

ART ASSIGNMENT #7

Composition & Perspective:
The Aerial Perspective Technique

A REFRESHER ON COMPOSITION

- **Composition in the visual arts refers to the way different elements are arranged in within the area.**

- It can also be thought of as the organization of *Elements of Art* (color, shape, line texture, etc.) according to the *Principles of Art* (balance, contrast, movement, rhythm, etc.).



- **When it comes to creating a visual composition, it's not only about the subject you draw/paint, but also its *location* within the space, and the *cropping/framing* you decide to go for.**

- All of these things can have a *huge* impact on how effectively an artwork is able to transmit an idea, emotion, or story.



PERSPECTIVE

- Perspective is considered to be one of the fundamental components of drawing.

- **It is used by artists to create the illusion of three-dimensional depth and space on a flat, two-dimensional surface like paper or canvas.**

- **Perspective allows us to create the sensation of form we can reach out and touch, and create depth and distance between objects in a composition. It allows us to establish what is closest to the viewer and what is further away.**

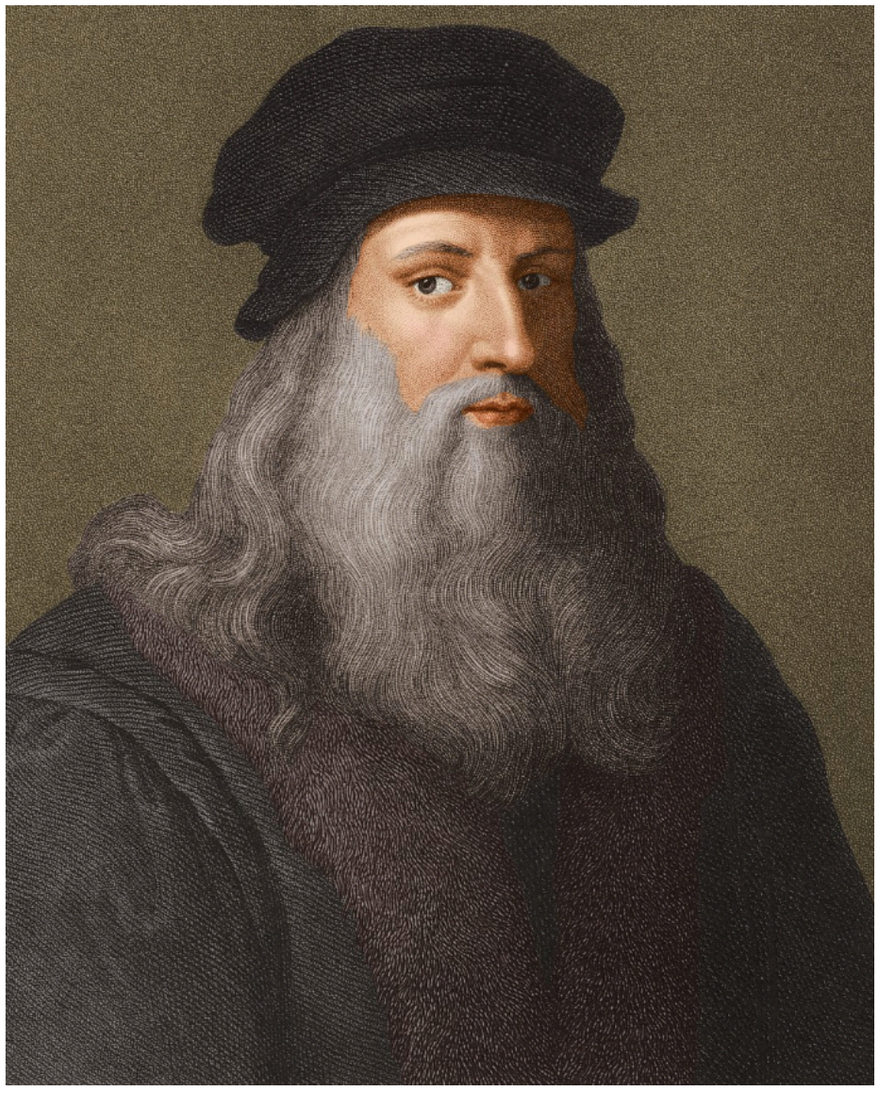
- Though perspective may be more easily perceived in drawings or paintings of settings and landscapes, rules of perspective apply to *all kinds* of subjects, including still life arrangements, portraits and figure paintings.



