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### **‘Foundations of Landscape Painting’ – Colour Application, Textural Effects and Development of Holistic Composition. Analysis of Selected Landscape Paintings by Second Year Students at Kenyatta University, Nairobi, Kenya**

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*08 Jul 2022* Landscape painting is a popular undertaking among students, particularly those taking formative painting units, some of whom have never used prescribed media such as watercolours, oils or acrylics; and others who have not been exposed to painting at the university level. In one of the second-year painting units where students study colour and its application, they are required to paint landscapes in watercolours and either acrylics or oils. Landscape painting gives them the opportunity to study and apply colour on paper or canvas since landscapes and other outdoor painting studies provide them with a very useful reference resource in terms of colour, colour tones, the transient effect of light and shadows as well as the natural environment that presents colours in their true natural setting. Landscape painting is perhaps one of the most profound opportunities for students to get acquainted with natural colours and their interrelationships before venturing into any other genre of painting where they actively apply colours and their properties for other purposes of expression. Apart from interaction with colour, landscape painting offers the students an added opportunity to delve into other aspects of pictorial composition. Landscapes as a reference resource provide a natural setting that showcases clear placement of many aspects of a pictorial composition that the students can relate with. These include the formal elements such as colour itself, line, shape, texture, value as well as masses and spaces. They are also able to apply the principles of art and design such as balance, harmony, centre of interest, perspective and rhythm. In this study, second year painting students studying colour were exposed to landscape painting for the first time as they studied colour and its application. The basic projection was that they were not expected to produce outstanding work. They were, however, taken through the

basic tenets of landscape painting including pictorial composition, application of elements and principles of art as well as the essence of observation. They were expected to work outdoors but were also allowed to use referent photographs in circumstances where they found them useful. They also worked independently and were allowed to select their medium from either watercolours, acrylics or oils. This paper examines how students responded to their task and how they approached the skill of observation, interpreted the application of colour and its qualities and dealt with pictorial composition. This is important because as it turned out, the students were very sensitive to how their landscapes ‘appeared’ and their ability to showcase what they observed. Ultimately, they were eager to determine whether their paintings were appealing to their classmates and by extension, to the viewers. Even though they were painting landscapes for the first time and some were handling some media for the first time, before embarking on their work, their attention was drawn from the onset to the use of textural effects, colour tones, perspective and details of the foreground, the fading background, nature of the sky and the effect of the transient light and shadows. They were encouraged to work outdoors as much as possible and finalize their work in their rooms. Beyond this, the students were given their space to work, with only the necessary comments that aimed at helping them retain their focus on certain pertinent points. This paper selects and features sample landscape paintings that underscore how a cross section of the students dealt with the formulation of landscape painting and the extent to which they were successful.

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## INTRODUCTION

Landscape painting has long been in existence and gained prominence over time from ancient and

classical renditions to a more concerted emergence as a genre during the renaissance and developing well into the modern times. Emanating from the Dutch word *Landschap*, its foremost objective is to

capture nature as it exists in its natural beauty, particularly the transient natural light of the sun as well as weather as they impact this beauty. Subsequently, landscape sceneries, by their very nature generate certain psychological associations; they can generate a calming serene feeling, or elicit a dull and depressing effect or even have a surreal effect depending on how they are presented. Landscape painting may involve many kinds of natural sceneries on land or extend to other types of sceneries including seascapes, riverscapes or cityscapes as the artist may choose. Blumberg (2020) observes that ‘Landscape paintings may capture mountains, valleys, bodies of water, fields, forests, and coasts and may or may not include man-made structures as well as people.’

Setting out what a landscape should contain, Mitchell (2014) notes that, ‘Landscape art’ is the description of natural landscape usually with a focus on mountains, trees, rivers, forests, valleys, coastline and other scenic areas. Often it does not include a humanistic element, which is why it is so interesting that it has such an effect on us as the viewer; having said that there are many depictions that show boats, ruined castles, bridges etc.’ In terms of basic description and materials, Gersh-Nesic (2019) notes that ‘Landscapes are works of art that feature scenes of nature. This includes mountains, lakes, gardens, rivers, and any scenic view. Landscapes can be oil paintings, water colors, gouache, pastels, or prints of any kind.’ Richman-Abdou (2017) describes landscape painting thus, ‘Landscape painting (or landscape art) refers to an artistic genre defined by a focus on natural scenery as subject matter. Landscape paintings can depict a variety of settings, such as mountains, forests, rivers, and beaches. They often offer a wide view of the scene, and usually place some focus on the sky.’

Landscapes can be executed outdoors in the open air or *en plein air* or can be painted in the studio from referent photographs. Each approach has its advantages and both culminate in interesting renditions. In demarcating the styles in landscape painting, landscape painting can be approached from three perspectives; *realistic* or *representational*, *impressionistic* and *abstract*. Representational landscape painting creates a realistic picture of the landscape as it manifests itself in nature without deliberate alterations of

colour and other elements and, hence, depicts the exquisiteness of natural beauty. Impressionistic landscape painting allows for the application of certain deliberate alterations, particularly unnatural colours, as the artist may wish to apply.

Impressionist style also means that the landscape painting is devoid of minute details and may involve bold brushstrokes. Abstract landscape painting involves the partial dismantling of the realistic landscape to an extent where the landscape is still identifiable but rendered differently, without natural order, creating a new pictorial dispensation. For example, familiar shapes of trees may be distorted; or the artist may use elongated shadows and false perspective may be used to distort the illusion of depth as it is usually depicted. In recent times, artists have developed hyperrealism in landscape painting where the aim is to surpass nature by producing work that is more refined than its naturalistic referent. On the essence of landscape painting in a modern dispensation, Herzog (2016) notes that, ‘One way or another, landscape paintings are evergreen, they simply never get old. Their popularity may increase or decrease from time to time, but it remains high.’

## Approaches to Landscape Painting

### *En Plein Air*

Painting *en plein air* means working outdoors in plain air where the actual landscape is the focus of reference. The main advantage of this approach is that the colours on the outdoor scenery are natural with the accompanying suggestion of varieties of tones as they exist upon the time of day. The artist also has the advantage of natural light and a clear view of the variety of textural effects. This kind of painting necessitates that the artist works quickly, capturing only the necessary but pertinent details that best describe the scenery. Often the purpose of outdoor painting is to complete the painting and present the outcome as an artistic piece. Brushstrokes are often spontaneous and bold with application of colour rendered straight onto the canvas. Some artists, though, prefer to work outdoors only for the purpose of gathering the necessary visual information they need to create their landscapes. In this regard, they make quick sketches using watercolours, coloured pencils or washes which they then later transform into detailed

paintings without alteration of the fundamental scenery. This approach is associated with impressionistic tendencies.

### ***Impromptu Sketching***

Impromptu sketching is a traditional approach where an artist documents interesting landscapes by way of quick sketches, often accompanied by detailed notes. These notes become handy when the artist later 'reconstructs' the scenery where they become referent resource material. It is an interesting approach that keeps the artist engaged in compositional work and also provides an opportunity for the creation of artistic possibilities since the artist has an opportunity for maneuver.

### ***Creating 'Surreality' in Landscape Painting***

Though it is unusual for an artist to create a landscape from imagination mainly because it is unnecessary, given all the natural referents around, landscapes can be created to completely dismantle the dictates of their natural referents. Artists can, therefore, use their 'creative liberty' to present to their viewers a landscape as they 'perceive' it in their minds, rather than as they 'observe' it, thereby discarding its specificity or locale. This is often done through the manipulation of natural colours and distortion of natural shapes to create a new landscape composition. The manipulation of natural colours and the distortion of the shapes of natural forms and replacing them with what is visually unusual or unnatural culminates in some form of surreality.

