

## Roger Lockey – Getting Things Into Perspective

Roger began by asking for a definition of perspective. We responded with words like ‘scale’, ‘distance’ and ‘depth’. He said it was actually a trick, and defined it as ‘a technique to create the illusion of three dimensions on a flat surface’. Not all artists used perspective in their work, and in a series of pictures he showed how it was used or not used.



It evolved through the Renaissance – Raphael understood it very well but the Egyptians generally produced their scenes as flat images. Picasso often totally ignored it with a sense of saying ‘I don’t need to be confined by that’. The drawings by Escher used isometric projection in which every dimension that was the same, was given the same size on paper, irrespective of how far it was away. The picture of the house does this – representation of a similar size, like the two ends of the roof, is not dependent on distance. However, Utrillo in his pictures of Montmartre, was very keen to convey distance in his street of shops and houses.

Escher’s Waterfall using Isometric Projection as opposed to perspective.



We then looked Aerial perspective.



What gave the appearance of depth here ? There are no lines in a receding landscape to give clues as to distance. The far away features are simply given a bluer and lighter treatment than those close to, which are darker. This is because distant hills are affected by the presence of the atmosphere containing water vapour, moisture and dust which took out much of the red end of the spectrum, leaving the blue – like the sky.

On to Linear perspective. We know that railway line lines don't actually converge in reality,



But distant things subtend a smaller angle at our eye and therefore create a smaller image on the retina. The **'Vanishing Point'** is where the lines appear to meet – at infinity – and the **'Horizon'** is at our eye level. Horizontals below the **VP** will slope up towards it and horizontals above the **VP** will slope down to it. The **VP** therefore tells us where we are standing, the essential point being that there must be at least one vanishing point.

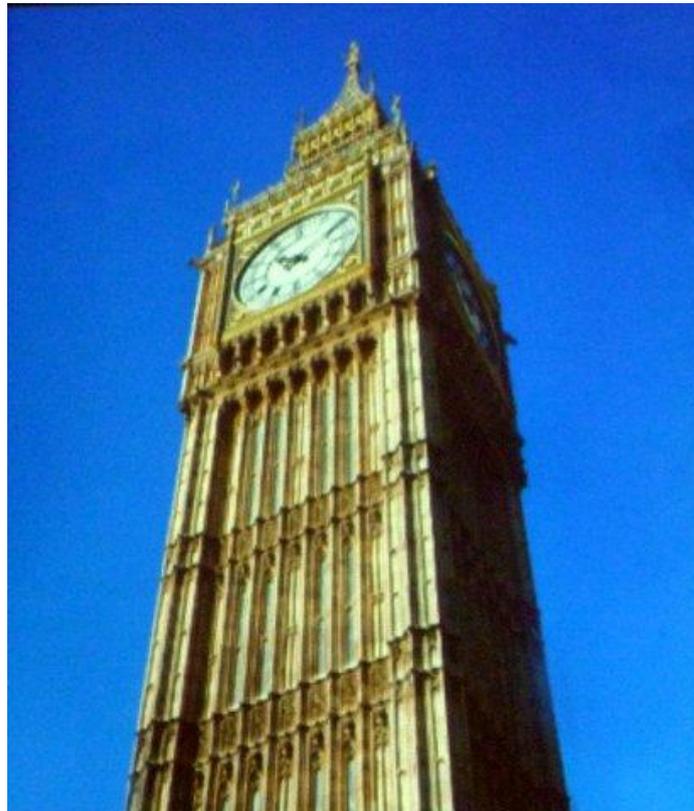


In Leonardo's 'Last Supper', the tops of the side windows all point down - and the bottoms of the windows all point upwards - to the most important person on the room - Jesus. The **VP** doesn't have to be in the middle of the picture, or even in the picture at all, it could be outside the frame.

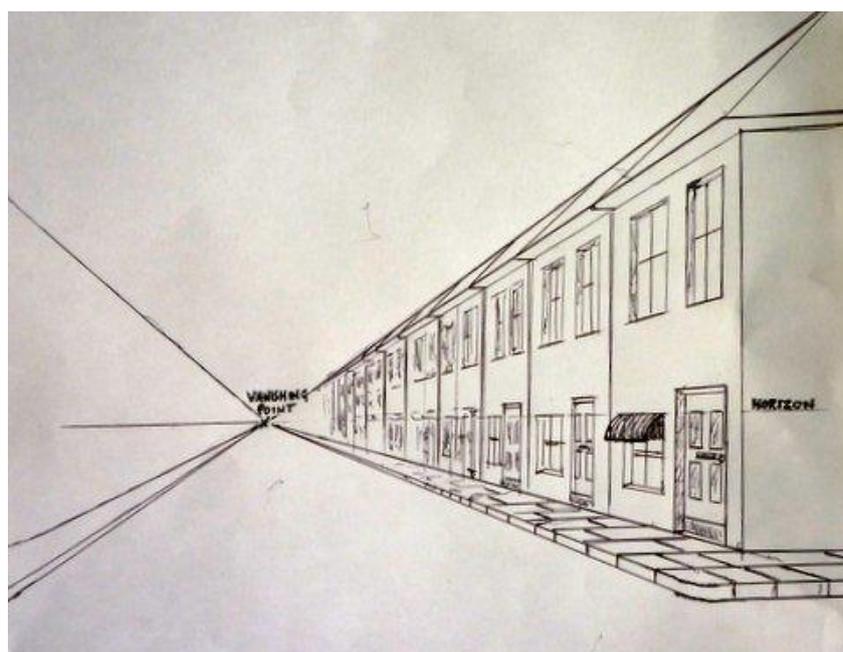


Where there is a corner in the picture, there are likely to be two **VPs** and in the case here they are both outside the picture.

Where the perspective of height is involved, there may be three VPs, as in this picture of Big Ben.



Roger then took us through an exercise drawing a row of terraced houses with an off-centre vanishing point and a horizon to give us our eye level.



The rules are simple - all vertical lines must remain upright, and the horizontals – doors windows, paving and kerb stones, even the window awning - must run to the vanishing point. The vertical lines delineating the houses get closer together with distance – because as you go further away, the width of the houses appears to get smaller. This is governed by a strict mathematical relationship but since that is slightly complicated, it will have to wait for another time!

Robert McLeish  
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