Painting with Acrylics
Week Three

From Color to Composition: Starting a Painting

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Quick Review: Warm, Cool & Tertiaries

Warm colors tend to advance.
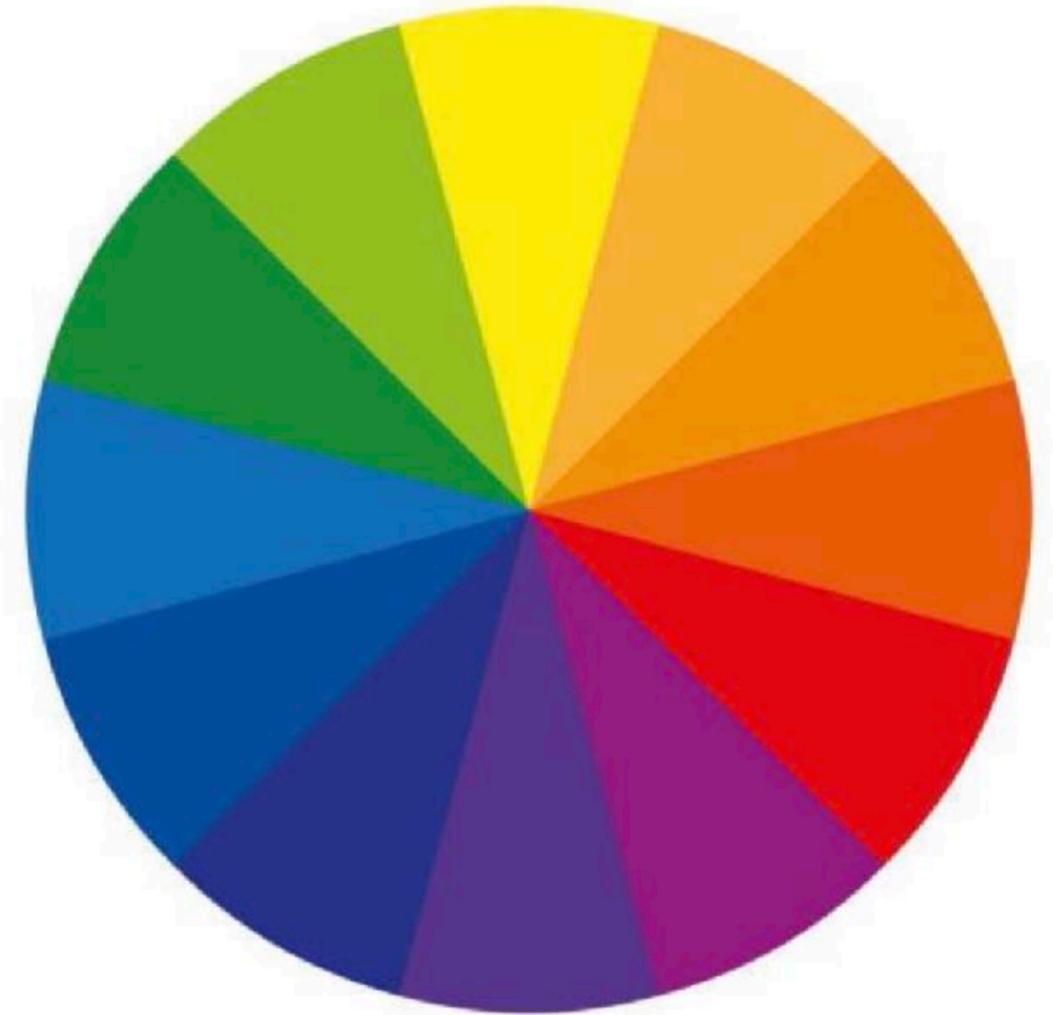
Cool colors tend to recede.

Last week, we introduced tertiary colors:

Primary + Secondary = Tertiary

(e.g., yellow + green = yellow-green)

Today's focus:

Using color temperature and tertiary blends in real painting situations.