### ***Fantasizing the Landscape***

Closely related to the concept or surreality, the idea that an artist can digress from reality into the realm of fantasy in landscape painting may be deemed either absurd or within the edge of acceptability depending on which side of the divide one subscribes to. But it is possible to imagine that while nature creates its most awesome natural landscapes beyond human power, an artist can create his or her own distant utopian depiction of a distant land, uninhabited, intriguing and profound. This can be done with the use of envisaged galactic colours, false perspectives, textural effects and forms that do not resemble the real naturalistic referent.

### ***Digital Influence of Referent Photographs***

In the digital era, the use of referent photographs is a stylistic approach that is popular with landscape artists since they do not need to feel the confinement of the moment of day, the constriction of the rapid passage of daytime or the limitations of the dictates of weather. This approach allows the artist to work in the studio and be able to make certain artistic interventions that add variety to the landscape painting by combining certain elements from different sources to create a new composition. This approach, subsequently, opens a whole array of possibilities in landscape composition since the artist can alter the nature of colours, replacing the natural colours of the environment with unnatural ones that blend differently and create new associations and moods. The artist can also shift, rearrange, add or subtract forms on the picture plane creating interesting new placements. This freedom of artistic maneuver also implies that the artists can delve into abstraction where they dismantle natural forms and mould them into new unnatural ones, giving the landscape new impetus. They can also explore surrealism by the use of surreal colours or distorted forms that add mystery to the feel and spirit of landscapes; or even explore hyperrealism as they endeavour to create a landscape composition more refined than the referent photograph.

### ***Influences***

Since landscape painting has such a long and chequered history, it is inevitable that related paintings will be viewed and reviewed in terms of influences that they visually tend to subscribe to. Hence some landscape paintings will be seen, in their description, to bear a tendency towards impressionism, abstraction, romanticism or even classicism even though the artist did not necessarily execute the paintings with these influences in mind. However, these tendencies provide a general descriptive categorization of paintings that artistically does no harm.

### ***Format***

Landscapes are often executed in a horizontal format. The greater width compared to a lesser height on the picture plane enables the artist to fit in many of the unique characteristics of a given scenery that he or she wishes to capture. This is

obviously because forms in nature manifest themselves horizontally rather than vertically.

### **Brief Historical Background of Landscape Painting**

Landscape art has a long tradition in China, the most common being the ink and brush *Shan shui* art form which originated in the 6<sup>th</sup> Century. The Greeks and the Romans created wall paintings that featured pure landscapes, a tendency that ultimately declined with the fall of the Roman Empire. During the renaissance, though there was a growing interest in the natural world, landscape painting had not emerged as a genre but was featured mainly as background sceneries in the story paintings based on biblical, mythological and historical themes popular at the time. Landscape painting became recognized as a genre in its own right in the late 15<sup>th</sup> Century but specifically more so in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, where landscape paintings became more prominent by featuring natural beauty for its own sake, where paintings were colourful and highly detailed and were not necessarily presented as mere backgrounds to other pertinent expressions. Landscape painting thus joined other more established genres such as history painting, portraiture or portrait Art, genre painting or paintings that depicted everyday life, and still-life painting that had hitherto been seen as more important in the powerful French academy. The 17<sup>th</sup> century saw the onset of classical landscapes based on ancient Greek mythology which propagated classical order and harmony and artists introduced a metaphorical element in their paintings as well as the dominance of the power of nature. Classical paintings displayed compositional order reflecting balance, harmony and timelessness. Landscape painting gained more recognition and became prominent with the onset of Romanticism in the later part of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Painters became more emotionally involved in self-expression as well as studying the essence of nature, from its serene natural scenery, the interaction between man and the natural environment as well as depicting the awe, strength and wrath of natural wonders. Romantic paintings were hence characterized by a departure from the calm order of classical historical and mythological subject matter to a new era of great artistic drama. Early modern landscape painting emerged in the 19<sup>th</sup> century characterized by Impressionism and the

popularization of outdoor *en plein air* painting. Impressionist landscape painting focused less on realistic details but more on the transient nature and energy of the scenery, including the effect of light, colour, tones and shadows.

### **Importance of Landscape Painting to Artists and the Wider Audience**

#### ***Mood and Emotion***

Landscapes as subject matter can elicit certain moods and emotions that are brought about by the awe of natural beauty, the power of nature and the intrigues of the moment. Mitchell (2014) observes that ‘Landscape paintings often construe a certain mood or emotion - they are incredible tools for creating an atmosphere.’ Artists become the bearers of these emotions which they pass on to other viewers who were not at the scene of the manifestation of wonder. Landscapes provide a sense of history to a scenery, perhaps a sense of philosophy, a religious significance, all seen through the artist’s work, colour and rendition. Sehgal (2017) further observes that ‘Paintings of landscapes have the potential to evoke a feeling of relaxation and positivity in us when in an irate mood. The serene views in subtle colours such as browns, greens and yellows are not only pleasing to the eyes but convey a feeling of contentment that lets all the problems drift away. Similarly, a beautiful sunset image often invokes a warm feeling and a sense of wonder.’

#### ***Nature as a Fundamental Artistic Reference and Resource***

As subject matter, landscape painting provides an opportunity for artists to observe nature as a phenomenon which in turn provides the perfect opportunity to study and apply colour, textures and other elements of art as they occur in that natural environment. There exists perhaps no other situational setting that provides such a holistic opportunity to comprehend how art elements apply in a painting as a result of direct observation of how they manifest in a natural environment. Mitchell (2014) further notes that ‘we can all access the external environment, which is one of the reasons why it is one of the most accessible and universal forms of art’

### ***Awe and Curiosity about Nature***

Landscape painting provides the opportunity for artists and audiences alike to internalize and conceptualize the awesome entirety of nature since nature and its wonders exist as created beyond human power and comprehension. Landscape painting is, therefore, an engagement with nature, a search for harmony and faith in its infinite serenity of beauty.

### ***Creation of Visual Interest***

Visual interest is normally applied in relation to a wall space that would otherwise be dull and uneventful. The introduction of colours, textures and natural forms add natural beauty and ambience into a space that enlivens the environment, be it indoors or outdoors. The transient nature of the human movement is such that it has to be broken by a situation that creates visual interest.

### ***Presence by Association***

This means that an artist, through his or her talent and execution of work, can visually transport the viewers' mind to the 'scene of occurrence'; in other words to the beauty of the locale that makes them feel that they are emotionally present and would wish to be physically present to view and enjoy the scenery. The individual artist then becomes the window through which audiences fathom beauty in distant lands that they are not able to reach. This demonstrates the unique placement of landscape painting in creating a global village of profound beauty.

### ***Landscape Art as an Anchor for Cultural and National identity***

There exists a sustained argument about the place of Landscape Art in the propagation of cultural and national identity in various parts of the world. Scholars have argued that there exists a distinctive and, therefore, a significant contribution of landscape art to cultural sensibilities, national psyche and the drive towards National identity in respective countries of the world. Wen & White (2020) contend that 'artistic depictions of the physical and cultural landscapes of a state's territory plays a significant role in the creation and perpetuation of cultural and national identities. It is notable that artists who painted certain landscapes

at a given point in their country's history had their works become synonymic with the peculiarities of those historical events and occurrences. Wen & White (2020) further contend that 'depictions of natural and cultural landscapes can serve the creation of cultural and national identity not solely through the faithful reproduction of what the artist can see but can also derive their power from artists' reflective engagement with the elements that constitute landscape and from subsequent depictions that are symbolist in kind.'

