

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.

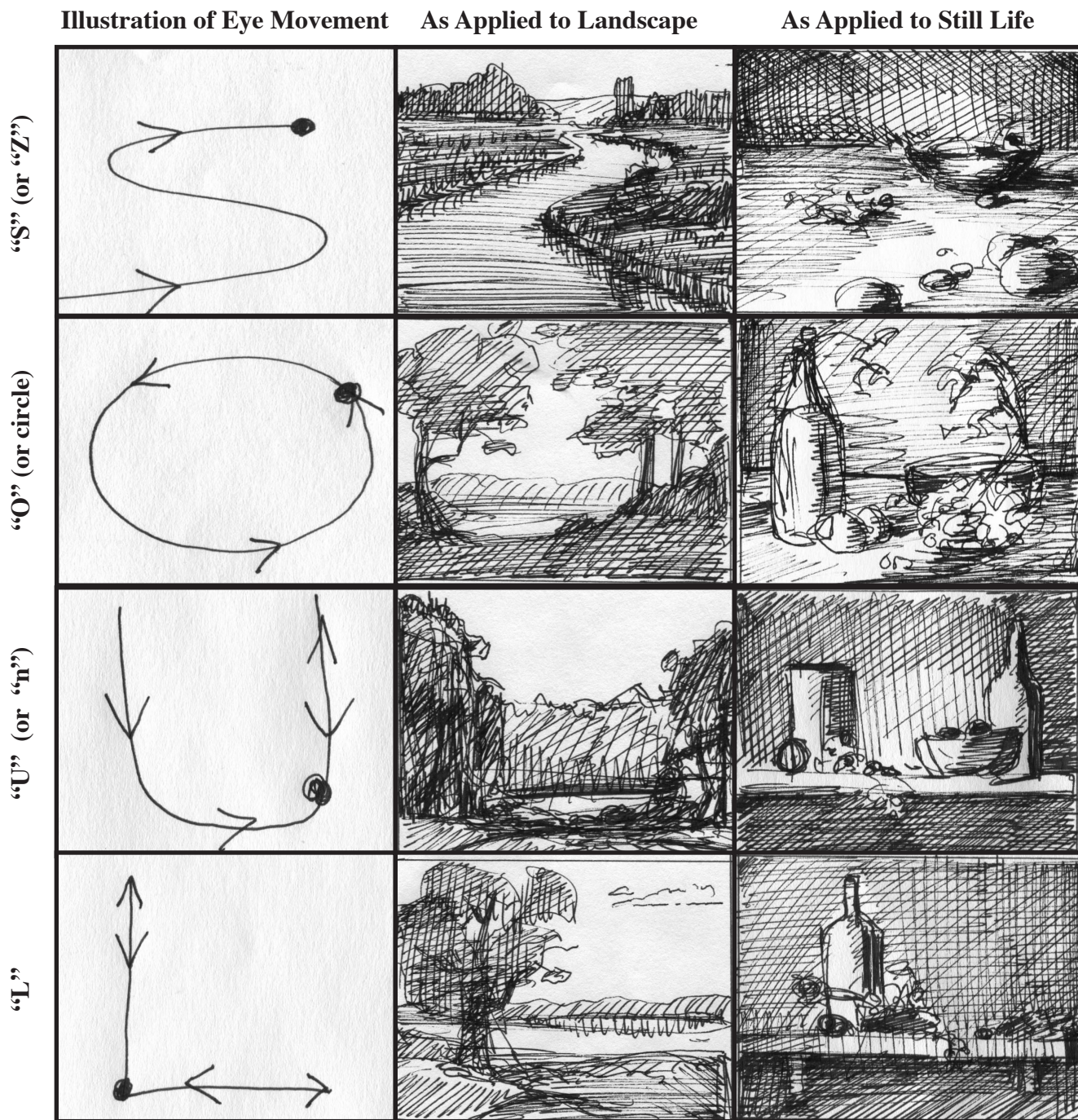
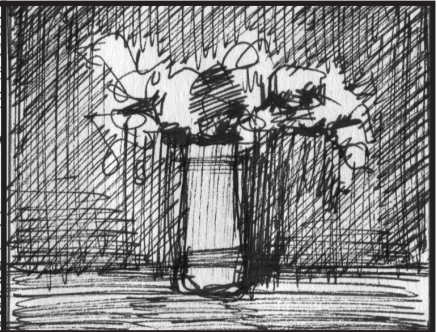
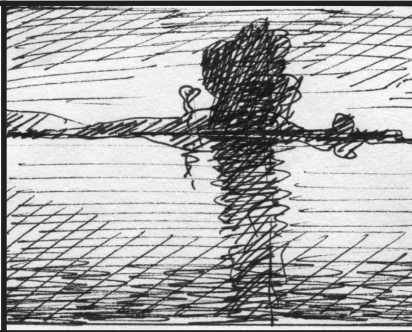
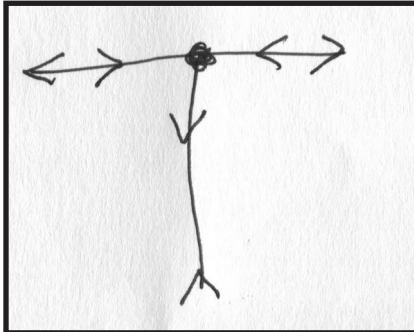


