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THE WATERCOLOR TECHNIQUE OF

ARCHITECTURAL RENDERING

by BERNARD ATKINS

PUBLISHED BY WALTER T. FOSTER

MATERIALS FOR DRAWING

DRAFTING TABLE: Preferably 8 feet long. A flat slab door, minus the fixtures, on a pair of sawhorses is a standard setup.

TRANSPARENT SKETCH PAPER for working out your perspective drawing and all other pencil sketching.

DRAFTING TAPE to tape down sketch paper.

T-SQUARE to make straight vertical lines; thirty inches long is an ideal size.

BLUEPRINTS.

TRIANGLES: A 30°/60° and a 45°. They should be at least 18″ long and will be used for a multitude of linework.

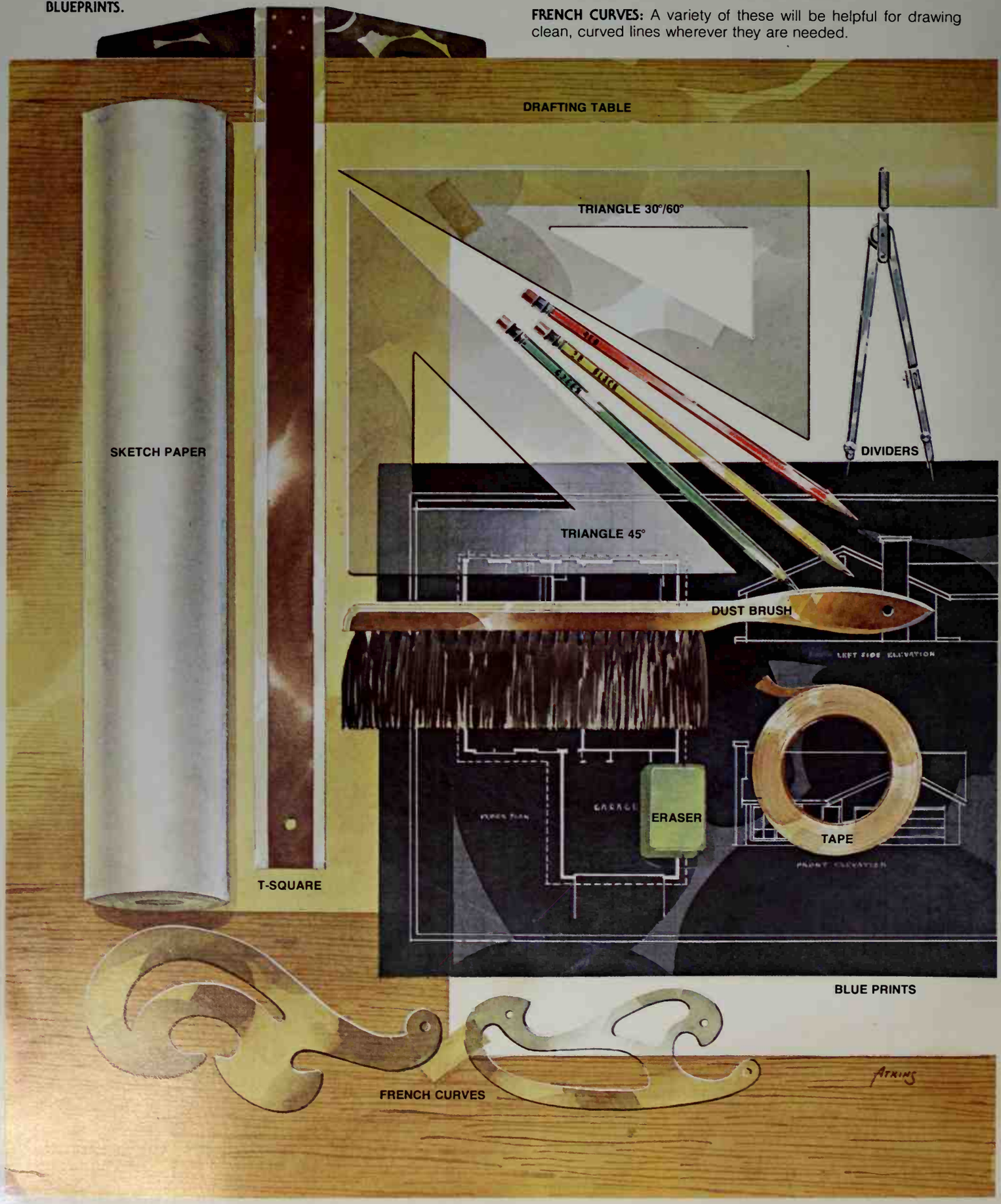
DIVIDERS for finding equal spaces on a vertical line.

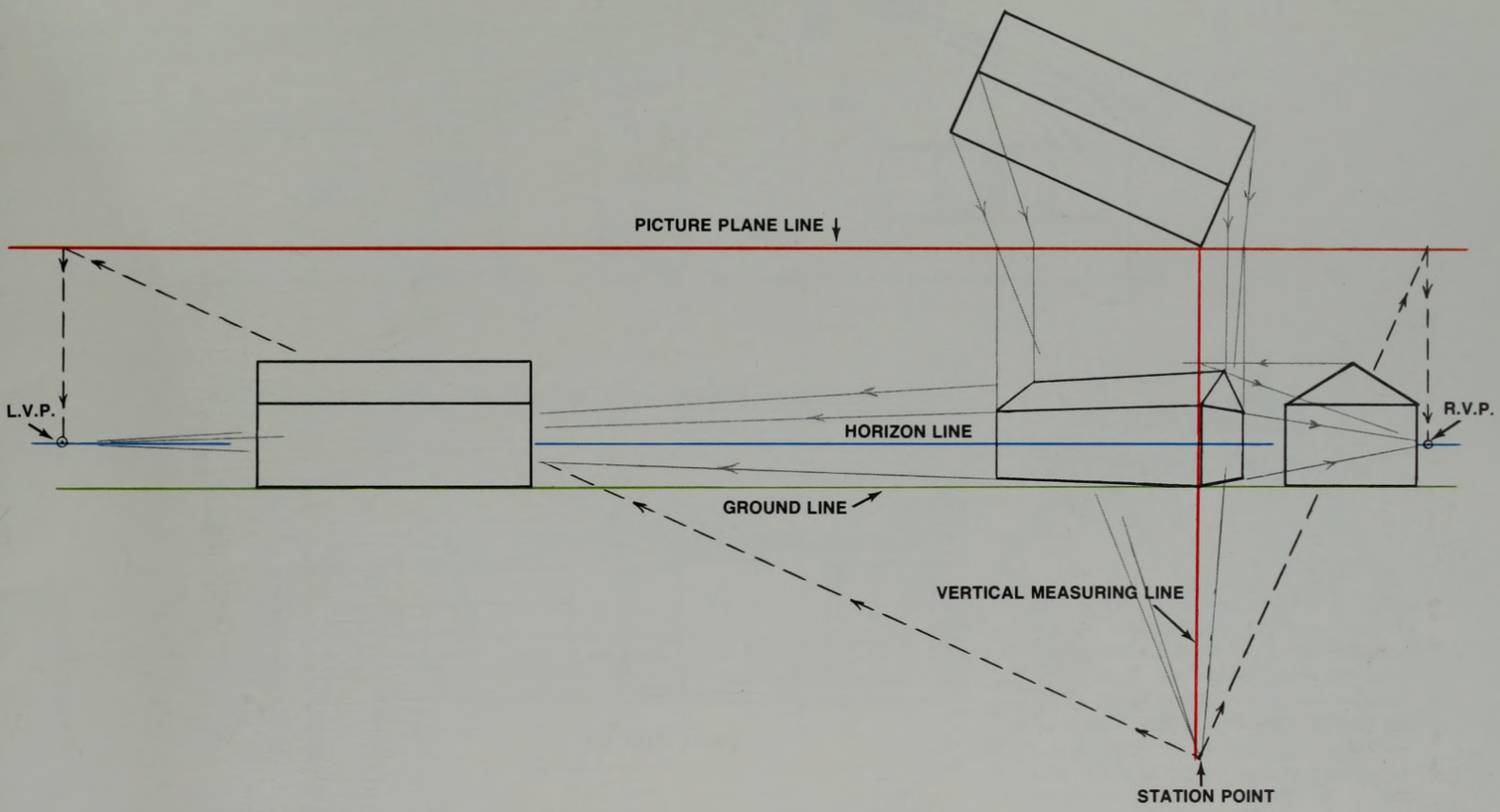
PENCILS: The plain old #2 household pencil will do just fine. A few colored ones will come in handy.

SOFT ERASER: You should get a lot of use out of this.

DUST BRUSH to sweep erasers off of the table.

FRENCH CURVES: A variety of these will be helpful for drawing clean, curved lines wherever they are needed.

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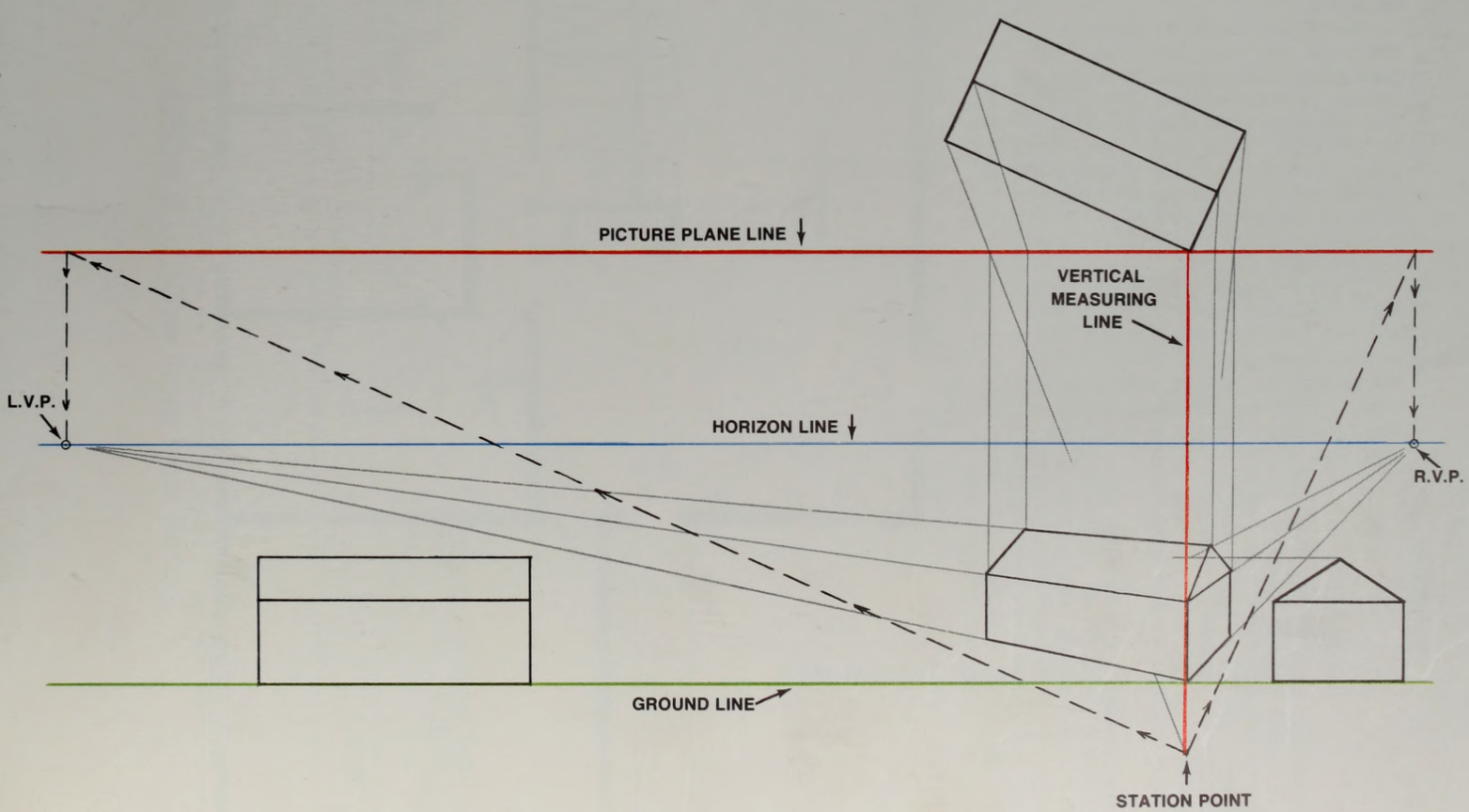
VERTICAL MEASURING LINE
STATION POINT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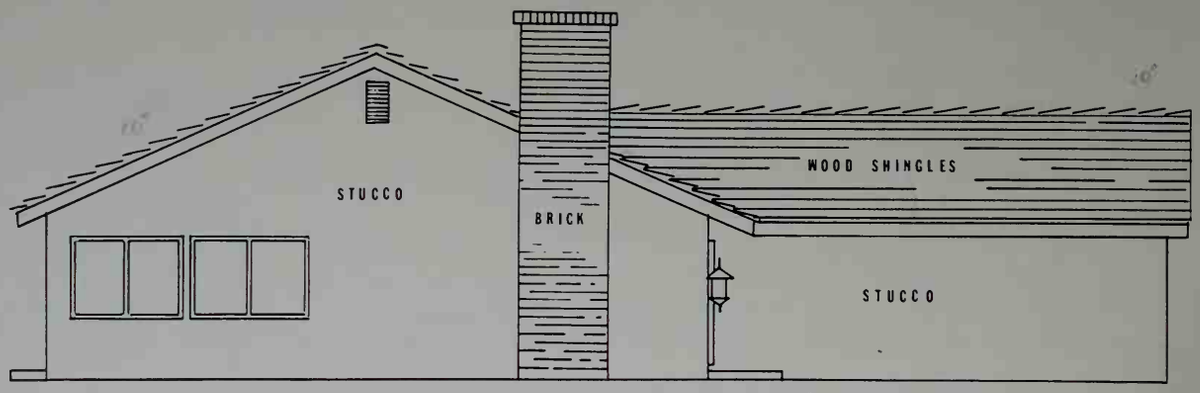
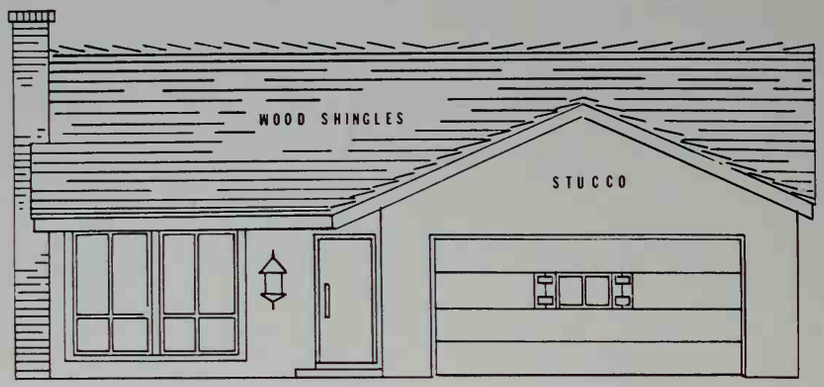


ELEMENTARY TWO-POINT PERSPECTIVE

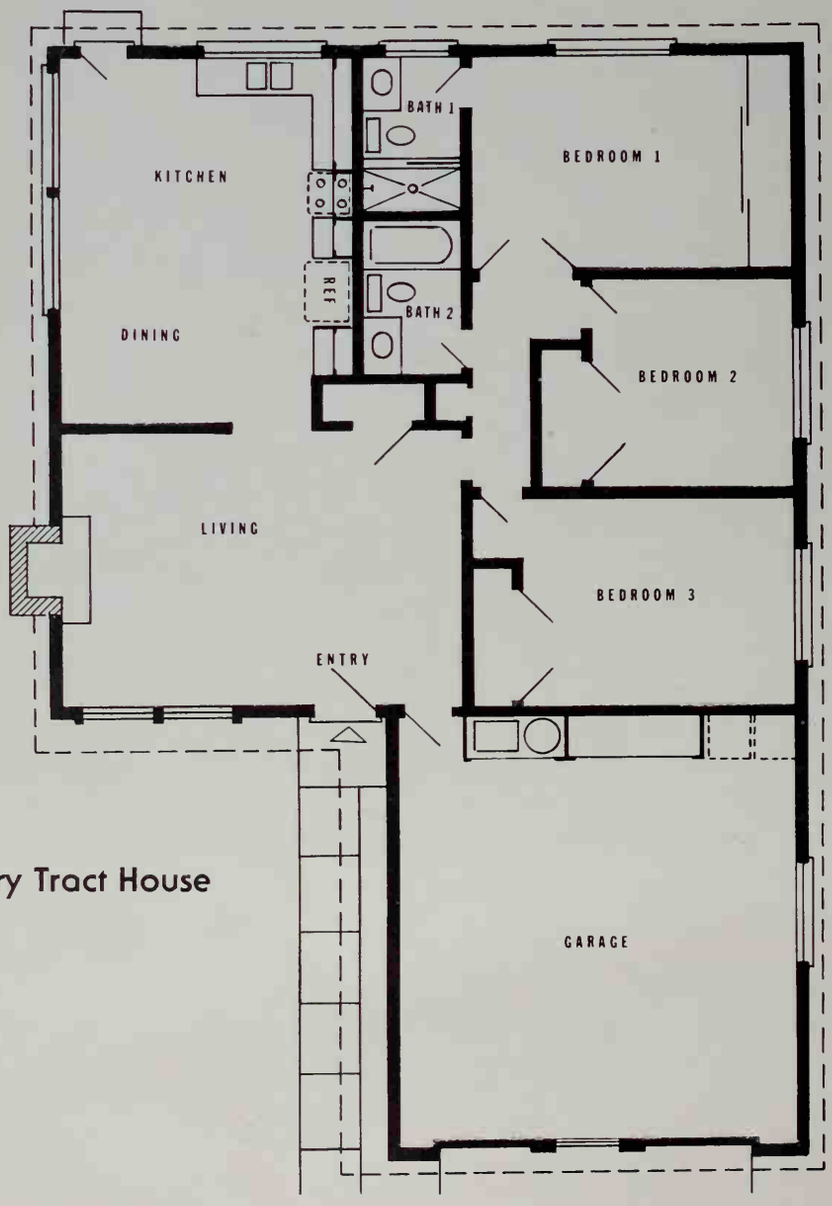
There is no use in going into a lengthy explanation of perspective on one or two pages of this book for it would only be duplicating another Walter Foster book, #29, **PERSPECTIVE DRAWING.** That book explains perspective in detail and I suggest you purchase that book and use it in conjunction with this one. There are one, two, and three-point perspective formulas but the two-point perspective is the most versatile and widely used so we shall deal with this one in our adventure into architectural rendering.