## **ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK**

In landscape painting, the analytical framework can be woven from a number of perspectives. The fundamental approach in landscape painting analysis is descriptive which is ultimately intertwined with formal analysis and has the aim of highlighting features of paintings that are pertinent in terms of the skill of execution and are, therefore, noteworthy. The framework highlights areas within the realm of execution of landscape painting by students that become important analytical tools.

### **Formal Analysis**

The application of formal analysis is fundamental to all forms of art and hence the use of elements and principles of art and how they are applied in landscape painting is important in shedding light upon how they are perceived and applied by students in order to achieve their objective. In landscape painting, it is expected that certain elements like colour and its tones, light and dark areas and shadows, shapes and texture would be prominent in the description of the paintings. Compositional principles that aid in the layout of the paintings such as perspective, balance, harmony, proportion, contrast, movement and focus would also be important in describing how the students handle the space provided in the picture plane, leading to unity of design. Ultimately any work of art culminates in 'form'. In this regard, Barrett (1994) observes that, 'All works of art have form, whether realistic or abstract, representational or nonrepresentational, meticulously planned or achieved spontaneously. When critics discuss the form of a work of art, they provide information about how the artist presents subject matter (or excludes it) by means of a chosen medium. They tell

of the artwork's composition, arrangement and visual construction.'

### Observational Skills

Landscape painting entails very careful observation, particularly when using a selected scenery which is a natural referent resource. In examining any landscape painting, this paper postulates that the level of the skill of observation applied is commensurate to the level of execution of the holistic painting and hence observation becomes, in its own description, an important analytical tool. This is in tandem with the usage of elements such as colour selection and application, textural effects, natural shapes, tones, shadows and the emphasis of areas of focus. This is accompanied by the application of principles that guide the whole concept of spatial organization of the painting itself. The difference between landscape painting and other forms of creative painting is that in the composition of landscape painting, observation is critical at every stage, particularly when trying to extract all visible natural clues embedded in the selected scenery. In other expressive creative paintings, artists are not subjected to the confines of observation of nature as it manifests and can initiate, generate and create many aspects of their paintings as they deem appropriate. In highlighting, for instance, the essence of direct observation in painting a landscape directly from its natural setting and why it is, therefore, an important analytical tool, Lancaster (2017) observes that, **'If you are painting a landscape or scenery and you are actually in the place, you're able to feel the energy around you.** Your personal feelings and thoughts whilst experiencing the subject will translate into your work to make it richer and more expressive.'

### Medium

The medium used in landscape painting is important in terms of the ability of the students to feel comfortable in rendering their work and, hence, produce the best results possible. In this paper, the

students were free to select their preferred medium from three choices; watercolours, acrylics or oils. Individually, each medium has its own characteristics in terms of application of colour, how it behaves and spreads on the surface as well as blending in with the technique. The students were free to experiment and find their comfort, particularly in the application of brushstrokes and other techniques that helped them obtain certain effects in their work.

### Technique

Within the broader painting techniques, landscape painting entails the application of colour on the surface according to the dictates of the medium and within that, the use of brushstrokes to create various textural effects which help to describe the essence of the work. Technique, therefore, becomes a fundamental ingredient of the creation of a landscape and how it is ultimately described.

### Light Effects and Illumination

Outdoor painting is characterized in a unique way by the effect of natural illumination. This is mainly because of the natural manifestation of sunlight and its transient nature. It is unlikely that any student studying a scenery will omit the application of the effect of natural light as it reflects upon certain parts of the scenery or shines upon natural objects. This not only creates shadows and an illusion of three dimension, but also lights up the environment, giving life to the painting.

### Stylistic Influence

Although students may not necessarily refer or subscribe to any stylistic influence in the process of their landscape painting, it is necessary to observe whether there exists an inclination towards a given style; be it realism, impressionism, or hyperrealism, or whether they even wish to breakdown the natural environment towards some level of abstraction.

### ANALYSIS OF WORK



Plate 1: Nyagah Eric Gitau (2021)

Acrylics on canvas - 60 x 80 cm

*Source - Department of Fine Art*

The student displays an interesting style that is detailed yet simplistic; he captures what is necessary in the painting in a realistic way without exerting too much 'energy of detail'. For instance, he studies the waterfall in simple falling linear brushstrokes of grey and white, yet creates a sense of water cascading down upon the rocks by varying the direction of the brushstrokes and varying the tones. The dark tones show where the water dips and sinks below, and the light tones depict where the water splashes to life again. With this style, the viewer is left with no doubt that the waterfall is alive and flowing, though the student does not render too much detail. The student also renders the vegetation above the waterfall with the same measure of purposeful simplicity yet convincingly capturing the lushness of the green vegetation and foliage that usually characterizes a waterfall environment. The penetrating sun rays are captured by light yellow

brushstrokes literally showing the rays themselves permeating through the forest cover, rather than through a haze of light that most artists would probably use. The student selects appropriate natural colours with pleasant yellow-green tones to depict the forested landscape and tones of light blue to depict the calm waters in the foreground. Though the forested area and the edge of the waterfall create a rather unusual linear demarcation that splits the painting compositionally into two parts, this does not disturb the viewer's eye because of the captivating nature of the overall composition and style that constantly shifts the eye upon the entirety of composition rather on the edge of the waterfall. The painting is done with good textural effects that help balance the elements. The fallen log on the left edge of the waterfall is an added natural form that the student observes and inserts to add visual substance to the painting.





Plate 2: Rochester Otieno Anabwani (2021)

Acrylics on canvas - size: 60 x 80 cm

*Source - Department of Fine Art*

In this painting, the student utilizes a number of elements that make the picture pleasant to view. He chooses and uses naturalistic colours that are pleasant to the viewer's eyes since they reflect the environment as it appears. Firstly, the blue of the sky has its correct tone and he proceeds to create an illuminative effect almost as if the effect is emanating from the hidden sun beyond the horizon. He creates grey tones to enhance the clouds making them hang like they are heavily laden with rain amid the illuminated evening sky, making the sky perhaps the most striking aspect of the painting. The green colour of the surrounding land bears its natural tone and subsequent tonal variations with specks of illumination in the far distance, gradually darkening

towards the horizon. The green tones lighten towards the foreground, allowing for the depiction of textural details of the hedge at the side of the railway line. The use of perspective on the railway line itself as an artistic tool aids in the creation of depth in the composition as it diminishes towards the vanishing point yet unfolds with adequate detail towards the foreground. The slightly tilted pink building to the left is another feature of perspective and demonstrates how the student perceives the importance of the foreground in setting his composition. The holistic composition is an interesting study of the lush green but almost bear environment that makes the viewer feel like they want to walk down along the railway line.



Plate 3: Okong'o Mong'ina Deborah (2021)

Acrylics on canvas - 60 x 80 cm

*Source - Department of Fine Art*

In this painting, the student demonstrates that she is aware of the fundamental aspects of landscape composition. The colours are natural and convincing; the blue of the sky bears a natural soft tone and suggests the hanging clouds as they linger far above the horizon. The mountain with its sharp picks is depicted with a rather irregular blue, which seems deliberate as it makes it stand out as an integral part of the painting. Landscape paintings may, at times, combine aspects of a very natural environment with aspects of colours that do not seem to blend naturally but create visual contrasts that enhance certain parts of the painting itself and hence become part of the style. The foreground waters are well executed with the necessary colour reflections. Textural effects are evident in the

foreground grass, flowers and foliage as well as the distant forested areas beneath the mountain edge. The tree on the left of the painting is painted over the sky, a technique often used by landscape painters, and the two trees with orange flowers blossoming on the right, are placed to balance out the composition. She places the same orange colour on the left of the picture plane. To add a modicum of life to the painting, the student inserts two white cranes in the foreground. In the execution of her painting, this student underscores the usefulness of compositional elements and understands how they apply in the composition of a painting. Subsequently, she applies the same in order to bring out pertinent parts that clearly enhance the natural serenity of the painting.