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Visual Framework (Depth & Layers)
Background, Middle Ground & Foreground

Paintings are built in layers of space:

Background – farthest away, softer edges, often cooler/lighter
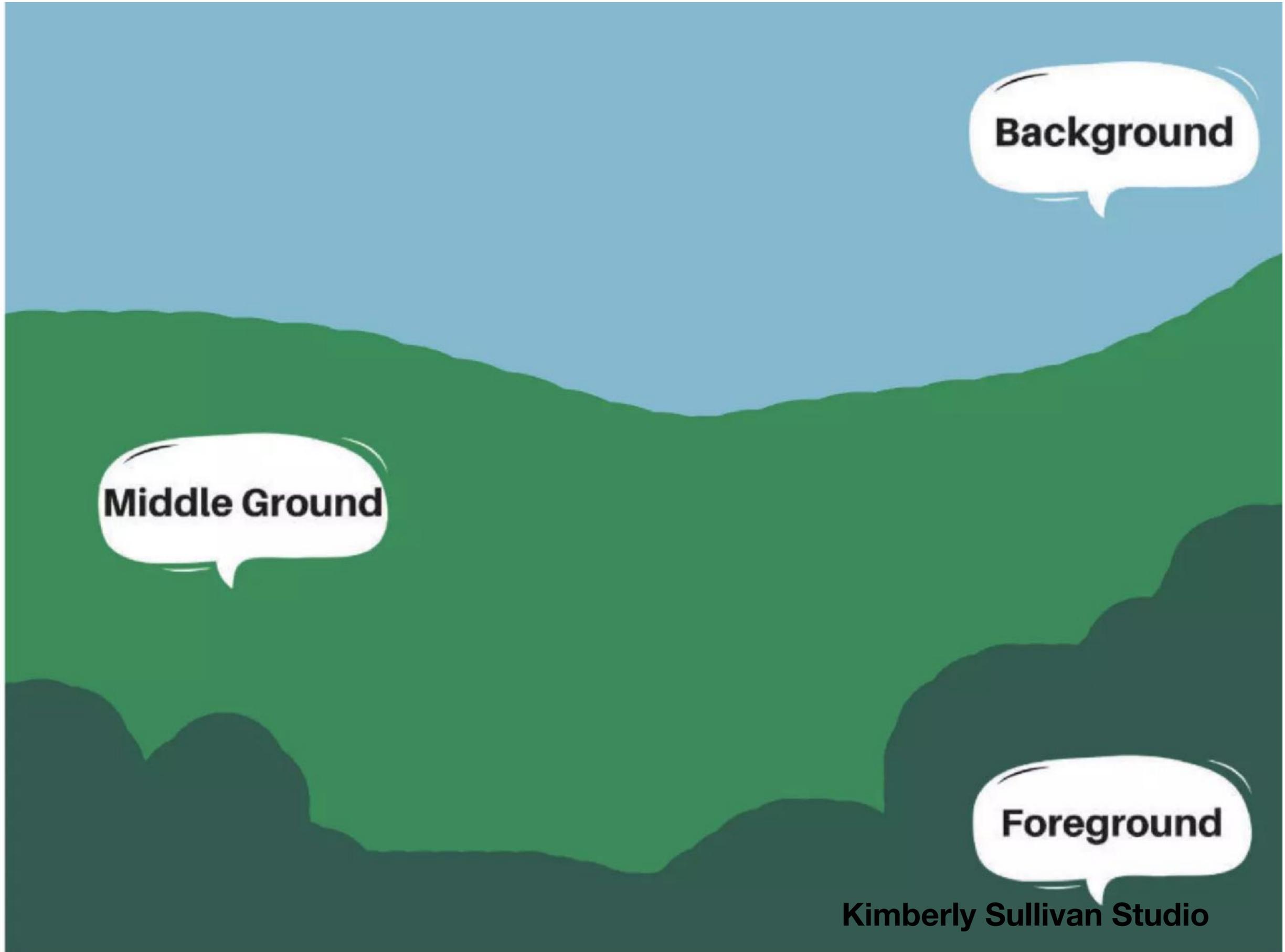
Middle Ground – connects space and shapes