Robert Papp, *Avocados*, 2013

“Perspective is to painting what the bridle is to the horse, the rudder to a ship… There are three aspects to perspective. The first has to do with how the size of objects seems to diminish according to distance: the second, the manner in which colors change the farther away they are from the eye; the third defines how objects ought to be finished less carefully the farther away they are.”

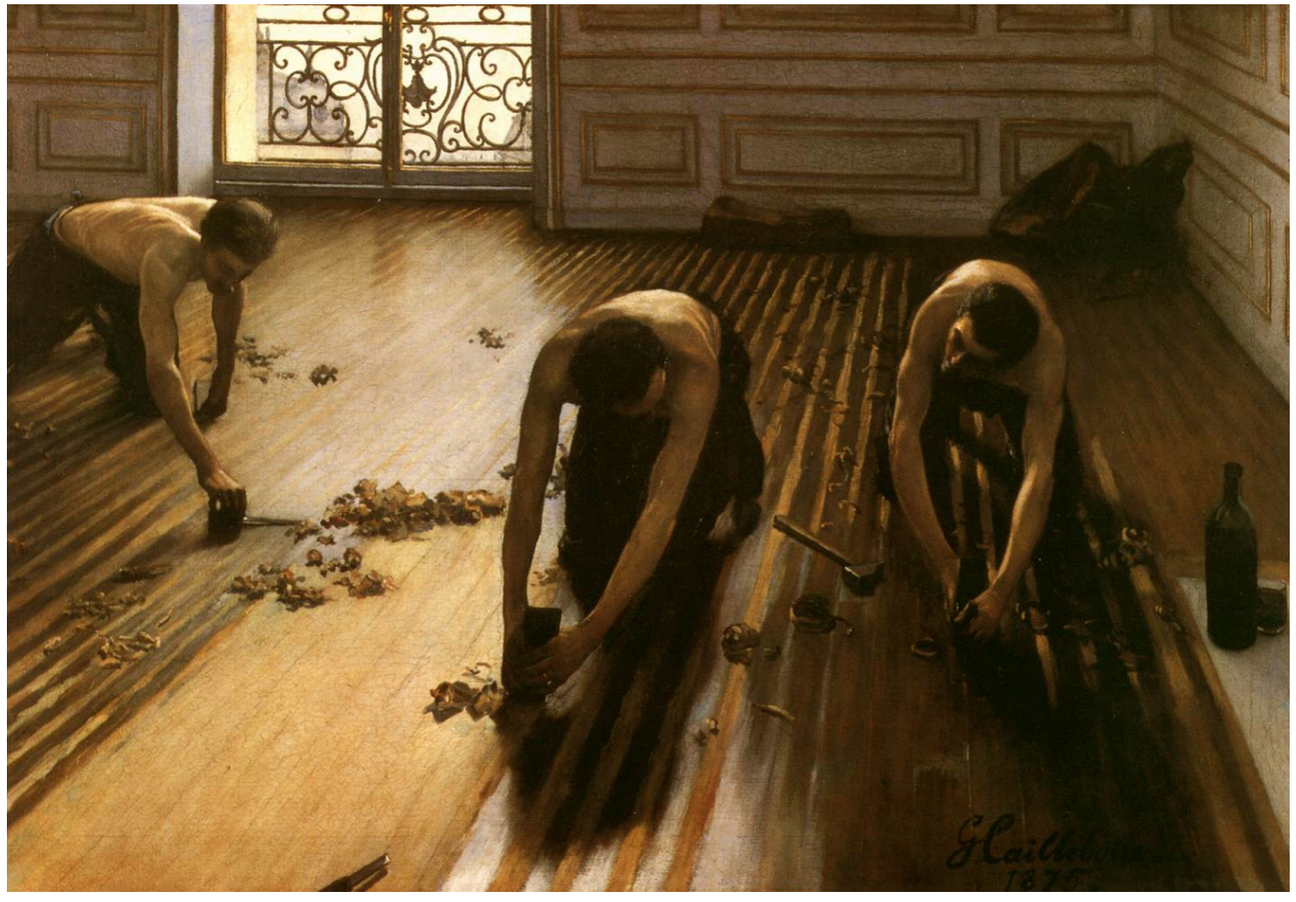
-Leonardo da Vinci



EXAMPLES OF PERSPECTIVE



Gustave Caillebotte, *Paris Street: Rainy Day*, 1887



Gustave Caillebotte, *The Floor Scrapers,* 1875

PERSPECTIVE IN HISTORY

- **Perspective techniques developed during the Renaissance in the early 1400s.**

- **Before this time, paintings were highly stylized and symbolic rather than realistic representations of life.** For example, the size of a person in a painting could indicate their importance and status (rather than their proximity to the viewer), and colors were often manipulated because they carried a significance/meaning.



Raphael, *The Betrothal of the Virgin,* 1504



Raphael, *School of Athens*, 1511

IMPORTANT PERSPECTIVE TERMINOLOGY

- **Viewpoint / Vantage Point**

The Vantage Point refers to the specific place from which a scene is viewed. This point can actually be very high (referred to as *bird's-eye*) or very low (referred to as *worm's-eye*).

- **Horizon Line**

This is the line that separates sky from land (in landscapes) or sky from water (in seascapes), though sometimes it's not that black and white (as in mountain landscapes). It is also referred to as the "eye-level" of the viewer. *It's important to decide whether the sky or the ocean/ground are more important in art so that we can place the horizon line accordingly.

- **Vanishing Point**