Plate 4: Rochester Otieno Anabwani (2021)

Acrylics on canvas - size: 60 x 80 cm

*Source - Department of Fine Art*

This study of a specific scenery demonstrates the observational skill that the student possesses which makes this kind of painting interesting to observe. Students do not necessarily have the same observational skills, a factor that significantly affects their ability to render paintings uniformly even though they may be studying the same scenery. Linear perspective is very well applied right from the shed in the foreground to the distant horizon, helping to create a sense of ground depth. He lays out the perspective in terms of the vanishing effect of the trees and the buildings as well as the paving in the foreground. The student also uses textural effects to show the various surface characters that help to define the composition. Most vivid is the neatly arranged stones on the foreground wall and the distance building as well as the grass and the bark of the tree. The use of shadows indicate that the

painting occurs during the mid-morning sunshine going by the direction of the elongated shadows of the trees. The student uses subtle natural colours, showing the light blue tone of the sky and the green of the grass and vegetation that depicts the coming to life of the scenery probably after a dry spell, shown through the rather light tones of green with a hint of brown on the ground. Finally, the student includes some figures that bring life to the scenery. Although figures are themselves transient and do not exist naturally to define a landscape as in the case of stones or other physical objects, they are at times used to capture and enhance the feeling of the moment since in this case, this painting features a residential scenery. The compositional aspect of the painting is good with the tree in the centre and the buildings on the left balanced by the vegetation on the right of the picture.



Plate 5: Castro Ahuba (2021)

Watercolours – 42x59.4 cm

*Source - Department of Fine Art*

This painting is a study of how students perceive a landscape environment in a most fundamental way but manage at the same time, to capture the essence of the scenery. The student first lays out the composition using a linear perspective that outlines surface grounding and establishes depth that is depicted by the river's flow towards the vanishing point. From the river's edge, the composition depicts a rising slope that extends to the mass of land above, explaining why some trees appear to sprout from an elevated ground. The beauty of the landscape painting itself is derived from the way the student applies the varying tones of green accompanied by designated spaces of dark shadows that enhance the three-dimensional effect that makes the painting lively and realistic. Textural

effects are used effectively to depict both living and dead objects, particularly on the tree trunks, rocks and leaves on the tree branches, grass as well as the abandoned boat on the right of the painting. The reflection on the water is well executed combining a variety of colours and tones that make the painting very pleasant to view. Water colour painting is often not so much about the inclusion of intricate details but much more about the touch of brushstrokes that enhance and emphasize certain areas that ultimately capture the viewer's eyes attention. The foreground of the painting is so well executed, not in terms of detail but the suggestion of colours, shadows and textures that create the feeling of the environment as it exists.



Plate 6: Gloria Auma (2021)

Acrylics on canvas - 60 x 80 cm

*Source - Department of Fine Art*

In order to construct the captivating composition in this painting, the student approaches the study of the scenery from three angles; the sky, the rocky side embankments and the perspective of the railway line itself. The sky is executed with just a suggestion of blue and a haze of very light tones that suggest the effect of shining natural light upon the horizon. This effect is used to shine light upon the railway line creating some form of illumination. She takes time to study the perfect linear perspective that slices across the picture plane towards the vanishing point which creates an undeniable sense of depth. The perspective is enhanced by the detailed study of the rails and the rail slippers as well as the ground upon which they rest. The use of texture as an element is vividly utilized to depict the pebbles on

the railway line surface as well as the sliced rocks on the side embankments. The use of light and dark effects and the use of shadows in carefully applied as an enhancement of textural effects that create a sense of solidity of both the pebbles on the ground and the slices of rocks on the embankment. It is not common for students to study a scenery dominated solely by the concept of perspective, but this student studies perspective for its sake but applies it to a natural scenery. This demonstrates the beauty of perspective that is often overlooked in its natural environment which, in this case, makes it not merely mathematical, but artistic. The choice of greys and an array of browns helps in the visual depiction of an area that was clearly excavated to create the pathway for the railway line.



Plate 7: Yvonne Achieng' Okumu (2021)

Acrylics on canvas - 60 x 80 cm

*Source - Department of Fine Art*

In this detailed painting, the student demonstrates the passion for intricate work shown through the study of textures, shadows and colour tones, the interrelation of which helps to bring out a remarkable outcome. The scenery itself is composed of green as a colour theme which is then interwoven into types of green and a variety of tones that help to depict textures. Intricate brushstrokes help to enhance the study of grass, foliage, leaves, tree branches and tilting trees that show her keen eye for the use of textural effects that create an environment of a dense forest. The student also studies the formation of rocks on the river with the use of greys and browns as well as light and dark areas and shadows that give the rocks their solidity.

The water itself is executed with the necessary reflections of the colour of the surrounding vegetation which demonstrates that the student is aware of the essence of this effect. She opts to insert two birds as embellishments to the scenery. The sky and distant mountain ranges are well done with a tone of blue that blends with the rest of the painting and adds to the beauty of colour. The application of perspective is evident which, in turn, suggests depth that penetrates into the picture plane and gives the scenery a convincing sense of grounding. The student demonstrates admirable application of elements and principles of art in the execution of the landscape painting that make it pleasant to view.



Plate 8: Wanje Kazungu (2021)

Acrylics on canvas - size: 60 x 80 cm

*Source - Department of Fine Art*

This landscape is captured using two basic colours; blue and green, which give the painting its own description of serenity. The student further selects the use of yellow-greens and blue-greens to depict various aspects of the scenery and particularly uses shadows and contrasting light areas to describe the nature of the scenery, including shrubs and trees. A touch of detail with a thin brush helps in the depiction of tree branches as well as the bloom age of the white flowers. Textural effects are evident in the foreground with specs of grass and shoots of white flowers which are depictive of vegetation sprouting to life. There is a good depiction of perspective and suggestion of depth in the way the land diminishes into the distant background and the

river winds from the foreground to the vanishing point. A little reflection of the trees on the blue of the river helps to create the effect of water. The sky is executed with a light blue tone and a suggestion of soft white clouds. This impressionistic landscape does not bear the intricate details shown in other paintings but the student captures the essential scenery in a way that is refreshing and evident of an emerging personal style. Students are encouraged to produce a painting based on their own observation and rendition of colours, tones and textures since these are what signify an individual approach to painting and creates interesting varieties of finished work.



Plate 9: Peter Rwamba (2021)

Acrylics on canvas - size: 60 x 80 cm

*Source - Department of Fine Art*

This painting captures the dense vegetation of a hillside that creeps up onto the rocky hill top, enveloping the entire scenery in a lush of green. A patch of water body is located on the lower edge of the hill. The student captures the lush vegetation through a careful study of a variety of green tones, setting darker tones against lighter ones in order to create meticulous contrasts which, in turn, help to identify the different types of vegetation. These contrasts also help the student to depict the feeling of depth by making the vegetation appear dense and grounded. For instance, he is able to create the distinction between the foreground vegetation and that on the distant hill by contrasting the tones around the mid-picture almost as if there is a demarcation line. He enhances this effect by capturing vivid textural effects that highlight the

foreground trees and shrubs that gradually diminish into the background, creating perspective. The entire pictorial composition utilizes the effect of textures, tonal variations and contrasts that create an illuminative effect to describe the scenery and environment. The water body placed deep into the forest, is captured by appropriate reflections of the surrounding vegetation and sky upon the water, making it identifiable and descriptive of the existing ecosystem. The water body, by virtue of its central placement, subsequently becomes the focal point of the painting. The execution of textural effects and the greenery of the vegetation is, however, so effectively spread out compositionally that the viewer's eye wanders across the entire picture plane.





