who was fond of long horizontal lines, showed a preference for canvases in which the width was much greater than the height. Seven of his paintings averaged a proportion of 5 to 9. A form nearly square is found in the canvases on which Diaz painted his landscapes. They averaged a ratio of 3 to 4. This is a rectangle which our eye is becoming familiar with, as it is the one holding the picture on the motion-picture screen. The little spaces on the ribbon of celluloid which hold the separate photographs in sequence are in a proportion of 3 to 4. (Three-quarters of an inch by one inch.)

Another pleasing relation of quantities in borders of areas is one in which the diagonal of a square is used as the long side of a rectangle, while a side of this particular square gives the measure of the short side. This produces a rectangle which is of a ratio of 3 to about  $4\frac{1}{3}$ .

A choice of certain shapes of canvases is part of a painter's style, as much so as his choice of subject, the technic which he practises, his range of

colors, and his preference for a special structure in his compositions.

Naturally, an artist, if he is truly an artist, breaks



### Pen and Ink Interpretations of Four Diaz Landscapes

away occasionally from some such formula as that of particular canvas shape.

Becoming skilful and developing ways in the practical work of composing pictures are matters of individual concern on the part of students. It is helpful for them to give thoughtful attention to the

pictures of the past and the best works of modern times, as such pictures, in the greater number of cases, will have "structure." This having structure, or a plan of composition, has had most to do in making a picture worthy of showing in a museum, or desired by collectors.

Whether a painting shows a simple construction, a unifying of lines and forms, an arrangement of patterns, or any special disposing or repeating of details—themes for subsequent chapters—the object of it all has been to create harmony and, among other things, help the expression of an idea. A work with no plan does not make a good medium for the expression of an idea. Such a picture would be likely to have but one message—discord.

The first thing for an artist to have when contemplating a pictorial composition is an idea. After this he selects the kind of composition desired, or which he believes to be suitable for the idea. Here is where it is advantageous to study the various kinds of picture-planning which the masters of the past have used, for that helps in acquiring practical ability in the work.

# PICTORIAL COMPOSITION AND THE EYE

2001.  
F. 1911.

## CHAPTER II

### PICTORIAL COMPOSITION AND THE EYE

#### *The Real Properties of Pictures*

**O**UR inquiry into the proportions of canvases of three landscapists has shown us that artists have preferences for certain proportions. The Daubigny landscapes are distinctive in that they are longer and narrower than most painters' canvases. Daubigny, besides his preference for a long oblong, liked a low horizon, which he often emphasized with the expanse of the placid surface of a river. Then he frequently accentuated the horizontal quality by indicating a file of ducks swimming straight across the picture. And some slanting lines were drawn at obliquities which made very small angles with the line of the horizon. This peculiarity added to the horizontal quality.

A typical plan of a Daubigny landscape is a simple diagram of a line for a low horizon, and two opposed slanting lines crossing it at a point to one side of the center. The upper parts of the slanting

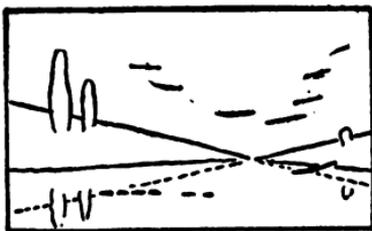
lines define the foliage masses, while their corresponding parts below mark the foliage reflections in the water. The meeting-place for the slanting lines, generally on the right, is counterbalanced on the left by a few vertical lines. These lines mark the places for tall trees.

Now this plan easily serves as the elementary construction, or description, of a number of Daubigny's landscapes, and brings out the significance of a plan in a picture.

What the peculiar force of good composition consists of may be brought out negatively in this way: in any picture minus a good arrangement a lack of something is felt, and the picture is disturbing as the disposition of the components is annoying to the eye. Why? Mainly because vision, meaning the organ of sight and accessory nervous apparatus, becomes fatigued in functioning unpleasantly. Here we come to an important point with respect to the effect on the beholder of a good or a bad pictorial composition.

We are contemplating some painting in a museum, there is a given effect of color, luminosity,

MET. MUS.  
OF ART  
NEW YORK



PLAN OF  
TYPICAL  
DAUBIGNY  
LANDSCAPE



Daubigny Landscapes Analyzed

and arrangement of the components. It holds us for any one or all three effects. But only for a moment or two, as we find its further consideration affords us no pleasure, and so we dismiss it speedily. The whole matter has been one of psychic and physiological fatigue. The eye in an unawareness of manner was made to jump zigzaggedly over the various details which were placed with no definiteness of planning. Poorly disposed components caused the organic parts functioning in vision to operate, not in the easiest, pleasantest way, but disturbingly and distressingly.

Consider a Daubigny picture again: we find it a pleasant occupation for the eye to wander over the canvas. The trends of lines toward one point on the horizon are agreeable, because in following them the eye, as a physiological organ, has functioned smoothly; and sight, as a psychic activity, was satisfied in having been led easily and therefore pleasantly to this point.

The meaning of good pictorial composition and its effect on sight and mind are illustrated by comparing pictures by Canaletto and Guardi with two

by Turner. Guardi and Canaletto made many pictures of scenes in their native city of Venice. In the examples chosen for illustration here they have shown a number of gondolas scattered about on the

GUARDI



CANALETTO



J. M. W. TURNER



Pictures by Guardi and Canaletto compared with two by Turner.

surfaces of the canals in their respective pictures. There is nothing greatly disturbing in the way they have disposed the gondolas in their compositions, but their manner of doing it was somewhat child-like, and shows only mechanical placing of these

details. On the other hand, the two pictures by Turner, Venetian views also, show a thoughtful grouping of the boats. In the Guardi and Canaletto scenes it seems an easy matter to count the boats—one, two, three, and so on. They are so clearly silhouetted and placed that we allow our eyes to wander over them once, and are then finished with them. The gondolas are so precisely depicted and arranged that there is no element of surprise. In the Turner pictures the boats are grouped and massed, and the eye is held by a puzzling, but not actively baffling, mystery.

Before attending to the preliminary description of the different kinds of pictorial constructions—which will be taken up in a later chapter—we would give a few words to the consideration of what a good picture really is with respect to its qualities and essentials.

A pictorial work should have the essentials of repose and movement, and the qualities of good draftsmanship and character. Repose is fundamental; it gives to a picture satisfied feelings of balance and unity. Balance is well symbolized in a pyramid or a bilaterally symmetrical design. Movement is ex-

emplified by a landscape like that of Daubigny, where the eyes are led to a focus. And movement, expressed with great refinement, was exemplified in the subtle, psychic exploration of boat-grouping in the two pictures by Turner described above.

Repose, furthermore, is to be thought of as the conserving force; the border which bounds the picture; and the unit of perception that gives an immediate inward image. It has to do with the equilibrium of the components, the inert quality from which starts the initial phase of the movement. Any first impression of one particular picture is an almost incognizant perception. The moment or so which is taken up with this first impression is that of perceiving, quite automatically, the unity or repose quality. Then follows the exploration of the picture, the movement quality, which as it continues brings into play strictly conscious thoughts and voluntary mental activity. This quickly involves, or is continued by, a critical examination with respect to the picture's meaning and technical characteristics.

Movement and proportion are related; the classi-

cal canons of proportions of the human figure with their divisions imply movement. A square resting on a base is an example of absolute repose, but a rectangle with unequal sides gives a feeling of movement to the eye at once. In a square there is little for the eye to wander over or have continued interest, as the fact of the four sides being equal is grasped at once. Eye movement and interest begin, and continue, as soon as there is a difference in related quantities.

The association of movement and a scale of quantities is shown by compositions of light and shade in masses. An example is an etching by Rembrandt of "The Descent from the Cross by Torchlight." In this picture the series of areas of varying tones give a feeling of movement along the chain of graduated patterns. The strong light, the source of illumination, first attracts the eye. From this point the eye begins to explore the picture through the series of lessening lighted areas to the darkening tones, and then to those of the deepest black in the background. This activity of the vision, conscious on reflection, but with a certain amount of unware-

ness, is what is meant by movement when looking at pictures.

A vivid and contrasting effect of light and shade, with sharply defined areas, is often very decorative



Descent  
from the  
Cross -  
Rembrandt

Arranged  
as a simple  
effect of  
Light  
and  
Shade.

as a design or forcible as an illustration, but it requires only a moment or two for visual comprehension. Such effects, especially when found in posters, attract immediate attention. But it is not lasting, for they are as quickly turned away from, as there

is no mystery in the bold coloring and sharply defined areas. A work of art has, as one of its attributes, a certain something which mystifies and arouses an interrogatory interest.

In a picture, such as this one of Rembrandt, there is a continual interest in contemplating it, as the eye is made to wander over it through the force exerted by the variety of patterns and the changes in tones.

We show, as a summary in concluding this chapter, a tabulation of the properties of pictures. Of the

#### TABULATION OF THE REAL PROPERTIES OF PICTURES

ESSENTIALS	{ Pictorial composition proper	REPOSE	{ Satisfying the feeling of balance
		MOVEMENT	{ Satisfying the desire for visual activity
QUALITIES	{ Things significant of the personality of the painter	CHARACTER	{ Intellectual appeal Emotional appeal Sincerity Thought (Ideas) Mannerisms Originality
		CRAFTSMANSHIP	{ Technic Truth of drawing Seriousness Decisiveness Style Congruity

two properties: essentials and qualities, essentials have the most to do with construction, and the particulars under this head are those dealt with in this book.

To state that qualities are the things significant of the artist's personality does not mean to imply that the manner of constructing a picture is no less significant of personality. This is very clearly brought out in analyzing a number of works of a master, as then one part of his personality is shown by the way he prefers certain types of picture planning.



# HOW THE EYE TAKES IN PICTURES



## CHAPTER III

### HOW THE EYE TAKES IN PICTURES

**T**O put it briefly, the reason for arranging the details of a picture into some kind of a composition is to attract the eye, hold it, and have it lead in an easy way over the picture area. It is proper now, at this point, before we go into the consideration of the different types of compositions, to make clear how the eye acts when looking at pictures. In doing so we will give specific examples to explain the matter.

Among the paintings by Chardin, a French painter of the eighteenth century, is one called "Le Bénédicité." This picture shows a group of a woman and two children. The woman is standing and the children are seated, and they, with a table and some objects, form a pyramidal mass. The woman stands facing the left with her bent back and downward sweeping margin of her skirt giving a line from the left downward to the right. This defines, in a curv-

ing line, the right side of the pyramid. Now in beholding this picture we are aware of first: (1)\* that it is an arrangement in light and shade. Next (2) the eye quickly notices that the head of the woman is at the peak of the pyramidal mass. The eye does not rest here but follows the outwardly curving downward line (3), spoken of above as giving the right side of the pyramid. This is the bent back of the woman, and the margin of her skirt. When the sight, in its path, has reached the lower rim of the skirt, it does not continue in this direction to go out of the picture, but is arrested by an object (4) on the floor. At this lower right-hand corner the eye having been stopped by the object, a brazier, finds the only other direction for it to follow is across to the left corner of the picture. Here it is again held by an object and prevented from leaving the picture area. After this it is forced to go in the only other possible direction, namely, upward (5). The impulsion to go in this direction comes from the placing of a few components in a path that marks the line of this, the left side of the pyramid. This

\* The numbers refer to corresponding ones in the engraving on page 29.

CHARDIN  
(1699 - 1779)

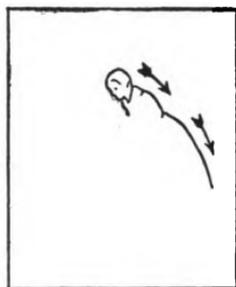


LE  
BÉNÉDICTÉ  
(LOUVRE)

1.



3.



2.



4.



5.



Analysis of A Pyramidal Composition  
Order in which the eye and mind function  
while looking at this picture.

eye movement ends at the head of the woman, the peak of the pyramid, from which point it may follow the triangular path again and alternate with

occasional restful glances to other details of the picture.

The picture of "The Organ Rehearsal," by Henry Lerolle, shows the lower left area, which is triangular, in shadow, and filled principally with a group of figures. The upper right triangular area, a smaller space, represents the interior of the main body of a church. The space with the group is the organ loft.

The first feature noticed in this picture after we experience the initial perception of a general effect of light and shade (1)\* is the standing figure of a woman who is singing (2). She is clearly silhouetted, and the curious contour which the dress of the period of about 1885 gives it draws the attention at once. Its effectiveness is striking and seems to hold the attention a trifle longer than is usual in a single detail of a composition. Next we notice that the vertical axis of this figure (3) cuts a certain obliquity—it is that of the loft railing. The line of this obliquity divides the picture into two areas, one light and the other dark.

On the floor, nearly directly below the principal

\* The numbers refer to corresponding ones in the engraving on page 31.

figure, are a few large books and sheets of music. This collection of objects (4) catches the eye. Vision does not rest there but continues its movement to a

HENRY LEROLLE



THE ORGAN REHEARSAL  
MET. MUS OF ART. N. Y.



Progressive functioning of the eye and mind as it takes in this picture.

group of figures (5), and then on to the man seated before the keyboard of the organ.

It would appear that the large area of the loft, with the figures and details in dark tones, would be heavy on this side, comparing it with the smaller area of the luminous interior with only vaguely indicated details; particularly as the singer (6) is in

the middle, and almost seems to act as a pivot, making the large, heavily shadowed left side go down, much as a pair of scales would if one side were loaded down with weights. But it seems to the author that this picture is well balanced, as the smaller area is so filled with the sense of light, the illusion of space, and an effect of atmosphere that the eye has as much exercise in wandering over its mysterious charm as it does in exploring the part with the large components in the foreground.

Perhaps it can be stated in this way: The drawing of details in the loft is precise, and the mind solves the presentation in a certain fixed determinable time, while in the luminous part the details are so delicately indicated that there is scope for the imaginative eye to linger and wonder just as long as it is necessary to counterbalance the determined time which the eye took in looking at the figures and details in the shadowed loft. We did not, in the first few moments as we contemplated one of these pictures, experience conscious verbal thinking. We were held by the spell of harmony expressed by the construction which had a quality holding

and soothing us, so that we were in a calm mood for further attentive study. This condition, which we believe to have been the case in the two examples given above, is proof that the pictures were pleasantly composed. Had it been otherwise we should have been agitated and irritated, and should have probably turned away. When a picture is badly composed, or with no attempt at structural planning, the mind is disturbed in translating the retinal image into mind concepts or thoughts. Psychologically, or physiologically, no matter in which way we regard it, there is a disagreeable effect.

A work of real pictorial art has in it an indescribable quality, one which impresses us at first and holds us with a composing essence. The first impression of a picture calls into activity the most inward sentient powers, that part of our mental life difficult to describe or designate by a name. A picture planned well influences this enigmatical part of our mind, and arouses emotions having no need of word thoughts. (We do not think verbally during the first few moments when looking at a Corot landscape.) After the initial wordless perception, the

## 34 PRACTICAL PICTORIAL COMPOSITION

mind is given further satisfaction and the eye physical activity by following the structural planning. Various ways of this planning we will give a summary of in the next chapter.

**BASIC PLANS OF PICTORIAL  
COMPOSITIONS**



## CHAPTER IV

### BASIC PLANS OF PICTORIAL COMPOSITIONS

**O**F the items in the tabulation of the real properties of pictures given at the conclusion of Chapter II, only two—repose and movement—will be considered in this book. These two qualities, or, as we have called them, essentials, are analyzed after this fashion:

REPOSE	{	Unity Harmony Symmetry Balance
MOVEMENT	{	Variety Rhythm Repetition Proportions

Again we wish to state that in a critical treatise on art, the terms, analyses, and tabulations are more in the nature of expediencies than hard-and-fast rules to go by.

We will now consider the basic plans of pictures and put them into some sort of classification.

*Symmetrical Compositions*

The most elementary structure of which we may speak as having repose is one in which symmetry and balance are clearly expressed. Many of the religious pictures of the old Italian masters are good examples. In taking one as a simple case there is a central component, and on each side a figure. Or there may be two groups balancing each other with a central element.