Illustration of Eye Movement

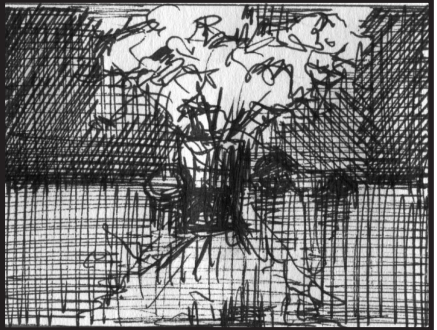
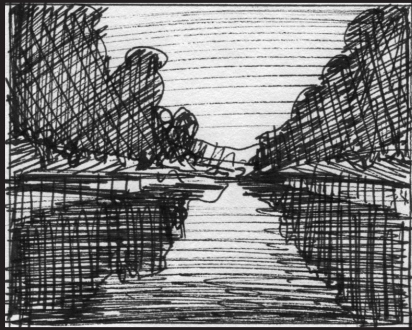
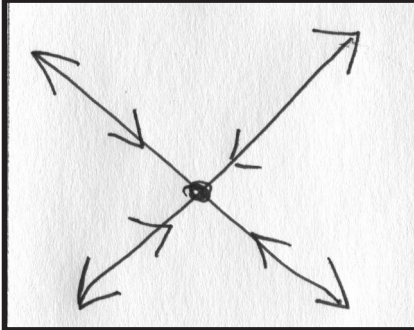
As Applied to Landscape

As Applied to Still Life

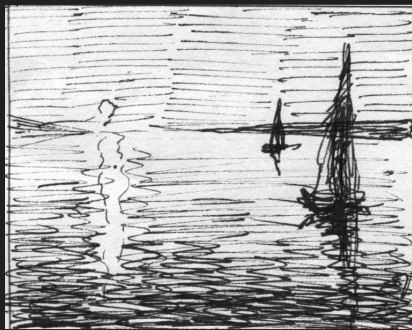
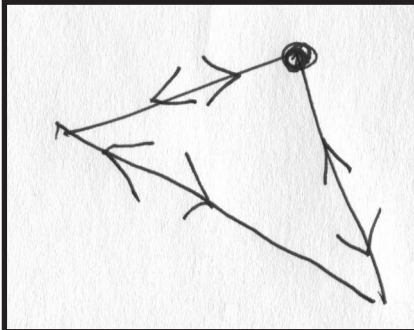
“T”



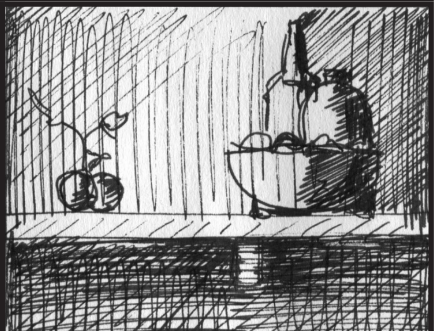
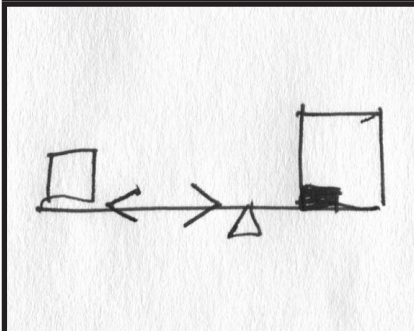
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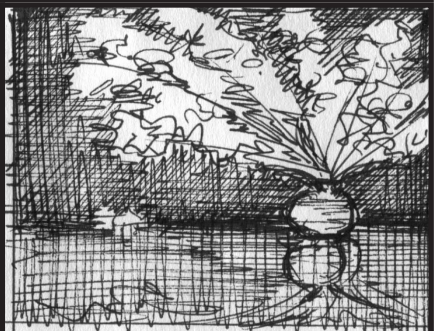
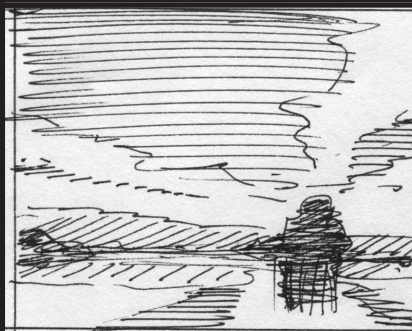
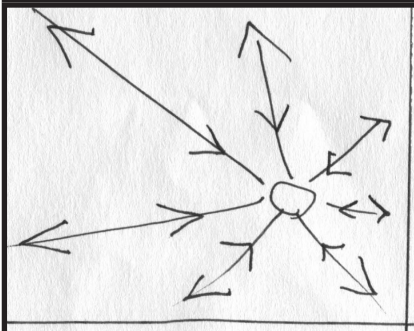
Triangle