Foreground – closest to viewer, stronger contrast, more detail
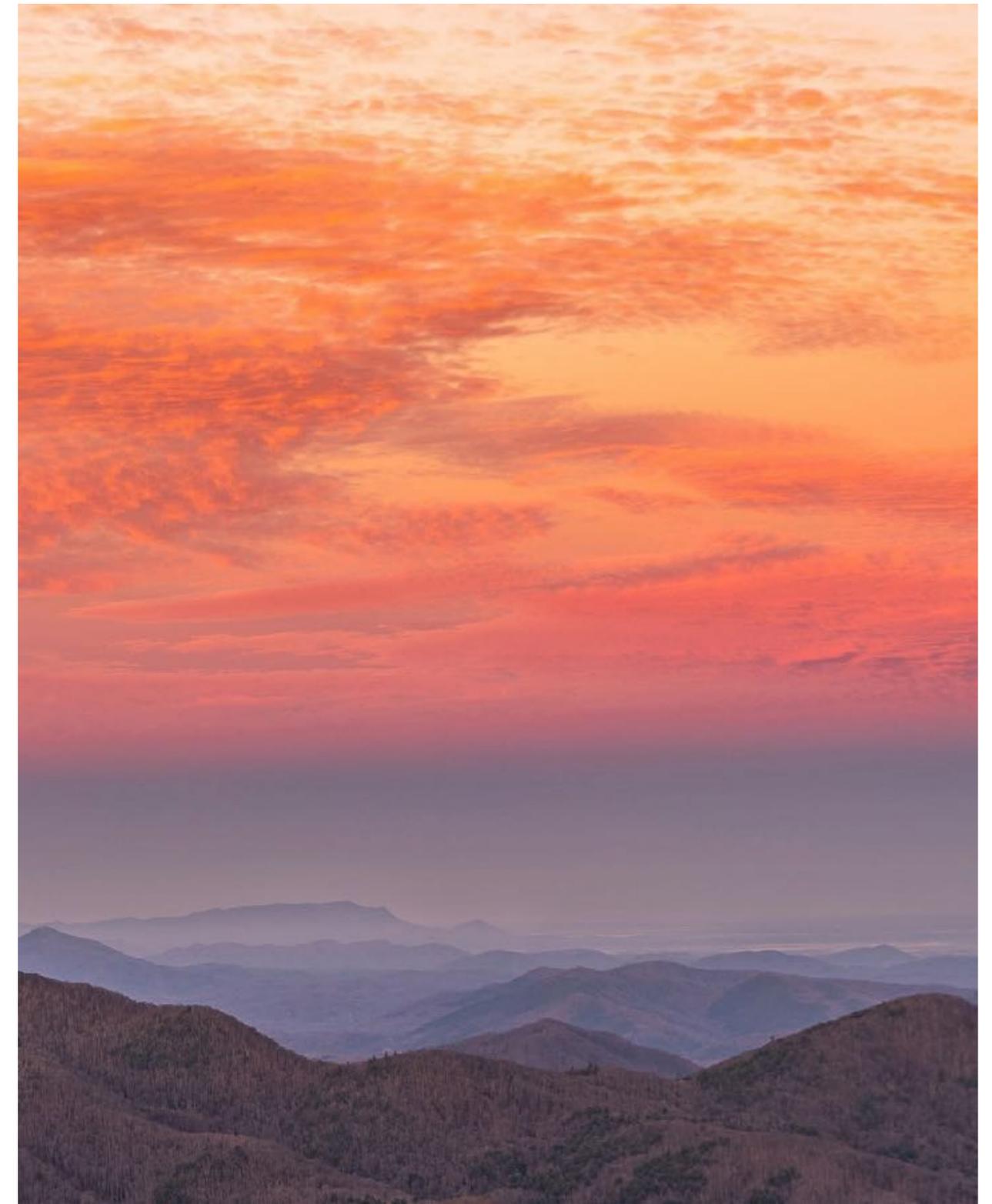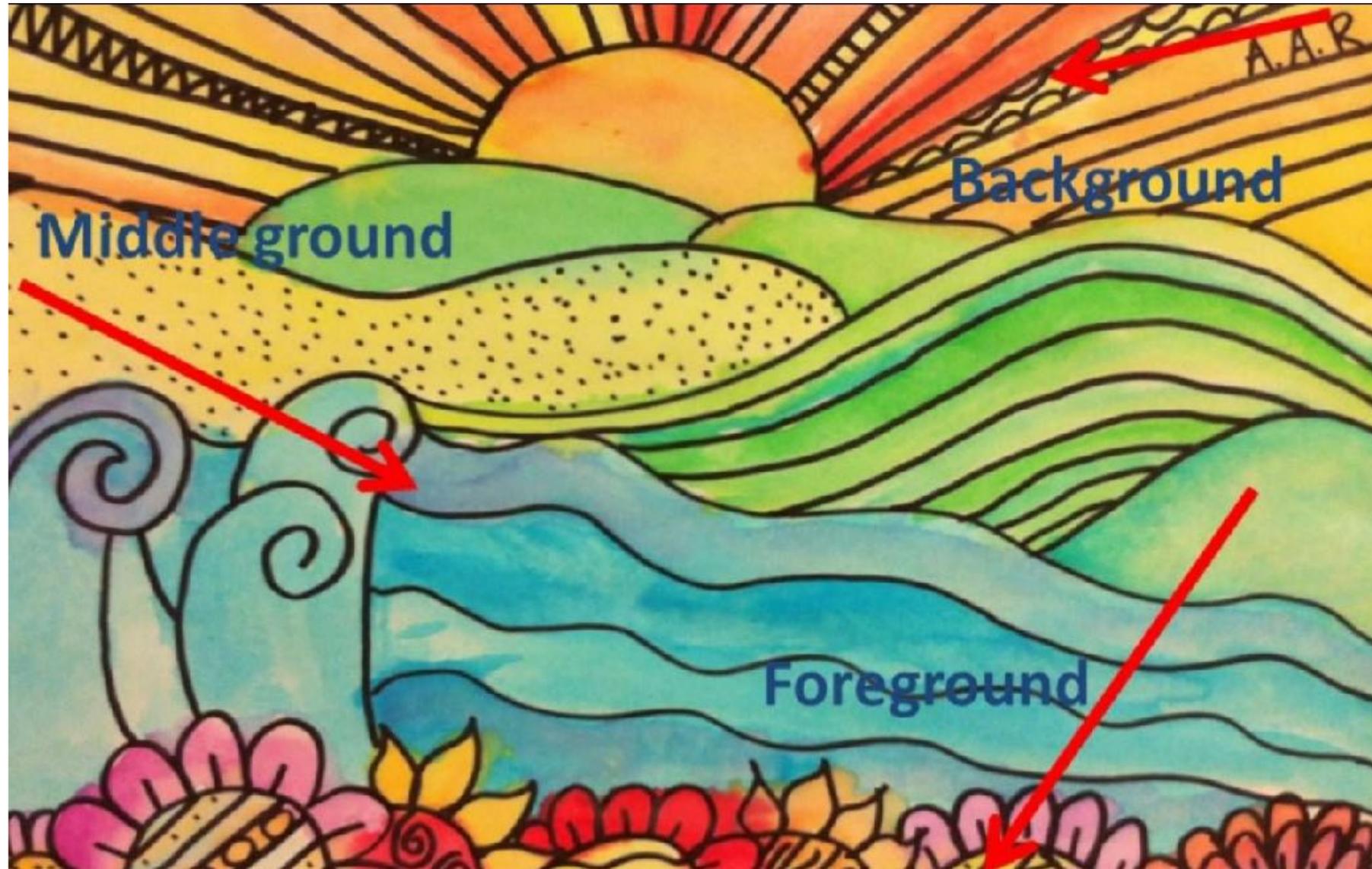
Artist Tip:

