



5 CREATIVE PAINTING EXERCISES TO SIMPLIFY LANDSCAPES

A hands-on guide to paint simpler and fresher
landscapes

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Hello,
friend!



I'm sure I'm not alone when I say that planet Earth is **amazingly beautiful**.

Landscapes are often full of life and details. They have the ability to evoke us **powerful emotions** such as calmness, solitude, vulnerability, sadness...

I **personally love** how nature can show up in so many different forms! We see **different shades** of the same color, and diverse color palettes depending on the season, **contrasting shadow patterns** depending on the light, organic irregular shapes that change in each ecosystem...

I am not at all surprised to know they are a **big source of inspiration** for many artists around the world!

However, the **abundance and deepness** we perceive in some landscapes **can easily translate** into very complex scenes to paint: overlapping shapes, overwhelming amount of elements, blurry edges, and more often than not, they can lead to frustration, **I feel it too!**

Nevertheless, we can definitely give some tools to our brain to help it with the **simplification process**.

In this guide you will find five creative painting exercises that can help you further simplify your landscape paintings, making them fresher and simpler!

How to use this guide

The goal of this guide is to **propose you five unusual ways to approach your next landscape paintings.**

Some of them could be out of your comfort zone, but that is not always a bad thing.

Change allows us to open ourselves to new opportunities, think out of the box and maybe discover something new. I believe these exercises will give you useful insights you can add to your painting toolbox.

There are five individual exercises, **try the ones you are curious about** and leave those not appealing to you! No hard feelings.

Most of the exercises can be applied no matter the medium: Watercolor, Gouache, Digital, Oil. It makes more sense with mediums painted with a brush but I am sure you can adapt them to pastels or pencils too.

For each exercise I will propose a landscape reference photo, but feel free to go paint outside or use your own inspirational photos. You will find some more at the end of the guide.

If you try some of this exercises I would love know! You can DM me on instagram ([@afrisartjourney](https://www.instagram.com/afrisartjourney)) or if you post it, add the hashtag **#simplifyLandscapesWithAfri** so I can share them too.

Have fun!!

Hi, I'm Afri! I am a watercolor and gouache artist in love with nature and landscapes.

My goal is to inspire you to unleash your creativity and to show you how painting outside could be good for your soul!

Next to me you can see Kenzo! He is my little helper when I go outside to look for artistic adventures.



EXERCISE 1

Use a Huge Brush

Using a bigger brush is the most effective way to know you will not spend a lot of time adding little details at the beginning of the painting, as you will be limited by your main tool! Read below some tips to take into account when doing this exercise:

Adjust the size of your brush to the size of your paper.

No need to overthink here, just take a bigger brush than you normally would.

Stick to the bigger brush **as long as you can**, this will allow you to make more creative and simplified brushstrokes.

Smaller brushes are allowed at the **very end** of the painting, when you feel you can't continue adding details with the bigger brush.

To get you started, you can use the landscape below as reference photo for your painting



EXERCISE 2

Limit Your Brushstrokes

Choose the total number of brushstrokes you will make in this painting.

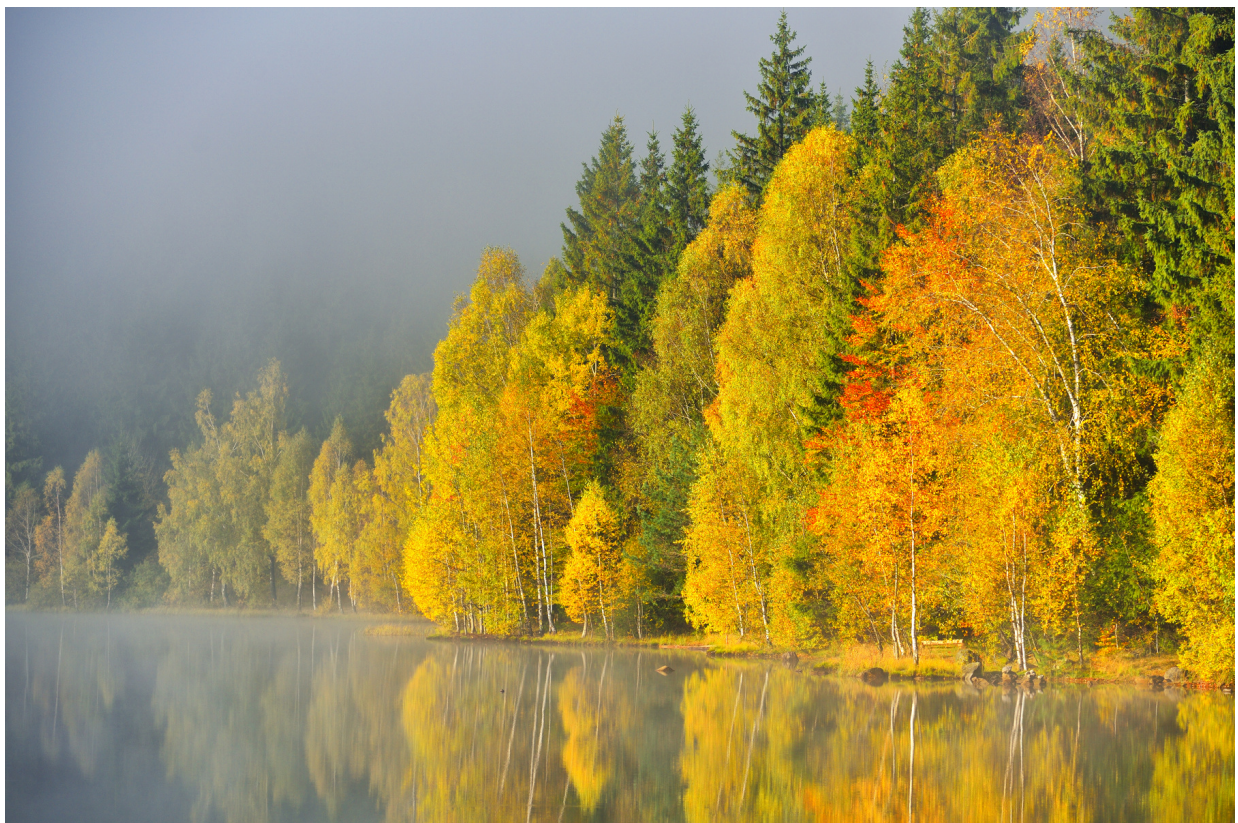
In this exercise, you will become more conscious about the brushstrokes you make, and you will probably need to group similar elements in order to paint your scene, which will help you simplify it.