The Vanishing Point is placed somewhere on the Horizon Line and it represents the farthest point in your picture. There can be a number Vanishing Points (One Point Perspective has one, Two Point Perspective has two, etc.).



Caspar David Friedrich,
Wanderer Above the Sea Fog, 1818

DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE TECHNIQUES

- There are several different techniques that artists employ to create a sense of perspective, depending on the subject on hand and the effects they are going for.

- **It's important to understand that they are often combined in one same piece.**

a) Aerial or atmospheric perspective:
Used in landscapes and cityscapes. Distant elements are paler (lighter in value), less detailed, and usually bluer/cooler than closer elements.

b) Linear perspective:
Optical illusion created by the use of converging lines and vanishing points that makes objects appear smaller the farther away from the viewer they go. There is 1-Point, 2-Point and 3-Point Perspectives.

c) Foreshortening:
Makes something recede into the distance by compressing or shortening the length of the object.



Dorothea Tanning, *Birthday,* 1942

UNDERSTANDING AERIAL/ATMOSPHERIC PERSPECTIVE

- **Aerial Perspective is the visual effect created by light when it passes through the atmosphere. Whenever you have the chance to view a landscape or cityscape first-hand, take a moment to observe and compare elements that are nearer to you to those further away from you. Usually, elements further away tend to look more blue, less saturated and lighter in value than those in the foreground.**

- This happens because there are water and dust particles floating in the air. Our eyes have to look through more particles the further an object is from us and this makes those elements appear lighter.



