

Column One

Don't concern yourself with textures early on.

Ensure the viewer gets a good read as soon as they see the piece.

Avoid straight lines when drawing anything organic.

Squint during rendering to see the basic shapes.

Early on, you're not modeling; you're blocking in.

Your thumbnail sketch could be simple line work, or it could be more rendered.

Keep values between 10 and 90. Save the extreme values for accents.

The more humidity in the air, the more the clouds carry the color of the sky because water droplets are like prisms that reflect light.

When clouds thicken, they absorb light, making them gray.

Radial shading is important for bumps and hills. Do not try to do linear shading unless you are working on a linear shape.

Fog sits close to the earth. It should not be as high as the tops of mountains.

Balancing scale is challenging but important. Ask yourself how big or small something should be based on its distance. Some things could look massive if they're in the background but still the same size as something in the foreground.

Remember perspective. Objects such as rock formations that are in the mid and backgrounds should show more of their sides than their tops.

The horizon line for a body of water should not be sharp. It should have atmospheric distortion.

Clouds should not reach the horizon line unless there is a major storm on that horizon. The closer clouds should be bigger and darker than the distant clouds.

Column Two

Your details need to be... detailed and accurate. If you are not trained and practiced in drawing or painting wood or dirt, use stamp brushes.

Clouds cast shadow!

Match the contours of a texture overlay to the contours of the surface you're applying it to.

Don't use brush stamps everywhere. For example, a grass brush can't be stroked all over the place because it will give you too much detail. The grass is not a focal point. Instead, use a canvas-setter to set the basic tones of the grassy area, and then /sparingly/ use the grass brush on top of it. Use painterly brushes as accents.

If we are zoomed in on the subject, we cannot see the gradient of the sky; we will see only one value. We can, however, see the gradient of the sun, even if the sun is off screen.

Analyze a study in black and white because colors can play tricks on your eye. For example, most of a piece can have so much brown, that any gray can look blue, or the greens of vegetation can actually be low-saturation reds and oranges.

Just because you plan something in the drawing doesn't mean you have to stick to it during the rendering.

The first step to gaining consistency is to draw rough thumbnail sketches.

In addition to surface planes, think of the human form as a bunch of cylinders, not only the neck, arms, and legs, but also the abs, ribs, and the torso itself. Better yet, look at these same areas as shallow ovals.

There are also cubes at the joints. The better the person is built, the more boxy the joints will look. If the person is soft, the boxes are harder to see. The pelvis and ribcage are also cubes.

The textures should be different throughout a piece.

Use the Golden Ratio for character and environment design.

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