Plate 10: Peter Rwamba (2021)

Acrylics on canvas - size: 60 x 80 cm

*Source - Department of Fine Art*

The beauty of this painting is in its spontaneity of execution. The student is able to feature so many aspects of the scenery yet paint them with such convincing simplicity with only touches of detail where necessary. The style, subsequently, allows the student to suggest details without labouring to actually paint each type of detail like the realists would endeavour to do. The choice of colours, from tones of green to light yellow ochre and even some red-violet are pleasant combinations that enrich the scenery. The colours are applied with beautiful brushstrokes some of which are applied with thin brushes in order to emphasize details. The high mountain top is done with a variety of dark and light tones of greys describing the ruggedness of the mountain edges and the impression of a cold mountain environment. The student also studies the

mountain slopes with suggestion of scattered shrubs. Perspective is shown by diminishing trees and vegetation starting from the river's edge in the foreground and continuing towards the foot of the mountain, creating a sense of depth. The river outlines its own perspective along its edges as it flows from the foreground towards its own vanishing point. The water effect is enhanced by the use of reflections of the colours of the surrounding vegetation. An aspect of natural illumination is portrayed towards the middle of the painting using a concentration of light tones which reflect upon specs of the vegetation. The sky colour is not the usual light blue but a combination of light oranges, yellows and purples that create a surreal sense of dusk in the background of an otherwise illuminated scenery.



Plate 11: Yvonne Achieng Okumu (2021)

Acrylics on canvas - size: 60 x 80 cm

*Source - Department of Fine Art*

The student studiously executes this painting by first and foremost exploiting rich colour and textural effects. She uses yellow-greens and blue-greens as well as other light and dark tones of green to bring out the colour of the vegetation and trees. This is augmented by the use of intricate textural effects that suggest leaves and other types of foliage all created by carefully applied brushstrokes. The variation of tones also helps to create perspective, with lighter tones falling on the distant trees and vegetation and the more vivid green tones appearing as the trees and vegetation draw nearer to the foreground. The sense of distance and depth is also enhanced by the two structures and the pathway leading to the edge of the river. As has been the general trend in the depiction of skies by most

students, the sky in this painting is executed with very light blues tones that diminish towards the horizon with only a soft suggestion of clouds, which is consistent with the tonal tendency of a naturalistic sky. The foreground depicts a gentle waterfall created by the river's slight descent, cascading down to join the lower stream. This cascading effect is depicted as creating a slight rumbling effect as the falling water hits the lower stream and continues with its gentle flow. The student effectively uses dark brown tones and shadows on the cliff face and stones to enhance the three-dimensional effect and create a sense of solidity. In this painting, the student effectively applies the basic compositional rules and creates a pleasant piece of work.



Plate 12: Castro Ahuba (2021)

Acrylics on canvas - size: 60 x 80 cm

*Source - Department of Fine Art*

This landscape painting features the study of vegetation including some which climb all the way up the cliff face. The student achieves this by the application of a variety of intricate textural effects that help to differentiate the types of vegetation. He also takes time to study and apply the various tones of green each of which describes a different type of vegetation. An interesting part of this study is the over-painting of a very light tone of green of the trees upon the dark background tone of the hillside, making the trees stand out. It is evident that the student took a lot of time to observe the various aspects of the landscape that ultimately culminated in its uniqueness. The scenery also appears to bear some illumination with natural light emanating from sun rays in the sky and falling upon the trees and shrubs, an effect that is enhanced by the use of contrasting dark tones on the cliff side acting as a

background. The student is also able to depict perspective and a sense of depth with the cliff face forming a spatial barrier indicating that the land itself diminishes towards the edge of this barrier. The clear space of land in the foreground that features low grass textural effects helps to enhance this spatial feeling. In landscape painting, students often tend to select a scenery that possesses significant colour embellishments. However, this student demonstrates that although certain sceneries may not bear an abundance of natural colours, it is possible to artistically exploit the dominant colour, in this case green, to create an interesting landscape painting. For instance, the student exploits the different types of green such as yellow-greens and blue-greens, light and dark tones as well as shadows to create a convincing description of the landscape as it exists.



Plate 13: Maigo Keng'ara (2021)

Acrylics on canvas - size: 60 x 80 cm

*Source - Department of Fine Art*

In this painting, the student applies a beautiful realistic style, using different tones of green to depict the landscape all the way to the undulating hills and blue sky on the distant horizon. This application of tones and their fading effect also contributes to the feeling of perspective which makes the land itself cut deep into the picture plane. The formal arrangement of elements and principles is clearly evident and the student demonstrates adequate knowledge of how they are inter-woven in a pictorial composition. The choice of colours is very pleasant, depicting the richness of the sprawling land underscored mainly by the use of green. The student not only applies tones but creates an illuminative effect that makes it appear like some light is falling upon the foreground even though the

source is not evidently visible. This effect also creates contrasting shadows and other dark areas that in turn create ridges. Another major component of the painting is the use of textures. These are used to highlight aspects of the composition such as the nature of trees and shrubs, the smoothness of certain patches of land and the roughness of other patches of grass, as well as the purple flowering tree, probably jacaranda, in the immediate foreground. The purple flowering tree seems to be purposely placed in the foreground to attract the viewer's eye while the red and white house helps to create sharp contrasting colour within the entire composition. The landscape is viewed from an elevation that makes it interesting to view and it is notable that the

student executes the work with precision neatness that describes his personal style.



Plate 14: Miles Ochieng Oloo (2021)

Watercolours : 42 x 59.4 cm

*Source - Department of Fine Art*

In this captivating painting, the student does not use the conventional brush strokes to depict vegetation but instead uses lines applied as outlines upon various tones and colours to suggest shapes that represent the various plants and vegetation. The use of colours such as greens, pinks and purples helps to enliven the painting. The use of outlines helps to insert details to the various shapes that, in turn, help to identify the individual nature of plants. The background water and forest edge are depicted using bolder impressionistic brushstrokes which create a contrast to the almost patterned foreground. Students are encouraged to experiment with and develop their own techniques to create interesting pictorial compositions. The smudge of blue in the

foreground, done with interesting brushstrokes upon tones of blue and purple probably represents a sludge of water that has permeated into the vegetation. Individual students may at times deviate from the expected norm in terms of application of brushstrokes and selection of colours to inject their own creativity. He starts by having a conventional background with thick brushstrokes and blue tones on the water as well as green tones on the forested area in the rear of the composition. He, however, abruptly changes style and utilizes a sharp black outlining technique to describe shapes that confine colours to their referent plants in order to highlight them. Examined from a slight distance, the painting is strong and captivating and does not lose the

beautiful aura of the scenery. The student, hence, demonstrates that he is willing to explore unusual

techniques while showing that he is comfortable with a conventional approach as well.