*Pyramidal Compositions*

A pyramidal composition has the important detail or group in a mass which is triangular. Elementary types of this kind of construction also have symmetry and balance.

In this connection it is interesting to compare a composition by Titian, of the "Madonna and Child with Saint Catherine and Saint John," with figure decorations on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, by Michael Angelo. The Titian work is a painting of an oblong shape while the Angelo pictures are enclosed within spaces formed by tympana. Both

have groups or figures in triangular masses. The thought evoked by the comparison is that perhaps

THE ESPOUSAL  
OF ST. CATHERINE  
TITIAN  
FLORENCE



SALMA



REHOBAM



ASA

THREE TYMPANUM  
DECORATIONS BY  
MICHAEL ANGELO  
SISTINE CHAPEL

Pyramidal Compositions  
Painting by Titian and Decorations by  
Michael Angelo compared.

the pyramidal type of composition in easel and altar pictures may have come about through the influence of examples in tympanic areas over doors and other architectural features. Or, explained in

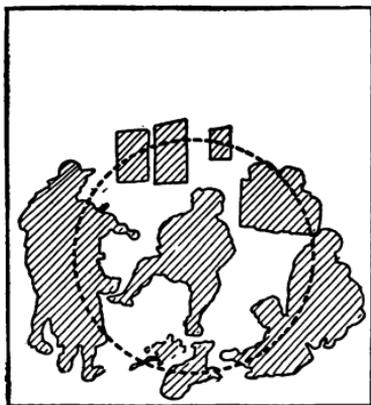
more detail: a mural painter, with the problem of placing a figure, or group, in the area defined by the tympanum, was compelled to arrange things so that the triangular space is filled to the best advantage. Obviously this would result in a pyramidal composition. Then a painter of an easel or altar picture, although not forced to do so, posed his figures in a pyramidal group because he saw in the mural work the effectiveness of a compact triangular mass.

### *Diagonal Compositions*

Many pictures are built upon this, the diagonal plan. Diagrammatically it is represented by an oblong with one diagonal. A noticeable characteristic of this kind of structure is that the diagonal most frequently runs from an upper left corner down to the lower right one. The diagonal of a typical example separates two triangular areas, in one of which the near, larger, deeper, or brighter-colored details are found. In considering this particular of the diagonal going this way, we come to what seems to be a preference of the eye for travelling along a path go-



A. VAN OSTADE WANDERING MUSICIANS  
THE HAGUE



TENIERS  
THE  
YOUNGER



BOORS  
REGALING  
NAT. GAL  
LONDON

### A Circular and An Elliptical Composition

ing downward to the right. This theory will be more fully considered in a subsequent part of the book.

#### *Circular and Elliptical Compositions*

Two forms of this kind of composition are plainly circular or elliptical in having the details distributed so as to suggest these forms. There is in nearly all

cases of a circular or elliptical arrangement an important component within the centre. Not always, however, in the exact middle of the space. Some details, of themselves, in certain constructions of this type, give a circular movement by the sweep of their curving forms. These details are usually drapery folds, clouds, or parts of the human figure such as gesturing arms.

### *Tunnel-like Compositions*

A variation of the preceding type of construction is one in which a view is given looking off into the distance under an arch-like affair. The effect is accomplished sometimes by arranging the details on some sort of a frame. It may be circular, elliptical, or rectangular. The particular frame surrounds an enclosing series of similar forms which decrease in size. The view of the distance, really a vista, is had through the smallest of these forms.

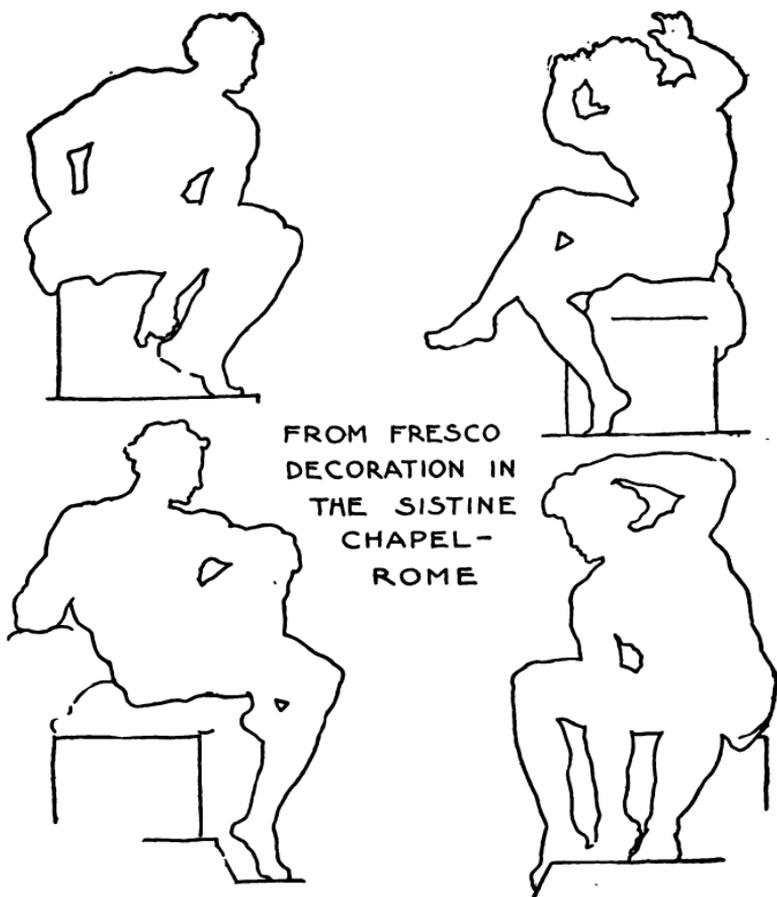
### *Converging Lines to a Focus*

Next in order are those pictures which are built upon a plan showing an evident focus for the prin-

cial lines; or in some cases, as sunsets, a point from which lines radiate. Nearly every picture has, of course, a point, spot, or place of interest to which the eye is led. In a picture built on the plan now considered there is a definite guiding to a point by details arranged in lines, either manifest or imagined. The focussing may even be implied, as in the case of a number of people in a group with their eyes directed toward one point. A problem in elementary perspective would answer for a typical converging line composition.

### *The Silhouette*

We come now to a plan having generally but a single component, which forms a more or less clear-cut silhouette. If there are other components they are small and subsidiary, and not of enough importance to take away from the justness of regarding this type of composition as having but a single component. Referring to Michael Angelo again, we direct the attention to some of his decorative figures in the Sistine Chapel which, when shown as pure outlines, illustrate the forcibleness of a figure with a



### Plastic Contours in Four of Michael Angelo's Figures

good silhouette. These figures are those of athletically built youths placed in such simple poses that the eye finds an agreeable activity in following the

contours. There is a plastic quality in these figures, that is, their poses have peculiarities and contours proper to sculpture. Pictures coming under this head are direct in their representation and readily understood. Often they are full-length portraits on large canvases, and life-size or approximating it.

### *Patterns of Light and Shade*

Lastly, we have pictures in which the first visual impression is one of a contrasting effect of light and shade. The term *chiaroscuro* (kiar-os-ku-ro), which signifies the art of artistically arranging lights and shade in a picture, may also be applied to works grouped under this head. Hitherto most of the remarks on composition have been made respecting lines in some sort of a construction, the direction, character, and disposition of which determined the way the eye was to follow to a focus or along some agreeable path. In an arrangement of patterns there is a point of interest, too, but instead of the eye following lines it is guided by a judicious disposition of graduated patterns in a sequence. The graduating may be that of size, light-and-shade values, or colors.

Some pictures of this type have the point of interest a place from which the movement starts instead of being led up to. Naturally, though, when it is a high light, or a strong note of color, it always will be attractive to us.

The above eight groups of composition are more fully treated in the following chapters. But there are other ways of constructing pictures than these. In landscapes and seascapes many different kinds are used. Following a chapter on them is one giving a few thoughts on various considerations respecting other ways in pictorial construction.

# SYMMETRICAL COMPOSITIONS



## CHAPTER V

### SYMMETRICAL COMPOSITIONS

**F**RA ANGELICO, whose best works are in the monastery of San Marco, in Florence, painted solely for the purpose of imparting religious instruction. One of the qualities of his paintings is a simple directness of composition. We can understand this better if we compare one of his typical pictures with the Campo Santo frescos of Pisa credited to Orcagna. The Campo Santo pictures are complicated, heterogeneous, and practically with no symmetry. They are disturbing and do not give any feeling of repose. On the other hand, Angelico's compositions are so symmetrical sometimes that one side is almost the reversed copy of the other. This gives a feeling of balance and, as in a pair of scales in equilibrium—repose.

Even in the exceptional cases where Angelico's pictures seem to show a certain amount of complexity, as in the rows and rows of angels, there is an orderly

unity in the way the angels are placed in these rows. There is concord in all this, and a reposeful feeling is attained. Some of his pictures show a foreshadowing of the circular and the pyramidal composition, which



The Triumph of Death - Part of a fresco in the Campo Santo - Pisa. Ascribed to Orcagna

types of picture-planning were used more frequently in later periods.

In a narrative picture such as that of "The Story of the Passion," by Memling, the interest is found mainly in its story-telling properties. This "Story of the Passion" has a sequence of incidents in a

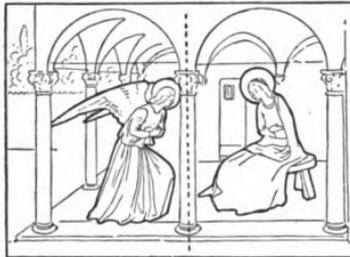


MET. MUS. N. Y.

THE  
CRUCIFIXION



FLORENCE  
CORONATION  
OF THE VIRGIN



THE  
ANNUNCIATION  
SAN MARCO  
FLORENCE



THE  
NATIVITY  
FLORENCE

LOUVRE  
PARIS



MARTYRDOM OF SS. COSMO  
AND DAMIAN

Typical Compositions of Fra Angelico

nearly unbroken line over the picture area. The spectator's mind is kept busy and alert, but it is only by the activity of his reflective powers that he is made to continue to look at this picture. That

is to say, it involves the use of active thinking rather than that silent attention operative when looking at a harmonious composition. In well-composed pictures the sense is touched first by the instant

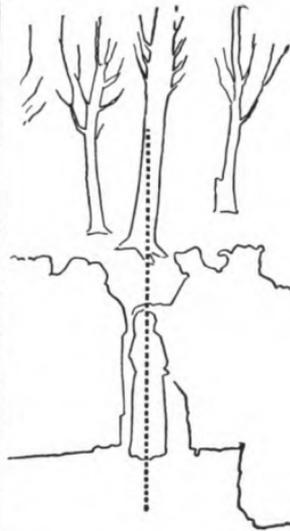


Story of the Passion—Memling. Turin.

apprehension of a unity. This holds the mind and puts it in a tranquil state for further contemplation, during which, in conscious word-thinking, the meaning of the picture may be grasped and understood.

Constructive elements of themselves, even though they are part of the unifying plan, sometimes have the force of movement. For instance, in Angelico's painting of "The Crucifixion," the two oblique lines

defining the backs of leaning figures of each side carry the eye inward and suggest that the attention be directed to the figure on the cross.



PANTHEON

PARIS

ANALYSIS

Blessing of St. Geneviève — Puvis de Chavannes  
 Analysis shows how tree emphasizes  
 the principal figure.

Puvis de Chavannes exhibited a predilection for perpendicular tree forms in his mural decorations. Part of the painting of "The Childhood of Saint Geneviève," in the Panthéon of Paris, shows five trees in the middle ground above the heads of the figures. The central and larger tree is directly over

the head of Saint Geneviève. It is a subtle bit of emphasis: the child saint, smaller than the adults, needs something to make her more conspicuous, and the larger tree, placed in the middle, catches the spectator's eye and directs it downward to the tiny child. The structure, due to the central position of this tree and the important figure on a central axis with the balancing groups on the sides, conforms to the requirements of a symmetrical composition.

The best examples of symmetrical compositions are certain of the sacred pictures of the Italian schools. The famous "Sistine Madonna" of Raphael, in Dresden, invites the eye by its symmetry. The figure of the Pope Sixtus II, and that of Saint Barbara, one on each side, by their equal placing, make the central group effective. And their particular poses—the saint in a devotional attitude and the pope directing his gaze to the centre—invite the fixing of the observer's eye on the middle component. A significant element of the symmetrical plan is the divided curtain at the top, which looks as if it had just opened to disclose the figures of the pictures.

In another of Raphael's pictures, "The Madonna



1.

RAPHAEL



2



3.

ANDREA DEL SARTO



4

SIGNORELLI

### Symmetrical and Pyramidal Compositions

1. Sistine Madonna 2. Madonna del Baldacchino -  
3. Madonna and Saints - 4. La Vergine col Divin Figlio e Santi.

del Baldacchino," in Florence, the symmetrical idea is very evident, but the general mass of the central group is pyramidal—the kind of planning which we are to take up in the next chapter. We can see by this instance how impossible it is to hold to any exact classification in analyzing works of art, for this picture could be grouped with the pyramidal compositions, too.

# PYRAMIDAL COMPOSITIONS



## CHAPTER VI

### PYRAMIDAL COMPOSITIONS

**A**S far as serving as a name for a symbol in the analysis of pictures, there is little need of regarding the precise distinction between "triangle" and "pyramid." These two terms will be used in our study as if having the same meaning, but it has been deemed best to speak of the picture-planning examined in this chapter, when considering them as a group, as of a pyramidal character. This term at once calls to mind a definite concept of a triangle with one of its sides horizontal and resting as a base. A triangle then, somewhat like the direct side view of a pyramid, is the framework or the enclosing form for pictures now under scrutiny.

Giorgione, in his "Virgin and Child and Saint George and Saint Liberale," a picture at Castelfranco, a place in northern Italy, has fixed three figures at the corners of an imaginary triangle. The

Virgin, holding the Child, is at the apex of the form, and the two saints are each at a lower angle. On each side of the central figure, as if viewed over a wall, a glimpse is had of outdoors. This, the pictur-



GIORGIONE  
(1477 ? - 1511)

VIRGIN AND  
CHILD WITH  
SS. GEORGE  
AND LIBERALE

CASTELFRANCO  
ITALY

### Pyramidal Composition

ing of landscape in backgrounds of religious pictures, is a subject which will be mentioned again in a subsequent chapter.

The plan of this picture as a pyramidal composition is intelligible enough, but what saves it from



1. CESARE DA SESTO  
MILAN



2. MURILLO  
FLORENCE



3. LEONARDO DA VINCI  
LOUVRE



4. ALBRECHT DÜRER  
FLORENCE



5. RAPHAEL  
LOUVRE

### Pyramidal Compositions

1. Madonna and Child. 2. Madonna of the Rosary.  
3. St. Anne, Virgin and Child. 4. The Adoration  
of the Kings. 5. La Belle Jardinière.

having too much of the geometric is that the tall staff held by Saint George leans over and crosses the line of the triangle of that side.

This picture, on account of the pendent figures of the two saints and other equalizing details, could very well be called a symmetrical composition.

Other pyramidal compositions, shown by analyses in an engraving on a page of this chapter, are paintings by Cesare da Sesto, Murillo, Leonardo da Vinci, Albrecht Dürer, and Raphael. Comment on them is unnecessary as they are so obviously of a pyramidal construction.

A genre picture of the pyramidal type is the illustration of "The Little Marionettes," by J. Burnet. Another is that of D. Wilkie, of a scene depicting a popular episode in English history, namely, "King Alfred and the Burning Cakes."

