

Thumbnail Sketches help to familiarize your eye, hand, and brain with the subject, and to identify painting problems before you have used a lot of paint and time...

I believe everyone should do several thumbnail sketches - to analyze the value, color, linear, and texture relationships - before painting. I will ask you to do at least two.

1 Make a simplified line sketch, drawing 'like a carpenter' (with simple straight lines) to show the boundaries of major shapes in the [picture plane](#).

2 Paint a value and hue sketch to help analyze color and contrast.

Based on your analysis of these thumbnails, you can adjust your composition before you paint (more about this later.)

Procedure:

Draw several rectangles on a sheet of inexpensive paper - the height and width should be proportionate to the [aspect ratio](#) of the the P.O.D.- these are about 2 units high x 2.5 units wide.

Squint Hard at your P.O.D. Find and mark the major lines in the composition/ Don't worry about tiny textures. Don't worry about getting sizes and positions perfect - approximate and fast are your goals.

Repeat the process with paint - block out the major values and colors of the major shapes.

With practice, the entire process will take a minute or two to do. Now you can spot potential problems and assets.

Analysis: The white rectangle in the lower right is very important! Many major lines point down and to the right. The white diagonal stops the eye from sliding off the canvas! The feeling of being up high is enhanced by the diagonals of the wall and mountains on the left -They shouldn't be cropped away ...

I see an opportunity to crop a bit from the top sky area, which doesn't seem to contribute much, OR to greatly enlarge the sky area to insert a dramatic cloudscape (both shown on the right.)



Photo by Mary Britt