In the two examples depicted on this page we have the typical two-point perspective setup. The only difference between them is that one is an "eye-level" view while the other is an aerial or "birds-eye" view. The space between the ground line and the horizon line determines the height angle of the perspective. The closer they are, the closer to an eye-level view you will have.

The lower you drop the station point, the further apart your vanishing points are and the more accurate the perspective appears to be. So try to drop the station point low enough to get at least one of the vanishing points a good distance from the vertical measuring line.



FRONT ELEVATION

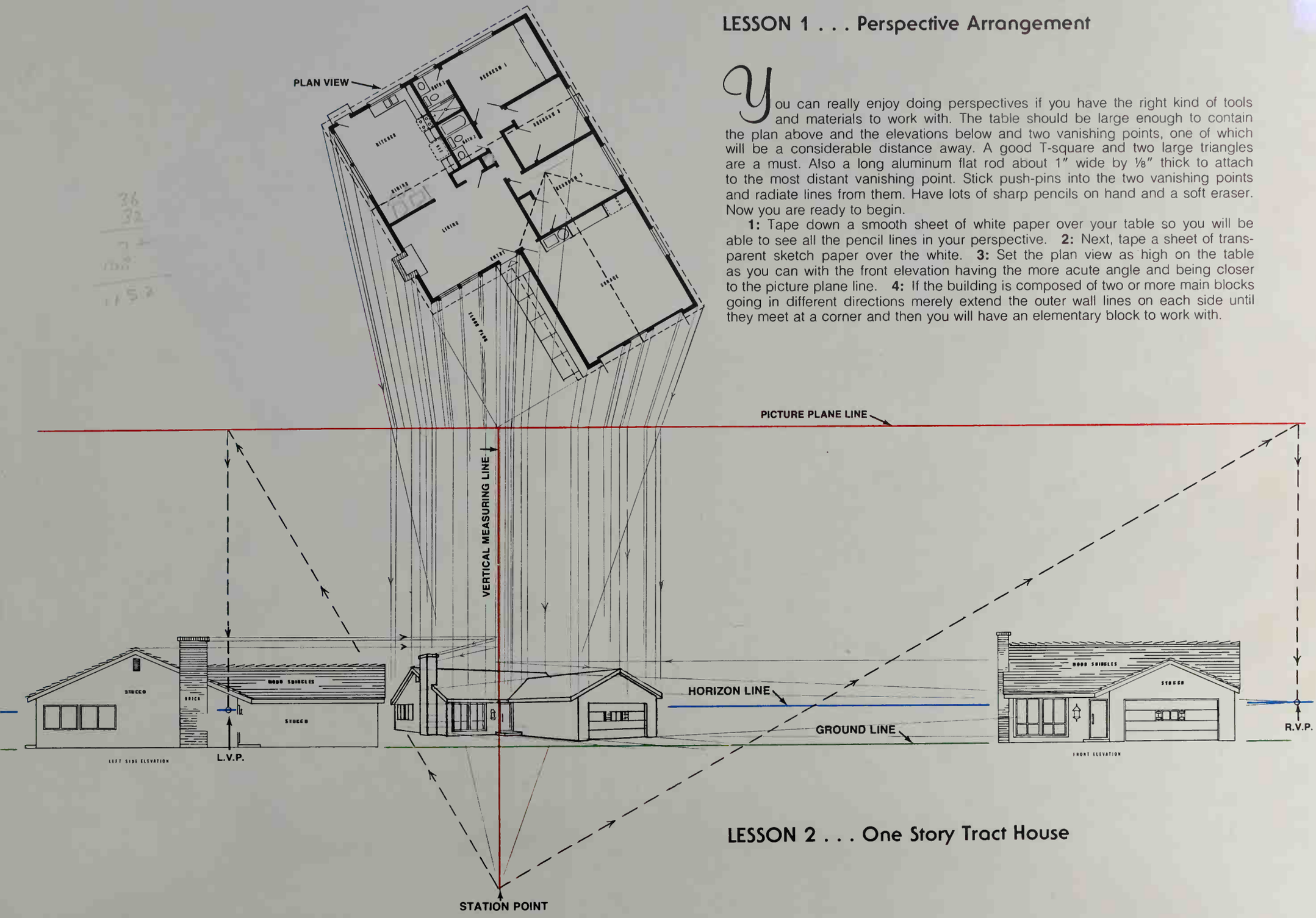


LESSON 1 . . . One Story Tract House

LESSON 1 . . . Perspective Arrangement

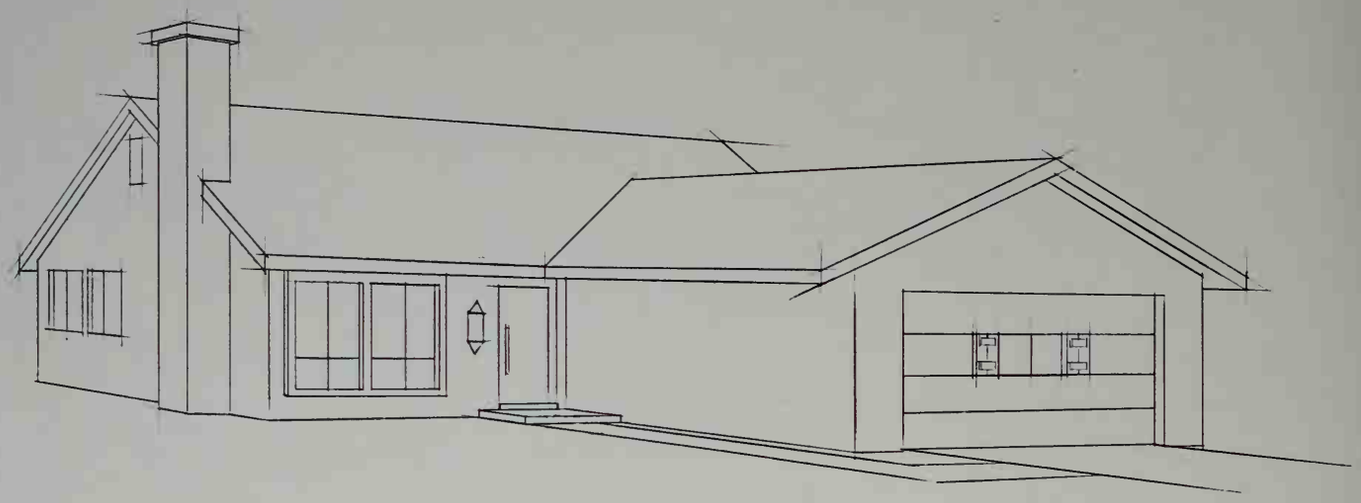
You can really enjoy doing perspectives if you have the right kind of tools and materials to work with. The table should be large enough to contain the plan above and the elevations below and two vanishing points, one of which will be a considerable distance away. A good T-square and two large triangles are a must. Also a long aluminum flat rod about 1″ wide by ⅛″ thick to attach to the most distant vanishing point. Stick push-pins into the two vanishing points and radiate lines from them. Have lots of sharp pencils on hand and a soft eraser. Now you are ready to begin.

1: Tape down a smooth sheet of white paper over your table so you will be able to see all the pencil lines in your perspective. **2:** Next, tape a sheet of transparent sketch paper over the white. **3:** Set the plan view as high on the table as you can with the front elevation having the more acute angle and being closer to the picture plane line. **4:** If the building is composed of two or more main blocks going in different directions merely extend the outer wall lines on each side until they meet at a corner and then you will have an elementary block to work with.

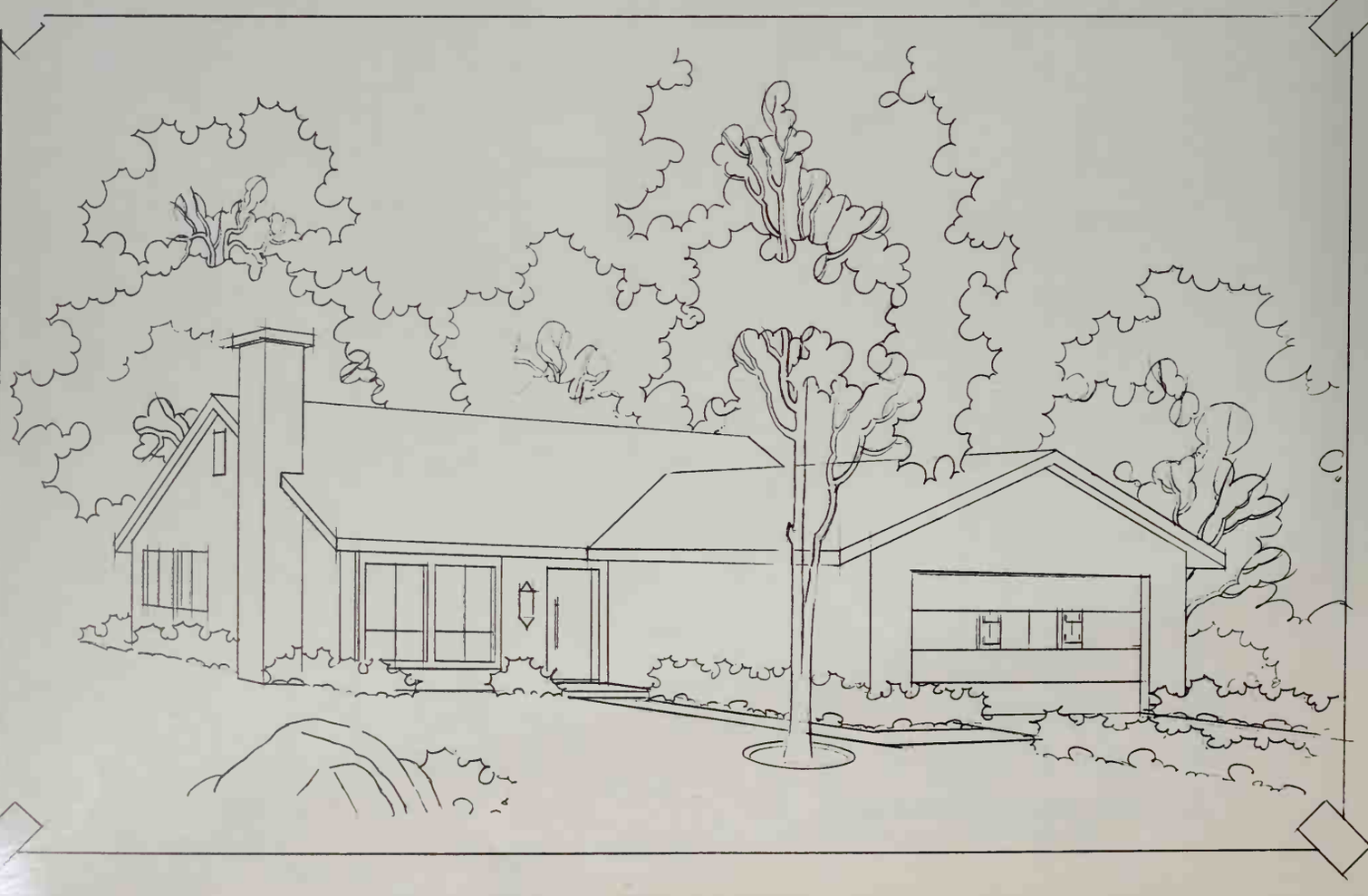


LESSON 2 . . . One Story Tract House

THE FINISHED PENCIL DRAWING

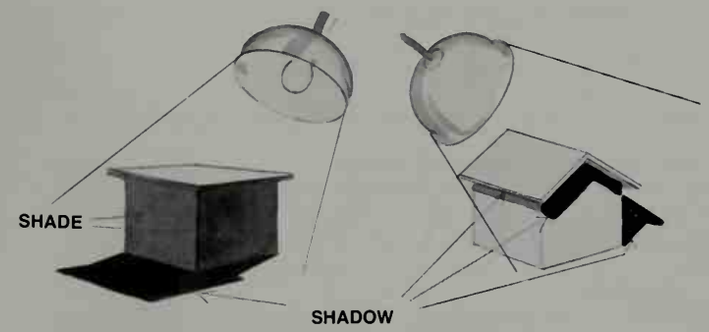


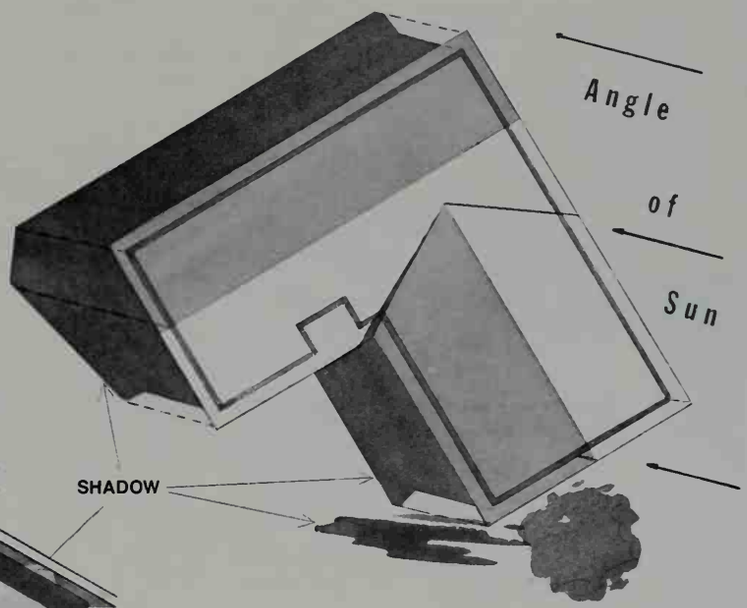
Above we have the finished perspective drawing of the house with the walk and driveway added. Lay another sheet of sketch paper over the perspective drawing and work out the landscaping. You may have to use two or three sheets to finally get a good combination of landscape elements. Refer to the pages on **TREE SHAPES, BACKGROUND TREES, AND FOREGROUND OBJECTS** in this book.

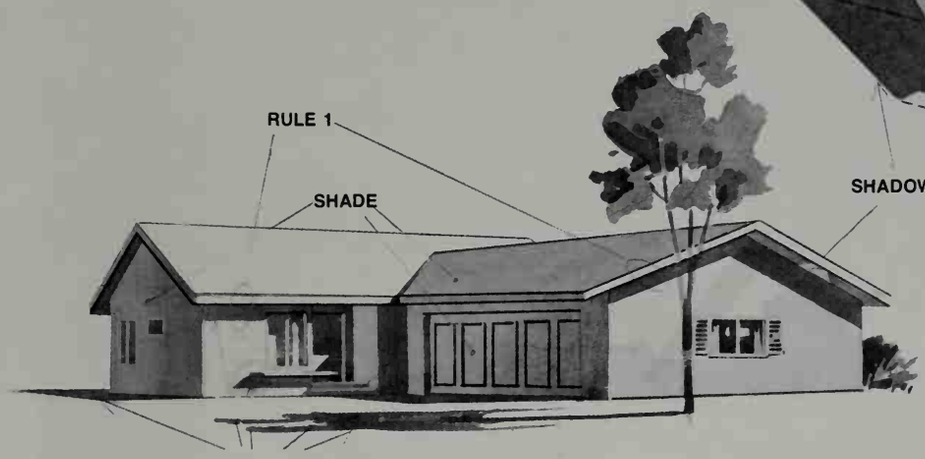


SHADES AND SHADOWS

The best way to learn about cast shadows is to construct several simple cardboard models and move a portable light all around them and notice how the shadows change as the light shifts. **SHADE:** An area which receives no direct light. **SHADOW:** An area that is darkened by light interference.

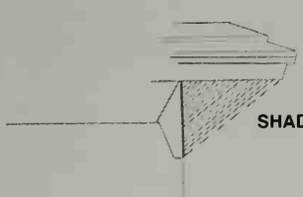




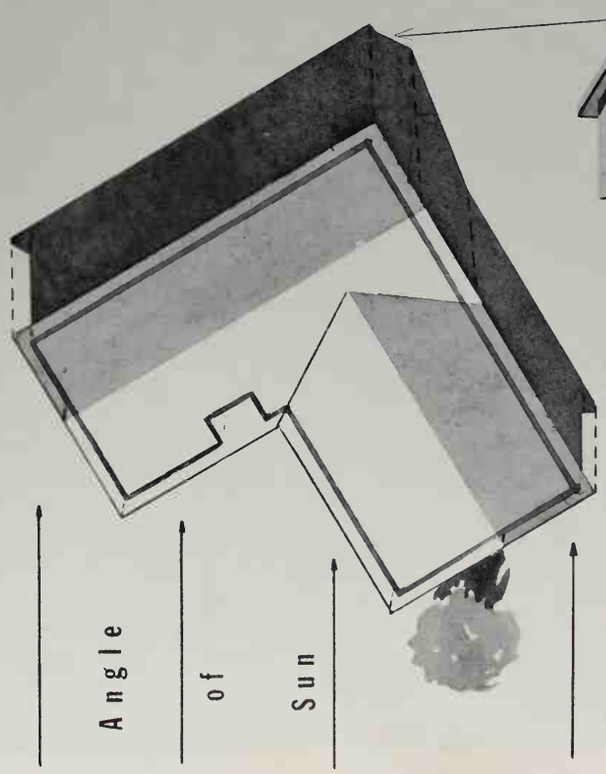


ONE-WAY LIGHT

For rendering purposes there are two lighting effects to consider. **1:** The one-way light and **2:** the split light. If you observe any building you will notice that both of these effects exist simultaneously. If the left side of the structure is in the shade (one-way light) then that means that the right side has to be in sunlight. The fact that the sun is striking both the front and the right side at the same time makes it a split light.