In a work, "La Déclaration," by J. F. de Troy, the figures and main objects are enclosed within a triangle. The angles of this form hold details that cause eye movement in the picture. At the lower left angle is a boy stooping over as if coming up from a lower level. That is, he appears to be on the last treads of a flight of steps, and his attitude suggests a movement upward, which gives the hint to the eye to continue the direction. This is a path

of the left side of the pyramidal form. At the apex of the form the eye encounters a large vase. Here the eye is arrested for a moment, but in seeking a new path, goes in a direction downward to the right. This defines the other side of the pyramid. When

D. WILKIE

KING ALFRED AND  
THE BURNING CAKES

J. BURNET



THE LITTLE MARIONETTES

### Pyramidal Compositions Two Typical Genre Subjects

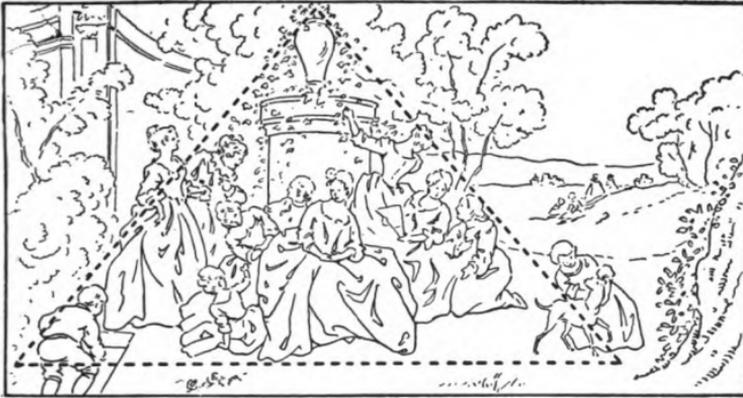
the eye arrives at the bottom—the right-hand corner of the pyramid—it is arrested by a group of interest. It is that of a girl and a dog. This holds the eye momentarily, but as vision cannot stay fixed on one point for any length of time, the trend is over to the other side.

We have an opportunity in this example to note

the seeming inconsistency of a picture having both repose and movement qualities inspired by the same details. To explain: the triangular structure encloses the main components and holds them in their places, and so imparts a feeling of repose, that is, a quiet satisfaction; while movement, or eye exploration, takes place along the path of the enclosing outline.

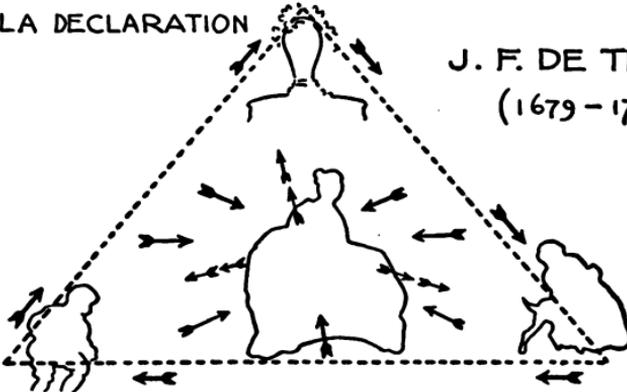
Of course, all this movement around the triangular path takes place in an infinitesimally short space of time. After the eye has so speedily and subtly bounded the mass it trends inward to a figure which has been given great prominence by position and costume. The figure is clothed in a dress which forms a voluminous mass. Its position is nearly in the middle of the space.

Visual activity on the part of the spectator in looking at this picture is like this: the boy, the vase, and the group of the girl and dog, at their respective angles, induce the eye to travel over the triangular path. Then the central figure acts as a lure to draw the eye inward occasionally; only the eye, needing a change, goes outward again, and continues on the



LA DECLARATION

J. F. DE TRÖY  
(1679 - 1752)



A Pyramidal Composition Analyzed Diagram explains manner of movement of the eye when it takes in this picture.

path around the three-sided mass. This activity goes on, back and forth, during the first moments of taking in the picture. Afterward, the eye may

linger over some detail and the mind dwells upon some point of drawing, technic, or any literary feature of the subject.

On page 67, following, a group of pen-and-ink impressions is shown, made from paintings of women by the following artists: Van Dyck, Franz Hals, Reynolds, Madame Vigée-Lebrun, Leonardo da Vinci, and Fortuny. These pictures exhibit the fitness of the pyramid as a basic plan for portraits, as in them the head—the important feature—comes at the apex of the mass. The artists have arranged, in their respective pictures, details of the costumed figures to form triangular masses. The particular position which a head has in one of these canvases is the most telling place for gaining the observer's attention in any picture or design.

Exemplifications of movement induced in the eye are to be found in two of Landseer's pictures. One, the well-known "Jack in Office," shows a dog-meat dealer's pet seated on top of a wheelbarrow, while two other dogs are below at the angles of a pyramidal form enclosing the principal details. The dog on the wheelbarrow is at the apex. The unity expressed by



VAN DYCK  
MARIA RUTHWEN  
MUNICH



FRANZ HALS  
PORTRAIT  
MET. MUS. ART. N.Y



REYNOLDS  
NELLY O'BRIEN  
WALLACE COL.



MADAME VIGÉE LEBRUN  
MRS. LEBRUN AND DAUGHTER  
LOUVRE.



LEONARDO DA VINCI  
MONA LISA.  
LOUVRE.



FORTUNY  
SPANISH LADY  
MET. MUS. ART

## Pyramidal Compositions

these three components, so placed, gives a first perception which attracts and holds the eye. Soon, though, movement has started, as the little dog on the left is depicted looking up at the dog above.

This gives the cue for the direction of the spectator's vision. Then the eye, arriving at the apex, lingers there for a moment, as this dog is so well pictured with a good concentration of light. But, as long attention on one point gives an uneasy feeling, the eye seeks another path. Opportunity for the eye to exert its energy is found next by the path along the other side of the pyramid. This is downward to the right, where the third dog is pictured.

The second work of Landseer which we give as an example of pyramidal composition is the frequently reproduced "The Shepherd's Chief Mourner." A sheep-dog is resting his head against the coffin in which his master's body lies. The initial impulse for the eye's activity is given by the slanting line of the dog's pose. This is a line which goes upward to the right and leads to an object on the wall—the apex of the triangle. From here the vision is led to other objects at the lower right corner of the triangle. These objects are a bench, the shepherd's spectacles, his cap, and a book. After the eye observes these details it finds another suggestion for movement in a stick on the floor. This detail, parallel to the lower

picture margin, carries the eye across to the place of initial activity on the left.

In the last two compositions, and in the one by

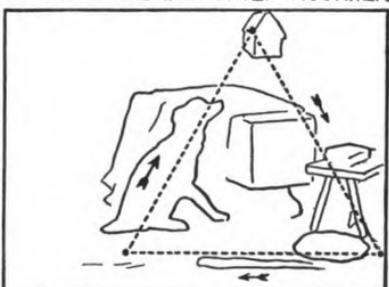
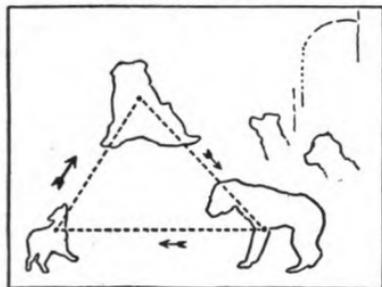
SOUTH KENSINGTON MUSEUM - LONDON



A JACK IN OFFICE.



THE SHEPHERD'S CHIEF MOURNER.



Sir Edwin Landseer (1802-1873)

Pyramidal Compositions - Eye movement takes place as shown in the diagrams.

de Troy, the eye movement was stated as starting at the lower left corner of the pyramid, going to the apex, down the right side, and then across the base of the form to the starting-point. There is every

reason to believe that the movement takes place in this way, as these lower left corners have, in every case, something in the depiction of the details to give hints for this direction. Eye movement may, in other cases, go some other way.

The celebrated etching, "The Hundred Guilder Print," by Rembrandt, of "Christ Healing the Sick," gives, on first beholding it, an effective pattern of light and shade. We are made aware, without any special conscious effort, of a strong illumination on a group of people, with one of the group predominant. It is the figure of Christ. This is due to its nearly central position in the pictorial area, the attitude, and a halo. But the principal element which brings the chief figure out is that it is at the apex of a pyramid. This form is composed of some of the assembly grouped in a more or less triangular mass. This composition is not so exactly pyramidal as the usual structure of this type. Rembrandt was too much of a master to have effected the matter crudely. But there are certain of the heads, hands, and arms arranged in lines which slant inward on each side to trend toward the central figure to give

a triangular character to the main part of the group of figures.

The pyramidal structure is rarely found in landscapes. Isolating, in a picture, a large tree mass and



Analysis of "The Hundred Guilder Print" of Rembrandt

giving it a triangular character does not seem to be liked by landscapists. By the frequency of its practice they seem to prefer that tree or foliage masses be off to the side, and attached, as it were, to margins of the canvas. It is good, though, to use the pyramidal plan for still-lives, and the grouping of

objects or geometrical models for exercises in drawing. Both for still-life studies and drawing a group of models, a definitely shaped mass gives the student an immediately comprehended structure for marking on the paper or canvas.

## DIAGONAL COMPOSITIONS



## CHAPTER VII

### DIAGONAL COMPOSITIONS

**T**HE pictures by the "Little Dutchmen," a certain group of artists of the seventeenth century, nearly all show an easily perceived structure in the composition. One type frequently used was the diagonal. Rembrandt and others of his period painted subjects in a grand manner on canvases of a large scale. The Little Dutchmen, on the other hand, used small canvases for their compositions, the subjects of which were generally genre, understanding this term in its usual meaning. Some of the most conspicuous representatives of the group were Dou, Metsu, Van Ostade, and Steen. A Flemish painter, Teniers, the Younger, was a contemporary of these men. He also put his themes on small canvases.

Before we go on with the study of specific examples of diagonal compositions we will describe a plan of a typical construction of this sort. Imagine a rectangle with a diagonal running from the upper

left corner to the lower right one. With the rectangle divided now into two triangular areas we have the plan of an average diagonal composition. We have instanced a diagonal slanting downward to the right, because the greater number of diagonally planned pictures have the oblique line in this particular direction. One of the ways of arranging a picture of this type is to have the lower area filled with light, and the objects there in prominence, while the other area is in shadow with incidental spots of light.

Gerard Dou produced some pictures in this style, that is, part of the composition in a strong light and part in deep shadow. He probably acquired a liking for effects of strong light and shade from his master, Rembrandt, but he did not follow him in working on large canvases. Three of Dou's pictures when analysed are found to be based on one simple formula. These pictures, by the way, are higher than they are wide. As a general statement on the relation of themes and shapes of canvases, in the pictures of the Dutch school, it may be said that figures with interiors are on upright rectangles, while landscapes are on horizontal ones.



1.

LOUVRE



2.

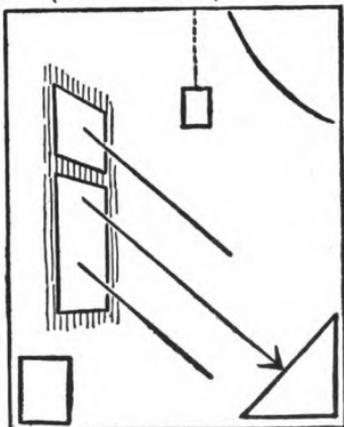
MUNICH

GERARD DOU (1613-1675)



3.

THE HAGUE



ANALYSIS

Three Diagonal Compositions built on one general plan.

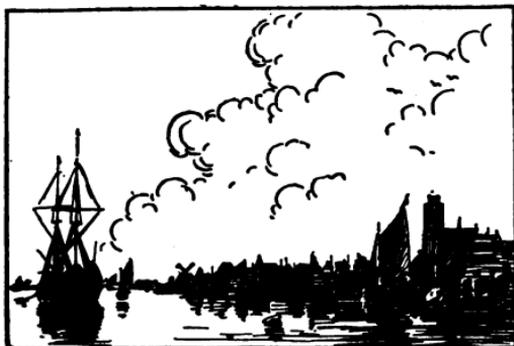
1. The Dropsical Woman - 2. Lady at her Dressing-table - 3. The Young Mother.

Our analysis of the Dou pictures came to this: the scene represents the interior of a room; the light falls slantingly to the right; a group of figures occupy the space illuminated by the light; the light comes from a large window and a smaller one directly over this large one; the light reaches an object at the lower right corner which holds it and prevents it, as well as the vision, leaving the picture area; on the floor in the left corner is an object which the flood of light sets off from the background; immediately above the central group is an object hanging from the ceiling which catches spots of light; at the right, close to the upper corner, are details catching a few weaker spots of light.

This description, with its enumeration of details, could be applied to any one of the three pictures which have been under consideration. Dou's method here seems to be to have one triangular area filled with light and the other in shadow, the principal figure or group under the full play of the light, and the objects in the shadowed part brought out by reflected light.

We can learn the meaning of balance in composi-

tion with respect to one phase of it by a critical study of a painting by Cuyp. This picture, "View of the Maas," is a diagonal composition with the



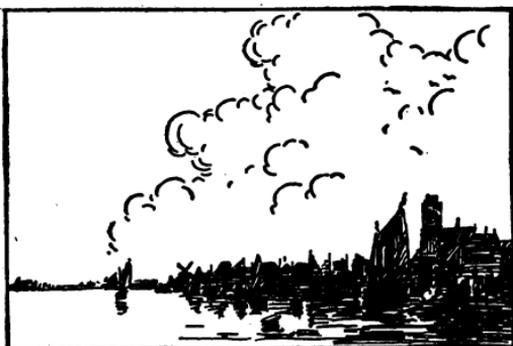
AELBERT CUYP  
(1620-1691)

Complete  
picture

MET. MUS. ART. N.Y.

View on  
the Maas

Lower picture  
is heavy on the  
right as it lacks  
the balancing  
component of the large boat on the left.



imaginary line determining the type going in a direction opposed to that which we have noted as the most usual. However, as it furnishes us with a very good example, we will proceed to examine it. The horizon is low; the foreground is taken up with

the surface of the river; in the distance, stretching to the right, is a town. Toward the right, projecting above the buildings of the town, is a church with a square tower. The space of the buildings and church is narrow, but it is helped to a quality of compactness by a collection of boats. All this, though, does not fill the area so as to comply with the idea of a diagonal plan. But cloud forms fill up the space in such a manner that the picture has a diagonal character. Now the picture as we have described it has all the details to the right, and the deeper shaded ones pushed down toward the lower edge of the canvas. This gives us, as we look at the picture, a feeling of weight on the right side. If left like this it would be unsatisfactory. But the painter balanced all this mass of detail on the right by placing a large ship on the left, somewhat in the middle distance. This component with its hull, masts, and all the reflections in the water gives a forcible note that equilibrates the pictures.

Balance in diagonal pictures is generally accomplished in some such way as this. Sometimes, though, the painter depends upon certain psychic qualities

with which he imbues his depiction so as to stimulate activity in both eye and mind through musing over the mystery of cloud forms or finding interest in a stretch of country extending into the distance. That is to say, instead of by an obtruding component, such as this large boat in Cuyp's painting, subtle visual activity is created by lingering over a sunset, clouds, and sky, or a view into the distance.

As to the remark which we made on the particular obliquity of the line determining diagonal compositions, we believe that its frequency is due to the fact that our writing is in the direction from left to right, and the succeeding lines go downward. In reading, of course, the directions are the same. The purport of the matter is that the eye as a physiological organ and vision as a mental process have become habituated to these directions—to the right and downward.

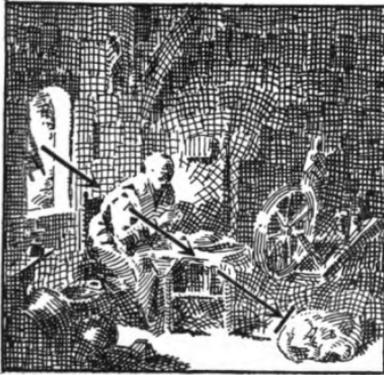
Another factor which has had something to do with the particular direction of the diagonal and the direction of the flood of light is this: the greater number of artists are right-handed, and as they manipulate a brush or pencil they arrange their studio

light so that there is no shadow cast on the picture which they are making. A light coming from the right would cause a shadow preventing the artist seeing clearly that which he is doing. The natural light, then, for an artist is one coming in the direction already described—obliquely from the left downward to the right. Nearly all pictorial art workers prefer the light to fall in that way. This will be better understood and its application to picture composing grasped when we analyze three pictures in the paragraphs which follow.

These pictures, instead of an evident division into triangular areas by diagonals, have this quality by virtue of the oblique direction in which the light falls. This direction, referring to the idea expressed above, is that experienced by an artist working in his studio—downward to the right.

