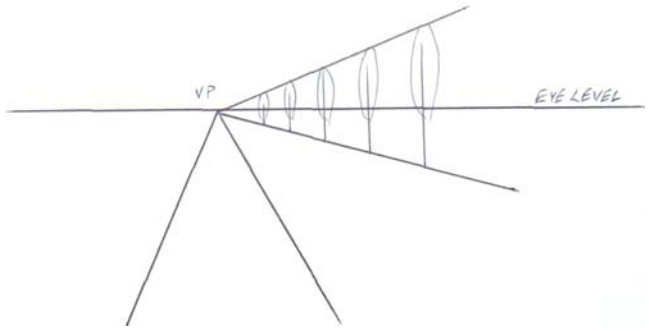
PERSPECTIVE IN LANDSCAPE

The basic problem in object drawing is that of representing a three dimensional subject in two dimensional form. We are trying to create the *illusion* of a solid object on a flat two dimensional surface. To do this successfully it is essential to have some technical knowledge of how to draw correctly using linear perspective and also create an *illusion* of depth by having an understanding of how colour and detail change with distance.

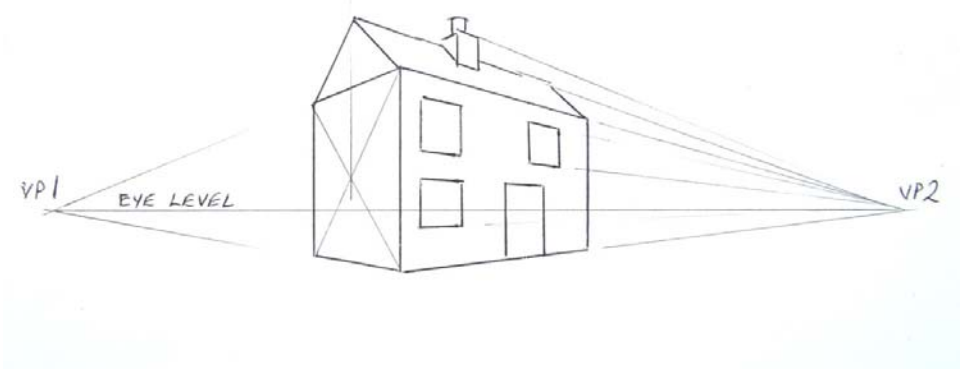
Linear Perspective

Linear perspective is often associated with drawing the outside or inside of buildings but an understanding of its principals can help with all landscape drawing. In the simplest example any parallel lines like the sides of a road or building will eventually meet at a point called the *vanishing point*, on a line represented by the viewer's eye level. At sea or on flat land this corresponds exactly to the horizon. In mountainous areas you will have to estimate a horizon or *eye level line*. This simple form of linear perspective with one vanishing point is called *parallel perspective.*



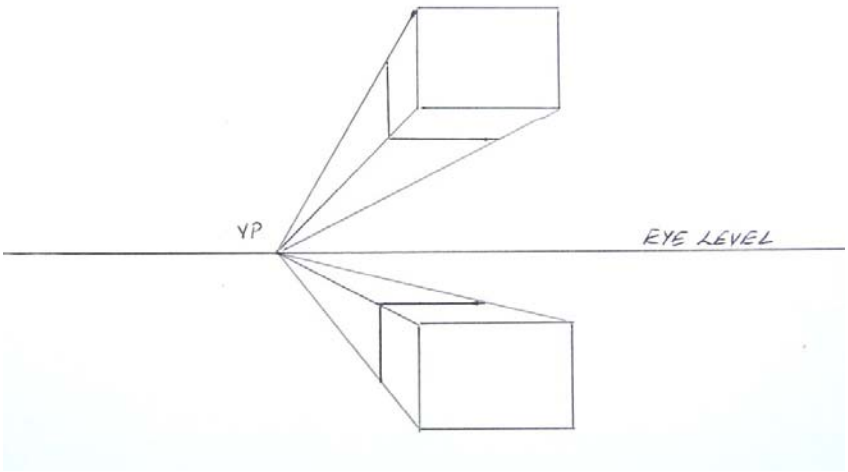
PARALLEL PERSPECTIVE

More often than not we view a building from an angle. To draw this necessarily involves two vanishing points and is called *angular perspective*.



ANGULAR PERSPECTIVE

In either parallel or angular perspective if we move up or down in relation to our building then the eye level and therefore the horizon or *eye level line* also moves and as a result changes our view of the building.



If two or more buildings are not square with each other then they will have different vanishing points but they will still be on the same horizontal *eye level line*. This would be common in an old village and in complicated situations like this; an awareness of the eye level line is the most important aid to estimating the angled lines of buildings.

Real perspective

Linear perspective is a theoretical model. The system assumes a spectator with a fixed viewpoint but in practice, head and eyes move constantly and an artist draws from a number of different points of view. Secondly our own perceptions prioritize naturally. Our brain cannot look at everything at once; if a figure or a tree in our landscape is important to us then we focus on that and we would naturally tend to make it bigger. For some people who have an innate ability to draw directly from observation, a theoretical knowledge of perspective is not essential but for most, to understand the basic rules can be an important aid to drawing accurately.

Aerial perspective

Just as important as linear perspective is aerial or atmospheric perspective. As a view recedes into the distance two things happen; the colour changes and the detail becomes less well defined because of the effects of the atmospheric haze.

A good example of the change in colour can be seen with grass. Directly in front of you the grass is a rich intense green. With the same grass seen 200 metres away the green appears less intense, a little cooler and also paler. The same grass seen 2 kilometres away on a hillside can be a pale blue/ green/ grey depending on the atmosphere that day.

A good example of how detail changes can be seen with leaves on a tree. Close up we see every single leaf and can identify its shape. 200metres away we can see only a texture defined mainly by light. A kilometre away even the trees merge together and we see only vague shapes.

Edges and lines in general become less well defined with distance.

It is possible to describe distance even without features such as roads, walls and buildings simply by using aerial perspective and controlling the tones and colours carefully. Generally the colours and tones nearest to you are more intense and become paler and cooler as the distance increases, affected by the blue of the atmosphere. In painting it is a characteristic of colour that warm colours advance and cool colours recede and this is probably simply because our brain is used to seeing these phenomena in reality and knows intuitively that they relate to distance.