When "blocking in", think in large areas, not small details.

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One way to show space is to overlap parts of an artwork to create a **foreground, middle ground, & background.**

Background

Middle Ground

Foreground

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Warmup Painting- Warms vs Cools: "Sky & Ground"
(12×12 Canvas)

This is a practice canvas to warm up your eye and hand, try brushes for different effects, and filling in space.

Paint a simple composition with:

- Sky (one temperature range)
- Ground (a contrasting temperature range)

Focus on:

- Warm vs cool relationships
- Soft blending
- Loose brushwork

DEMONSTRATION- Blending and Texture. Warms vs Cools

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Final Project Introduction

Canvas Prep to Blocking In-Using Your Photo Reference

Today you'll begin your main painting using a photo from your phone.

The goal is to:

- Establish composition
- Block in large shapes
- Place light and dark areas
- Build the foundation of your painting

Details will come later.

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Blocking In: How to Start

How to Block In an Acrylic Painting

Blocking in means loosely painting:

- Big shapes
- Major light and dark areas
- General color zones

Do this first:
Background → Middle Ground → Foreground

Don't do this yet:
Tiny details
Fine lines
Highlights

Big shapes first.
Details later.

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Painting from a Photo Reference

Your photo helps you with:

- Composition
- Light and shadow
- Color temperature

You are not copying the photo exactly.

You are interpreting it.