SPLIT LIGHT



Walk around your neighborhood on a sunny day and start noticing shadows and light sources. You will see everyday objects in a "new light" if you'll pardon the pun. Two rules to remember about cast shadows. **RULE 1:** A parallel plane will cast a parallel shadow on another parallel plane. **RULE 2:** If the plane casting a shadow is perpendicular to another then an angular shadow will result. For rendering purposes always try to make the cast shadow value darker than the same value in the shade.

MATERIALS FOR PAINTING

WATERCOLOR BOARD is a watercolor paper glued onto a heavy board to keep it from going flabby when wet. A good 300 lb. paper will do as is and you can use the other side if you make any disasterous errors.

GRAPHITE TRANSFER PAPER is used to transfer the drawing from the sketch paper to the watercolor board. See page on **MAKING AND USING A GRAPHITE TRANSFER PAPER.**

T.V. DINNER PAN AND A BUTCHER'S TRAY are both used as palettes. The t.v. tray is good for large amounts of wash and the other for smaller bits of paint mixing.

A WATER CONTAINER

A COMPLEXION SPONGE AND A MANUFACTURED HOUSEHOLD SPONGE for a multitude of purposes.

FACIAL TISSUE is indispensable for dabbing and picking up watercolor washes and also for drying out wet brushes, etc.

PAINTS are all watercolors except for a few gouache colors and an opaque white.

BRUSHES are good quality red sable watercolor brushes in graduating sizes.

A TOOTHBRUSH for spattering the paint to get a "pebble" effect on roof and walls.

A HEAT GUN to quickly dry up washes so we can continue on with the painting.

CLEAR TAPE to mask off areas you do not want the washes to enter.

FRISKET KNIFE to cut tape and friskets.

STICK PEN is used to transfer lines onto the watercolor board.

RULING PEN makes straight lines with paint.

ALUMINUM MOULDING has a variety of uses but mainly as a guide for lines going back to the vanishing points.

When you do quite a bit of painting it is very inconvenient to have to squeeze paint from tubes every time you need a color. Therefore, I use an ice cube tray and squeeze all of my colors into it, add water with the complexion sponge, and mix it to a creamy consistency with a wooden stick. I keep the tray covered when not in use with a piece of glass.

I find that a window louvre cut off at one end to fit the tray works perfectly. In this way I can dip my brush into any color in a second and be painting. For transporting the paints, wrap a big rubber band around each end of the ice cube tray and over the glass cover to hold it down tightly over the paints.

THE COLORS IN MY PALETTE

NEW GAMBOGE

YELLOW OCHRE

CADMIUM ORANGE

CADMIUM SCARLET

BURNT SIENNA

ALIZARIN CRIMSON

INDIAN RED

VAN DYKE BROWN

WINSOR VIOLET

FRENCH ULTRAMARINE BLUE

MANGANESE BLUE

ANTWERP BLUE

PAYNES GRAY

HOOKERS GREEN DEEP

IVORY BLACK

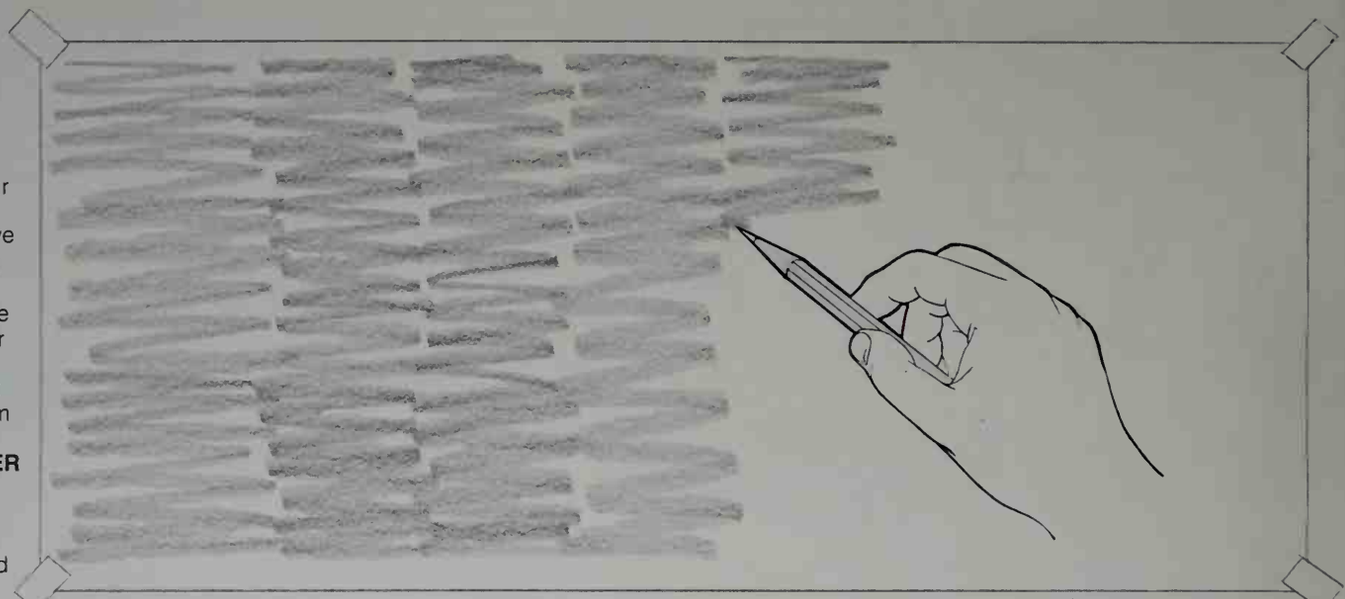
WINSOR GREEN

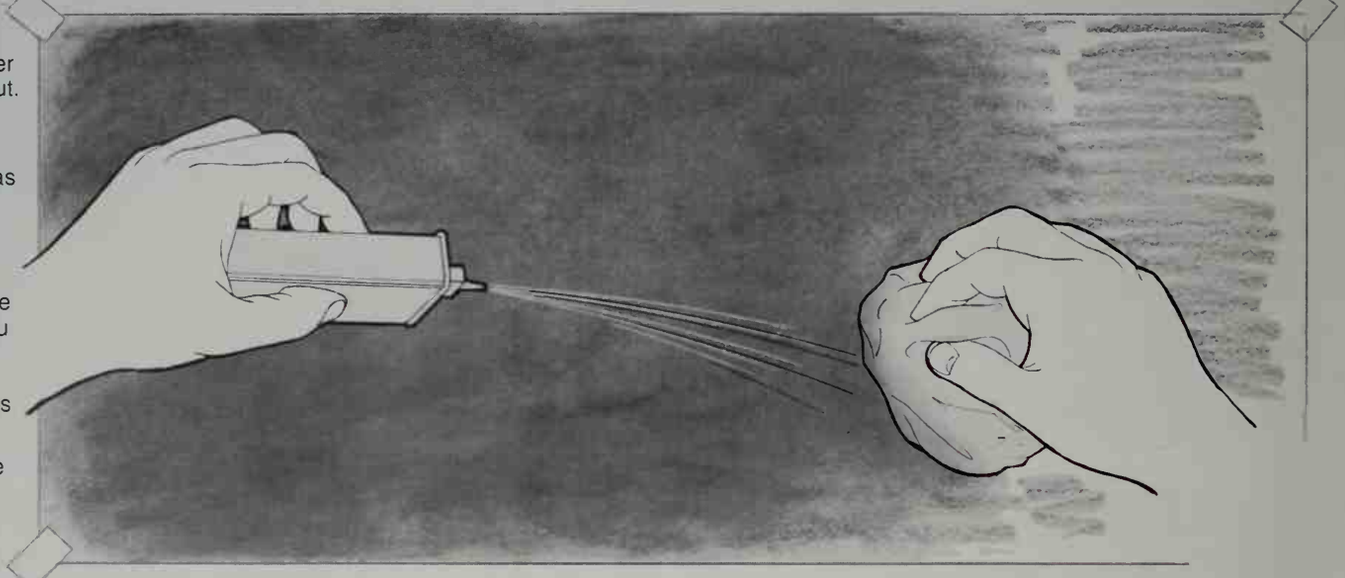
HOW TO MAKE AND USE GRAPHITE TRANSFER PAPER

After we get our perspective drawing done we have to get that drawing onto a paintable surface. Therefore, we have to use a transfer paper similar to a typewriter carbon but made of graphite from your pencil. **NEVER USE CARBON PAPER** to transfer your drawings because it leaves dark lines that cannot be erased and also leaves a greasy residue along the lines. The graphite transfer paper can be used over and over again until it wears out.

Some art supply stores carry graphite transfer paper that has been commercially manufactured and comes in colors including black. But in case none is available when you need it, you can make some yourself by following the simple instructions on this page.

Tape down a piece of sketch paper and rub with a soft pencil as dark as you can. Squirt some lighter fluid on it with one hand and rub a soft tissue over it with the other. Repeat this process until you get a fairly dark and even surface. Slip the transfer paper, face down, between your perspective sketch and the watercolor board and go over all the lines with a ballpoint stick pen or stylus. I prefer the stick pen because you can tell where you have already traced. The drawing is now transferred to the watercolor board and you are ready to paint.





RENDERING OF LESSON ONE

Sky and lawn washes laid on.

Basic colors of house added.

Side elevation of the house darkened and cast shadows added. Darks in the glass for depth are put in.

The tree washes are started and rocks and bushes are worked up.

The finished rendering shows the brick, shingles, and line-work carefully added. Also shadows from the trees and darks in the tree shapes to give the trees form. Flowers are added for color.

WATERCOLOR WASHES

THE FLAT WASH: Start at one end with a brush loaded with wash. Puddle the wash on and tilt the board in different directions for evenness. Sop up the excess wash with a damp sponge or brush.

GRADED WASH WITH A VERTICAL SHINE IN THE CENTER: This is a good wash for cylindrical shapes such as curved walls and tree trunks, etc. The technique is the same as a one color graded wash but the gradation should be finished in the center rather than the other side. After it's dry repeat the process starting from the other side.

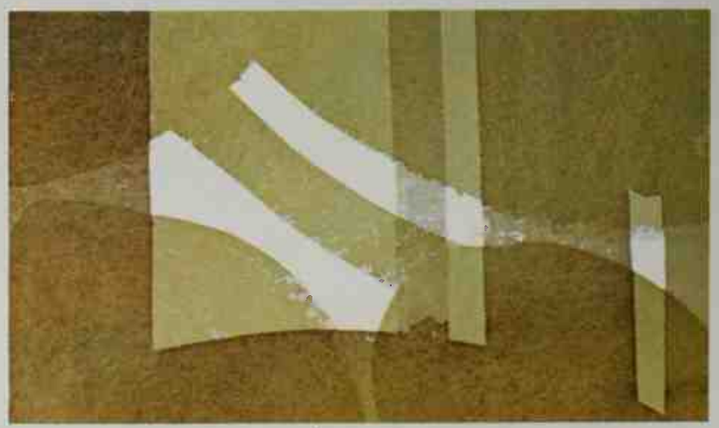
GRADED WASH (ONE COLOR): Same as above, but you may pre-wet the board with a sponge, and while still wet, add the wash. Start the wash at one end and let it flow to the other.

GRADED WASH WITH A DIAGONAL SHINE: Use the same method as above but start in the corners and grade toward the center.

GRADED WASH (TWO COLORS): Mix two washes. Do everything as in the one color graded wash, but while it's still wet, start the other wash from the opposite side and let it grade and fade away toward the center.

GLARE WASH: Whether flat or graded, this has to be done on a dry board and the wash must be laid on and left there with no further tampering. See page 30.

GRADED WASH (THREE COLORS): Mix three washes; wet the board with a sponge, then puddle on the three washes; one on the left, right and center. Tilt the board back and forth to control washes. Pick up excess with a damp sponge or brush.



TWO GLARE WASHES—ONE OVER THE OTHER: After one wash is dry add another over it using a darker tone. Strive for good patterns and continuity of the washes.

Here are washes and techniques to practice to give you control and confidence in your painting. Remember, **mix twice as much wash as you think you'll need.** In all of the examples I masked off the edges with clear tape and burnished it tightly to the watercolor board. **IMPORTANT!** Until you know how to handle watercolor, **never add a wash to one that is partially dry or still damp!**

SKIES

In all of these skies my colors are Ultramarine Blue and Van Dyke Brown. You may experiment with others however to suit your own personal tastes.

1: The board is pre-wetted with a sopping household sponge except in the cloud areas. The blue sky wash is then flooded on and runs throughout the wet area, but is stopped by the dry cloud spaces. You should tilt the board considerably and sop up the excess wash with a dry tissue. Brushes and a complexion sponge may be used for softening clouds and for giving them definition.

2: This sky is actually just a graded wash. Pre-wet the entire sky and slop on some blue sky wash and let it run. Keep tilting the board all around until you have a perfect gradation. You will notice that skies appear to get lighter as they get closer to the horizon.

3: The entire sky surface is pre-wetted and the sky color is dropped on with a sponge or large brush. Leave the board flat so the color "flares" out. Don't put in too much blue or all the whites will be gone by the time it dries.

ROOF TEXTURES

SHINGLE

1: First wash

2: Second wash

3: Add horizontal lines (skipping here and there) with ruling pen.

4: Add vertical lines and some darker tones in some individual shingles.

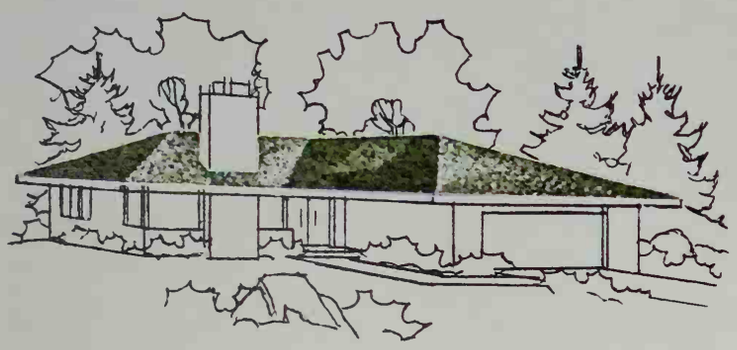
1: First wash

2: Second wash

3: Add horizontal lines with small brush.

4: Brush in verticals and some darker tones on the individual shakes.

SHAKE



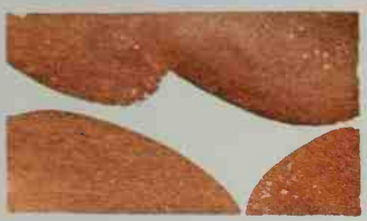
ROCK OR GRAVEL

1: First wash

2: Second wash

3: Mask off entire surface except for roof area and spatter dark tone with a toothbrush flicked with your thumb.

4: Spatter light tones and remove tape.



1: First wash

2: Second wash

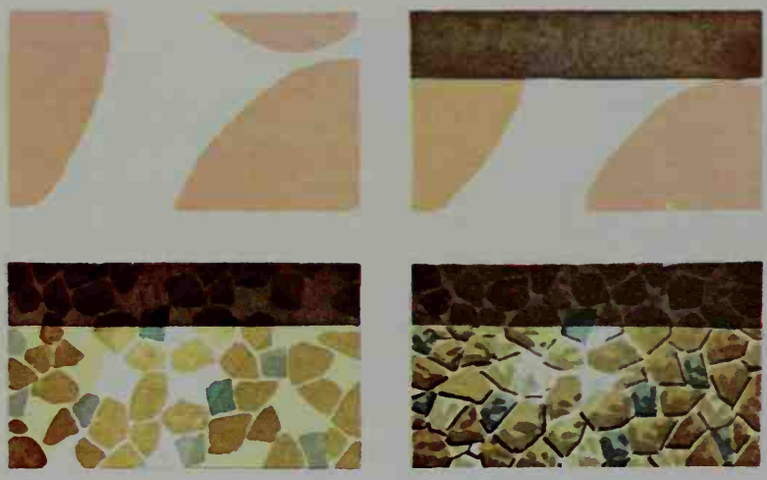
3: Space and paint in vertical rows of tile.

4: Add dark verticals between each row of tile and detail the rounded ends.

SPANISH TILE

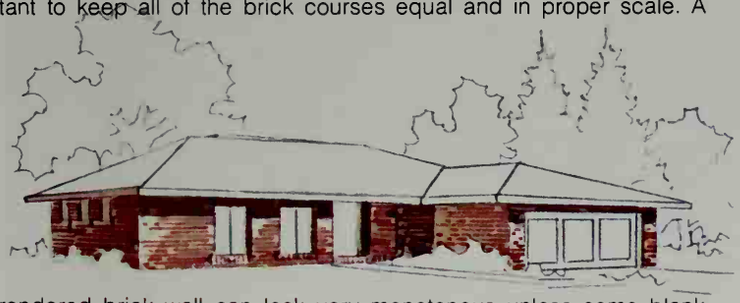
MASONRY TEXTURES

FLAGSTONE is a sandstone that is easily split into large slabs and is ideal for paving and other decorative masonry work.