Our first example is a painting by Dou, an old woman eating her humble meal while seated near a window. The light comes into the room and is stopped as it falls obliquely at the lower right corner by striking a detail, a crouched-up sleeping dog. The second picture is one by F. Van Mieris, show-

ing two old people eating and drinking at a table by the window. Here again the light as it comes into the room on the left falls obliquely, to be stopped by an object, a flower-pot, at the lower right corner.

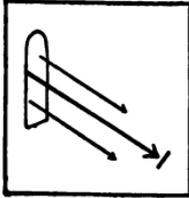


1.  
GERARD DOU

MUNICH



ANALYSIS



FRANZ  
VAN MIERIS  
FLORENCE

The slanting of the light rays gives the diagonal quality in these pictures.

The third picture which we are to consider with this diagonal character is one by Palamedesz. The scene represents a number of people conversing and playing musical instruments. It is a diagonal composition, and yet not built on a geometrical struc-

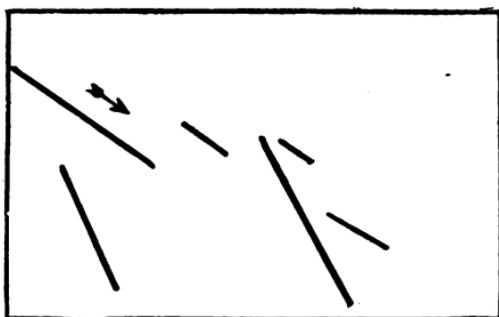
ture. The quality that holds it together as a picture of this type is a subtle obliquity of lines having two phases: the play of light as it enters the room,



PALAMEDESZ  
(1607 - 1638)

THE CONCERT  
THE HAGUE

ANALYSIS



A general obliquity of lines as the diagonal quality in a composition

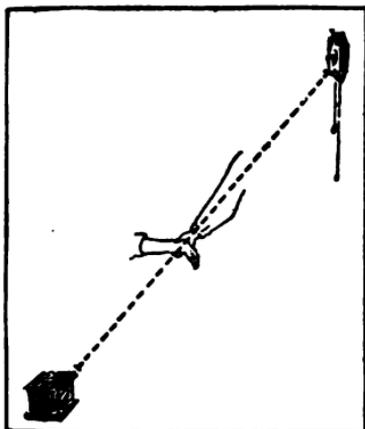
and the repetition of similar slanting lines in some details and the poses of figures. For instance, with regard to the second phase: a boy is pouring out wine, and his pose is such that his right leg is

stretched out in the direction giving this diagonal quality; one of the men near the centre has an attitude which gives by its general pose this direction again; and a long-stemmed pipe held by a figure



JAN STEEN

AMSTERDAM



ANALYSIS

## THE CONSULTATION

## Diagonal Composition

The eye is made to connect the components along the diagonal

and the bow held by a 'cello-player have this particular obliquity of direction.

An interesting bit of symbolism is found in the picture "The Consultation," by Jan Steen. This painting shows a doctor taking the pulse of a woman. The patient is seated on the left with her head rest-

ing on a pillow on a table. The doctor, who is standing on the right, has an arm extended to feel the pulse of the woman. This is a diagonal composition, but the slanting line characterizing it is imaginary, and connects three details: a clock in the

Mme. Sarah  
Bernhardt  
Painted  
by CLAIRIN



PETIT PALAIS

An Example  
of  
Diagonal  
Composition.

PARIS

upper right corner on the wall; a foot-warmer on the floor on the left; and at a point almost central, the incident of the pulse-feeling. The symbolism expressed in joining the three details, all pertinent to the theme, is clear.

Another peculiarity of diagonal compositions is one in which the principal figure, or its general pose is, as it were, stretched along the oblique line which

goes from corner to corner. Clairin's portrait of Sarah Bernhardt is a picture of this type.

Diagonal compositions, briefly summed up, may



TENIERS LOUVRE  
THE PRODIGAL



ZURBARAN MUNICH  
ST. FRANCIS



POTTER  
LANDSCAPE  
WITH CATTLE



BOUCHER LOUVRE  
PASTORAL



JAN STEEN MET.MUS.N.Y.  
A DUTCH KERMESE

## Diagonal Compositions

be built in these four ways: (1) On an obvious geometrical plan with the diagonal separating a light area from one in shadow. (2) Plainly geometrical with the diagonal marking off of one region holding the important details. (3) An implied, almost enig-

matic diagonal quality by the direction which is given by the drawing to some of the details, or in which the light falls. (4) The pose of the principal component—a figure generally—built on a diagonal.

**CIRCULAR AND ELLIPTICAL  
COMPOSITIONS**



## CHAPTER VIII

### CIRCULAR AND ELLIPTICAL COMPOSITIONS

**C**URVED lines as we see and imagine them imply movement rather than quiescence. Particularly when we hold in our minds the concept of a circle as it so readily suggests the thought of wheel movement. But as a circle is complete in itself and holds any components placed along its path in their places, and so achieves unity and harmony, it can be considered as a symbol of repose. A circular structure gives a composition a oneness which satisfies the mind in its first impression, and puts it in a receptive mood for further appreciative interest.

Of the numerous illustrations of Gustave Doré, in his Bible gallery, nearly one-fourth are built on a circular plan. Four of the best examples are analyzed here by little pen-and-ink sketches. In telling about them we can readily follow the formula-like method used when studying the three diagonal compositions of Dou, that is, analyze them and find some general description which will fit all four pic-

tures. In pursuance of this method, then, we observe that there is a component in the centre, a single figure or group; around this feature a sequence of subsidiary details is circled; certain prominent points of these details are heads, human members in action or objects, and approximately they carry the line of the encompassing curve around the detail in the centre. This description, which fits our four examples of Doré now under consideration, is all which would be needed to define any elementary circular composition.

Some others, however, are not so easily described. The "Transfiguration" of Raphael, in the Vatican, can be thought of as two pictures. The upper part is unmistakably of the circular type, with the principal figure—Christ—as the central feature and five figures—prophets and disciples—around it. Below in the second picture, or second part of the whole composition, the figures in the group have certain details disposed in an ellipse, or properly a circle in perspective.

The element linking these two pictures together as one composition is a psychological one, for it takes



HEALING THE SICK.



THE LAPIDATION OF ST. STEPHEN



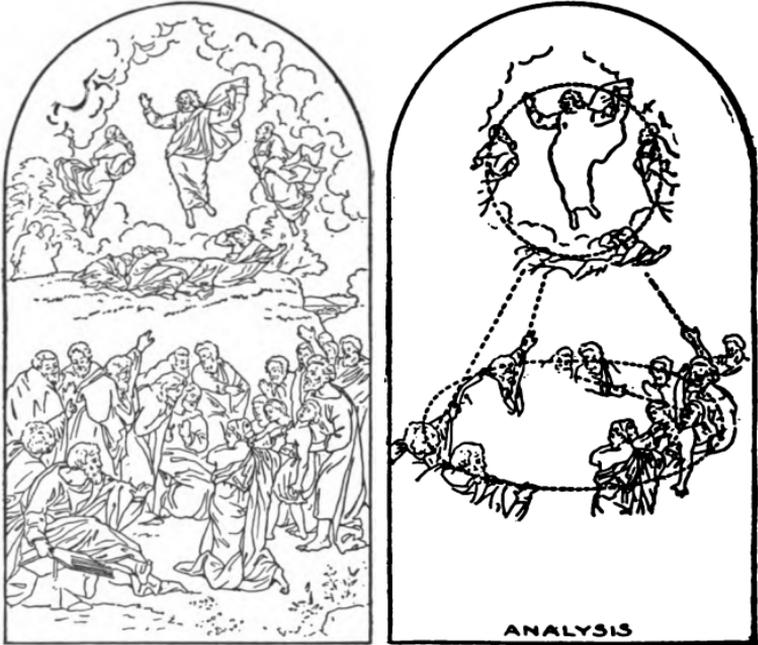
PAUL AT EPHEBUS



THE STAR IN THE EAST

Circular Compositions  
Illustrations by G. Dore'

place in the mind of the spectator. It is accomplished through the stimulative quality of the gestures of some of the figures. Three of the disciples

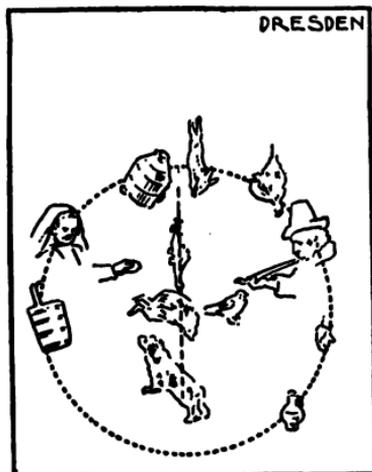


RAPHAEL FINISHED BY GIULIO ROMANO

ROME

### Painting of The Transfiguration analyzed

of the lower group point upward to the central figure, that of Christ, while other figures, by their expressions and gestures, call the attention to a sick child of the group which gives the association of the incident with the figure above.



WOMAN SELLING POULTRY

THE LETTER WRITER,

Two Circular Compositions by  
Metsu-(1630-1667) analyzed.

A circular construction was a favorite way of picture-planning of some of the Dutch masters of the genre. Metsu was a frequent user of its simple structure. For example, there is a circular path for the eye to follow around a central detail. The path is determined by a ring of graphic particulars.

In one picture by Metsu, called "Woman Selling Poultry," the central feature is composed of a dead fowl on a bench, and another one held by the woman. Because of their positions and lighting they attract the eye. The attention is strengthened by encircling details of two heads, a hand and arm of accessory figures, a dead bird, a rabbit, a cage, a pail, and a jug. Inventorial as this may sound, it is only in keeping with the diagrammatic way in which the components are distributed. Two details helping the vision trend toward the central features are an outstretched arm of a woman who seems to be considering the purchase of a fowl, and a long-stemmed pipe held by an old man.

In another picture by Metsu, "The Letter Writer," a young woman is seated at a table over which the light streams from a window. The objects compris-

ing the encircling element are not disposed in an exact circular path, but are merely distributed around the central figure of the young woman.



DRESDEN

One Form of Circular Composition  
Teniers, the Younger—Self-portrait.

The attracting and holding of the eye by objects placed to produce an enclosing form and then direct the attention to a central feature is illustrated in a self-portrait by Teniers, the Younger. Teniers has placed himself a little to the left of the picture area. He is holding a tall glass in his outstretched right

hand; his left hand holds a globular jug which just touches the floor; his large felt hat hangs on one of the posts of the chair-back; and on a wall above his head is a paper with a sketch of a face. These four objects mark the angles of an imaginary lozenge form. Teniers' head is within its borders.

The optical functioning here is something like this: there is an immediate comprehension of the intentional disposition of details; our eye follows a path around and through the points where the four objects are depicted; while there is an alternate trending to Teniers' head and away from it to the four outer objects again, and then around the lozenge-shape path again. Other details in this painting show the interior of an inn. These furnish an occasional supplementary activity for the eye when it is weary of looking at this too easily comprehended—and monotonous—composition.

Conventionality is found in Boucher's work. There is a bewilderment of allegorical figures in exaggerated attitudes, and a mingling of drapery folds and decorative episodes filling the picture. But with all this there is a basic construction, or a

definite plan. A picture of his in the Wallace Collection, in London, is of a circular plan with the details in the lower part of the picture grouped to

FRANÇOIS BOUCHER (1703-1770)



1. WALLACE COL. LONDON.

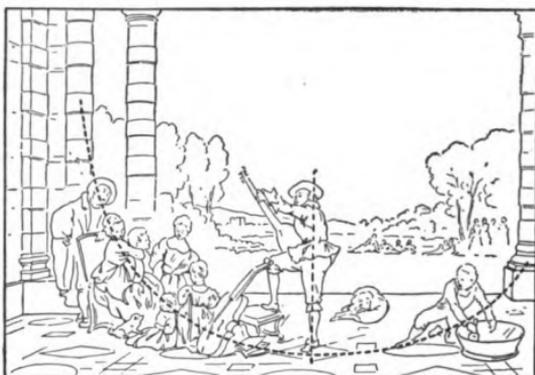


2.

Circular Composition Picture based on  
a Double Curve  
1. Le Lever du Soleil. 2. Le Jugement de Paris.

give the feeling of a large curve; others above suggest, with the help of a burst of light, a smaller circle. This picture is a grand composition on a canvas  $9\frac{1}{2}$  feet high and 8 feet broad. It is called

“Le Lever du Soleil.” In the same collection is another canvas by this painter called “Le Jugement

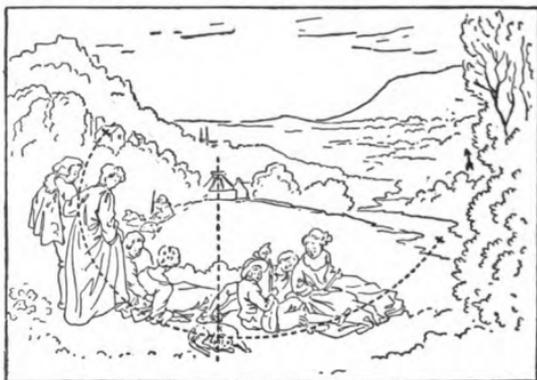


ANTOINE  
WATTEAU  
(1684 - 1721)

LES CHARMES  
DE LA VIE  
THE MUSIC PARTY

WALLACE COL. LONDON

PARTIE DE  
CAMPAGNE  
POTSDAM



## Crescentic Compositions

de Paris,” with figures and details sweeping upward in a double curve. This, an S-curve, is like Hogarth’s “Line of Beauty.”

Watteau, in some of his pictures, had the structural

plan based on a crescent-like line. In a well-known work, "Les Charmes de la Vie," or, as it is sometimes called, "The Music Party," there are com-



1.

RICHARD WILSON  
(1713 - 1782)

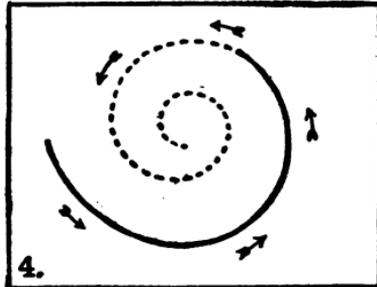


2.



3.

CALLCOTT (1779-1844)



4.

ANALYSIS

1. The Storm - 2. Italian Landscape -  
3. Landscape - 4. Movement induced by  
these compositions - (Paintings - Met. Mus Art.)

ponents massed on the left and distributed so that a curve goes downward, and then sweeps up at the end on the right. This curve, an imaginary line, is

the axis along which the figures are placed. It is anchored, as it were, by a prominent figure of a man playing a musical instrument. This figure is clearly set against the background, and is nearly in the centre of the picture.

Another picture by this master, "Partie de Campagne," has figures grouped along a similar curve, which is also kept in place by an imaginary vertical line going from a foreground detail—a sleeping dog—to another detail above it in the distance. The eye in its activity along the curve from the left to the right is induced to continue in imagination over the landscape extending into the far distance.

This alluring of the eye to meander and the mind to find interest in extended views in landscape pictures is attained in various ways. To the instances which we have already given we may add two pictures by Richard Wilson, "Italian Landscape" and "The Storm," and one canvas by Callcott, called "Landscape." These pictures show a similar arrangement, which is this: the details are so disposed that a basic plan is a sweeping curve from the left downward to the right, and then upward again.

Practically this is like the beginning of a spiral, for when it is continued it shows a winding inwardly. This movement, trending so, keeps the eye busy exploring the details of the distance. Although the curve is a restless one and excites ocular movement, it keeps the vision within its proper sphere of the picture area, and so is, after all, an element of equilibrium, harmony, and gives a feeling of contemplative repose to the beholder.



## TUNNEL-LIKE COMPOSITIONS



## CHAPTER IX

### TUNNEL-LIKE COMPOSITIONS

**T**HE picture construction under scrutiny in this chapter is similar to the circular, but as it has certain distinctive peculiarities, a separate chapter is devoted to it. Thought of as an effect of light and shade, a typical picture of the kind which we are considering now, if simplified, gives the feeling experienced in looking through the large end of a hollow cone out to the distant view beyond the smaller end. Again, it could be epitomized as a simple corridor effect, or perhaps a tube, the far opening of which opens out into the distance. In line, the plan of these compositions would be like concentric circles, or a series of enclosing squares decreasing in size.