Frans Koppelaar, *Landscape Near Bologna*, 2001



Joaquim Alves Gaspar, 2007

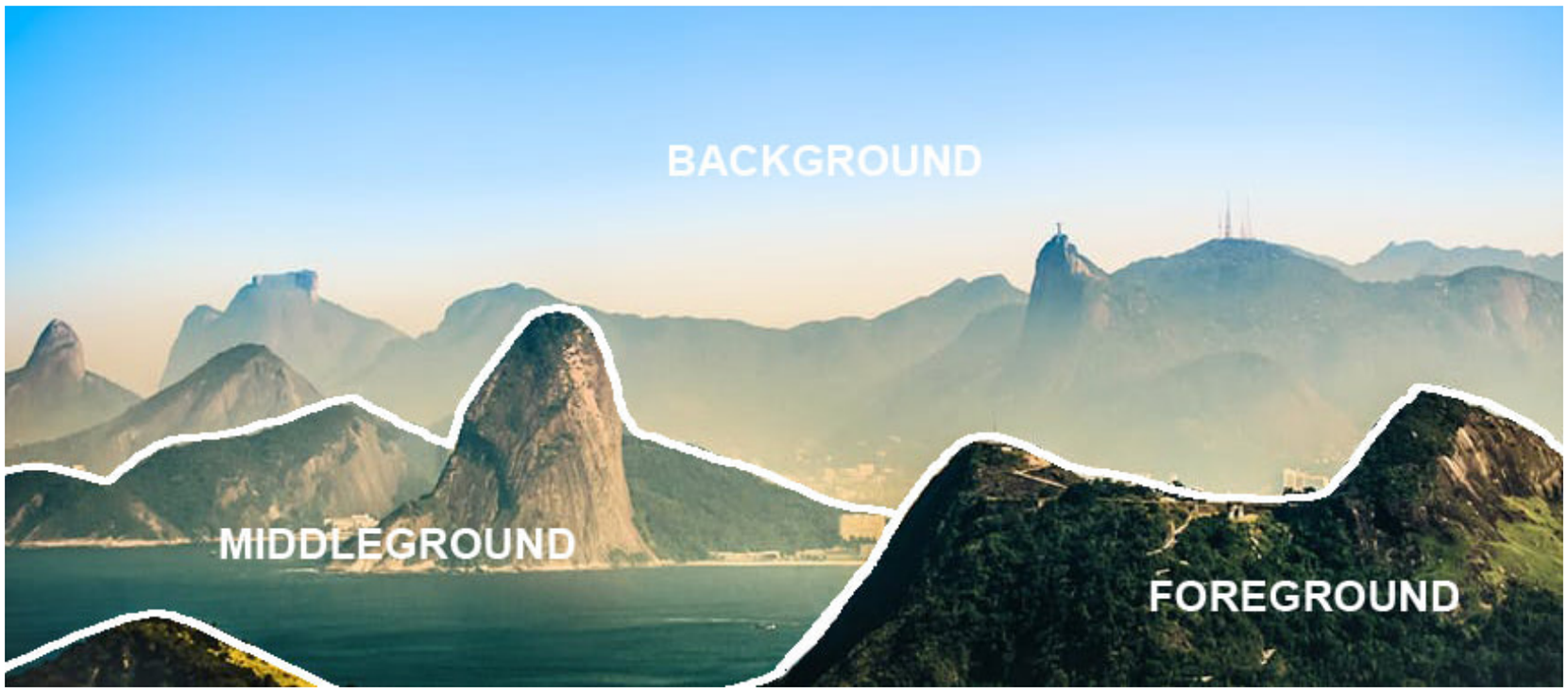
AERIAL PERSPECTIVE AND OVERLAPPING LAYERS

- **Aerial or atmospheric perspective can be demonstrated by a mountain range in which the mountains in the distance appear lighter in value and a bit cooler, or bluer.**