Plate 15: William M. Angwenyi, (2021)

Watercolours – 42 x 59.4 cm

*Source - Department of Fine Art*

Some landscape paintings test the student's ability to study unique settings. Observational skill in landscape painting is what constitutes the study of pertinent aspects of the scenery and translates into the beauty of execution. The student focuses on the dusk or dawn effect of illumination although the rays of the setting or rising sun are themselves not visible in the colours of the sky itself as would ordinarily be the case, creating a surreal environment. All other aspects of the landscape study are well executed in well-observed tones of blue and green, including the brush strokes

suggesting the texture on the water, the tones of colour on the green forest in the mid-ground and the tones of blue in the distant mountains. The setting of the painting also depicts perspective and depth. The sky is executed in an unusual tone of blue which, however, aids in the mystery of the bizarre illumination. The painting is demarcated into two major segments; the green foreground and the blue mountain background and sky. The student executes the painting with remarkable neatness upon every aspect of the composition, segmenting every detail.



Plate 16: Lolaram Mesri (2021)

Acrylics on canvas - size: 60 x 80 cm

*Source - Department of Fine Art*

In this intriguing landscape painting, the student studies a flowing river scenery. The painting is interesting because it is not clear whether the student indeed noticed that the landscape was actually tilting to the right of the picture plane and in a real natural situation, the river's waters would cascade down upon the dry land, overwhelming the small tributary, overrunning everything on its path and flooding the area. However, in landscape painting, this kind of effect is often used to make such paintings both naturalistic yet surreal, a combination that is very engaging to the eye. The textural effect on the water suggests that the river is active and flowing. There is a clear suggestion of perspective and depth since the ground does diminish towards the forested edge. However, certain aspects of the painting, particularly the trees, are outside the normal line of perspective. The

painting is colourful with lush green with beautiful tonal variations that differentiate various aspects or segments of the composition. The sky is well executed with a subtle tone of light blue and hanging clouds that do not, however, interrupt eye movement. In landscape painting, skies are not often meant to be interruptive to eye movement, but add colour as an embellishment to the naturalistic effect of the composition. The student uses extremely vivid, rugged textural effects with beautifully executed brushstrokes to depict the forested area in the background as well as the foliage in the foreground. He uses light and dark areas as well as shadows to demarcate certain segments of the composition. The scenery is made very pleasant by the use of vivid natural illumination that falls upon the flat grassland and

parts of the forest. The painting is very neatly finished.



Plate 17: Mutheu Alex (2021)

Acrylics on canvas - size: 60 x 80 cm

Source - Department of Fine Art

In this painting, the student places a large tree as the centre of interest and makes a beautiful study of the tree itself and how it blends with the rest of the environment. He uses brown tones, shadows and textural effects to bring out the three-dimensional effect of the tree that makes it solid and alive. The foreground is done with grassy textural effects with a slight suggestion of the direction of the wind, shown on the shoots of grass. The rest of the landscape is pleasant and naturalistic with an appropriate suggestion of perspective and depth that makes the viewer want to walk down the scenery towards the distant hill. The student also studies the shrubs and scattered vegetation that are characteristic of certain parts of an African

savannah environment. The student applies the effect of natural illumination with the effect of the sun rays shining vividly upon the tree, creating shadows. This effect is extended upon the ground itself and parts of the face of the hill, making the painting have an interesting early morning aura, going by the shadows. The painting is made to spring to life by the use of textural effects across all aspects of the painting, particularly the way the vegetation is laid out in the foreground and then diminishes and spreads all the way to the hill top. The student studies the very naturalistic sky with tones of blue and hazy horizontal clouds that give it its serenity. This effect enables the viewer to shift attention from the sky itself and to focus attention



on the beauty of the landscape. The painting is neatly executed.



Plate 18: Adhiambo Ode (2021)

Acrylics on canvas - size: 60 x 80 cm

*Source - Department of Fine Art*

In this 'marshland' landscape painting, the student captures the feeling of a forested marshland through the use of beautiful textural effects and reflections on the water. She demonstrates good observational skills and studies the forested area on the right of the picture plane and the distant background by the use of various tones of green as well as dark shadows that depict the trees and thick foliage. This effect is replicated as a reflection on the water that helps to create an impression of a rather calm, deep-water body that stretches to the edge of the forest. The painting depicts perspective that, in turn, suggests depth, shown by the effect of water penetrating deep into the picture plane towards the distant edge of the forest that also forms the background. This forested area in the distant background forms a dark reflection on the water creating distance and

appropriately depicting the water surface, an effect that is extremely important in depicting a wetland in a landscape composition. In the foreground, the student studies the effect of water plants that suggest mangrove environment and proceeds to show the texture of leaves in the foreground tree. The sky is executed with a very light blue tone accompanied by soft clouds that enhance the painting by the addition of a different colour that manifests without undue domination of the painting. This light blue-sky effect is also reflected on the water, enhancing the realism of the painting. A certain amount of natural illumination is evident upon the forest area on the right of the picture plane as well as on specs of the background forest. The student, subsequently, uses an appropriate formal arrangement of elements

and principles in a manner that helps her to execute a very convincing landscape painting.



Plate 19: Rochester Otieno Anabwani (2021)

Acrylics on canvas – size: 60 x 80 cm

*Source - Department of Fine Art*

This painting demonstrates that individual students can be able to isolate and study the intricacy of certain details even in a holistic scenery in order to study the uniqueness of those selected aspects. In this very pleasant landscape, the student takes time to study certain aspects of the scenery as a way of highlighting the essence of natural beauty. On the bottom right-hand corner of the painting, he uses thin brush strokes to study, in great detail, the textural effect of long grass, foliage and undergrowth, carefully understudying the shapes of various leaves. This effect of over-painting is done in contrast to a dark background that helps to enhance the effect of each individual brush stroke. He depicts the pond of water by creating reflections of clouds as they appear in the sky, and of the tree

leaves and branches as they appear on the standing trees nearby. Textural effects are extended to the rest of the composition in the distant background with the added use of green colour tones. Perspective is well suggested and the sense of depth is evident as the eye shifts from the foreground, across the water towards the horizon. The sky is well executed with a naturalistic light blue tone with very realistic clouds that appear hanging with a little grey. The painting features natural illumination that shines upon the mid-picture and the illuminated sky reflects the same on the water. It is only when such paintings are observed closely that one appreciates the passion of the student in trying to bring out certain details that underscore great observation and certainly great enjoyment.



Plate 20: William M. Angwenyi (2021)

Acrylics on canvas - size: 60 x 80 cm

Source - Department of Fine Art

This interesting painting is executed with the application of only essential details in all its aspects, very much like pictorials used in animated settings. The student utilizes all the fundamental elements and principles but avoids intricate naturalistic details, settling instead for suggestive details and hence deriving its uniqueness. The colours are rich and deviate from the naturalistic tones that are found in a natural scenery. However, the tones of green are well varied on the tree and the ground that help to create both solidity and distance. The use of purples on the distance rock face is unusual but unique, creating deliberate reflections of the same purple on aspects of the vegetation as well as on the clouds in the sky. A rock face may not be naturally purple but may appear purple due to the effect of distance and certain reflections. Perspective is suggested by the winding pathway in the foreground that diminishes

into the vanishing point. Textures on the trees, grass and vegetation are suggested but not elaborate. The dark tones and shadows are effectively utilized to create the grounding of the landscape itself which depicts a sense of depth that penetrates into the picture plane. The student executes the sky in an equally unique way depicting clouds that form suggestive shapes rather than the usual scattered clouds that students like to insert. The illuminative effect is evident, depicted by the sun shining upon the distant rock face and hill, enhancing the concept of depth and distance when seen against the demarcation of the dark green/purple tones that form the edge of the vegetation towards the mid-picture. Such paintings are refreshing and demonstrate the student's ability to deliberately deviate from the norm and create an interesting style.