A picture resembling the corridor effect is Whistler's etching, "The Lime Burners." This shows a roadway going under a wooden portal which leads under other structures to the middle distance, where we get a view of a glimmer of light on the surface of

a river. In Whistler's "Tragetto," another etching, there is a tunnel-like structure dark and shadowy. The view at the end through the shadow is that of a bright sunny effect, with indications of a waterway, as some boats show there.

Whistler had a partiality for tunnel-like forms as basic structures for pictures. Two others interpreted by us in pen-and-ink impressions are "San Biagio" and "Under Old Battersea Bridge."

Woodland scenes are often fashioned with this mode of achieving effectiveness in composition. A mass of foliage with many tree-trunks, indicating the depth of a forest, is shown; the picture would have a shut-in feeling if it exhibited that alone, as the eye would find only scientific delight in lingering over the botanical details. But a path is marked and its extension into the distance through the shadows and dark masses of the overhanging trees gives pleasure to the eye and mind. This pleasure is increased when a sunlit opening in the distance is reached.

A visit to a picture-gallery would show many landscapes with a description such as the one which



THE LIME BURNERS



UNDER OLD  
BATTERSEA BRIDGE



SAN BIAGIO

TRAGETTO



Pen sketches of four Whistler etchings  
Examples of Tunnel-like Compositions.

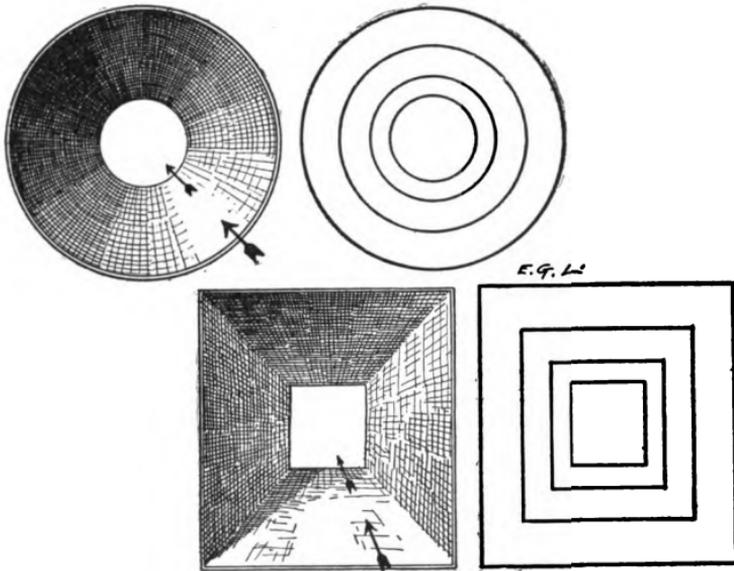
we are about to give would fit with but slight, if any, modification. The foreground of grass-clumps is in shadow, with scattered spots of sunlight; on each side are foliage masses with tree-trunks; the over-

head branches extend to meet one another; smaller tree-trunks, branches, and leafy clusters succeed into the distance to an opening where there is sunlight; a path starting somewhere in the foreground leads up to the opening after it has passed through the shadowy bower of tree-forms. Now a composition of this sort has a peculiar quality in arousing certain emotions. The construction exerts a visual activity, which leads the imagination through a shadow-filled tunnel, suggesting a fantastic feeling of suspense or even dread, out into the brightly lighted distance, giving a climacteric sensation of relief and joy.

The landscapes of Diaz, whose work has been remarked upon in preceding paragraphs, were usually built on a formula which is like the description immediately above. Diaz was particularly successful in rendering sunlight in the woodland openings at the ends of the paths.

A variation of the tunnel-like composition has the distant view encompassed by components on each side only, but with some connection of the two sides by shadows or appropriate detail. In a Wyant pic-

ture, "Forenoon in the Adirondacks," a tree-trunk on one side and a clump of them on the other with some overhanging branches frame a distant view. In a painting by George Morland, called "Midday



Basic Structures of Tunnel-like  
and Concentric Compositions

Meal," the view is bordered by posts of a gateway, clusters of foliage, and part of the contour defining a group of pigs. This framing by components in a picture of a distant view concentrates the attention on it, and helps to satisfy a feeling which we

have when looking at pictures, namely, one of extension of the mind's eye into the distance.

Pieter de Hooghe, a Dutch artist who flourished during the middle period of the seventeenth century, painted interiors with figures. He seemed to delight, judging by the many works extant, to picture things which had characteristics of squareness. His pictures have details such as window-frames, doors and doorways, tiled floors and bricks. A most pleasing quality in his pictures is the manner in which he arranged the architectural parts so as to afford a view, generally through a doorway, from an interior to outdoors. In nearly every one of his compositions there is scope for the eye to extend its vision through a passageway, the length of a room, or a series of open doorways—tunnels, as it were. Sometimes it is a view out into a sun-illuminated yard, from whence the view is continued through more openings of some kind.

Some of the Little Dutch masters seemed to have found a lot of satisfaction in placing their subjects within the space enclosed by a window opening. This pictured detail repeats the ornamental mitred

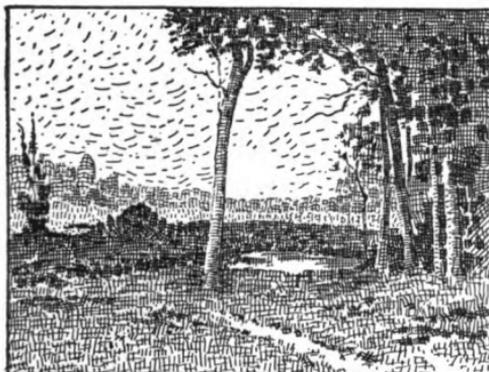


GEORGE MORLAND  
(1763 - 1804)



ANALYSIS

BOTH PICTURES IN METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, N.Y.



ALEXANDER H. WYANT  
(1836 - 1892)



ANALYSIS

The effectiveness of a distant view  
framed by foreground components

frame holding the canvas. Whistler, in cases cited above, placed his point of interest, that is, framed it, at the end of a corridor. Some landscapists,



LOUVRE

1.



AMSTERDAM MUSEUM

2.



NAT. GAL LONDON

3.



WALLACE COL. LONDON

4.

Pieter de  
Hooghe  
(1630?-1681)

MUNICH



5.

This painter's  
preference  
in subjects  
shown by  
these  
outlines  
of his  
works.

COROT

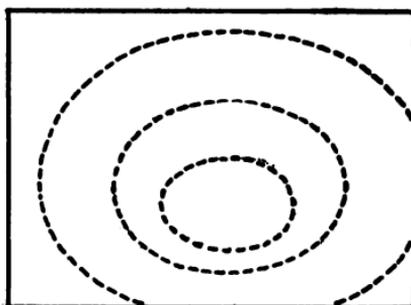
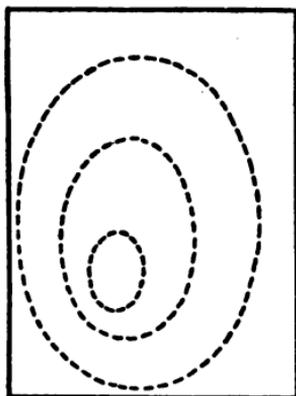


MET. MUS. N. Y.

ROUSSEAU



WALLACE COL. LONDON



ANALYSES OF THE ABOVE PICTURES

Two Woodland Scenes -  
 Typical examples of Tunnel-like  
 Compositions.

as we have noted, framed the luminous distance, the point of interest, by a bower of trees. De Hooghe framed a distant play of sunlight by the squareness

of a doorway or a window. Netscher, Metsu, Dou, and other Dutch painters surrounded an item of interest—a portrait or character study—by the framework of a window with a few subordinate details.

To particularize, one example is that of a Netscher picture showing a young woman in aristocratic dress at an open window. It is a broad window with a flat-arch top; the young woman has a bird perched on her hand, the empty cage is resting on the broad sill; at the upper right hand is a curtain, and over the sill some drapery is pictured. A face is vaguely discernible in the shadowed depth of the room.

Some such description as this could be written of other "window" pictures of the time, showing a figure posed at a framed opening. Other examples pictured on pages of this chapter by pen studies are Gerard Dou's portrait of himself; and two by Metsu, "The Alchemist" and "The Sportsman." No doubt pictures such as these were produced because of a fashion of the period. They are, nevertheless, interesting examples of composition. The proscenium-like opening of the arched window together with the



1.

NETSCHER MUNICH



2.

GERARD DOU  
AMSTERDAM



METSU

3.

LOUVRE

METSU

4. THE HAGUE

1. Girl with a Parrot.

2. Self-portrait.

3. The Alchemist.

4. The Sportsman.

The figure posed at an arched open window—  
An arrangement often used by the Dutch Masters

objects around it give the eye something to be busy over exactly as in a circular composition. In regarding the picture the vision is made to encircle the surrounding window-frame with its details, and alternate the activity by centring the gaze on the principal figure posed there. This open window, in form like the fore part of a tunnel-like composition, gives the suggestion to the eye to continue its gaze into the room. This gratifies that desire which we all have with respect to pictorial work—an extension of the imagining eye into the distance.

This carrying of the vision by a special construction into the depth of a picture is also a feature of other types of composition. As stated, nearly all pictorial works have something of this quality in their constructions. As specific instances we have so far considered the circular and elliptical, and those noticed in this chapter. But there is another: namely, the kind showing a trending of lines to a focus.

COMPOSITIONS OF CONVERGING LINES  
TO A FOCUS



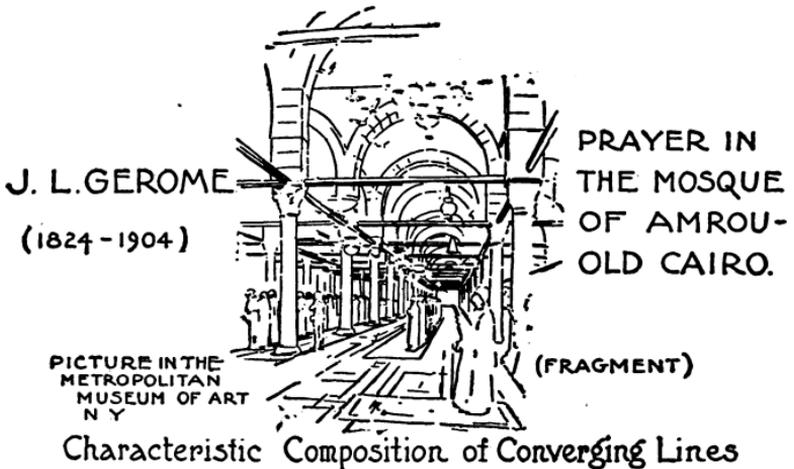
## CHAPTER X

### COMPOSITIONS OF CONVERGING LINES TO A FOCUS

**I**N general, the purpose of the structure, in the kind of pictorial composition to which this chapter is devoted, is to make the eye trend toward a central point of interest. This point is most frequently the position of the principal component, or the one determining the theme of the picture. In this, the converging-line type of picture-planning, the eye, as it sends its gaze toward a central point, follows lines which are either apparent or only implied.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, in New York, has on its walls a painting by Gérôme called "Prayer in the Mosque of Amrou, Old Cairo." The scene shows an interior with an interminable series of pillars and arches receding in perspective. There is one large arch in front with parts of adjacent arches; beyond this the arches decrease in size to a degree of exceeding smallness. The pillars supporting the arches, the first ones isolated and precisely drawn,

gradually become closer and smaller as they withdraw into the distance. On the floor, the tile work also exhibits a decreasing in size and a lessening in distinctness. Then in rows are many worshippers, whose figures go back in diminishing sizes in keep-



ing with the general idea of convergence. All the structural lines of this very elementary composition come up abruptly to the far wall of the building. It is a wall, we see that well enough, but we should have preferred to be led on, to be charmed and mystified by something in the far distance. There is a little glow of light beyond some pillars to the right which gives some suggestion of outdoors, but

it is not enough to satisfy the kind of feeling of mystery which we should get by a view out into the distance through a window or a doorway.



NAT. GAL. LONDON

Hobbema

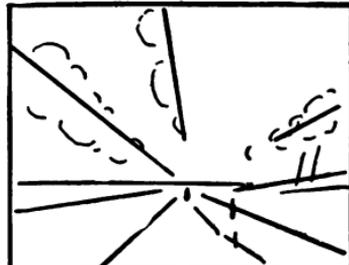
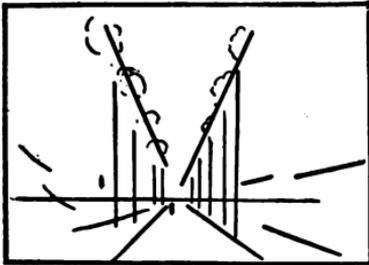
1.



MET. MUS. N.Y

J.V. Ruisdael

2.



Converging Lines Compositions.  
 1. The Avenue, Middelharnis.  
 2. Wheatfields.

In landscapes built on the principle of converging lines the matter is differently managed. In the famous landscape by Hobbema, in the National Gallery of London, called "The Avenue, Middel-

harnis," a road is pictured going off in perspective to a point about the centre of the horizon. The road is bordered on each side by tall trees bearing foliage in straggly masses. These trees, too, go off in perspective. There is a pleasant emotion in following these vanishing lines as they go to a focus on the horizon. We are pleased to have been led by such simple rhythmic measures to the horizon, as we find it is endless—infinite—where we may centre our interest and imagination as long as we wish.

Gérome's mosque interior brings us up against a wall. When the problem of following the converging lines has been settled by perceiving and learning that it is a wall, we have solved one phase of this picture's meaning, and may possibly dismiss it and pass on. We may find, to be sure, many moments of interest in studying the medley of colors, the costumes, architectural details, or in the admiration of its technic. But in the Hobbema landscape we hover over it in imagination and tarry before it with a vague feeling that there is always a new beauty to be found in its permanent suggestiveness.

Jan Steen painted a picture called "The Feast of

Saint Nicholas," which illustrates an episode of the celebration in his time. On Saint Nicholas' eve children place their shoes before the fireplace. On the



JAN  
STEEN  
(1626?-1679)

THE  
FEAST OF  
ST. NICHOLAS

RIJKS  
MUSEUM  
AMSTERDAM

### Converging Lines Composition

morning the good child finds his shoes filled with gifts, while the disobedient one finds a switch made of a bundle of twigs in one of his shoes. In Steen's picture the good child is placed well in front, sur-

rounded by presents, but the bad child, a boy, is on one side in an attitude of weeping. A girl holds, as if taunting the bad boy, his shoe with the bundle of twigs. This, an important detail bearing on the theme of the picture, is at the converging point of a number of structural elements. The vanishing lines of the tiling find their perspective point there; the line defining the lower edge of a mantel, if continued, would end there; a vertical line of a door-jamb is also directed to this point; and lastly, a child in the group points to the shoe. It is all very clear, and a practical example of a converging-line composition.

Balestrieri's frequently reproduced "Beethoven" is a very skilfully arranged composition of converging lines. The picture is on an elongated canvas—longer than two squares placed side by side. It shows five people in a dimly lighted room listening to a violinist and an accompanist. The painting is in subdued tones, with no sharp outlines. But some outlines are sufficiently indicated as lines to show that they lead to one point. Some lines are those of the floor boards, or its covering, parts of the furni-

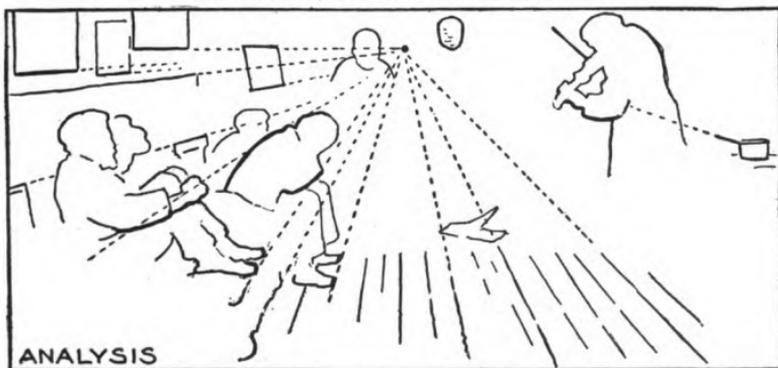
ture and frames on the wall, and certain details of the figures. A subtle treatment in the composition

L. Balestrieri

SALON OF 1900



BEETHOVEN



Composition of Converging Lines

is accomplished by having the mask of Beethoven, which hangs on the far wall, just a trifle to one side of the converging point. This mask, of white plas-

ter, gives occasion for absorbing and continued thought when the eye and mind have been led up to it.