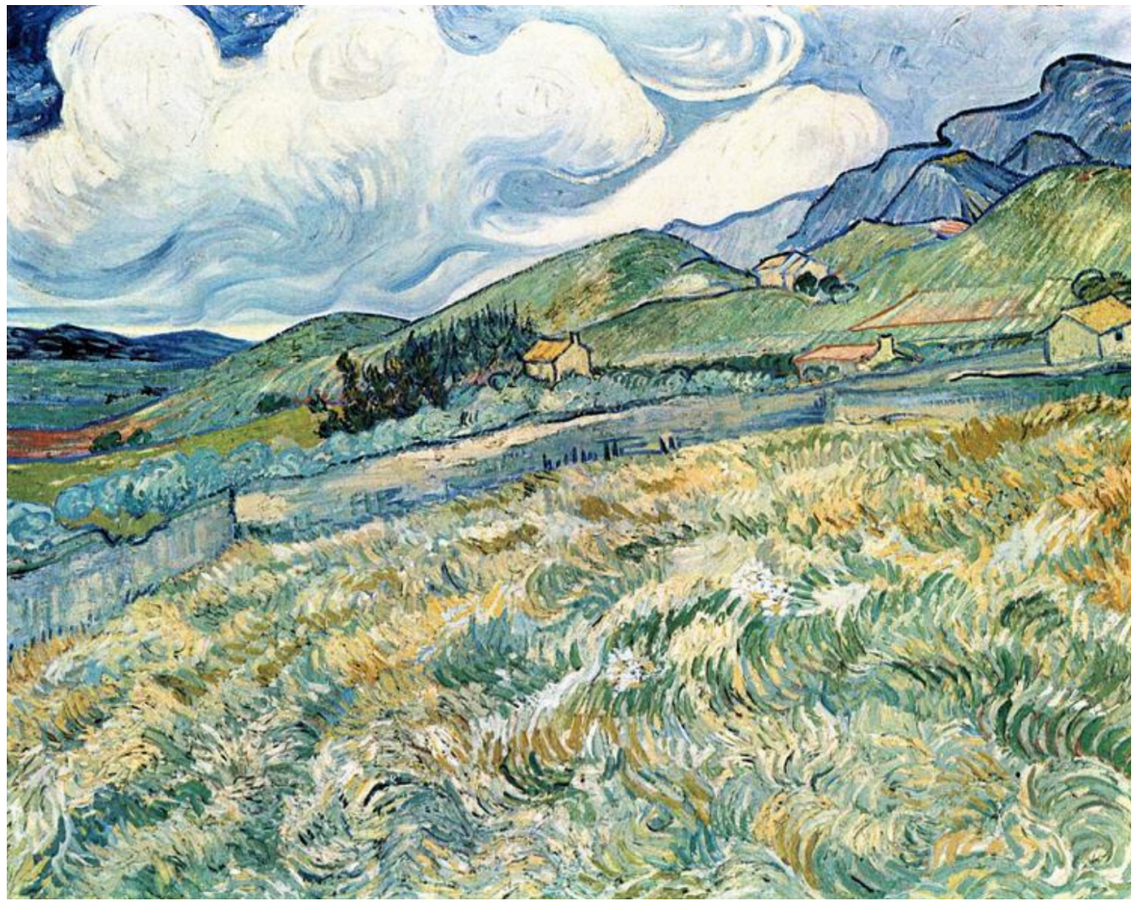
- Aside from using these pointers to create the sensation of depth in a landscape or setting piece, making sure to add a variety of overlapping layers will also enhance the effect.

- **Usually, landscapes include a foreground, middle ground and background.**

- Remember you can *always* use your artistic license to manipulate certain things (color, size, etc.) and further enhance the sense of depth. After all, you're the artist. You're in charge! And, especially when it comes to painting landscapes, photographs are just a jumping off point.



