Get the Right Perspective

Learn to see perspective lines in architectural structures and photographs; then use this concept to draw more accurate and interesting buildings.

OUR EYES PERCEIVE the world around us in three dimensions through a very complex combination of binocular and monocular cues. In order to be able to render objects in a way that makes them appear three-dimensional, we've developed perspective techniques for drawing these objects. Understanding perspective is an essential step to being able to "see" objects in the world and to draw and paint them convincingly. The three basic applications of perspective rendering are one-point, two-point and three-point perspectives (see definitions, page 58). These approaches have two things in common; a horizon line and vanishing points.

On the Horizon

The horizon is a straight line at the "edge of the earth," where land and sky meet, and vanishing points are fixed points on the horizon where lines from the viewed object converge. Where you place the horizon in a picture is very important. Traditionally the horizon is located at the eye level of the observer; however, if you're looking up at a structure, that may not be the case (see my painting *Amsterdam Dormer*, below). You

ABOVE: In this photograph I chose major architectural lines—the base of the spire, the top edges of the dormer and window cornices, and the rooflines—as my perspective lines. The horizon line is below the frame.

RIGHT: *Dormer, Amsterdam* (watercolor, 16x10)