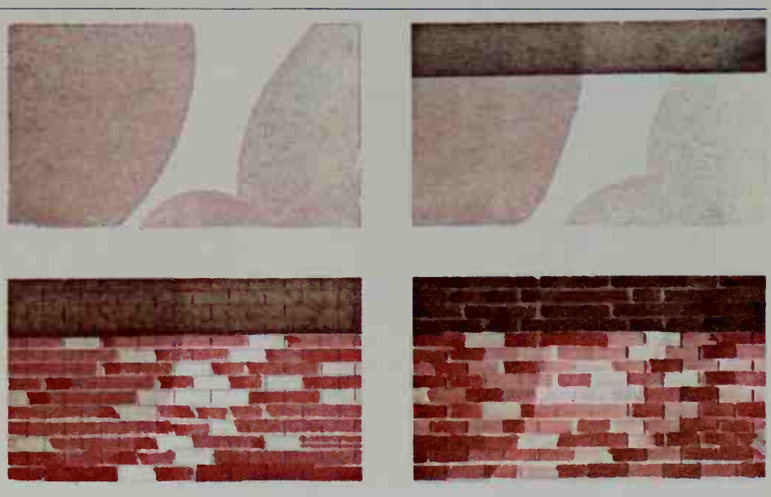


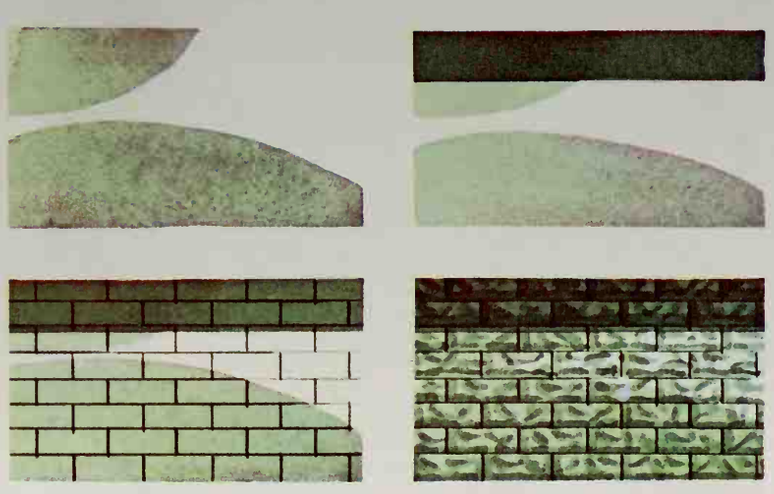
SANDSTONE is a popular stone in the southwest. It is soft and easy to shape. It comes in soft earthy beiges and is usually laid in a random, casual pattern.

BRICK is a manufactured block made from clay that is then fired; it comes in a wide variety of sizes and colors. In rendering, it is important to keep all of the brick courses equal and in proper scale. A

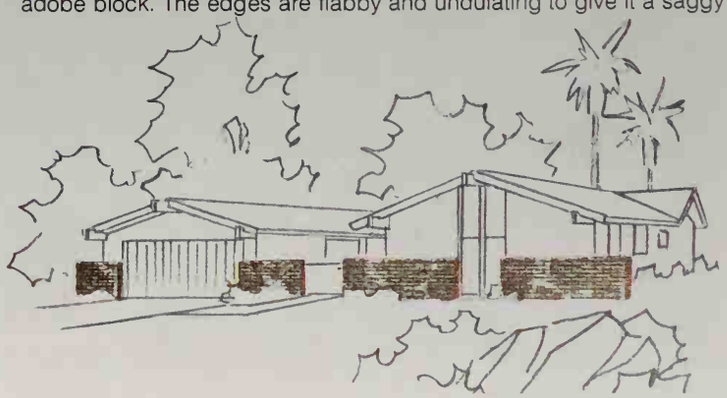


rendered brick wall can look very monotonous unless some blank spots and tone variations are introduced. The multitude of brick patterns are too numerous to get into this book.





SLUMPSTONE is not a stone at all but is, in reality, a manufactured adobe block. The edges are flabby and undulating to give it a saggy



and casual appearance. It lends itself to Spanish and ranch-type housing. It comes in many colors and can be painted.

RENDERING A TYPICAL RESIDENCE

Mask off the roof with clear tape and lay in the sky. While that's drying, mask off the bottom of the house and lay in the lawn wash. Make sure that you have much more color mixed than you need so that you will not run out in the middle of the wash.

When sky is almost dry, remove tape and dry thoroughly with heat-gun or over gas or electric heater (face down) until hot. Then tape around the outside of the house and lay in the lightest washes for the roof, siding and stone. Note the use of the graded wash on the wall and roof. Again, dry thoroughly and lay in the darker washes for the turn sides of the roof and the walls. Be careful to get a clean, straight, vertical edge on the corner.

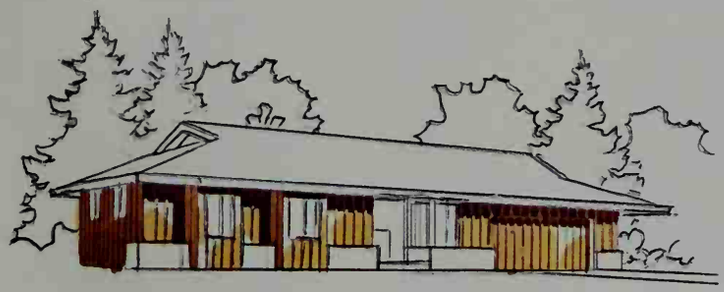
When this dries lay in the dark shadow areas and the first window washes. Also the front door color. At this time add a few darker tones of color to various areas of the roof and walls to give the building depth and style.

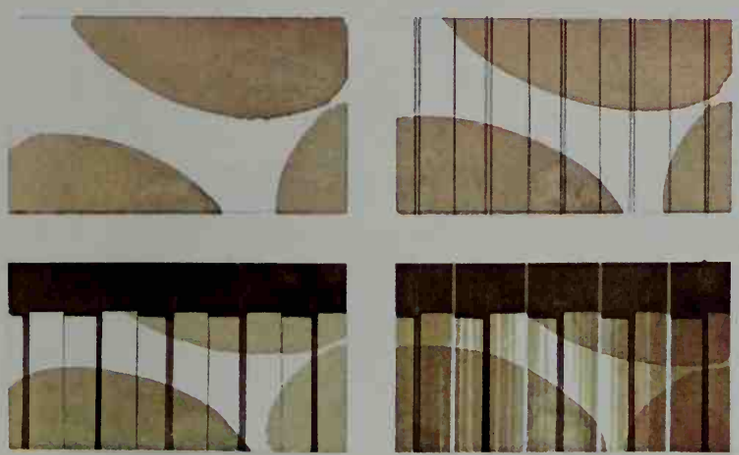
Remove all tape and lay in darker window activity and first landscape washes. Detail the shakes on the roof and the stone walls near the front door. Lay in wash on driveway and sidewalk.

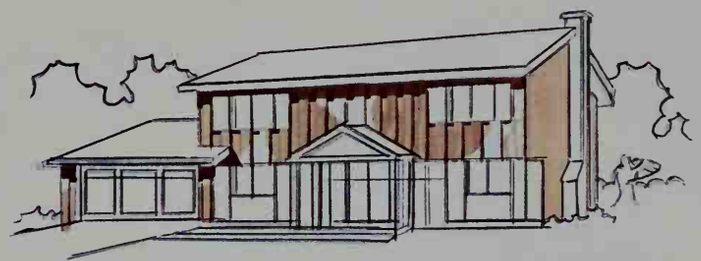
Finish up by painting in the trim and linework with your ruling pen and laying in the darker areas of your landscape to contrast against the lighter parts of the house. A few shadows on the lawn in the foreground and the dark foreground tree will help to frame the picture and keep the viewers eye from wandering. Highlight areas of the house and landscape that need it with opaque and "jab" in a few bright flowers near the front door to play up the main entrance.

WOOD SIDING TEXTURES

BOARD AND BATTEN: This siding is vertical wood planking with 1"x2" wood strips called "battens" nailed on over the seams. It is a very popular pattern for houses, apartments and small office buildings.

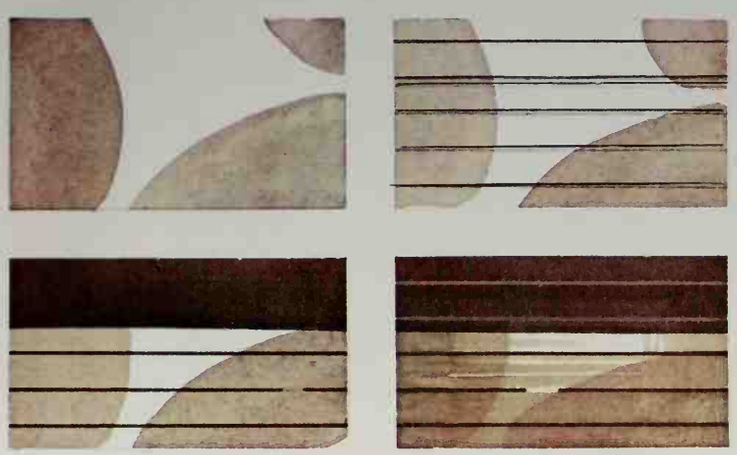


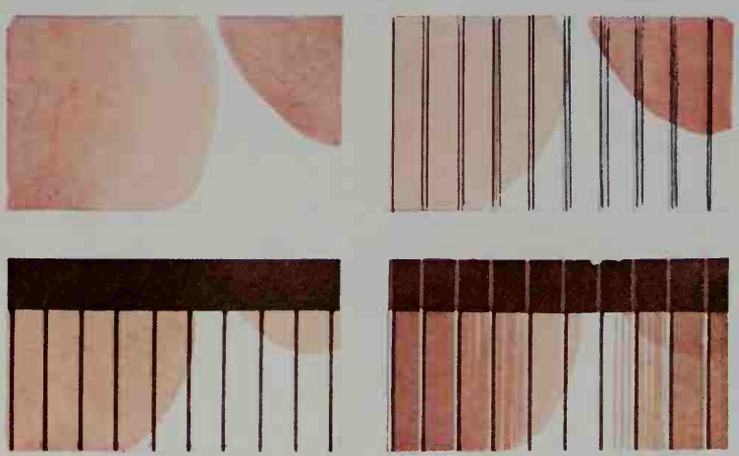




BOARD ON BOARD: This pattern is derived by alternating every other board and slightly overlapping them. It is considerably bolder than board and batten and is also a very popular wood siding.

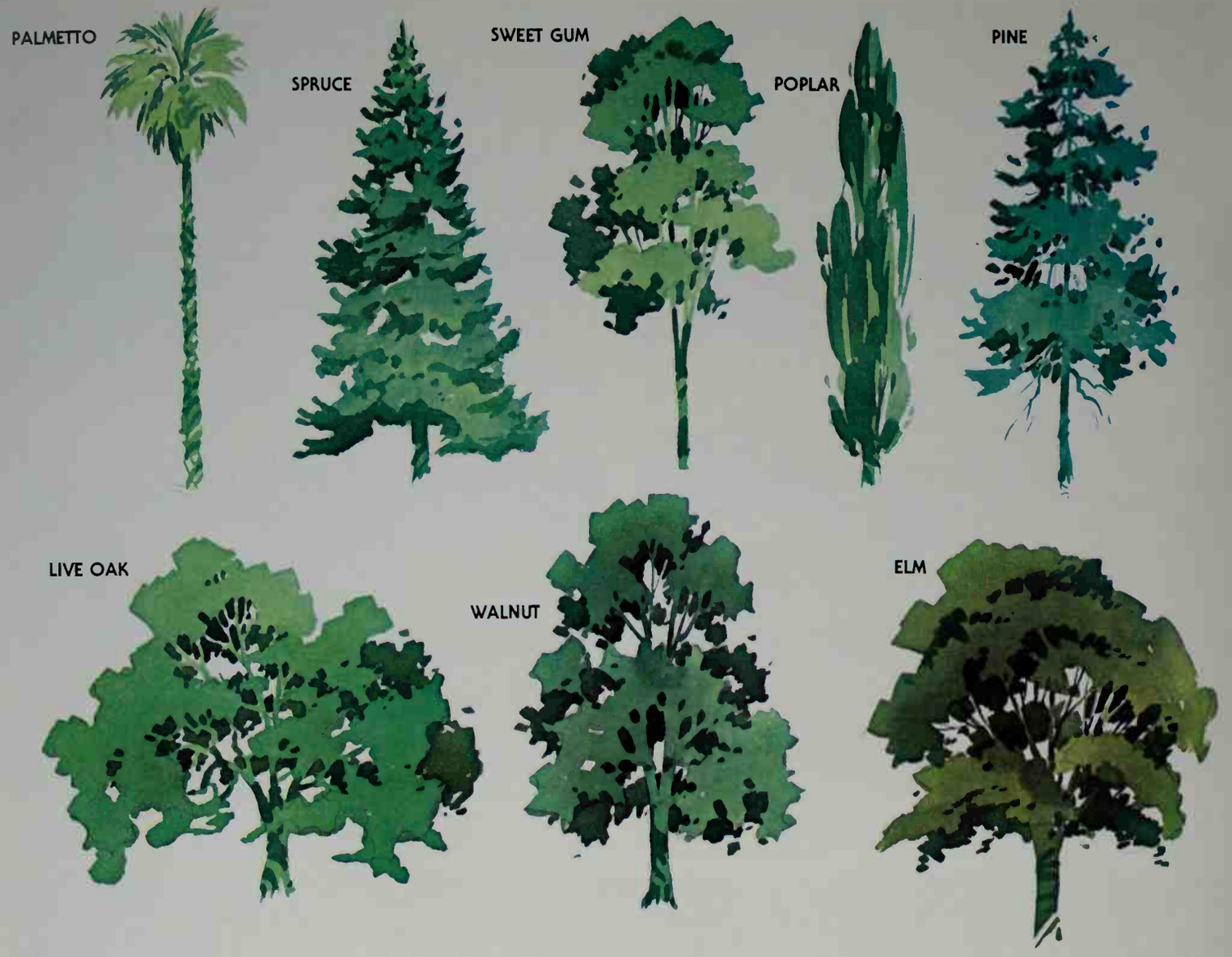
V-GROOVE OR TONGUE AND GROOVE: This siding is planking that has a beveled edge so that when two boards are set side by side, the space between the boards forms a "v" shape.

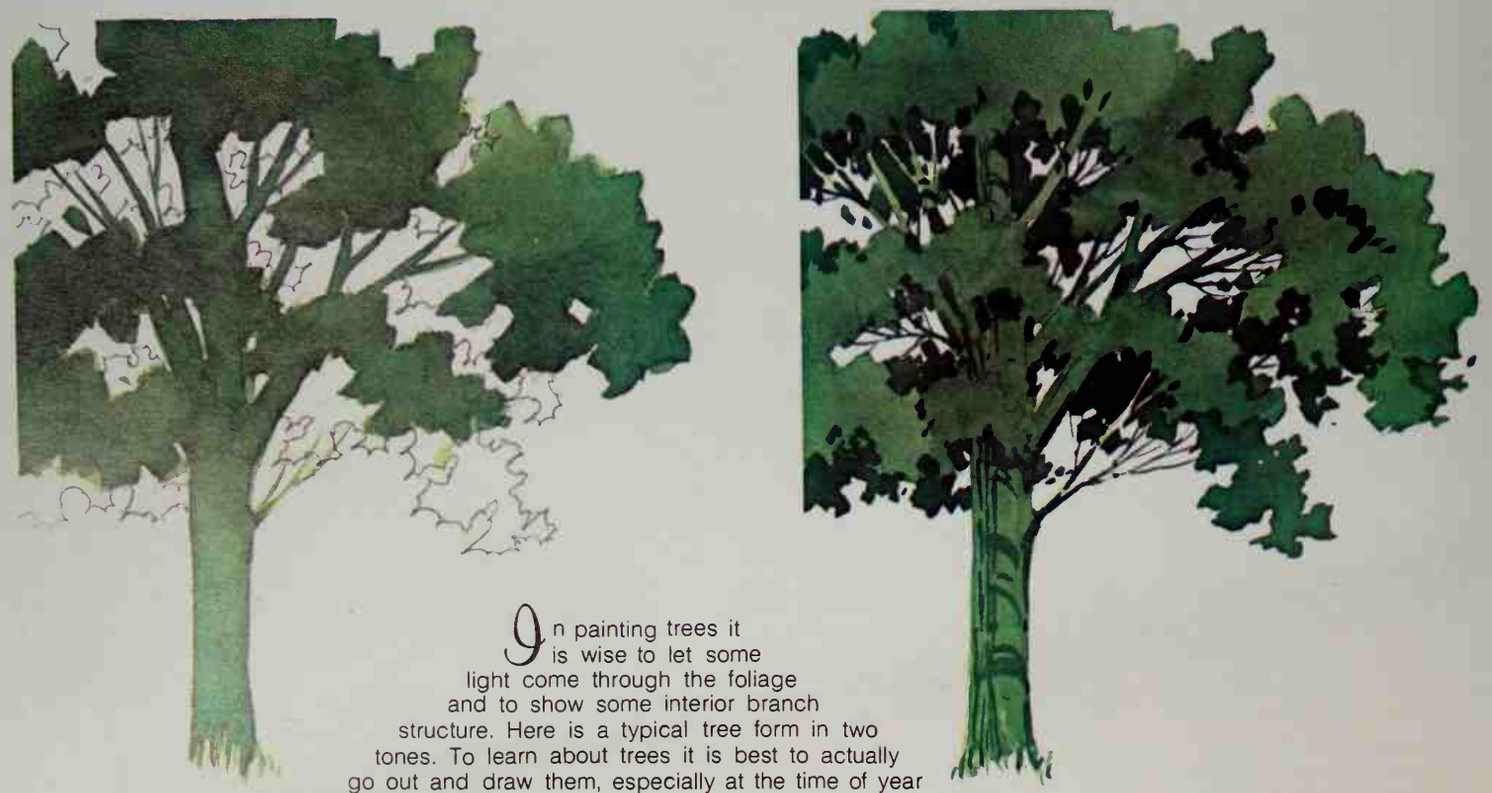




SHIPLAP: This siding is always used horizontally and is one of our oldest patterns. Starting at the bottom each board is nailed so that it slightly overlaps the board below.