A composition manifestly converging is Leonardo da Vinci's mural work of "The Last Supper." In this, lines defining architectural features—sunken panels of the ceiling, false windows of the side walls, and the ends of the table, all slant to one centre. Here the principal figure is placed. This picture is of little value as an extant work from Leonardo's hands, that is, thinking of the pigment as material put on by brushes held by him. The original paint has long fallen and the picture has been so many times restored that only as a pictorial conception of this master is it of interest to us.

Other matters respecting its structure are these: the figures of the twelve apostles by their gestures illustrate another way of directing the attention to a point of interest. For instance, the hands and arms, by their poses, call the attention to the central figure. There is unity, too, between certain hands in this pointing. A hand on the left points in a direction and way which is repeated by another

hand; the apostle on the far right holds his two hands in a pose and a direction which is exactly repeated by another apostle.



REFECTORY OF SANTA MARIA DELLE GRAZIE, MILAN

1.



2.

LEONARDO DA VINCI'  
(1452-1519)



3.

1. THE LAST SUPPER. - A simple composition of converging lines. 2. Arms and hands pointing to the principal figure. 3. Heads in groups of three.

The picture also embodies in its arrangement another principle of composition: namely, that of repetition. The heads of the apostles are in groups of

three heads. Monotony is avoided and variety attained by having some groups with their heads very



Presentation in the Temple - TINTORETTO.  
Example of implied focussing lines.

close together, and other groups with the heads somewhat apart.

Tintoretto's painting of the "Presentation in the Temple" is a composition nearly square—an un-

usual shape. It represents the Virgin in her girlhood ascending a flight of steps. The girl is well silhouetted against the background as it shows her ascending the steps. Although the figure is well separated from the others, and so sufficiently brought



Titian's way of picturing "The Presentation".

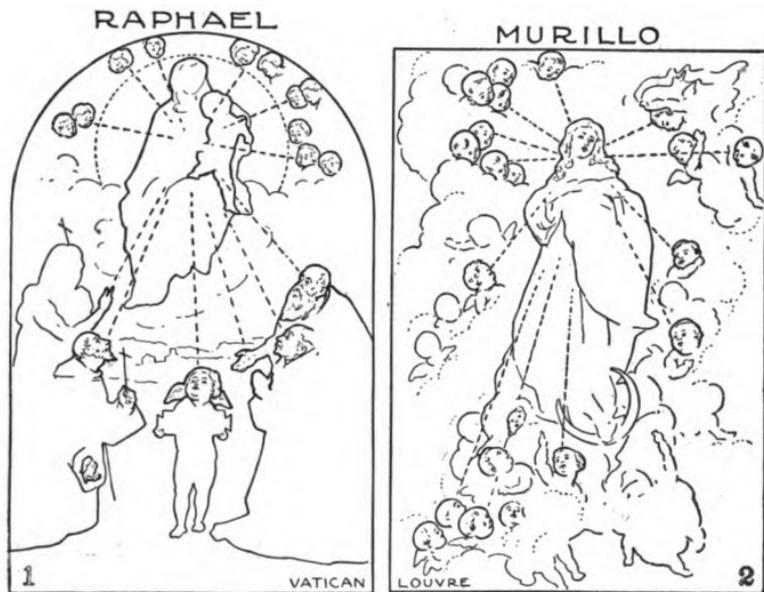
out, Tintoretto depicted three persons in the surrounding group pointing their fingers at her. Such pointing is another form of converging-line structure, only in this particular case the lines of the structure are mental ones, supplied by the spectator viewing the picture. In the group around the Virgin nearly all have their heads turned to look at her. In this

manner of composition—of forming an implied structure by pantomime, gesture, or direct pointing of fingers—we have a peculiar and effective attribute of pictorial representation. On reflecting upon it we understand that there is something else in pictorial art besides basing pictures on geometrical constructions.

In Raphael's "Madonna di Foligno," in the Vatican, and in Murillo's "Immaculate Conception" of the Louvre, there is exerted again, in each case, this peculiar force of compelling the eye to follow an assemblage of suggested converging lines. This force is found in the way the figures are drawn, that is, by their attitudes and gestures.

Murillo's picture has a central component surrounded by cupids floating among the clouds; their heads are either looking to the centre, turning as if about to look, or as if they have just done so and have only turned away for a moment. In Raphael's composition some heads of angels in the sky, and those of figures below, suggest by the depiction a common direction of vision toward one point of interest—that of the principal group.

This feature of these two pictures, with the heads of the figures so drawn as to suggest a centring of the attention, influences a similar fixing of the at-



Two examples of implied lines—of vision—converging to a point of interest.

1. Madonna di Foligno.
2. The Immaculate Conception.

tention in persons before the canvases. The manner of depiction operates on our susceptibility and by suggestion makes an appeal to the instinct of common curiosity.

This peculiar force is markedly present in a work

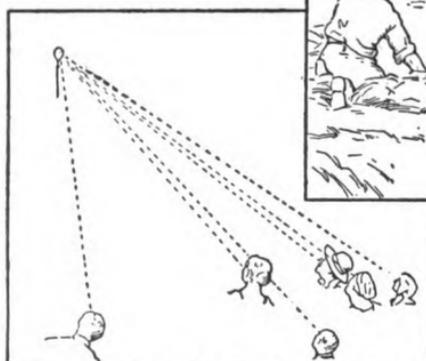
by Julien Dupré, called "The Balloon." This canvas, a shape higher than broad, represents some hay-makers who have paused for a moment to watch a

JULIEN DUPRÉ  
(1851-1910)  
THE BALLOON



MET MUS. ART. N.Y.

ANALYSIS



The suggested lines of vision make this picture a composition of converging lines

balloon. All of the people of the group have turned around, hold up their heads, and have directed their gaze toward the object in the air. From their eyes implied lines start, which converge at the balloon in

such a manner that we, the beholders of the picture, feel the force of the suggestion and turn our eyes in that direction, too. Another detail which helps the convergence is a rake-handle, held by one of the hay-makers, pointing to the balloon.



# THE SILHOUETTE



## CHAPTER XI

### THE SILHOUETTE

**W**E are now to give our attention to a manner of picture-planning characterized by a general absence of complexity. Examples of this do not find place, as a matter of construction, in any of the previously studied types of composition. They have an element, in the best examples, which gives a feeling of repose, or composure, by a quiet quality of tonality and a directness of presentation which appears at first sight as if accomplished with little labor. Pictures having this latter appearance never disturb us. But their distinct and more especial quality is that they have clear-cut outlines bounding somewhat simply toned masses.

If we turn back for a moment and examine a painting by Metsu again, we see how the principal figure is surrounded by a ring of incidental details which first attract the eye and then direct it toward the central figure. Or we may consider the Tintoretto picture, where the artist did not seem to feel

that the figure was prominent enough unless some of the surrounding people pointed at it, or looked that way. But in the pictures considered in this chapter the eye is allured by the simplest of means. Either there is a single figure, or there is a principal component, and a few, or minor, details in the background.

A most telling outline, giving a good silhouette, is the figure in Manet's "Boy with a Sword," in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, in New York. This picture, higher than broad, represents a boy of about eight years, close to life size. He is standing with the feet held apart, which makes it seem as though he had just paused in a walk. A large sword from which a heavy belt hangs is clasped by his two arms.

This picture has a commanding, serene effect on the spectator. There is ample space between the contour of the figure and the rectangle of the frame. The visual functioning while looking at this picture is in this manner: the outline of the figure is an easy path for the eye to follow, with the gentle winding in and out as it defines the form; there are

no sudden angles or zigzag movements. On one side only is a contrasting element—that of the sword, which projects in part beyond the general

Edouard Manet  
(1852-1883)

BOY WITH  
A SWORD

MET. MUS. OF  
ART N. Y.



The figure  
in silhouette  
and the  
picture reduced  
to its simplest  
patterns

bulk of the figure. The corresponding and harmonizing attributes of the picture should be noted as follows:

The subject is of a single figure and as a personality has a reposeful mien.

The pose of the figure is relatively a quiet one.

The outline of the general mass is simple.

Details not standing out as details.

All these attributes are similar in their general nature; that is to say, quiet, simple, and reposeful. And in keeping, too, is the technical manner in which the pigment has been placed on the canvas;

namely, by an individual touch which is restrained and kept in moderation.

Just recall to mind a painting by Meissonier, in which we see an aggregate of details, bright colors, graduated shades meticulously exact, figures often gesticulatory, and the work finished by brush strokes immoderately elaborated. In Manet's work the likeness of the attributes constitutes the unity, as if it were a structure, holding the picture together. In a Meissonier canvas the like quality in the attributes also constitutes the unifying structure, only it does not give a reposeful feeling. There is a satisfaction, though, in seeing a correspondence of qualities, even though they are of a positive nature. In the Manet picture the unity is such that it imparts a distinct feeling of repose and restfulness.

What we are trying to make clear is this: any picture of the kind we speak of as having an effective silhouette has an immediately apprehended simplicity of contour. This means that intricacy of line is absent, strong mannerisms are lacking, and there is quietness in color, tone, and treatment. Two excellent examples are Whistler's frequently repro-



GLASGOW 1.



PARIS 2.



3  
FREER GALLERY

W.M. CHASE



MET. MUS. N.Y. 4.

CHARDIN



MUNICH 5.

MANET



MET. MUS. N.Y. 6.

Figure pictures exemplifying the effectiveness of a simple silhouette.  
 1. Carlyle—2. The Artist's Mother—3. La Princesse du Pays de La Porcelaine—4. Lady in Black—5. The Cook—6. Woman with a Parrot.

duced portrait of "Thomas Carlyle," and the "Portrait of the Artist's Mother (Arrangement in Black and Gray)."

Chardin, whose "Le Bénédicité" we analyzed in a preceding chapter, infused his subjects with a delightful quiet air. The figures in his pictures have simple outlines, or are pleasing as silhouettes. He, however, disposed objects about his figures to play significant parts in the composition. In another picture by him, "La Pourvoyeuse," a woman who has returned from market with provisions leans on some article of furniture. Her figure taken as an entirety presents a simple contour. It is interesting to see how the painter has placed objects on the floor on each side so as to influence the eye and direct it as it studies the picture. Placed on the left is an object, evidently an earthenware utensil. As it is isolated the eye picks it out quickly. According to the view of the author, it is the initial place from where the eye begins to travel over the picture. This movement is an upward sweep bounding the left side of the figure. When the eye reaches the head it moves, after a pause, downward on the other side of the figure to a detail consisting of two dark-hued glass flasks.

As a contrast to this picture we present for study

“The Thinker,” by Thomas Eakins. This subject is unostentatious in character, in a natural pose, and with the space surrounding it bare. The picture is

1. LOUVRE



2. MET. MUS.



CHARDIN

1. La Pourvoyeuse -

EAKINS

2. The Thinker -

Two Figure Pictures Compared.

that of a man in an attitude with feet solidly on the floor, hands in the trousers pockets, and head bowed as if in reflection.

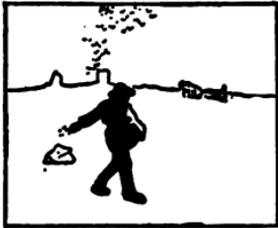
On first beholding this picture we note that there is no extraneous feature to catch the eye first. In-

stead, the effect is attained by an impressive simplicity, sincerity of representation, and an easy contour of the silhouette. Chardin, we saw, depended upon two objects to catch the eye and invite it to find interest in the picture. In the Eakins picture a straightforwardness in all the attributes is sufficient to attract and hold the eye and mind.

The picture of "La Pourvoyeuse" would have made a very interesting canvas without the details. But then, of course, it wouldn't have been a Chardin work, as placing surrounding details to mark the corners or limits of triangles was a manner of composition very characteristic of this painter.

It is surprising how frequently this device has been used in portraiture of a single figure with a simple contour set against a plain background. Even in Holland, when the Little Dutchmen painted and filled their canvases with innumerable details and complicated backgrounds, occasionally simple silhouette figures were painted in portrait work. Gerard Terborch, for instance, painted a few portraits in which the figures form masses of almost pure dark monotonous set against nearly uniformly col-

ored backgrounds. Such excellent examples by him are found in London and Munich.



J. F. MILLET  
(1814 - 1875)

THE SOWER



THE GLEANERS



SHEPHERDESS



THE MAN WITH THE HOE



THE ANGELUS

Millet pictures simplified so as to show the effectiveness of the figure poses.

It will be observed when studying Terborch's other compositions how his liking for an effective

silhouette shows by some prominent figure having a simple mass with an unaffected contour.

The distinguishing feature of a picture by Millet, the leader of the Barbizon School, is simplicity. A Millet picture of the most characteristic style gives a first sensation of unaffectedness. The pose of the figure, or any mass arrangement of a group if there is more than one figure, will be simple. What outlines there are will be pleasing ones for the eye to follow. They are silhouettes with a plastic quality which gives the impression that they could be translated into mouldable material. We mean by this an appearance as if they were pictures of statues.

The first example which we brought forward as a good illustration of the effective silhouette, "The Boy with a Sword," does not suggest the plastic, but impresses us as a thing of paint and brush. But any Millet depiction of a peasant has the ease of contour which is a characteristic of sculpture.

The principle of the forcefulness of the silhouette underlies the appreciation and attention paid to objects of art. A vase, especially, makes a good example. We are charmed with a vase of good form,

on first viewing it, by the immediate awareness of a pleasing mass defined by an uninvolved outline. The eye delights in following the curves as they bound the form. So, too, in pictures where there is a figure with a pose giving a clear-cut contour, the eye finds an agreeable sight in its varying outline so rhythmically undulated. A good piece of sculpture when looked at from any angle has a bulk with no violent modulations of contour. Time, itself, seems to object to a plastic work having any sharply projecting part, for we see how sculpture of the past comes down to us with such parts broken off by the wearing vicissitudes of the ages.



# **PATTERNS OF LIGHT AND SHADE**



## CHAPTER XII

### PATTERNS OF LIGHT AND SHADE

**W**E are now to attend to a type of composition presenting at the first glance an arrangement of patterns of light and shade. An example of the kind of picture which we have reference to is one showing a predominating quality of having a high light, half-light, shades, deep shadows, and lacking outline, as this term is ordinarily understood.

The reason, as we have stated, for using a geometrical structure in a composition is because it attracts and holds the eye by its unity, and then makes it easy for the vision to pass over the details agreeably. A certain kind of visual and mental activity takes place with pictorial schemes in light and shade, too, for when the chain of patterns has these patterns in rhythmic succession, they form a unity. This attracts the eye, holds it, and then leads it to a further contemplation of the picture. These pat-

terns are either in a sequence of varying sizes, changing tones, or diversified hues. If the eye in its following of the series experiences no break in the rhythm of varying sizes, changing tones, or diversified hues, then the picture has been harmoniously put together.

Sometimes the succession of patterns is hardly perceptible as a series because the tones change with little variation. A series of grays with neither a strong light nor a deep black is an example. At other times there is a sharp contrast between patches of nearly pure white, or the strongest bright color, with patterns which are nearly black, or of very dull colors.

But generally pictures in light and shade—paintings and illustrations—have patterns running the whole range from luminosity to obscurity as in nature under average conditions. Strictly speaking, this statement should be modified by saying—as the particular artist believes these effects to be.