AERIAL PERSPECTIVE IN FAMOUS ART



Vincent Van Gogh,
Mountain Landscape Behind the Hospital Saint-Paul, 1889



Lawren Harris,
Yoho Valley and Isolation Peak, 1928

AERIAL PERSPECTIVE IN FAMOUS ART



Camille Pissarro,
The Boulevard Montmartre on a Winter Morning, 1897

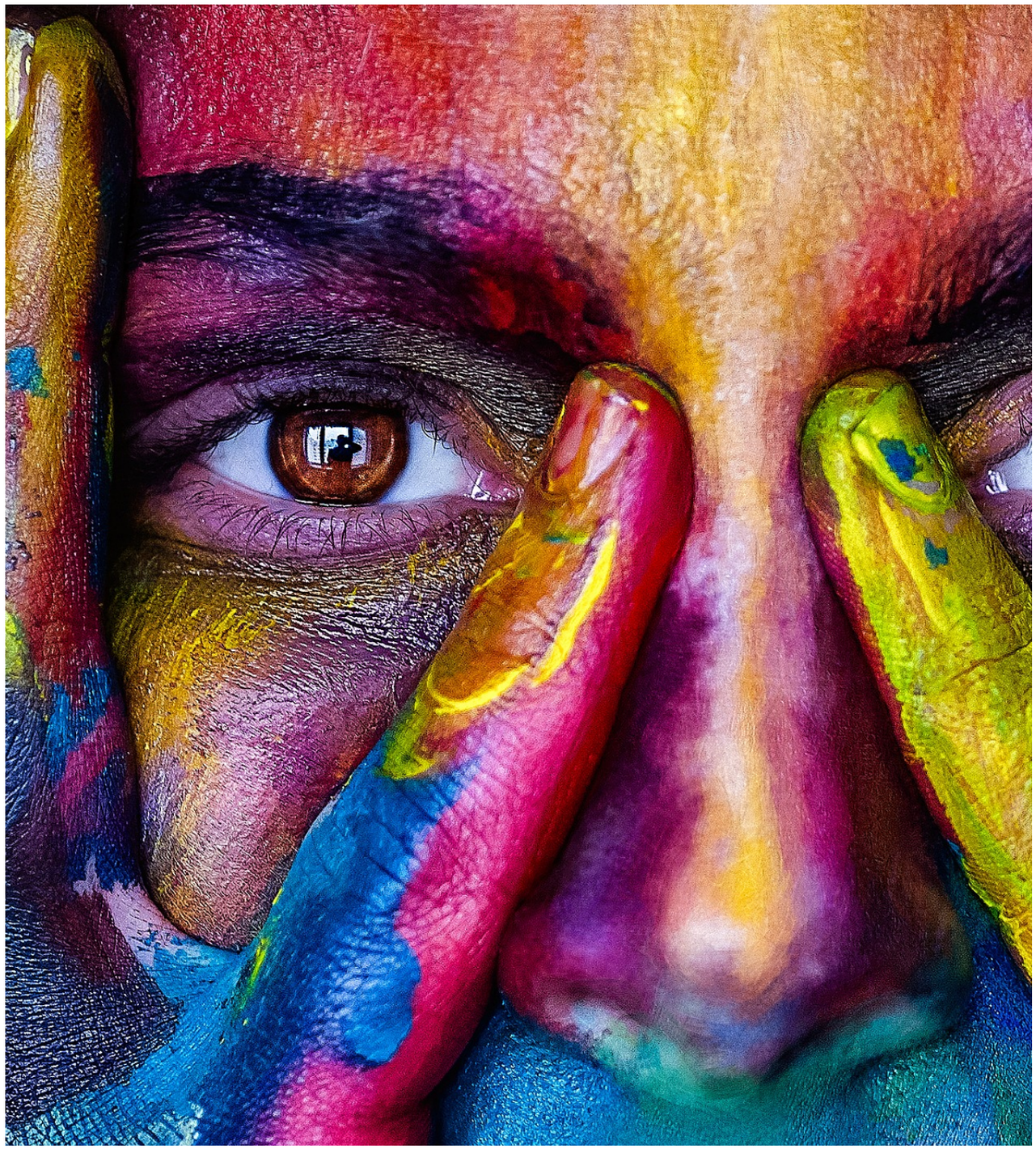


Andrew Wyeth, *Christina's World,* 1948

CREATIVE ASSIGNMENT #7:

- **Create a drawing or painting of a landscape or cityscape that demonstrates your knowledge on Aerial Perspective.**
- **Try to incorporate your knowledge of the Rule of Thirds and asymmetrical balance. **See last class.***
- **Make sure to include a foreground, middle ground and background to further enhance the sensation of depth.**
- **Have fun and be creative! :)**

ARTISTIC PROCESS *SUGGESTED* STAGES



1. Dream/Visualize it
2. Plan + Prepare
3. Execution
4. End it (or repeat it)
5. Evaluate + Reflect