ARCHITECTURAL TREE SHAPES

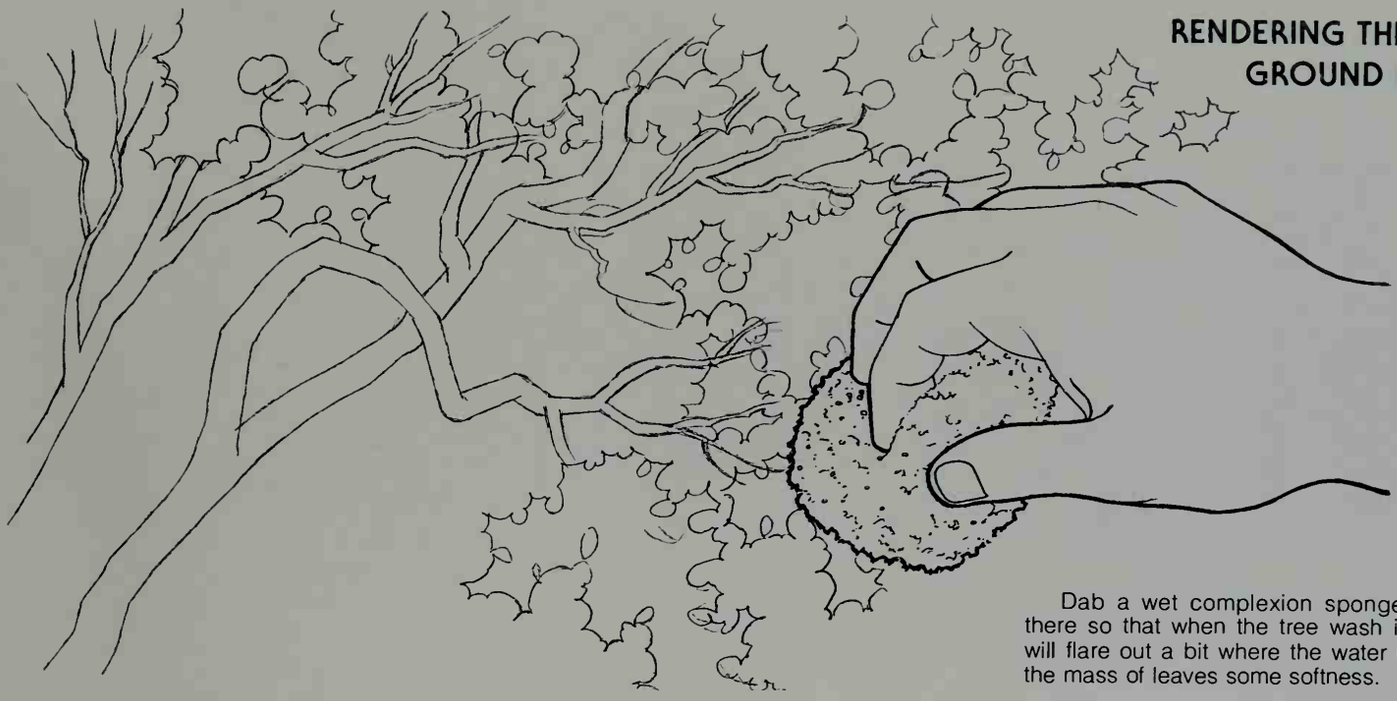




On painting trees it is wise to let some light come through the foliage and to show some interior branch structure. Here is a typical tree form in two tones. To learn about trees it is best to actually go out and draw them, especially at the time of year when the leaves have fallen and you can study the branch structure.

For more information on drawing trees refer to Walter Foster Book #3, How to Draw Trees, and #55, More Trees.

RENDERING THE FOREGROUND BRANCH



Dab a wet complexion sponge here and there so that when the tree wash is laid on it will flare out a bit where the water is and give the mass of leaves some softness.

After the first foliage wash has been put on add the main branches and pencil in the areas for the darker foliage that is in shadow.

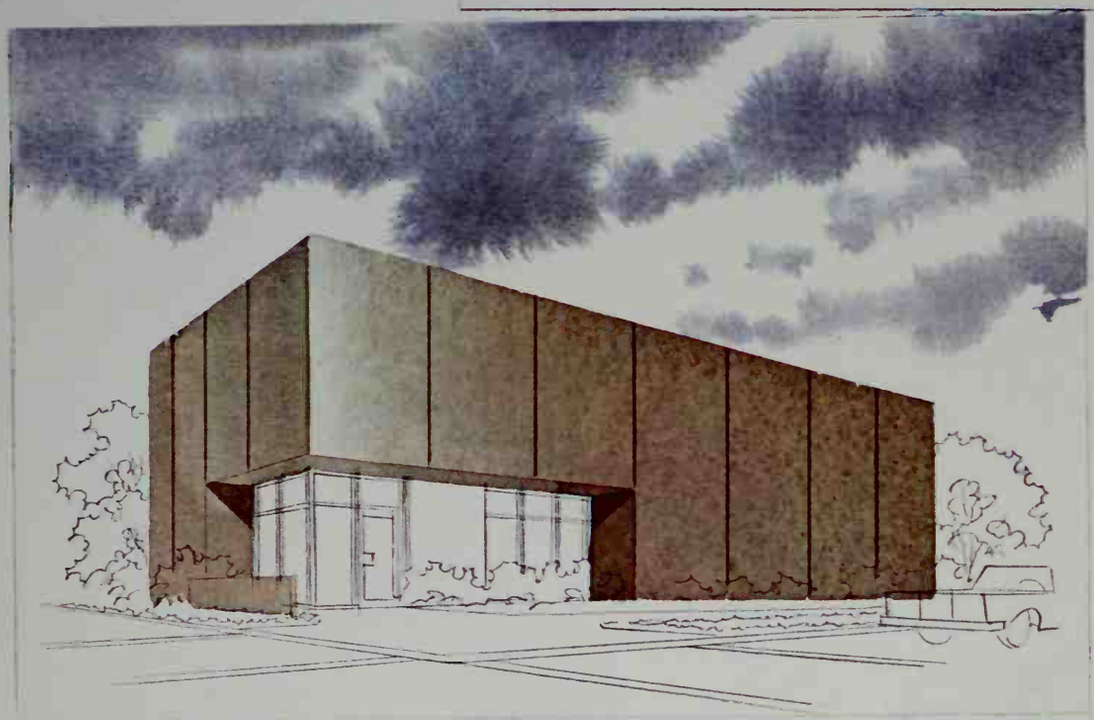
Paint in the darker foliage and darks on branches. Put darks in where they will add definition to the tree structure. Little branchlets should be added with a finer brush. Note the foreground tree branches in the finished renderings in this book.

The residence portrayed on this page has a variety of textures, wood siding, plaster, brick, shingles, shutters, glass, etc. The clean, straight detail such as the window trim and facia boards give it a fresh, crisp look.

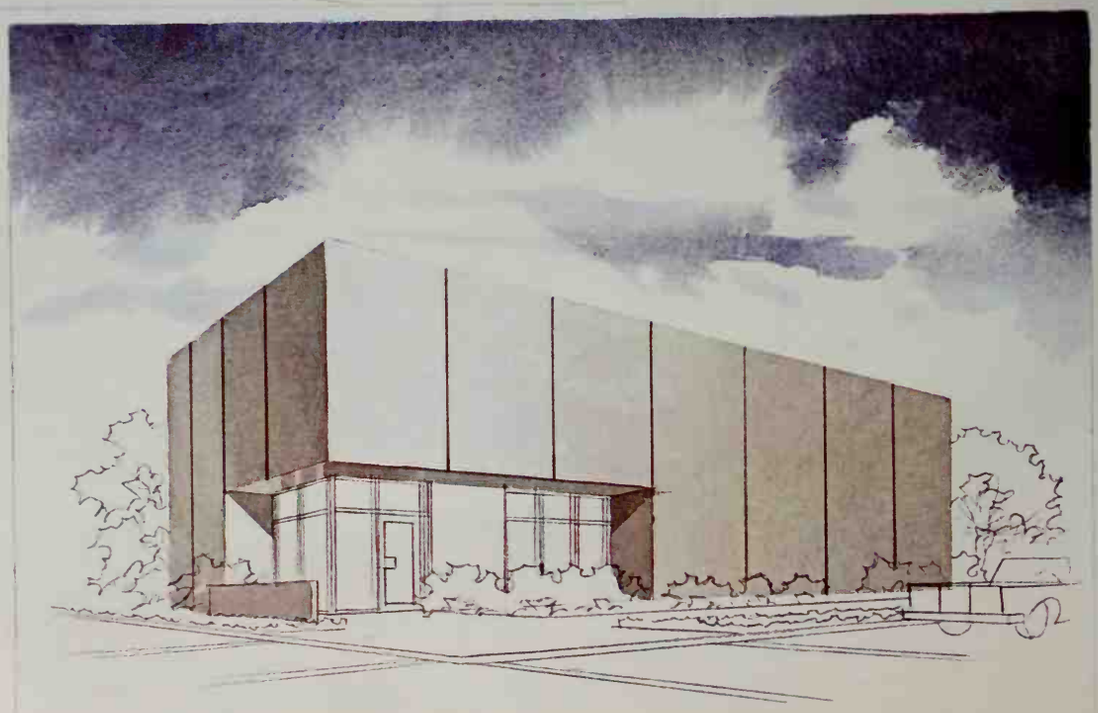
A mixture of landscape elements frame and enhance the structure. Split lighting was used with the sun shining down from the front and left corners of the building.

HOW SKIES HELP TO DEFINE THE BUILDING

On this example a light building is silhouetted against a dark sky. It is a perfect solution for a light building with no huge background trees. A poor solution would be example #3 in which the sky doesn't help the building to "read" at all.



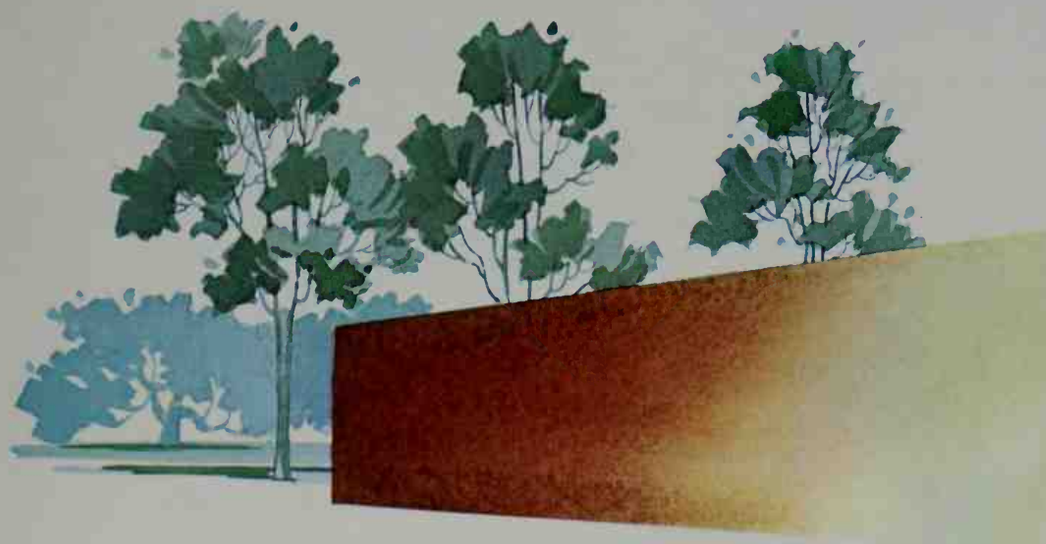
A dark building is already defining itself without any help from the sky. Keep the darker parts of the sky high and away from the dark building and let it just add to the atmosphere of the rendering.



This is an example of what you should not do. However, this can still be saved by re-wetting the area around the building and flooding in some darker sky wash. Remember, with watercolor the washes usually dry much lighter than they look when they are wet. Experience will teach you how to judge this.

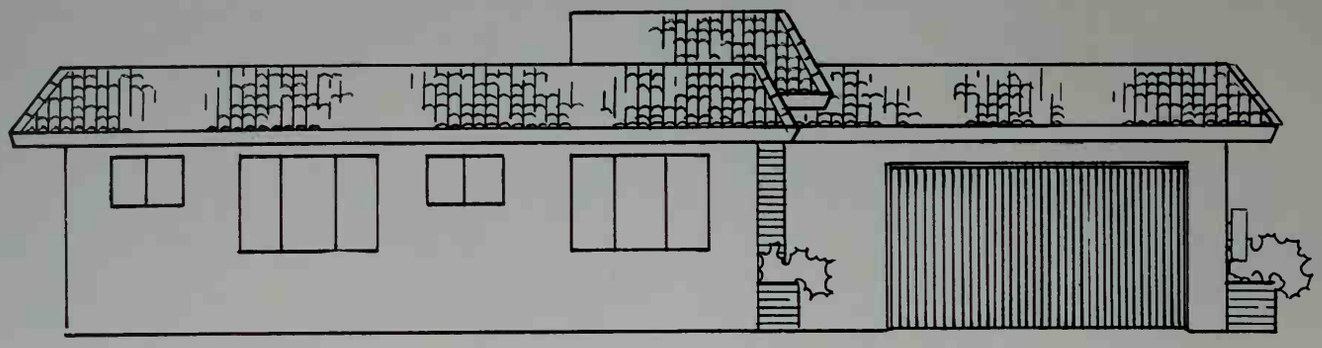
HOW BACKGROUND TREES HELP TO DEFINE THE BUILDING

As the building wash lightens, the background trees should be dark to define the building. When the building is dark, the trees should be light and out of the way.



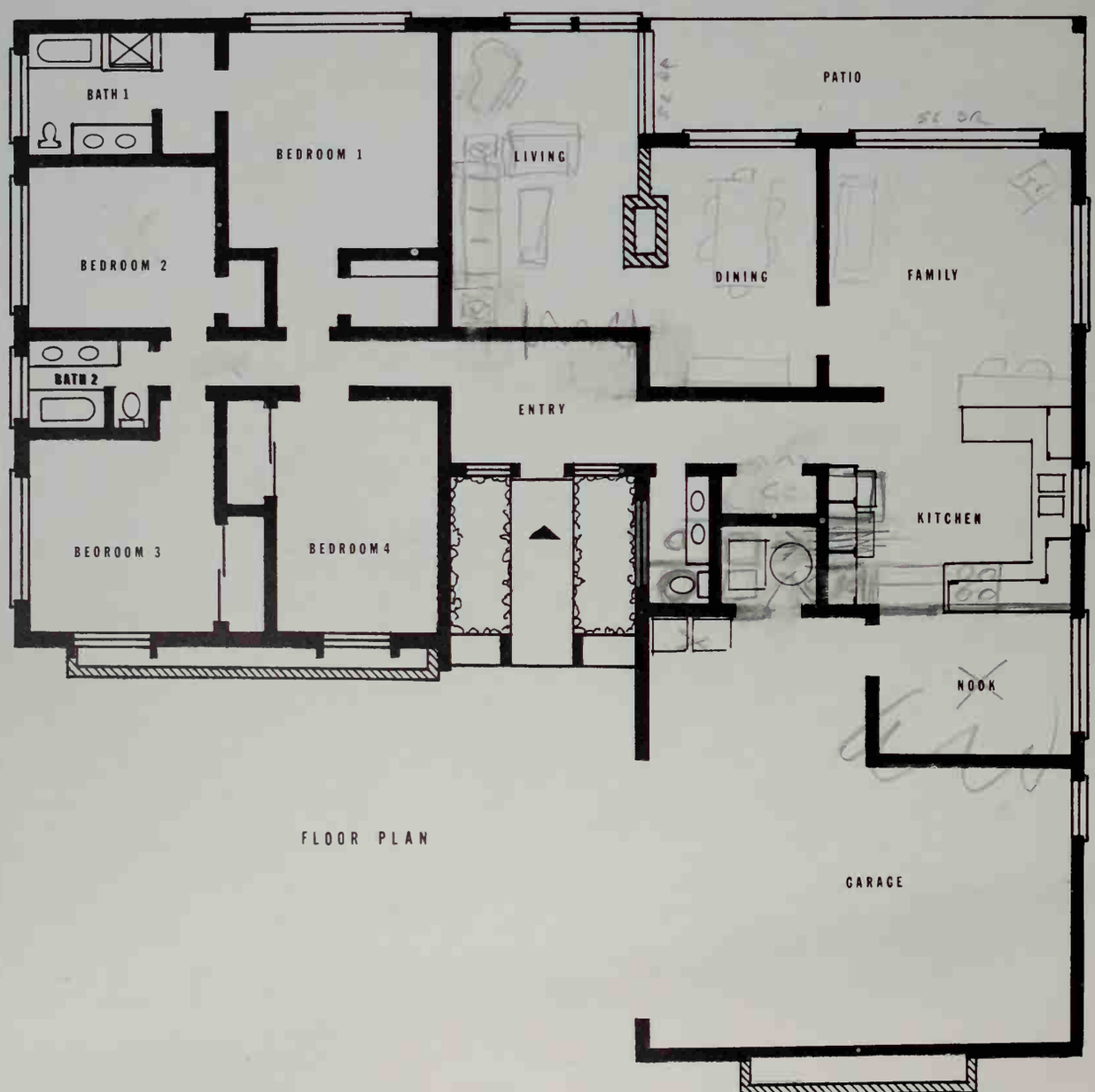
Notice in this aerial view how clusters of trees and their cast shadows define the edges of the light mass of the building. The pebbly texture on the roof was made by dipping a toothbrush slightly into a darker wash and flicking the bristles with the thumb onto the roof. Needless to say, you should mask off the entire background so you won't get any spray on it.