The ideal to be kept in mind in making a composition in light and shade is to have, in whatever scale of tones adopted, a pleasing continuity from



AMSTERDAM 1.



WALLACE COL 2.



HAGUE 3



MET. MUS 4.



MUNICH 5.



WALLACE 6.



7.  
MET.  
MUS.

The Light and Shade Patterns of Rembrandt  
1. Night Watch - 2. Wife of Burgomaster Pellicorne  
and Daughter - 3. The Presentation - 4. Portrait -  
5. Adoration of the Shepherds - 6. The Unmerciful  
Servant - 7. Old Woman Cutting Her Nails.

the lightest tint to the darkest shadow. When this is produced, unity and harmony result, and a reposeful feeling is imparted to the observer of the picture. But sometimes there is, especially in certain manners of black-and-white illustration, a studied intention of disturbing the observer's first view so as to startle him by a sharp contrast or an obvious discordance.

No doubt the question arises at this point exactly how should patterns of light and shade be arranged so as to be harmonious. Briefly, it is a process of gradually changing the sizes of the patterns of light and shade from the largest to the smallest, or a making of a progressive scale of dark patches to gray ones, and then to one of the highest light. Or the order may be considered as going the other way: from small patches to larger ones; and from the high light to the deepest shadow.

Although pictures which are predominantly effects of light and shade are often constructed on the several geometrical plans of composition, usually their effects are secured in some way which does not fit into any of the groups of geometrical plans. And



1. ANTWERP CATHEDRAL



2. MUNICH



3.



4. MUNICH



5. FLORENCE



6. MUNICH



7.

Pen Sketches of typical Rubens pictures.  
1. Descent from the Cross - 2. Servant of Rubens - 3. Helen Fourment - 4. Cupids -  
5. Holy Family - 6. Satyrs - 7. Rubens and his first wife.

the fact that this is so is the reason why describing a picture in patterns is difficult.

A typical manner of preliminary thought when starting out to make a picture in light and shade is to look at a view with all its details as an assemblage of patterns: that is, consider it as one large visualization which is to be translated in pigment on a surface. Opposed to this is the way of recognizing forms as such, and taking note of the edges which separate them from each other or the background.

Now great significance is given in a picture of patterns to the space, or spaces, of strongest illumination. A feature of this sort is a controlling element for both the spectator's eye and that of the artist as he tries to get the correct scale of values. The particular place where the strongest light should be placed is important. Rembrandt, in single figure pictures and portraits, usually placed it about the centre of the upper half of the canvas. This corresponds to the place where the head comes in any one of the examples of portraits of women given under the group of pyramidal compositions. This



MUNICH

1.



2.

TURIN



5.

TURIN



WALLACE

3.  
WALLACE  
COL.  
LONDON



6.

DRESDEN



4.

Pen and Ink Sketches of Van Dyck Paintings  
1. Rest on the Flight into Egypt - 2. Holy Family -  
3. Wife of Philippe le Roy - 4. Philippe le Roy -  
4. and 5. Children of Charles I.

particular position in the picture area is also the one which creators of advertising designs find the most forcible. Rembrandt in other canvases has the light areas somewhat scattered, but with a large one acting as a control to hold the seemingly scattered ones together. This idea is another feature of pictures in patterns to be thoughtfully studied. The artist's personality has a great deal to do with determining the character of pictures in light and shade. We understand this and learn its importance in studying the works of certain of the old masters, as every one shows an individual manner of rendering. Any well-composed picture could be resolved into an elementary design, or epitomized into a simple effect of light and shade. As it is, we do this without any particular mental awareness. When we study the works of the great masters of the past we gradually form mental abridgments of the main features of those viewed most frequently in museums, or made familiar to us by reproductions. It is by these abridgments (analyses) which we form in our minds that we recognize, at our first glances, the works of particular artists. This has to do with composition,

as it is only because the pictures had consistency in plans or structure that we remembered them. A



RIJKS MUSEUM.  
AMSTERDAM.

1.



WALLACE COL. LONDON.

2.

3.



AMSTERDAM

4.



MET. MUS. OF ART N.Y

Sketches of Four Franz Hals Paintings  
1. The Artist and His Wife - 2. The Jester -  
3. Junker Ramp - 4. Laughing Cavalier.

disorderly arrangement may have a certain force upon our minds, but not one to form a pleasing memory in a normal person.

On the pages of this chapter are some pen-and-ink impressions of certain works of a few painters who were masters in light and shade. The attempt has been made to render the general effect so as to give the characteristic of any particular artist's pictures.

SCHALKEN  
(1643-1706)  
DUTCH  
SCHOOL



A Typical  
Candle -  
light  
Picture

We notice how Rembrandt has most frequently but one patch of very strong light against a large area almost approaching murkiness in its darkness of shadow. Rubens painted in several different styles. One picture by him showing a strong contrast of light and shade and some feeling of breadth is the "Descent from the Cross," in the cathedral of Antwerp. It is observable in some of Van Dyck's pictures that the lights are often scattered. This



1  
BERLIN

JAN VERMEER VAN DELFT  
(1632 - 1675)



2.

MET. MUS. ART N.Y.



3 BERLIN

GERARD TERBORCH  
(1617 - 1681)



DRESDEN 4

1. The Necklace - 2. Young Woman with a Water Jug.  
3. The Musician - 4. Lady Washing her Hands.

has particular reference to some portraits in which the large lace wristbands, and the hands themselves, show out as patches rather conspicuously.



THE SPINNER  
RIJKS MUS.  
AMSTERDAM

YOUNG GIRL  
PEELING APPLES  
MET. MUS.-ART. N.Y.

NICOLAES MAES  
( 1632-1693 )



Pen sketches of two of Maes's paintings

The distinguishing feature of Franz Hals's method is his brush-work and the handling of the pigment. His civic pieces—group portraits of officials—and



PAININGS IN THE PINACOTHEK MUNICH



Murillo's Child Studies - Patterns of Light & Shade  
1. Pastry Eaters -  
2. Melon Eaters -  
3. Dice Players -  
4. Counting Money -

his single figures, had certain arrangements of patterns due to the whiteness of the lace collars, cuffs, and the strongly lighted faces.

Many Dutch artists painted pictures representing candle-light. Among them was Godfried Schalcken, of Dordrecht, whose numerous small canvases with this effect are scattered throughout the galleries of Europe.

Pictures characterized by simplicity and dignity are those of Terborch and Vermeer. Each shows, in his respective works, an immediate recognizable trait. Vermeer thinks of the light flooding the room as modulations which lessen in strength as the rays go farther away from the source of entry—the window. He seems to have actually tried to paint light. Terborch thinks more of the effect of light as its rays cause relief on objects. He shows the effect of light as it falls on fine textiles, or rugs, and brings out the folds and wrinkles of garments.

In this connection, in speaking of patterns, it is curious how often painters seem to delight in depicting rugs and textiles with conspicuous patterns.

Another notion regarding light is illustrated in

paintings by Nicolaes Maes, another Dutch master of genre. He had usually one simply delineated figure, well-placed within the picture area, in a pleasing mass. This, the principal component, Maes surrounded with an aureole luminosity, which seems a vibrant thing glowing around the figure.

Murillo's four child studies in the Pinacothek of Munich do not conform, in the matter of structure, to any group or class. Yet when we see them all together we recognize a common consistency of plan. We form a mental concept of this. We never forget it, even though we cannot find word-thoughts to describe it.



# LANDSCAPES AND SEASCAPES



## CHAPTER XIII

### LANDSCAPES AND SEASCAPES

**I**F the early pictorial works are to be taken as criteria, the people of olden times did not care for natural scenery as subjects for pictures. Paintings of the early days had human figures as the sole subjects in pictures. Of course, horses and wild animals were pictures, too. Views when they occur in old pictures seemed to have been put in merely to fill in the backgrounds. Landscapes during certain periods were nothing more than conventional designs, and had little verisimilitude to nature.

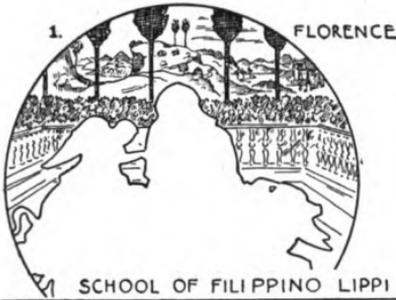
In early religious pictures it seems to have been the fashion sometimes to indicate a little stretch of country in the background. But the landscapes in these pictures have, in spite of their odd drawing, an alluring power of inducing the eye to explore their expanse. This is the main reason, after all, for making a picture of scenery, for, no matter by what school produced, a picture of outdoors should have

the quality of making the beholder feel as though he could, in imagination, travel over the pictured scene.

This particular of having the eye and mind wander over the picture is one of two very useful suggestions for the student of landscape-painting to remember. The other suggestion is this: a picture should have three planes—(1) foreground; (2) middle ground or distance; and (3) far distance or background.

One reason, as we have said, for structure in a picture is that eye activity, as it takes in a picture, should be easy and non-fatiguing. In landscapes the non-fatiguing eye movement consists in following winding roads and curving streams; roving over hills in succeeding planes as they go off in perspective; noting rows of trees; and travelling over the diminishing planes as they vanish into the distance.

There is no special kind of composition on which to build a landscape. But a landscape is only effective as a composition when planned with some basic structure. In the consideration of the various pictures of scenery and seascapes remarked upon in



GIOTTO  
PADUA



PALMA  
VECCHIO  
DRESDEN



RAPHAEL FLORENCE



SODOMA FLORENCE

**Typical Landscapes of Early Religious Pictures**  
 1. Holy Family and Angels - 2. Flight into Egypt - 3. Jacob and Rachel - 4. Madonna del Cardellino - 5. St. Sebastian.

the remainder of this chapter, the correctness of this statement will be confirmed.

Claude Lorrain's pictures, both in tone and construction, are good examples of harmonious compositions. Some of this quality of harmony is attained by the way in which the components are balanced. In one of his harbor scenes, in mind at this moment, we find a large architectural feature balanced by a pendent piece on the other side. This latter component is the end of a very large boat. His landscapes are equally balanced: a large tree mass on one side is balanced by another slightly smaller tree mass on the other, and scattered throughout the foreground are figures and incidental details. They give points of momentary pause for the eye as it explores the picture.

During the period when the Little Dutch Masters of genre flourished landscapists of Holland made frequent use of the diagonal structure. Cuyp, for instance, filled one triangular area with foreground and foliage, in more or less shadow, with the other area showing a glowing sunset. He was especially fond of picturing a figure holding a whip, or stick,

CLAUDE LORRAIN (1600-1682)



DRESDEN

1.



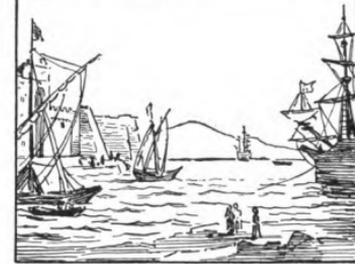
NAT. GAL. LONDON

2.



MUNICH

3.



WALLACE COL.

4.

J. M. W. TURNER (1775-1851)



5.

LONDON



6.



LONDON

7.



MET. MUS. N.Y.

8.

Pictures by Lorraine and Turner Compared.  
 1. Flight into Egypt - 2. Claude's Mill - 3. Harbor scene at Sunrise - 4. A Seaport - 5. The Bay of Baiae - 6. The Golden Bough - 7. Building Carthage - 8. Grand Canal.

so as to point to the sky. In this way he emphasized the effect by the sharp contrast of the object against the light, and gave, by the pointing, the suggestion for the eye to gaze into the endlessness of the sky.

Although the members of the British school of Constable's time studied the works of the Hollanders of about one hundred years before, they showed more originality, and did not have the structure of a picture so obvious as a structure. Among the works of especial interest is Constable's "Salisbury Cathedral." It follows the idea in composition noted in a preceding chapter, of having the eye and mind pass under the shade of a bower of trees to come out into a sunlit middle ground, and then to the principal component in the distance.

Turner's work is varied, and one painting will not be confused with another even though he built several on a similar structure. He excelled particularly in ways of leading the eye to a focus. In the confusion of colors of "Rain, Steam, and Speed," the high bridge over which the train passes is in perspective lines going to a focus in the hazy distance. In his Venetian scenes certain lines of the architec-

ALBERT CUYP



1.

NAT. GAL.



2.

LOUVRE



3.

MET. MUS. N.Y.



4.

NAT. GAL. LONDON

JAN VAN GOYEN

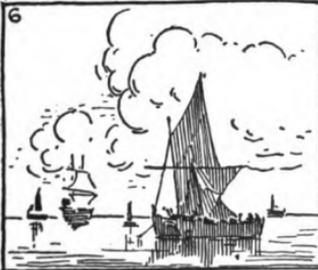
DUTCH SCHOOL



5.

MET. MUS.

W. VAN DE VELDE



6

MUNICH

VAN GOYEN



7

MET. MUS. N.Y.

1. Landscape with Cattle - 2. Départ pour La Promenade - 3. Woman Milking - 4. Dutch Landscape  
5. Landscape - 6. A Quiet Sea - 7. Moerdyck.

tural features and some of the boats are directed to a common point.



1.  
AMSTERDAM

J. v. RUISDAEL  
(1628 ? 1682)



2.  
MET. MUS. N.Y.



3.  
MET. MUS.

HOBBE MA  
(1638 - 1709)



4.  
AMSTERDAM

1. The Mill (A famous picture)  
2. Landscape - 3 Entrance to a Village - 4. The Water-Wheel.

The elements in the planning of the "Golden Bough," and the similarly classical rendering of the "Bay of Baiae," are in curves which suggest ellipses. In the "Snow Storm, or the Harwich Steamer in



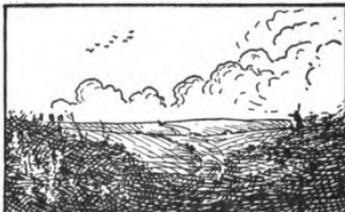
1. CONSTABLE LONDON



2. NASMYTH MET. MUS.



3. NAT. GAL.



4. NAT. GAL.

JOHN CROMÉ  
(OLD CROME)



5. COTMAN MET. MUS.

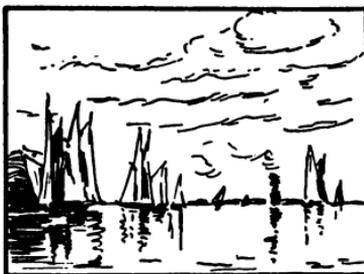


6. GAINSBOROUGH NAT. GAL.

**Landscapes - British School -**

- 1. Salisbury Cathedral - 2. At Penshurst -
- 3. Landscape with Mill - 4. View on Mousehold Heath -
- 5. Village - 6. Watering-Place

Distress," a bewilderment of waves and clouds is found, on analysis, to fit into an elementary plan which leads the eye to a focus. This is where the



W. GEDNEY BUNCE

1.



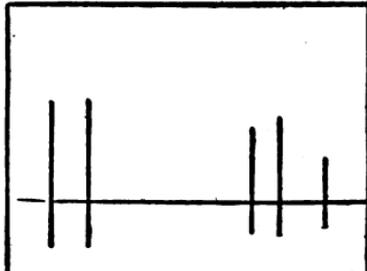
B. JONGKIND

2

ALL IN THE MET. MUS. ART. N.Y.