Plate 21: Gloria Auma (2021)

Acrylics on canvas - size: 60 x 80 cm

*Source - Department of Fine Art*

In this cut-off scenery, the student studies a selected segment of the landscape from a close-up vantage point. In terms of composition, such paintings may seem to cut off certain parts, like the upper portions of tall trees, mainly because they tend to tower over the otherwise pertinent aspects of the scenery that the artist wants to capture. The composition, hence, forms a window through which the viewer sees the scenery as it exists. The student studies an elevated section of the ground in the foreground with a paved pathway, trees and grass which she executes with textural effects, use of yellow-green and other tones

of green as well as tones of brown on the trees. She features the water in a light blue tone which is a reflection of the blue of the sky. She suggests perspective at two levels; one that emanates from the elevated ground and another that emanates from the foreground and diminishes along the line of the river into the distant forest. The student also features the hilly grounds on the right side of the painting. The effect of natural illumination is evident with light shining through the yellow-greens and falling upon the pathway, creating shadows on the stones and trees in the foreground.



Plate 22: Mutheu Alex (2021)

Acrylics on canvas - size: 60 x 80 cm

*Source - Department of Fine Art*

The student applies colour and textural effects in the execution of his landscape painting in a simplistic but effective way. He uses tones of green to depict the surface and undulating nature of the land itself, including the intertwining of the land that helps to create ridges which, in turn, create perspective. The textural effects help to make the trees in the foreground and in the background appear naturalistic and other textural effects can be seen in the immediate foreground showing the undergrowth sprouting in-between the stones by the riverside. The student uses his creativity to render the sky in a way that makes the clouds appear to form a pattern-like formation. Clouds do, at times, form bizarre shapes upon the sky and artists often exploit such unusual spectacles for artistic purposes. Due to the transient nature of clouds, such cloud formations do not linger for long but last long enough for the artist to capture their artistic appeal. The enlarged cloud placed on the right side of the picture plane helps to

create a sense of balance with the tree placed on the left side. The combination of colours and textures and the formal arrangement helps to create an eerie serenity of the landscape as if such beauty does not exist in the real world. The student also uses an illuminative effect on the tones of green on the landscape itself and also on the trees and stones, helping to enhance the three-dimensional effect. Perspective is clearly shown through the intertwined effect of the open patches of land. This compositional layout from the river's edge in the foreground to the diminishing trees towards the horizon helps to enhance the sense of distance.

### **Observations and General Overview**

In the execution of a landscape composition, as in all other art, the formal application of elements and principles of art and design is fundamental in delving into how students perceive and execute their

work. Since landscape painting falls under the realm of art that is derived from observation, the development of observational skills becomes of special significance in the execution of the paintings. In the application of elements and principles, this paper observed the specificity of some of them and the application of all others holistically. What turned out to be of particular significance was the choice and application of colours, use of colour tones, application of shadows, use of textural effects, application of linear perspective and the depiction of the holistic composition.

### ***Observational Skills***

It can be observed that students, from the onset, were aware of the need to keenly observe the nature of the landscapes they were undertaking. They were then able to compartmentalize aspects of this observation into tangible visual executions that significantly strengthened their artistic rendition and highlighted their individual style. The ability to do this in landscape painting is important because it enables the student to depict pertinent aspects of the landscape that make the whole pictorial composition spring to life. For instance, the observation of the nature of the foreground enables one to pick out unique details on the ground such as pebbles, fallen tree trunks, grass textures, embankments, living things, flowers and other foliage. Other pertinent observations include the nature of the sky and its colours and tones, the distant background, including hills and mountains as well as the diminishing effect of linear perspective. A keen eye is also able to make out the effect of natural light and shadows and how they affect the three-dimensional nature of the composition as well as its overall beauty.

### ***Choice and Application of Colour***

Landscape or outdoor colours are first and foremost natural colours; they bear natural tones and have a transient quality, that is, they reflect the nature of the shifting light. Students were able to observe these colours appropriately as they manifested themselves in the particular environment and, subsequently, applied them appropriately in their paintings. This was particularly apparent in the execution of the blue of the skies and the green of the environment where the students chose the

correct type of blues and greens as well as the correct tones that captured the natural scenery. It should be noted that in formative landscape painting, students are encouraged to confine themselves within the referent colours and only to venture into their own colour renditions and tonal explorations in later units.

### ***Use of natural light and the effect of illumination***

The effect of natural illumination or the effect of falling natural light is fundamental in landscape or any form of outdoor painting. Any natural environment is brought to life by the transient natural light that enables all aspects of that environment to be revealed. Artists observe and use the effect of light to highlight pertinent parts of their paintings while creating the necessary contrasts to create certain visual effects that enhance the paintings. The use of natural light and its transient nature, for instance, is a key ingredient of impressionism and outdoor painted work done in the open air or *en plein air*. This is because there is a way in which the falling sun rays, as they transition from morning to evening, reflect upon and illuminate aspects of the scenery highlighting some parts and de-emphasizing others through the formation of contrasting dark spaces and shadows. This helps the artist to describe the transitioning of time and to enhance the illusion of three dimension already suggested by the use of linear perspective. The effect of light is also useful in building psychological associations since bright light builds a sense of joy, freshness and hope just like dawn creates daybreak that transforms an environment and reveals its usual beauty. Diminished light ushers in a sense of dullness or gloom just like dusk engulfs an environment and makes it diminish into the impending darkness erasing any modicum of beauty. It was observed that students took a special interest in the whole concept of illumination as it occurred in its natural setting and applied it accordingly in their work.

### ***Application of shadows***

Shadows are an integral aspect of landscape or outdoor painting since they naturally best manifest themselves in outdoor environments because of the transient nature of natural light. Hence, they play an important role in how that environment is artistically perceived and how a painting is

ultimately executed. Without shadows and variations of tones, it would be hard to create the illusion of three-dimensional effect evident in paintings. It is acknowledged in artistic work that shadows eliminate flatness and enhance the concept of solidity. All forms in a pictorial composition then seem grounded on the surface, which together with linear perspective, creates the feeling of depth on a flat surface. In addition, and particularly important in landscape painting, shadows are synonymous with the concept of transient time which would be impossible to visually depict in a painting without the insertion of the length of shadows in a painting, very much in the way impressionist painters would render their work by studying the time of day. It was observed that students were aware of the purpose and visual effects of shadows and effectively used them in their paintings.

#### *Use of textural effects*

The use of texture as an element and the application of various textural effects that manifest in a given environment are an integral part of landscape painting since the environment offers numerous surfaces that bear different textures. Textural effects are ordinarily best applied on the foreground of the painting since, in the referent environment, they diminish with distance. The nature of textural surfaces helps to differentiate the various aspects of the composition making the painting realistic and convincing. For example, artists will often study the texture of leaves and foliage, the texture of the barks of trees or dried out tree trunks, open ground textures such as soils, pebbles and twigs, covered ground textures such as grass and hedges and other surface textures that may feature as a part of the landscape such as wooden, metal or concrete surfaces. The paintings featured in this paper demonstrate that the students are aware of the effectiveness of textural application in enhancing different parts of their composition that ultimately aids in its entirety. Textural effects are evident in all the paintings to different degrees but are all effective in describing the nature of the particular environment. However, for the purpose of visual demonstration, the textural execution of the embankments on the sides of the railway line and the pebbles that appear in-between the railway sleepers (*Plate 6*) are particularly useful in describing the environment upon which the railway

line is placed. In *Plate 5*, the student is keen to showcase the textural effect on the dead tree trunk as well as the green leaves, grass and foliage which greatly enhances the pictorial composition.