LESSON 2 . . . A Residence



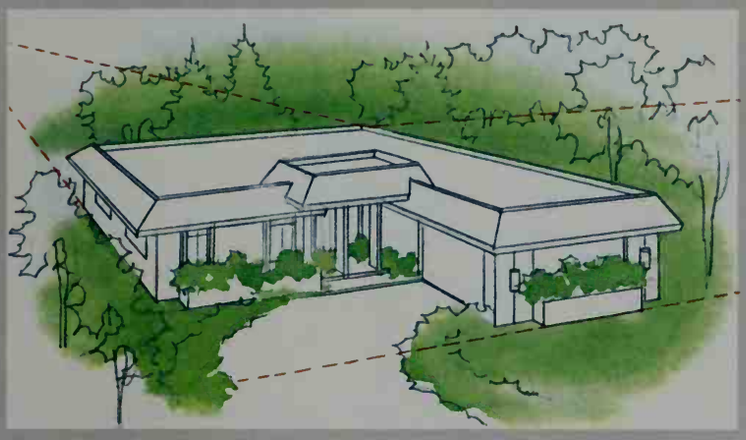
LEFT SIDE ELEVATION

FRONT ELEVATION



FLOOR PLAN

VIGNETTED AERIAL VIEW OF LESSON TWO

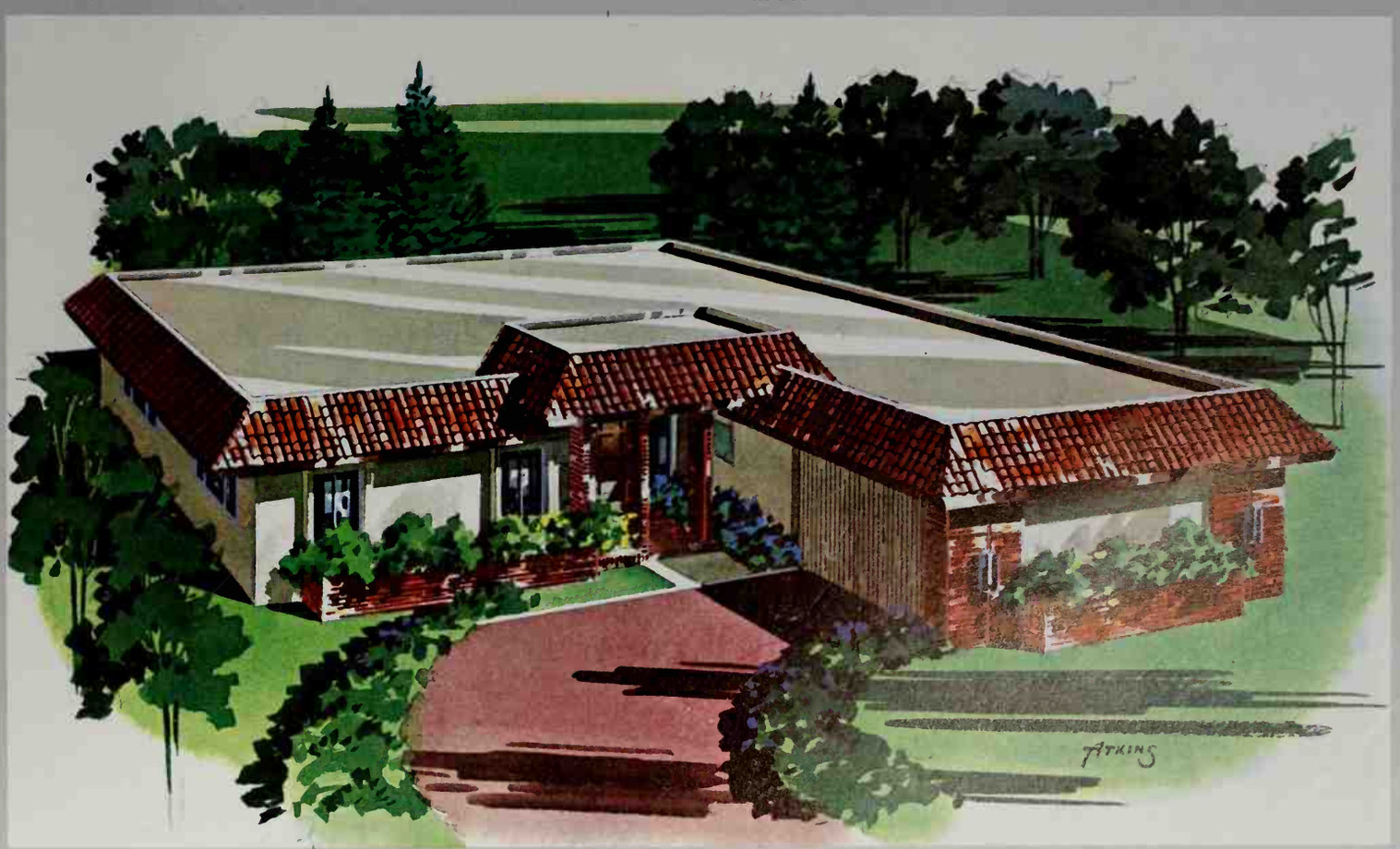


Mask off building. Wet board and lay on lawn washes.

Pull off tape; lay basic washes on building and driveway

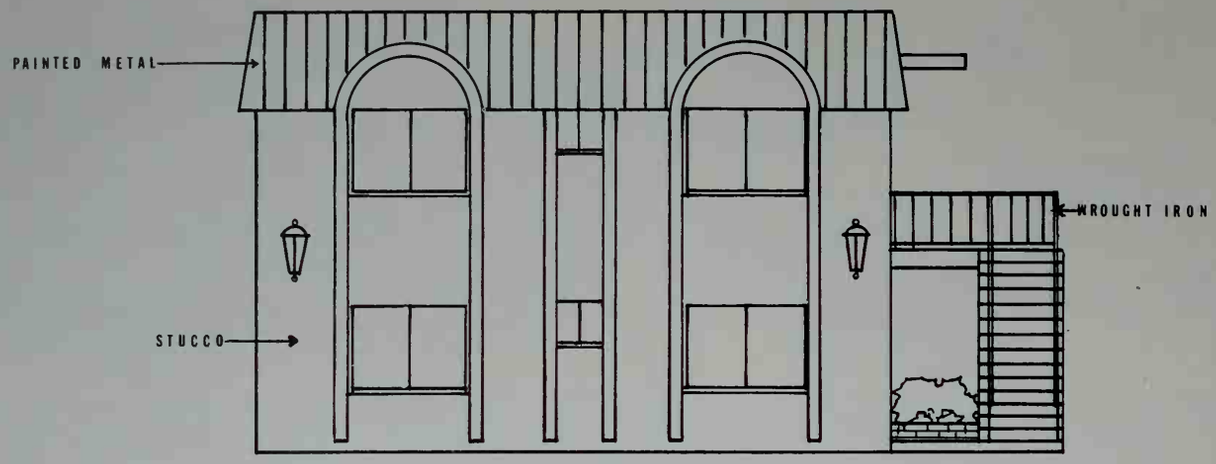
Add second washes to background areas. Trees and shrubs defined. Shadows on the building are darkened and the windows are started.

The background trees are started as is the detail on the building. Cast shadows from the house and the bushes are added.



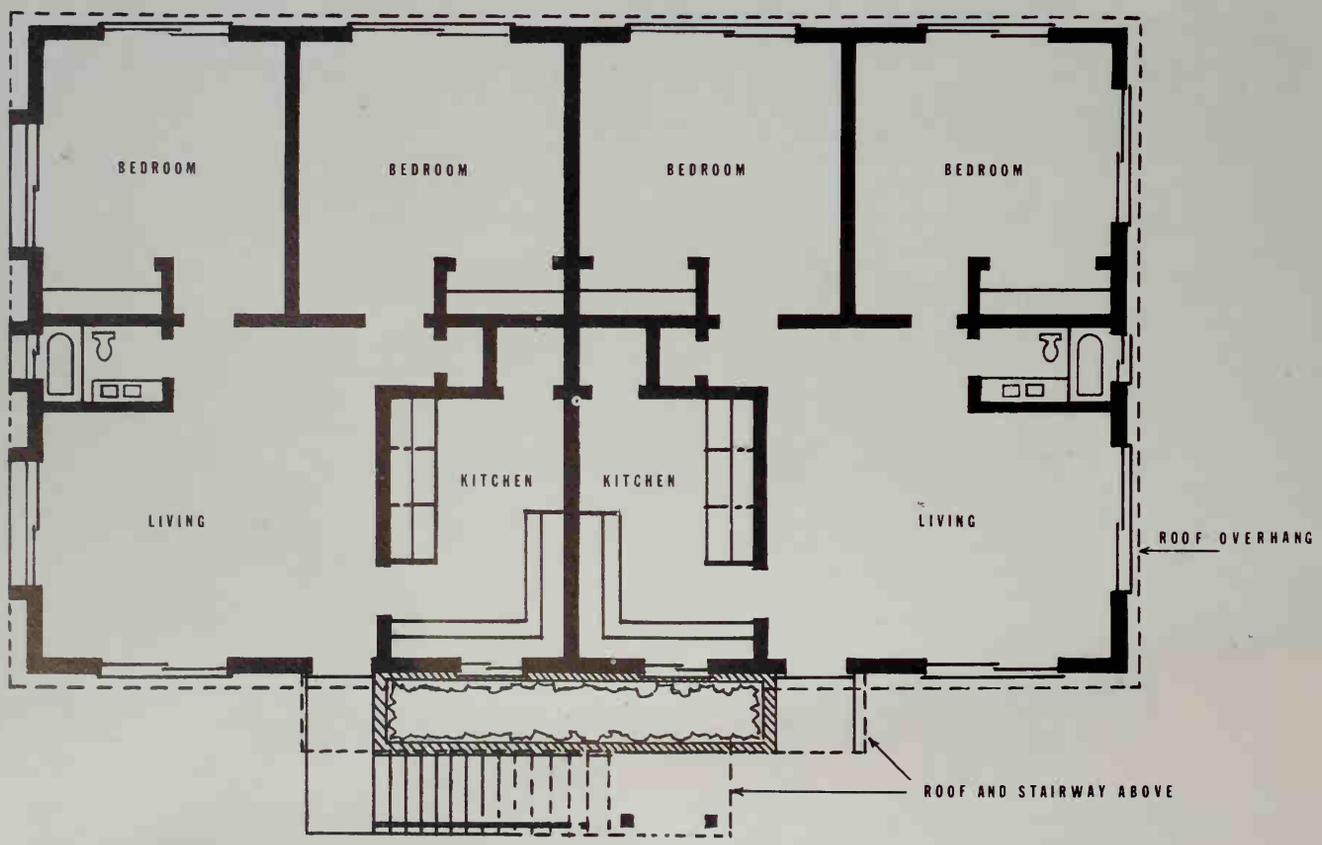
Finish up by detailing foliage and trim on the house. A couple of foreground shadows from trees that are not in the picture area help to balance the darks and lights and frame the residence.

LESSON 3 . . . A Four Unit Apartment House



FRONT ELEVATION

RIGHT SIDE ELEVATION



Tape off building and lay in sky and street wash.

Add basic landscape washes and the second wash over street area.

Start background trees and progress with landscaping in the foreground. Some good light patterns can take the place of foreground objects.

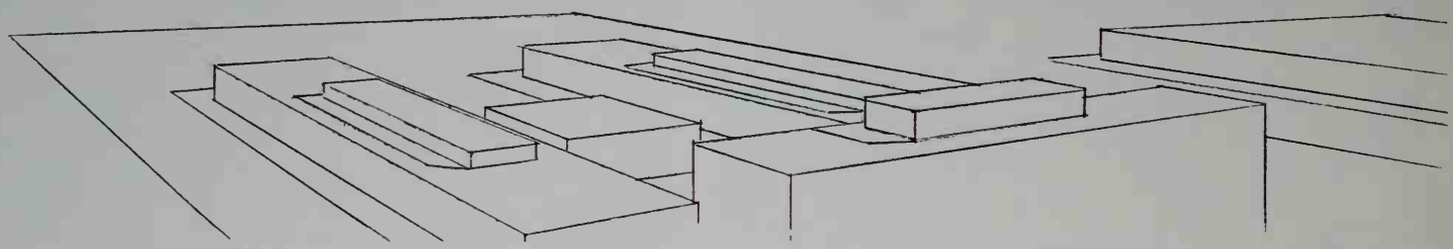
Start the shades and shadows on the building and put in the basic building washes.

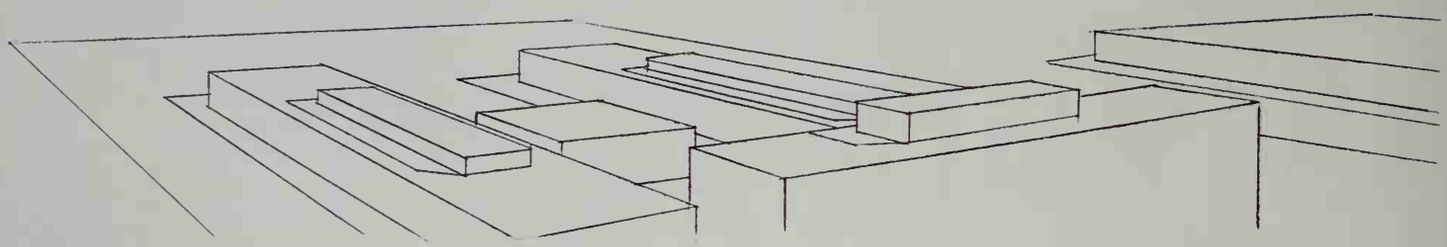
Detail both the building and landscape areas and the rendering is complete.

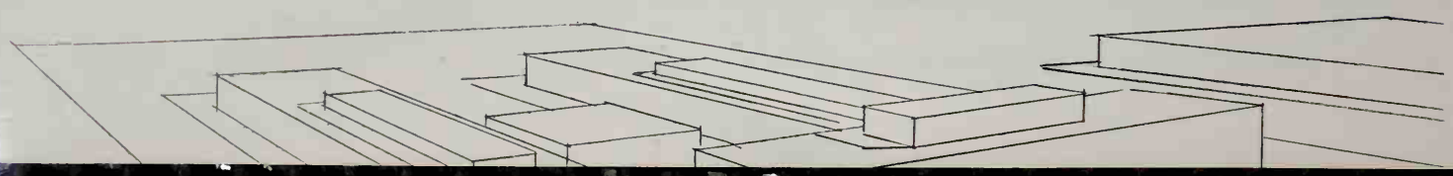
BACKGROUND MOUNTAINS

In drawing mountains work out a good composition first with light areas, and areas well defined. Get a direction for the dark areas to go, usually down from the top at an angle, either to the right or left. The background mountain is usually just two tones, the main overall wash and a darker wash to give it form.

Keep the bottom of the mountains soft so that you may put trees in front of them without a harsh baseline showing through. Mountains tend to get bluer and less contrasty with distance but they can be brown, green or many other colors. See some of these in a few of the finished examples and start observing mountains with an artist's eye for shape and form.

