

Tip #54

Creating A Sense of Scale in Your Art

Often when we're painting landscape, it can be difficult to get an idea of scale. How big ARE those rocks?! How far away is that hill? What exactly are we looking at?

Use something that is of a known size-approximately, anyway-to offer hints to your viewer. If you've ever been to Elephant Rocks State Park in southern Missouri, you'll see why they were named that! They're HUGE. But if you just painted the rocks without some known reference, you might think you were in a Japanese bonsai garden. I sketched them with my husband standing between them, and he was dwarfed by their immense size-at 6'3" that was some feat!

Art 54-1, "Joseph in the Valley of Fire"

Remembering how well that worked, I added the figure of my sweetheart when I painted these rocks in Nevada's Valley of Fire for my online watercolor class. He loves the desert, and it just seemed right to let his figure way up on the rocks provide a focal point as well as telling you exactly how large these boulders are.



Art 54-1

Art 54-2, "Distant Herd"



Art 54-2

It works well with distant landscapes, too. Let trees or animals show you how far away things actually are, as I did here. The cows at the horizon to the left side of the road are TINY, here, but that's how they looked up under the shade of the far trees.

You can use this trick with things that are close, too-use a coin, a wristwatch, an orange to show scale. It's all relative!

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