Steelyard



Radiating

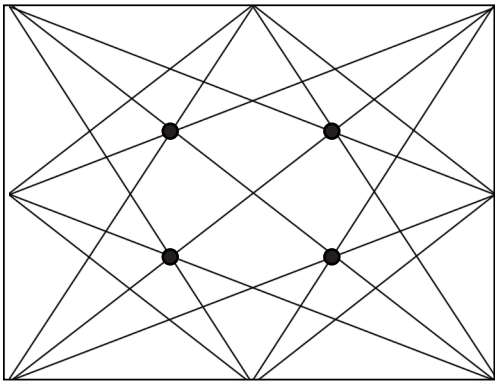


Step 2 - Integrate your choice of a compositional “type” from step 1 onto a harmonic armature (or one of the other numerous armatures such as the golden mean, root 2, root 3, etc.)

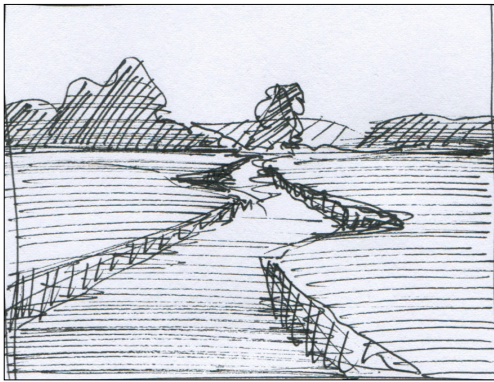
SAMPLE - Use of a General Harmonic Compositional Armature

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.

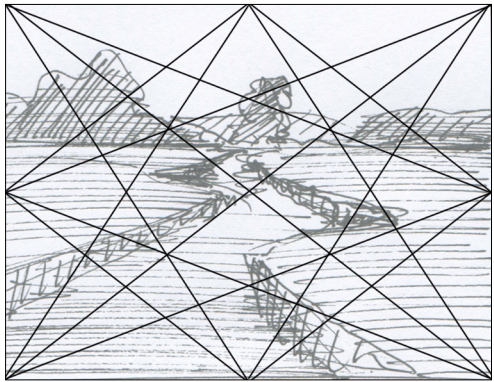
This first series of images shows an initial thumbnail concept sketch that explores an “S” curve landscape. It is simply a gesture drawing of an idea. Although a good start, the composition could use some refinement. The layout feels too symmetrical and centered. The eye is led straight up from the bottom.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



Generic Harmonic Armature

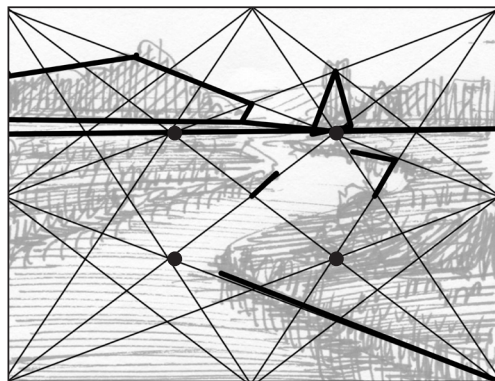


This is a thumbnail drawing without consideration of harmonics or the armature.

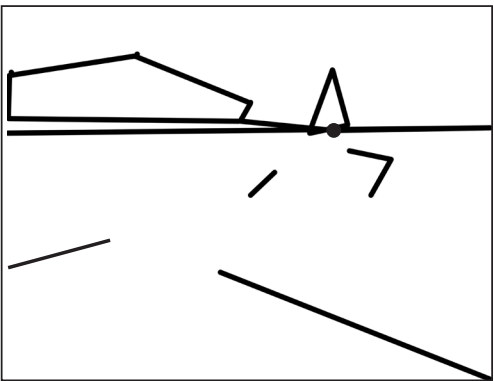


This image demonstrates the lack of harmonics.

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.



Here is a sample of landscape “S” composition locked on a Generic Harmonic Armature.



This image shows significant isolated parts of the composition where intersections and leading lines of the armature were considered. There are numerous other intersections and leading lines - you only need to focus on a few.



This image shows a refined landscape “S” composition. Note... the use of the armature should not be obvious or appear to adhere to a formula - it should appear natural and not forced.

* 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.