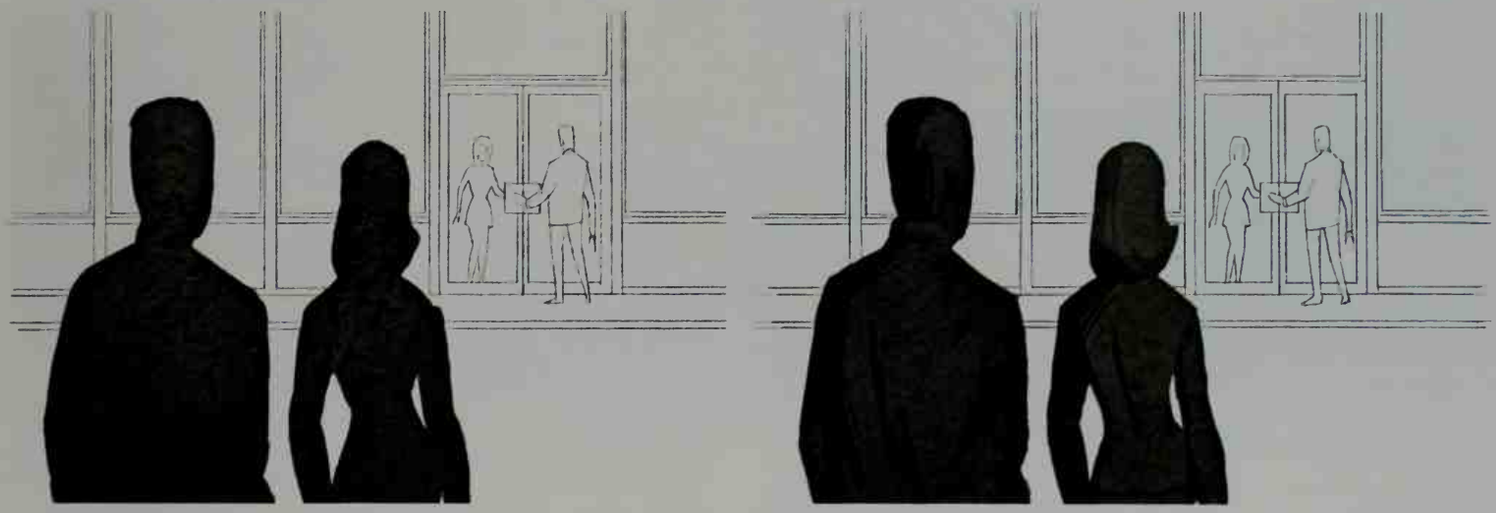




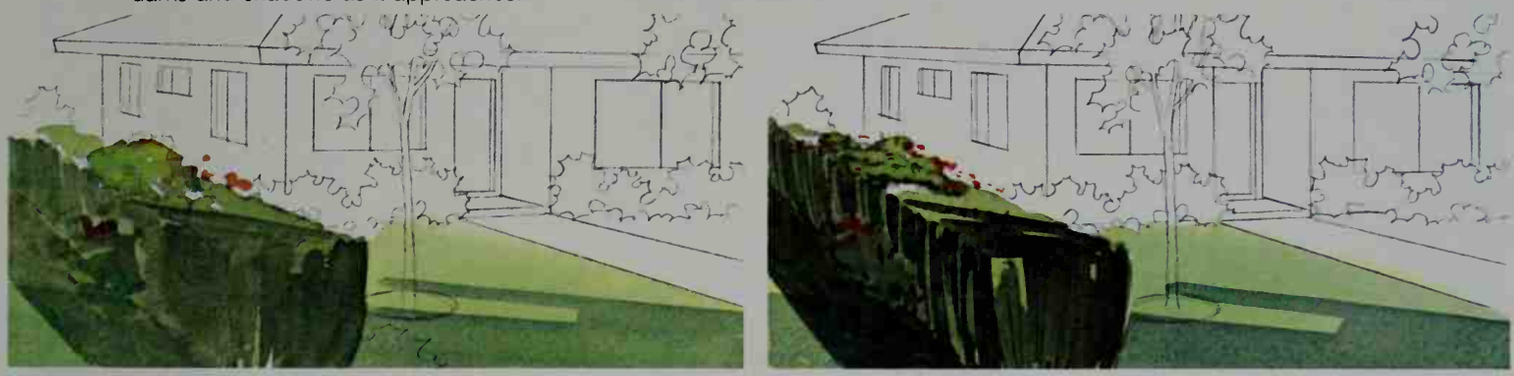


SOME FOREGROUND OBJECTS

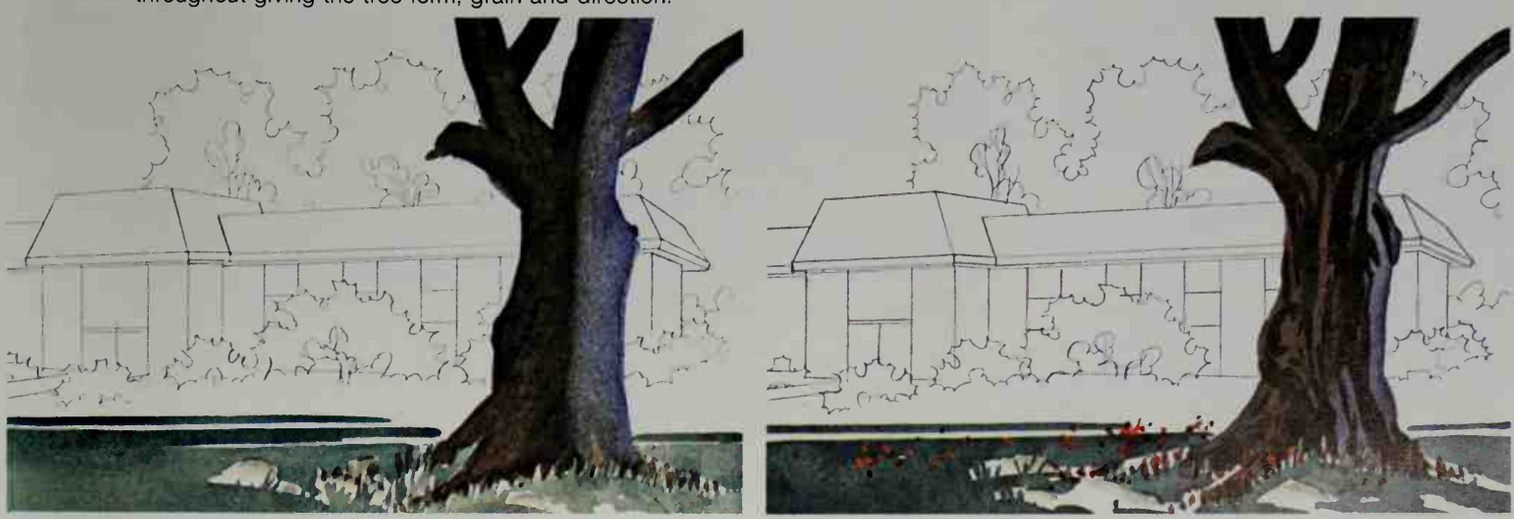
The importance of the dark foreground as far as a rendering is concerned is to "frame" the subject matter and keep it as the center of attraction. Foreground objects also should enhance the rendering and give it a feeling of depth.



The foreground **HEDGE** is actually coming at us from the background and middle ground. It picks up foreground darks and shadows as it approaches.



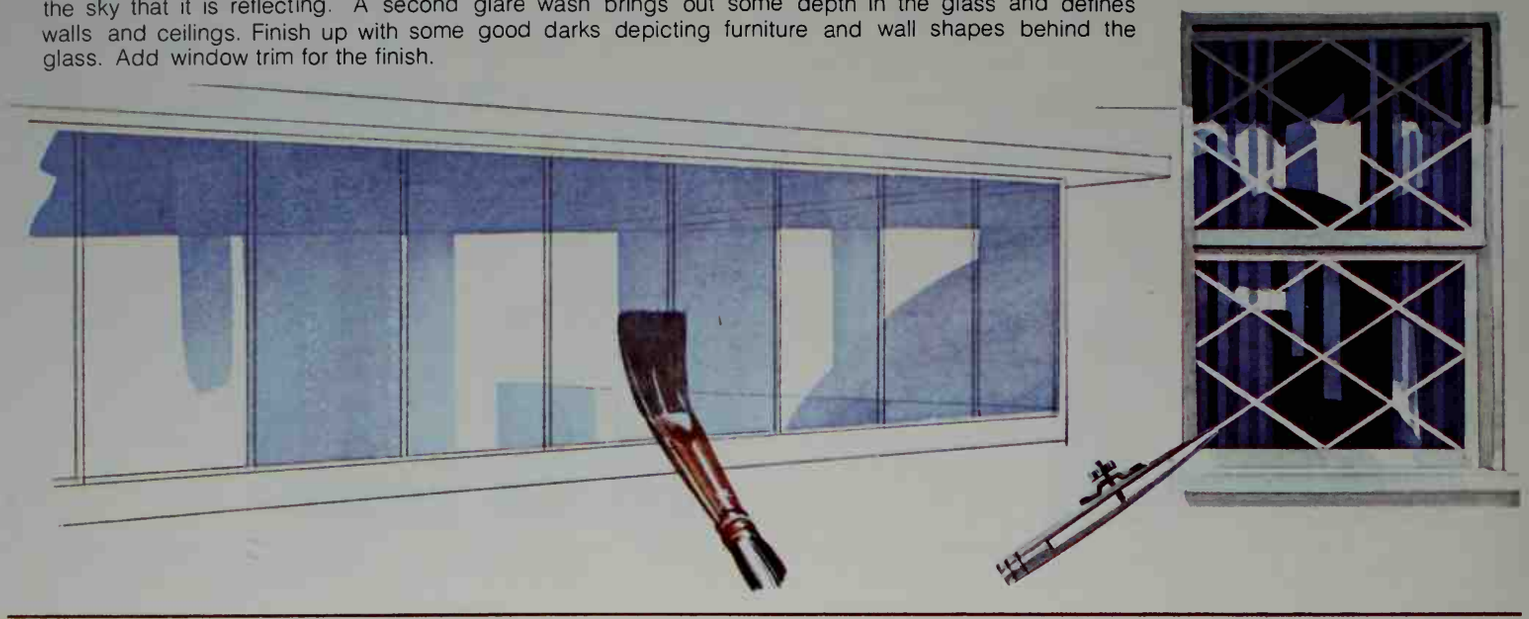
The foreground **TREE TRUNK** begins dark but with a reflective light on the shade side. A darker wash is added throughout giving the tree form, grain and direction.

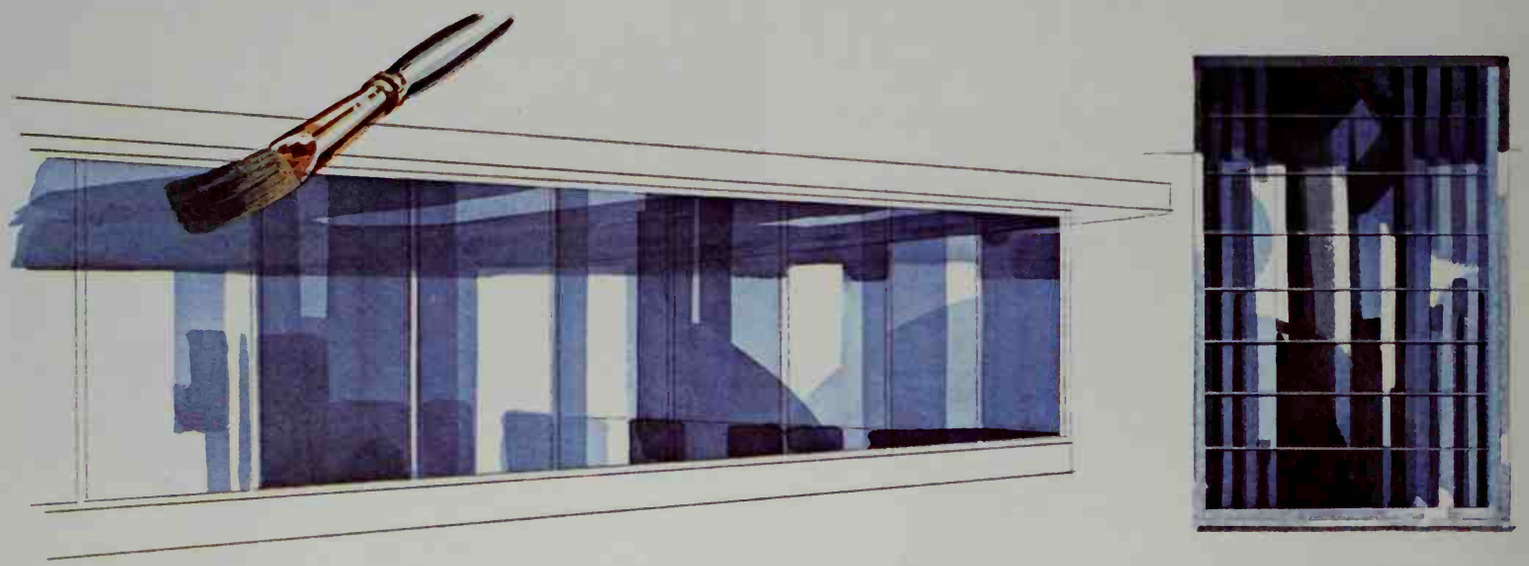


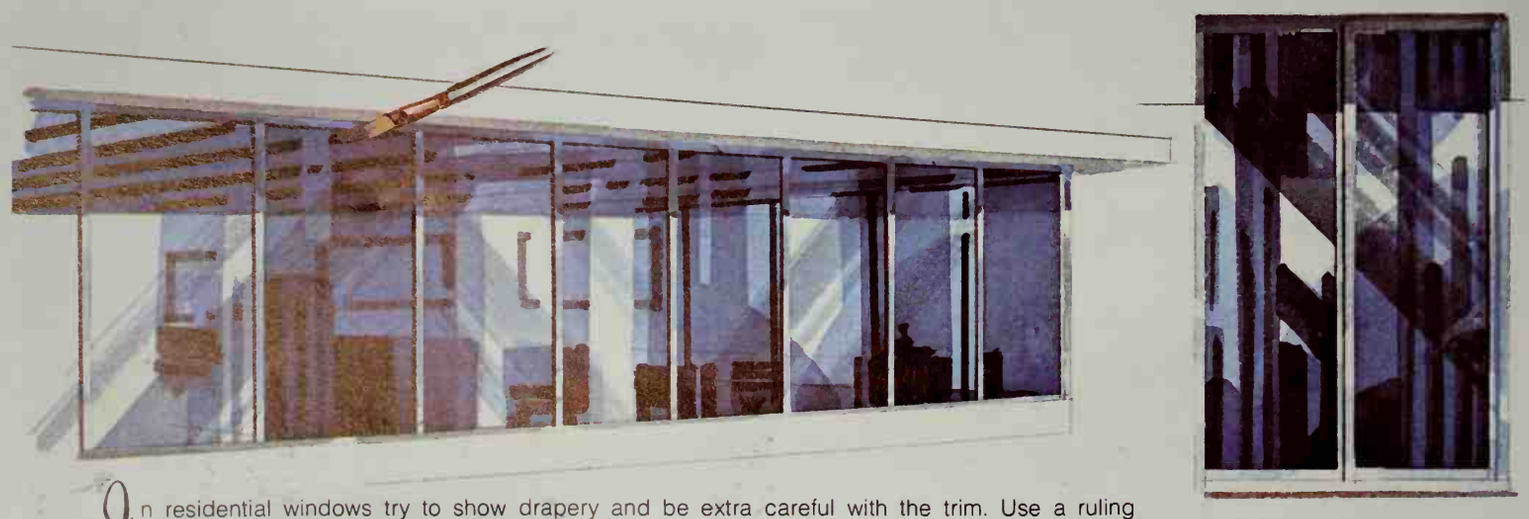
ROCKS AND BUSHES are good foreground objects and help to keep the rendering from looking too "formal". A few toned-down flowers should lend a bit of excitement to a dark foreground area.

HOW TO RENDER GLASS

Rendering large glass areas is one of the biggest challenges in the rendering profession. The glass color depends on two things: **1:** The actual color of the glass itself. **2:** The color of the sky that it is reflecting. A second glare wash brings out some depth in the glass and defines walls and ceilings. Finish up with some good darks depicting furniture and wall shapes behind the glass. Add window trim for the finish.

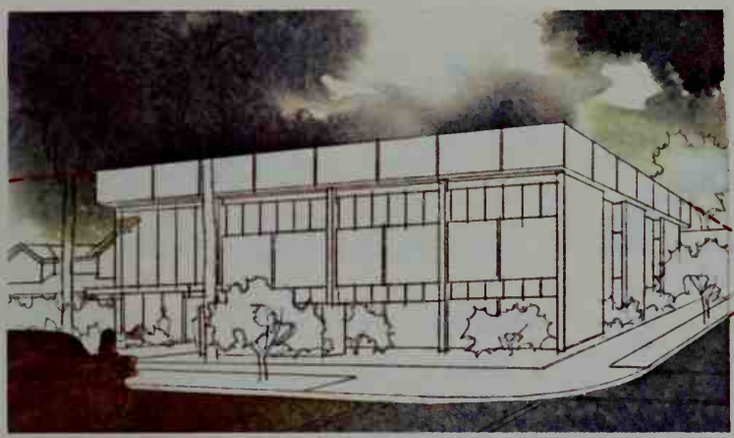






On residential windows try to show drapery and be extra careful with the trim. Use a ruling pen for trim-lines. Here are three of the most common windows: **1:** The double hung. **2:** Louvered glass. **3:** Sliding glass or casement. Both look the same in the renderings.

OFFICE BUILDING



Mask off the top of the building with clear tape and lay in the sky wash. While the sky is drying, mix up two washes (French Ultramarine Blue with a touch of Van Dyke Brown and one Van Dyke Brown with a touch of French Ultramarine Blue). **Make plenty of each.** Use two brushes, one for each wash. After masking off the sidewalk and curb, wet the street well with a sponge, and while still wet, lay in first the brown wash on the left carrying it to about midway through the length of the street then start the wash on the other side. Tilt board from side to side until the washes fuse into one soft graded wash.

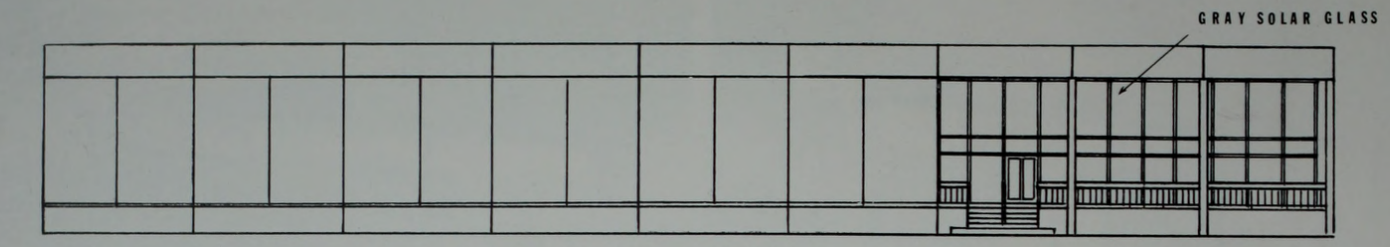
Add more pigment to each wash and lay in another darker tone on the street using some directional lines. The foreground figure should be dark but avoid the car this time. Peel off the tape and lay in sidewalks, grass and a few of the lighter shrubs. Catch some car detail at this time.

Tape around building and lay in main washes.