#### *Use of perspective*

There was evident use of perspective in all the landscape pieces, and students displayed adequate knowledge of how it is applied in the formulation of a pictorial composition. One important aspect of the use of perspective is the creation of the illusion of depth in a composition through the arrangement of forms in the foreground, gradually diminishing to create the mid-ground as well as the distant background. It is well understood that without the effect of perspective and its placement on a flat surface, the pictorial compositions would appear flat and the beauty of realism in landscape painting would be lost. Some students chose to depict linear perspective as it actually manifests as a study in itself (*Plates 2, 4, 6*) while others suggested the perspective within the layout of the pictorial composition itself (*Plates 10, 11, 12.13*). In the formulation of the holistic composition, it was evident that students internalized that apart from the normal illusion of diminishing sizes of objects and other forms, perspective is also enhanced by other visual factors such as the effect of colours, diminishing tones, diminishing textural effects and the use of the illuminative effect of light shining upon the surface.

#### *Ability to create a holistic composition*

The whole idea of creating a holistic composition is intertwined with the artist's ability to interpose one artistic element with another in order to form a complete or coherent whole. This is because even in the usual formal arrangement of elements, nothing is operationalized independently; all elements are applied in resonance to one another in order for them to create form. This paper contends that students understood this resonance in formal arrangement and were able to use their observational skills to ensure that it was evident and adequately enhanced in order to contribute towards the creation of their composition. Subsequently in *Plate 2*, for instance, the use of the illuminated sky creates a sense of distance while the railway line creates a linear penetration towards a vanishing point that stretches to the horizon leaving in its wake

a clear three-dimensional illusion. The use of colour tones shows a lighter tone of green that enables the artist to show immediate textural effects in the foreground while the probable time of day necessitates hazy, darker tones towards the horizon. The building in the foreground is comparatively larger and detailed enough and enhances the sense of perspective seen against a desolate patch of land that stretches beyond. Holistically, the painting is very effective in showing a great sense of penetrative depth that indicates that everything in the picture is very well grounded almost as though you can walk along the railway line. In all other paintings, students showed sensitivity towards the presentation of holistically strong compositions that made all of them pleasant to view.

### *Use of spontaneity*

Spontaneity is an important tenet of landscape painting mainly because it defines the major approach to how landscape painting is executed. In *En plein air*, for instance, the fundamental idea of outdoor painting is to capture the changing effects of light, colours and shadows. Subsequently, it is vital that the artist works and responds to the instantaneous effects unfolding in the environment at the particular time of day. Though the landscape scenery is itself static, the transient nature of natural light and the way it reflects upon or illuminates certain aspects of the landscape makes it imperative that the artist grasps the beauty of the moment. Working spontaneously also affects the stylistic rendition because of the element of speed, including the use and application of brushstrokes, the capturing of natural colours, tones, shadows and textures as well as depicting objects as they exist in the scenery that gives it its definition. The onset of the digital age, of course, has meant that artists can capture the scenery digitally and work on certain details at their convenience, but that does not eliminate the nature and purpose of spontaneity. This is mainly because nothing can replace the essence of what the eye naturally captures and processes within a prescribed moment in time, which in all description, becomes the core of this kind of art. In this case, even though some artists may wish to 'touch up' their work after the outdoor experience, the details of that touch up are bound to be confined to the basics of the original painting which is different from simply working to

reproduce a referent photograph. Students were encouraged to work outdoors as far as possible in order to lay the basis of their landscapes but they were also allowed, for the purpose of their own artistic satisfaction, to make the necessary touch-ups as they found appropriate, if they found that to be of significant enhancement of their personal style.

### *Rendition of the sky*

It was observed that all students approached painting of the sky from an understanding of the need to apply lightness of blue and softness of the clouds. Since they were not referring to each other's work, it was evident that they each viewed the execution of the sky as being important yet unobstructive. The sky then became an integral part of the painting without being the dominant part of the composition, thereby enabling the viewer to enjoy the holistic composition.

### *Students were initially not sure of their abilities*

As they commenced their work, students were not sure what the outcome of their landscape painting would be; after all, they were experimenting with colour application and testing their own observational skills. It can be observed, however, that their work turned out to be outstanding and beautiful to view. They applied colour, textures, light and dark areas, colour tones, perspective, balance and overall composition in a way that exceeded expectation at this point of their artistic development. Subsequently, it can be asked what it is in landscape painting that elicited such passion and enthusiasm. Could it be that landscape painting offered the students some element of respite, relaxation or even calmness? These potent questions may not be answered in this paper since students themselves were not interviewed. Landscape painting often thrives on the concept of spontaneity, focus and observation. In this study though, all indicators were that students were, in addition, driven by the passion to get it all right within the confines of their unit. This is further demonstrated by the fact that they did not refer to each other's work during their painting process.



## CONCLUSION

In all its forms of presentation, landscape art remains a popular and fascinating genre the world over. From the work presented in this paper, it can be concluded that students demonstrated a particular fascination with landscape painting; perhaps for its own sake, perhaps because landscapes are naturally beautiful to behold, or perhaps more so because it gives them the opportunity to artistically study holistic formal composition in its natural manifestation. It can be concluded that since the students worked independently in the painting of their landscapes, which means that they were not consulting or comparing their work as they developed their paintings, the major factors that they all encountered and tended to rely on in the renditions of their work, can, therefore, be determined to be of fundamental importance in landscape painting and by extension, to how they learn and sharpen their artistic skills. Ultimately, this becomes critical to how they apply these skills in other genres of art.

As has been observed, *colour* and its effects are fundamental in this regard. Students were able to apply colour and colour tones as they appeared in the landscape and to study in earnest, their unique effects and their impact upon the eyes of the viewers. They were also able to apply *texture* and a myriad of textural effects, not necessarily because they were already aware of the role of texture as an element but because it had a unique way in which it manifested itself in the context of the naturalism of landscape painting that was clearly observable and which, in turn, helped them to render their work appropriately. The students also applied a variety of *tones* including dark shadows, specifically to differentiate various aspects of their landscape paintings since those differentiations were important in helping them create perspective, depth as well as suggest masses and their corresponding spaces. The students were particularly drawn in by the study of *light and its effects* since these effects are naturally evident as they manifest during the respective time of day. Unlike other genres of art where an artist may deliberately determine the source of light and areas to be illuminated in a painting, for instance in a still-life composition, landscape painting uses natural light that emanates

from the sun and, hence, its illuminative effect is very unique and naturalistic.

Students across the board seem to have realized this and utilized it in a very effective way throughout their paintings. It can also be concluded that students not only understood the need for *perspective* but applied it extremely well in their landscape paintings as a tool for creating depth within the picture plane. It also implies that painting landscapes as the core subject matter enable students to study perspective and the concept of depth not merely as a mathematical concept of pictorial layout and composition, as would be formulated in any other type of painting, but as a visual/artistic requirement as presented and observed in the naturalistic scenery. This then indicates that perspective and depth manifested themselves spontaneously as the students developed components of their landscapes. It can be concluded, therefore, that landscape painting can be considered a major platform for understanding the essence of perspective and the importance of the illusion of depth in the creation of artistic work that resonates extremely well with students.

This paper featured second-year students' work where the students have not been exposed to extensive painting work as they would be in their third and fourth years. Subsequently, from the foregoing, it can be concluded that landscape painting can be identified as an essential genre in helping students hone their artistic skills particularly in formal application and arrangement of elements and principles of design within a prescribed time. It helps them to quickly focus and comprehend the role of each element in rendering a pictorial composition and how principles help in this formulation mainly because a landscape composition is an observed natural phenomenon. It is subsequently conceivable that they would be better prepared to venture into other genres of painting where these kinds of skills would be applicable.

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