HOMER D. MARTIN



ANALYSIS

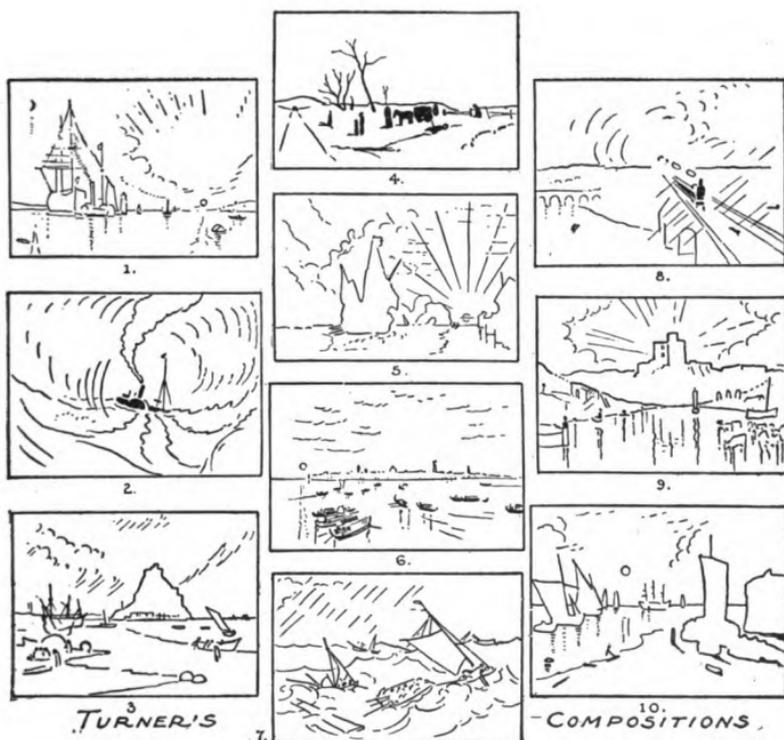
Three Pictures constructed on the same plan.

1. Venice - 2. Sunset on the Scheldt -

3. Harp of the Winds, View on the Seine.

dark mass of the steamer is pictured. "Ulysses Deriding Polyphemus" and the famous "The Fighting Téméraire" are two pictures which show diverging light rays from a sunset. These two paintings, of

course, belong to the converging type of composition even though the lines diverge.

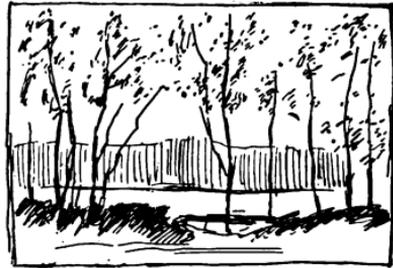


1. Fighting *Téméraire*- 2. Snow Storm- 3. St. Michael's Mt. Cornwall-  
4. Frosty Morning- 5. Ulysses deriding Polyphemus-  
6. Approach to Venice- 7. The Shipwreck- 8. Rain, Steam  
and Speed- 9. Norham Castle- 10. Sun rising in a Mist.

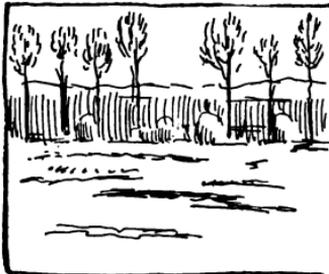
Some of Turner's pictures are so episodic in their representation that titles are really superfluous. Besides the æsthetic emotions other feelings are



SPRING TIME

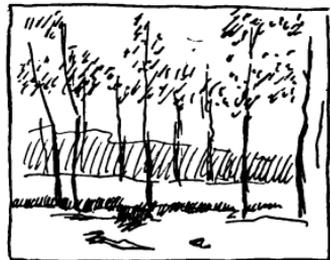


EVENING, SEPTEMBER

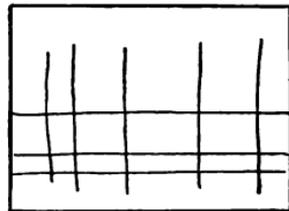


AUTUMN

FREER COL. WASH. D.C.



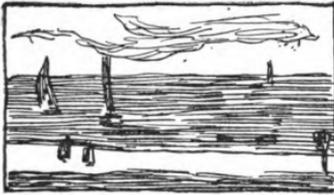
TWILIGHT, MAY



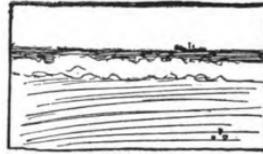
ANALYSIS

Dwight William Tryon  
The simple construction of these pictures shown by the analysis.

aroused. The "Shipwreck," for instance, stirs up by its short and angularly disposed lines sensations of distress. As a contrast to this picture is the one of "Norham Castle," which gives with its soothing,



NOCTURNE, BLUE AND SILVER, BOGNER



THE ANGRY SEA.



GRAY AND GOLD  
HIGH TIDE AT POURVILLE



SYMPHONY IN GRAY,  
EARLY MORNING, THAMES



BLUE AND SILVER, BOAT  
ENTERING POURVILLE.

SUMMER  
SEA.

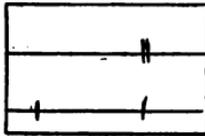


BLUE AND  
SILVER

FREER  
COLLECTION  
WASH. D.C.



ANALYSIS



Thumb-nail Sketches  
of Whistler Pictures  
Compositions  
of Parallel Zones

easy rhythm of vertical lines, a feeling of peacefulness, very well befitting a rural scene.

Now a simple structure such as a horizontal line

with a few verticals crossing it would, it seems, give a plan upon which pictures of little variation could be built. Yet Jongkind, Homer D. Martin, and W. Gedney Bunce used it as basic structures for pictures. They are illustrated in this book by little pen-and-ink sketches, and accompanied by an analysis which fits any one of the three.

A similar idea of line elements sharply contrasting each other is a scheme which is used by the American painter, Dwight William Tryon. Among his paintings in the Freer Gallery of Art, in Washington, are four landscapes which could be represented by the same diagram of four or six vertical lines crossing at right angles several horizontal lines. The horizontal lines correspond to the several planes which extend from the foreground to the distance, while the vertical lines mark the places of trees.

In the Freer Gallery, among the many Whistler pictures, are some small seascapes which show an unusually simple idea for composition. In seven of them—represented here by thumb-nail sketches—the structure is the same. A description of one picture would fit any one of the six others. Briefly it

is this: the area, a horizontal rectangle, is divided into a few parallel planes, or zones, of varying widths; a little detail is in the foreground, off to one side; another detail is above this one, but on or near the horizon; a third detail is in the foreground on the side opposite to where the first detail is placed.

The parallel zones represent any one, or several, of the following details: beach, a strip of water, waves, foam, sky, or clouds. The details are objects, figures or boats.



VARIOUS THOUGHTS ON PICTURE  
COMPOSITION



## CHAPTER XIV

### VARIOUS THOUGHTS ON PICTURE COMPOSITION

**P**ICTURE-MAKING, to be successful, depends upon a rhythmic placing of components. This way of disposing of components is simply an ordering of details so that the beholder's eye functions easily, and the mind experiences an agreeable composure when taking in the picture, or grasping its meaning. This, of course, we have already pointed out, but as it is the fundamental thought in our explanation of composition, it is pertinent to dwell on it.

We found, in beginning our study, that there was no vagueness when considering pictures based on a geometrical framework; but that as we continued, complexity began and a simple analysis of a picture was less easy. This appeared clearly in the study, in the preceding chapter, of landscapes and sea pictures, in which we saw that there are ways of constructing pictorial compositions whose fundamental

plans cannot be assigned to any of the elementary groups which we studied at first.

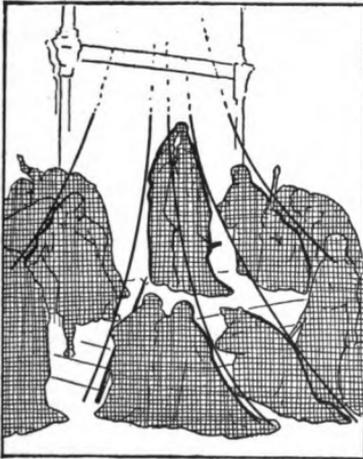
In Doré's illustration of "David Mourning for the Death of Absalom," a group of people are in a circle on, or around, a platform. David is in the centre, facing a wall, with his arms uplifted. Certain outlines of the figures in the group mark imaginary lines curving upward. These upward-trending lines agree in direction with the extended arms of David. The top part of the picture consists of a blank wall. This space, bare of conspicuous detail, gives scope for the eye as it feels the urge to movement given by the lines which we have described, namely, those of the uplifted arms of the central figure, and those coming from the certain contours of the figures in the group.

We can understand better the worth of this composition by noting the poor impression which it makes upon us when the picture is cut off at the top, close to David's clasped hands. The picture in this way lacks force, as the necessary space for the beholder's imagining eye to move is wanting. Although, as clearly perceived, this illustration is a



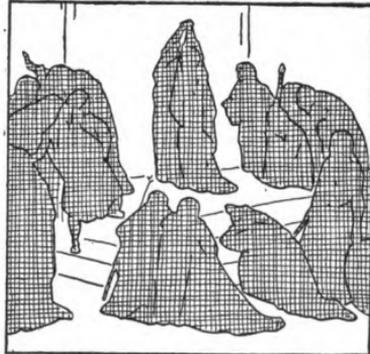
GUSTAVE  
DORE'  
(1833-1883)

1.



DAVID MOURNING  
FOR THE DEATH  
OF ABSALOM

2.



1. Analysis - Lines are shown to have a strong upward movement - 2. Movement destroyed by cutting the picture off at the top

circular composition, the concord of meaning in these lines has its share in the unity of construction.

Some of Turner's paintings of storms at sea, if reduced to their simplest elements, show collections of jagged and angular lines. These—short and broken—are full of the expressions of action. Similar significant plans result in analyses of Rubens's hunting pictures. We will examine two of them. At first sight they give us an impression of disturbance and confusion. The "Wolf and Fox Hunt," a mêlée of men and animals, can be reduced to an assemblage of lines. They represent swords, spears, and gesticulating members of human figures and animals. The assemblage of lines, however, shows that all this jumble has a certain degree of order, and reveals the fact that the picture has a plan. Again, in the "Lion Hunt," the largest spears of the hunters are so disposed as to converge to a focus. Then other details are so placed that they oppose and balance each other. As in the first instance, this is all plainly shown by reduction to a simple diagram. In a sense one of these diagrams may be thought of

as the actual structure of its particular picture. Even though these two examples are, as pictures, not at all restful, there is some mental satisfaction

Two Hunting Pictures by Rubens.



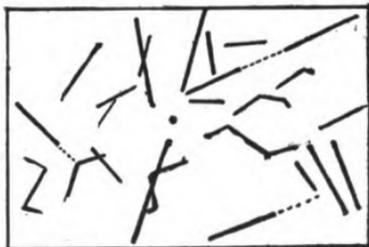
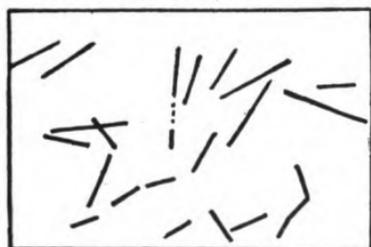
METRO. MUS. N.Y.

1.



MUNICH

2.



Leading lines of some components in confused arrangements proper to the themes.

in apprehending how each, in its own way, has a plan of some kind.

We now come to certain thoughts with respect to character in pictures reflecting on an artist's liking for a particular form in the consistent manner in which he repeats it as a theme throughout the com-

position. Many painters of the Renaissance have pictured the marriage of Saint Catherine. In the paintings of two contemporary artists, Correggio and Luini, who painted this subject, the figures are so placed that the centre of interest—putting the ring on the finger—is at the lower middle of the canvas. But in Luini's picture the figures are in attitudes in which the arms and heads are held somewhat angularly. There is a feeling in his picture as if the figures had stopped for a moment, a quality in harmony with the sense felt by the straight lines of the attitudes. Correggio's work has some movement. His figures are so drawn that if the poses and attitudes were simplified into a diagram, it would show a group of curved lines. It is these curving lines which impart movement to the presentation. Consistency of delineation characterizes these pictures, each one in its own way. The diagrams, with their particular kind of lines, represent the unifying elements.

The "Dream of Saint Ursula," a picture of a series in Venice, by Carpaccio, has an attractiveness which is given to it by a perfect compatibility between the



LUINI (1475?-1533)  
MILAN



CORREGGIO (1494 - 1534)  
LOUVRE

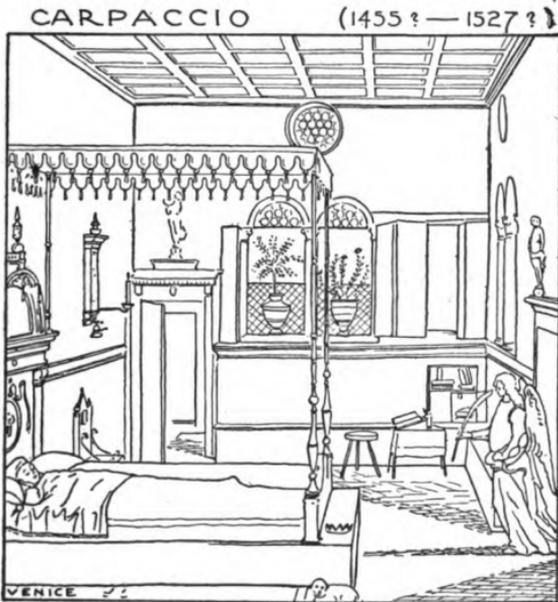
The Marriage of St. Catherine by two Italian Masters - The analysis in each case, shows a consistency in character.

characteristic details. The picture shows a high ceilinged room with a four-poster bed. The saint is lying in this bed, and an angel with a palm leaf held

in her hand is entering the room. Linearly correct, the picture has, nevertheless, a certain childlike directness of manner of drawing. The determinants giving this work its character are the simple straight-line effects, and a repetition of right-angled forms. There is a large rectangle defined by the posts and frame of the bed, and a number of smaller rectangular forms in other details of the scene. The rhythm of angled shapes is continued by the coffering of the ceiling. This repeating of like characteristics creates a harmony and holds the satisfied vision composedly. The shape of the picture, by the way, is one nearly square.

A recurrence of like shapes is found in an engraving by Dürer of Saint Anthony. The saint, reading a book, is crouching in a pyramidal mass. His cowl is a smaller repetition of this shape, and back of him is a hill which has a pyramidal characteristic, too. This hill is filled with buildings which have roofs and towers suggesting the pyramidal. These similarly shaped forms—the hill, the monk, his cowl, and the medley of towers and roofs—afford a pleasing activity for the eye.

The visual and mental functioning in looking at this picture is like this: the eye is attracted and then held by the initial perception of two large pyramidal forms of the hill and the monk; the eye, as it must



Repetition  
of straight  
lines and  
square  
forms.

*The  
Dream  
of  
St. Ursula*

necessarily vary its attention, begins to explore the picture and finds pleasurable activity in moving from pyramidal shape to pyramidal shape of the buildings. Monotony is avoided by the changing sizes of the smaller details, and an alternate activity of returning to the consideration of the larger forms.

An element which holds the components together in this picture is the contrasting vertical line of a cross-topped staff stuck into the ground close to the crouching monk.

A revelation of an artist's particular preferences is illustrated in the works of some of the painters of the Barbizon school. Corot's trees, generally willows by the waterside, are soft, and in parts like misty veils of foliage; Daubigny silhouetted against the sky a scattered group of straggly poplars; Rousseau would work into his compositions vigorous tree forms, oaks generally, with gnarled trunks and mazes of twisted branches; Diaz seemed to have eyes only for those tree combinations which made bower-like effects; while Harpignies saw those trees only as subjects to paint, it would seem, which had irregularly shaped masses of foliage against the sky. Harpignies, who died in 1916, lived so many years after the time of others of the school of Barbizon painters, living to the age of ninety-seven, that his relation to the school is forgotten.

Taking any one of these landscapists and noting the consistency of manner in their compositions,

we see still another feature of composition. It is that this consistency—impossible of accurate description—constitutes the structure of the picture.



An Engraving by Dürer Analyzed  
 A rhythmic arrangement of triangles  
 and pyramidal shapes.

And this feature is the quiet unity which makes the painting attractive to us at the first glance.

This statement brings us to the consideration of the underlying thought of the remarks on the various pictures studied in this, the last chapter of the book. It is that there are other methods in con-

structing pictures besides those studied in the foregoing chapters. We refer especially to pictures having a plain geometrical plan. In the other examples, immediately preceding, the recurrence of similar forms and characteristics—even mannerisms—constitutes the element unifying the picture just as a simple geometrical plan does. And this element, no matter of what character, is the unifying quality making it a harmonious picture to be valued by connoisseurs, or to be placed on the wall of a museum for our enjoyment.











89051961449



b89051961449a