Simplify what you see into shapes and value areas

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Composition: Rule of Third
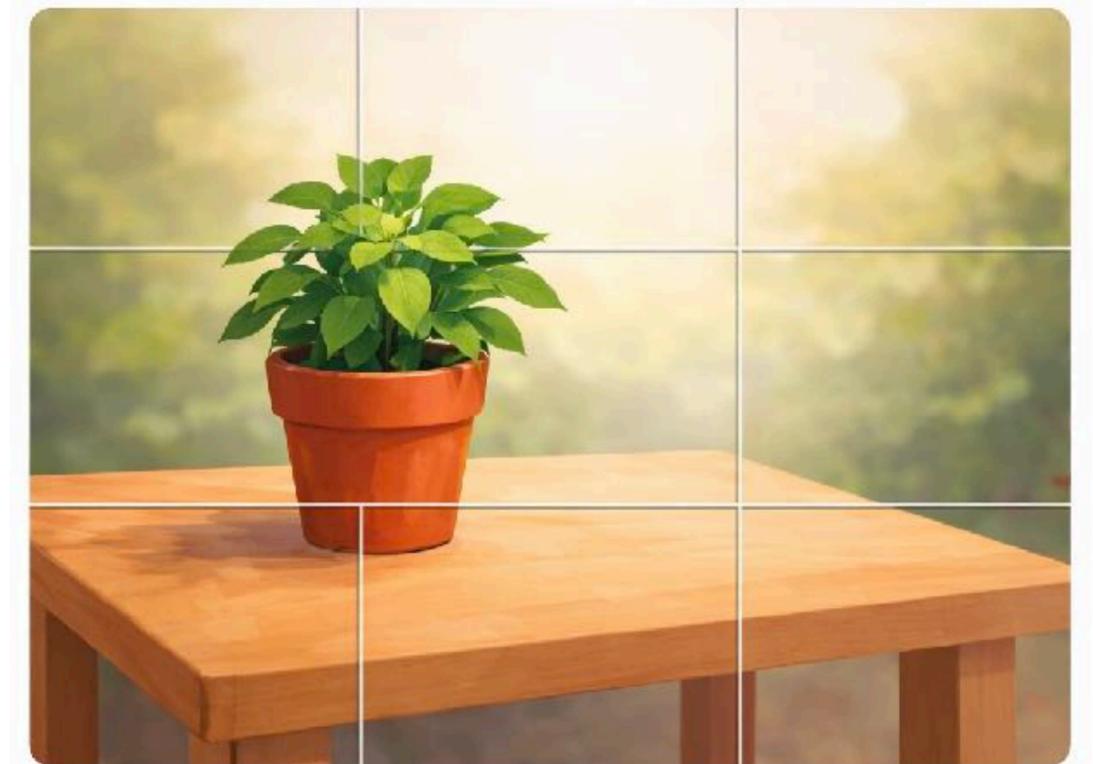
The Rule of Thirds (Simple Composition Tool)

Divide your canvas into thirds horizontally and vertically.
Strong focal points often fall:

- Along these lines
- Or near their intersections

This helps create:

- Balance
- Movement
- Visual interest

Avoid placing your main subject directly in the center.

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Setting Up Your Palette

Organize your palette before you paint:

- Warm primaries
- Cool primaries
- White
- Mixed tertiary colors

Lights separate from darks

Warm mixes separate from cool mixes

Clean palette = clearer color decisions.

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Brush Types & Painting Order

Use different brushes for different areas:

Large flat or filbert:
Backgrounds, blocking in big areas

Medium round or bright:
Main shapes, middle ground

Small round/detail:
Details (later, not today)

Painting order:
Background → Middle Ground → Foreground
General → Specific

You have the paint, and the brush, and the colors, and the canvas, and the vision; go on, create your masterpiece.

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Where to Pause Today & What's Next

Today's goal was to complete a strong block-in of your painting.
If you have time, you may begin to:

- Gently refine edges
- Add a few simple details
- Adjust color temperature (warm vs cool)
- Clarify light and shadow

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Optional Mini Project (Coaster)

Optional Practice: Color Blending on Porous Coaster

This mini exercise reinforces:

- Blending techniques
- Tertiary color mixing
- Thinking back to the color wheel

Focus on:

- Smooth transitions
- Warm to cool shifts
- How acrylic behaves on a porous surface

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