Everytime you **lift** your brush from the paper, it counts as a brushstroke! :)

You can make **less brushstrokes** than the number you choose. The idea is to restrict how many details you can add to the painting.

If you want to explore how to **further simplify** the landscape once you've finished, choose a smaller number and try again!

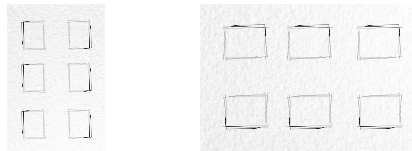
To help you take the first step, try to paint the landscape below in 20 brushstrokes.



EXERCISE 3

Minimize

In this exercise, we will paint **several minimized versions of your landscape**. Start by drawing in a piece of paper between four and eight small rectangles. Example:



Inside each rectangle, paint smaller versions of your landscape but changing something in each of them: remove an element from the scene, change some shapes, the point of view, the shadow patterns, the color palette... you name it!

Painting in a smaller size can help you simplify the painting as you won't have room for details. Also, if you have several rectangles available, it is possible that you will be less cautious with the marks you make, leading to more spontaneous and fresher brushstrokes.

Go wild, no change is too big or too crazy, try and **experiment!**

Once you finish the smaller versions, **observe them**. Think about what you like from each of them and use the parts you love the most in your larger painting.

To help you break the ice, make six different smaller versions of the landscape below:



EXERCISE 4

Zoom Out

You can't get lost in the details of a scene if you don't really see them.
In this exercise the goal is to **look at the landscape from far away**.

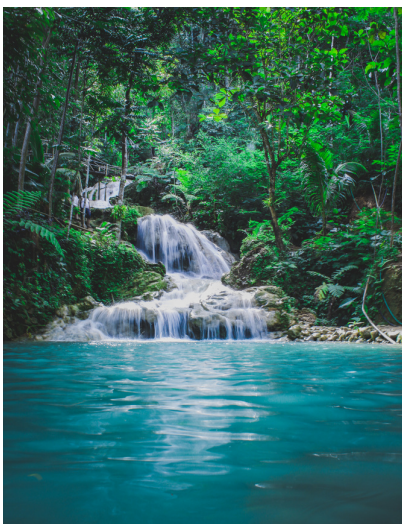
If you are using a reference photo, you can zoom it out in your electronic device or look at the photo across the room. You can have more freedom to make different marks without associating them with a specific object. However, you will still be able to see the light, color and shape of the main elements, which should be enough to transmit what is happening in the landscape.

Look for **shapes, patterns, edges and contrasting colors**. They will help you tell the story in your painting.

Suggestion is a powerful tool! You don't need all the details to understand a scene so feel free to just suggest what happens, you don't even need to know what it is.

If you are painting outside live (en plein air), you can make this exercise by **squinting your eyes**.

To help you take the plunge, you can use some of these zoomed out photos for reference:



EXERCISE 5

Remove Noise

The goal of this exercise is to actively decide which elements from your landscape or reference photo **will not be in your painting**. Before selecting those elements, it is helpful to first find what is the focus of your painting.

Decide what will be the **focal point** of your painting. That could be the sky, a tree, a lighthouse or any other element you want to highlight.

It is possible to have **secondary focal points** too, these will guide your eyes along the painting when looking at it.

After deciding your focal points, take a look at the rest of the elements in the landscape, which ones are **not** useful to **highlight** them even more?
Remove them from the painting

To help you take the first step, I leave you this beautiful tulip landscape here:



EXTRA REFERENCE PHOTOS

for painting studies







