Designing Pictorial Composition

Step 1 - Choose a composition “Type” to explore for your subject matter. These Types can be applied to any of the numerous art genres - from figure to landscape and everything in-between. Note... these samples are the most common types, but there are many others to consider as well.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Illustration of Eye Movement</th>
<th>As Applied to Landscape</th>
<th>As Applied to Still Life</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“S” (or “Z”)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“O” (or circle)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“U” (or “n”)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>“L”</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Illustration of Eye Movement As Applied to Landscape As Applied to Still Life

“T”

“X”

Triangle

Steelyard

Radiating
Step 2 - Integrate your choice of a compositional “type” from step 1 onto a harmonic armature (or one of the other numerous armatures such as the golden mean, root 2, root 3, etc.)

**SAMPLE - Use of a General Harmonic Compositional Armature**

The Generic Harmonic Armature uses naturally occurring ratios that are formed by intersections. These intersections correlate to musical root harmonies... octave (1/2) perfect 5th (2/3), perfect 4th (3/4), etc. These ratios that are pleasing to the ears, are translated into ratios that are pleasing to our eyes.

This first series of images shows an initial thumbnail concept sketch that explores an “S” curve landscape. It is simply a gesture drawing of an idea. Although a good start, the composition could use some refinement. The layout feels too symmetrical and centered. The eye is led straight up from the bottom. Masses and shapes are randomly placed without consideration of harmonic placement.

Here, we can see how the initial idea has been slightly modified to lead the eye in a bit more of an interesting path - ending up on the upper right rule of thirds intersection. The land masses have been slightly moved to lock onto a few select leading lines and intersections of the armature. Thus, a more pleasing and unified composition results as optical harmonics are utilized.

* A note on the “Rule of Thirds”:
The “rule of thirds” is a common go-to approach for directing the eye of the viewer to one of the four intersections. This approach is derived from the harmonic armature as the four quadrants correspond to the four heaviest intersections of the harmonic armature. Although not the only (or perfect) locations for subjects, these intersections are naturally located in areas that are pleasing to the human eye.