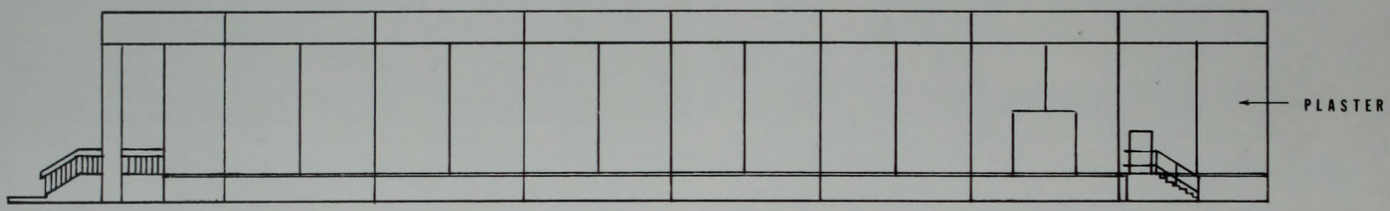
Remove tape and put in preliminary background washes on trees, buildings and shrubs. The glass area on the building should now be started.

The finish includes: darker tones in glass area, linework on the building, darks in the foreground and background landscape, and also in the car, figure and background building. Addition of other small figures and linework on the sidewalk and safety zone lines in the street.

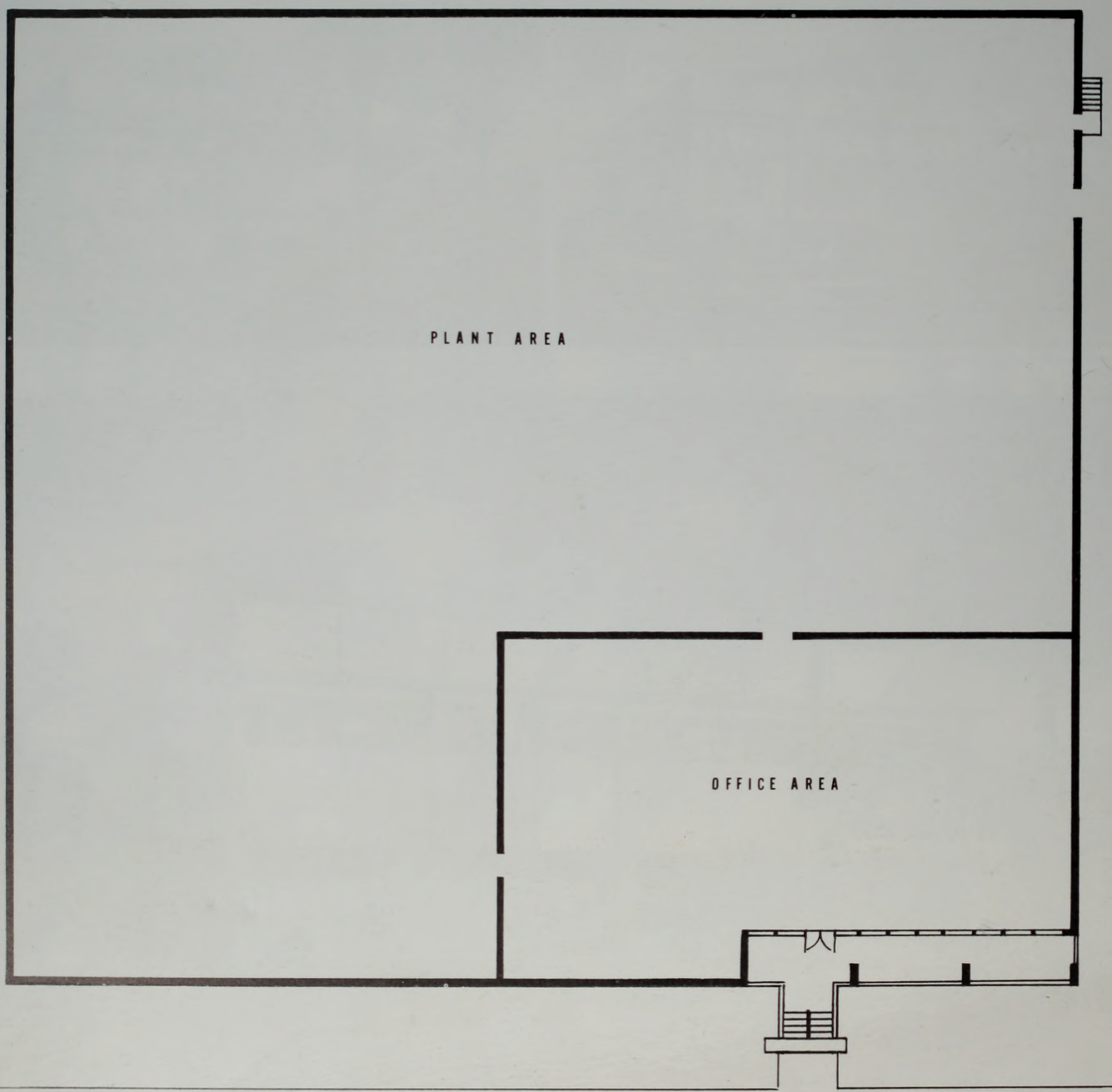
LESSON 4 . . . A Small Industrial Building



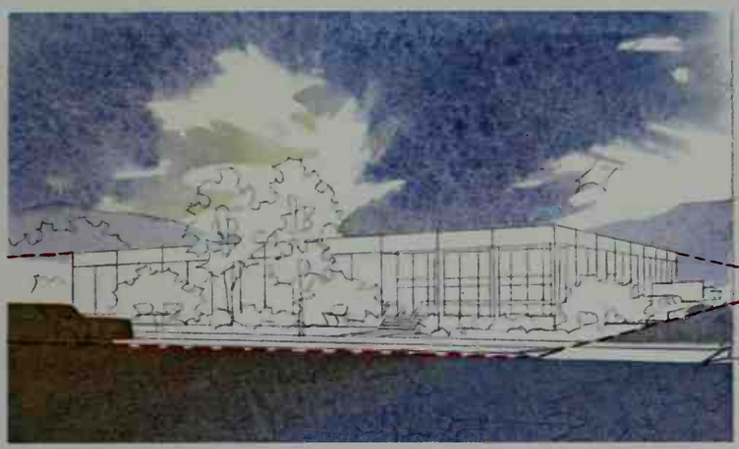
FRONT ELEVATION



RIGHT SIDE ELEVATION



LESSON 4 . . . A Small Industrial Building



Trace building on watercolor board and after taping off building, lay in the sky wash and the street washes. The mountains in the background can be started.

The mountains are finished and the background trees started. The first washes are started on the lawn and walks. Darker tones in the street define the direction of the traffic. Paint in the first wash in the car windows.

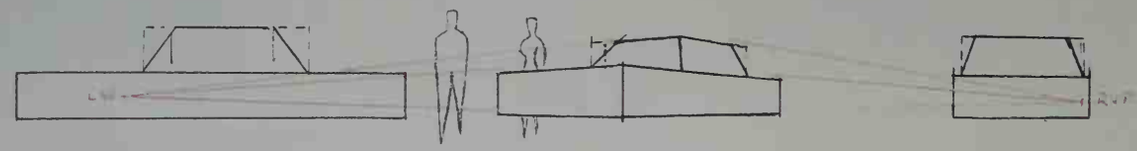
Second washes on lawn and walks make them complete. First building washes are started, along with the foreground bushes.

The darker interior glass tones all added and the trees started.

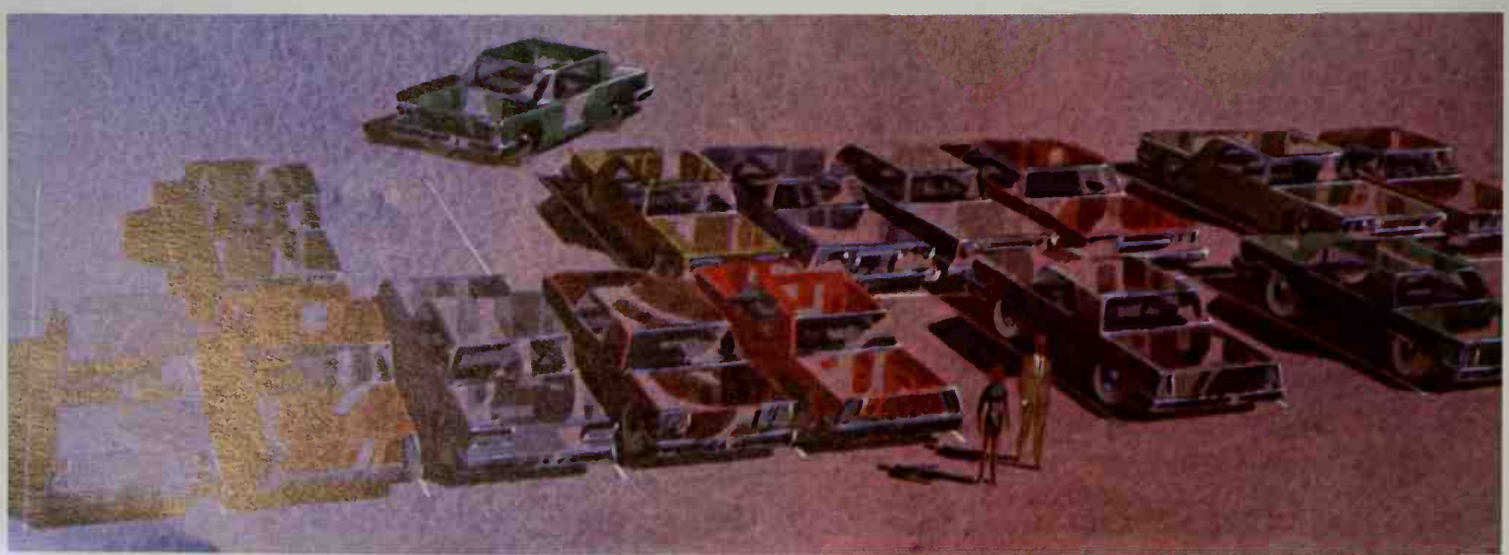
Finish up landscape and detail on building. Get some color with a few people and some flowers. Frame it up with a foreground branch.

THE ARCHITECTURAL AUTO

Think of a car as two boxes, one atop the other. They have to follow perspective lines to vanishing points the same as the buildings. Cars for architectural renderings should be nondescript otherwise they may become more important than the building. Try to keep them modern, however, and avoid too many bright colors. The two big problems with cars is keeping them in the right scale as compared to the building, and having them lie flat on the ground.

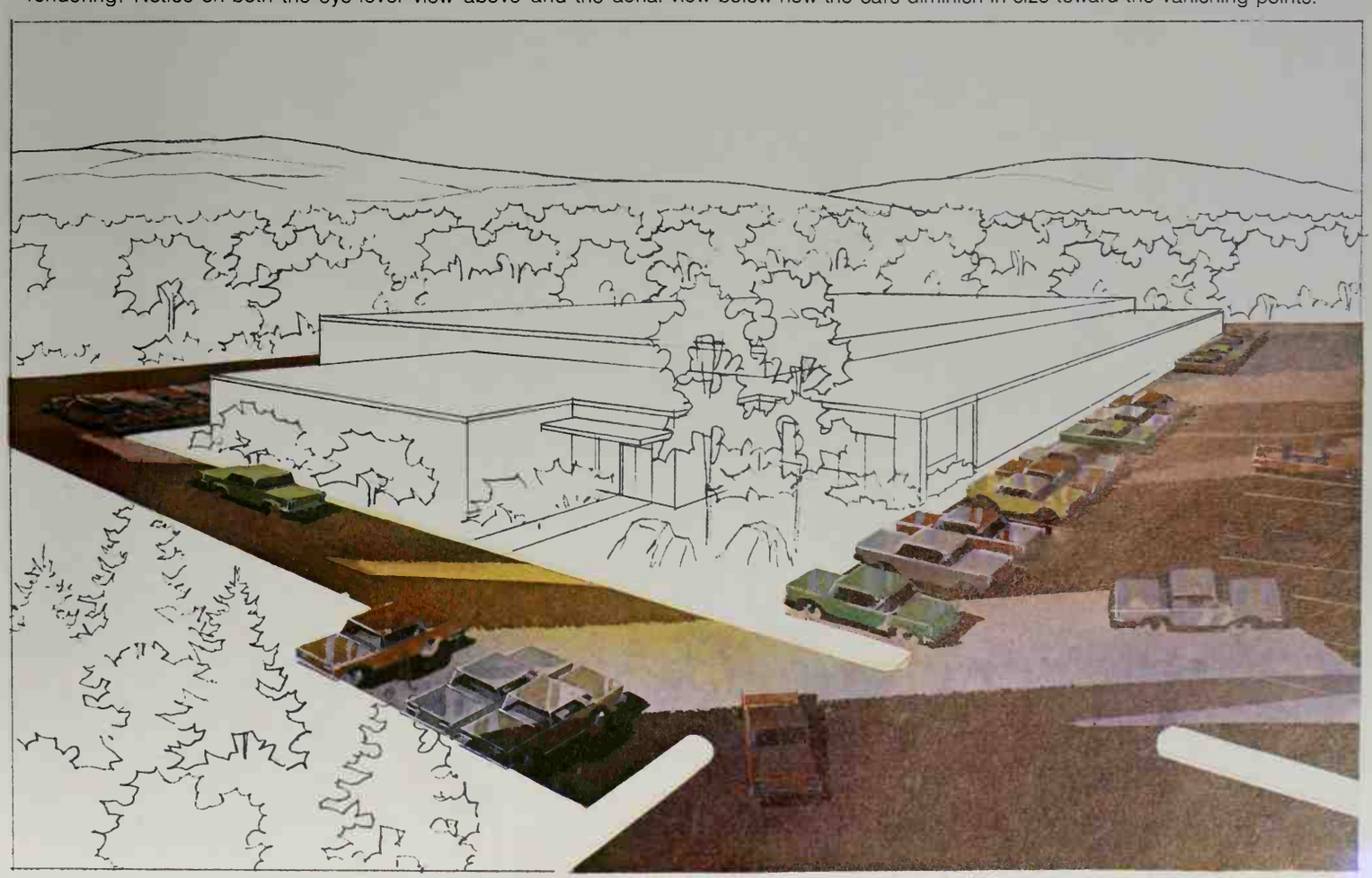


A section of a typical parking lot. Notice how the ground wash automatically dulls down the highlights on the cars and keeps them from becoming too prominent.



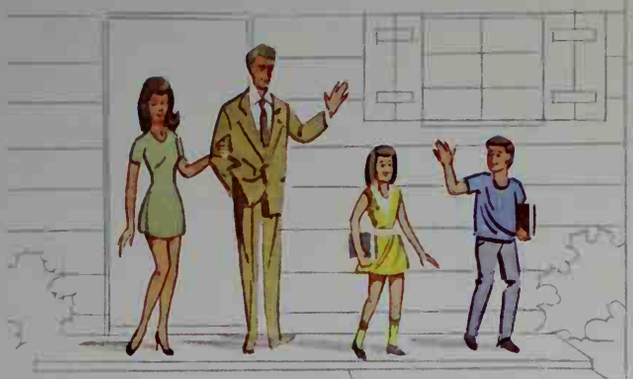
CARS IN THE ACTUAL RENDERING

The street wash is a three color graded wash and includes the cars. The windows, shadows and highlights on the cars "pull them out" but they are still subordinate to the architecture. They are good foreground objects and help to give a "busy" atmosphere to the rendering. Notice on both the eye-level view above and the aerial view below how the cars diminish in size toward the vanishing points.

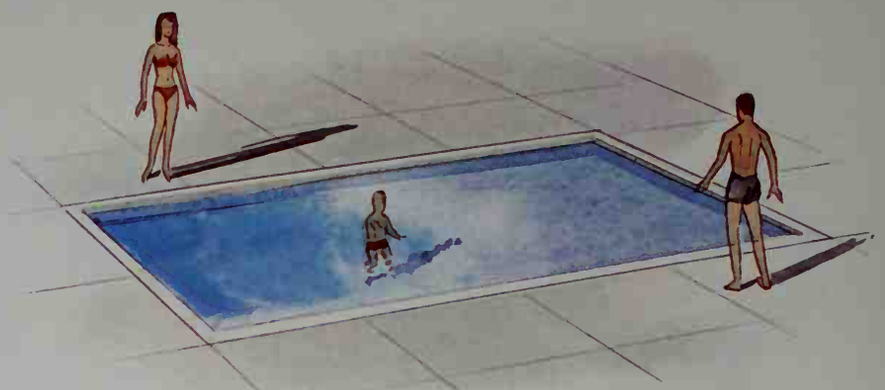


THE ARCHITECTURAL FIGURE

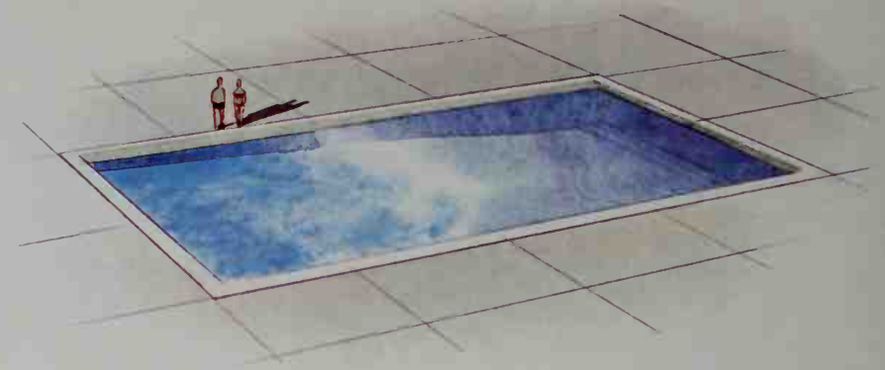
There are many styles and ways of painting a human figure for use in a rendering. Some are very realistic and detailed while others are very abstract and nondescript. I prefer a realistic figure without too much modeling. Two tones should be sufficient to do any figure. In a rendering, find the correct height of one person by scaling him to a door. Then scale all of the other figures from that particular individual. See example below. Added information can be found in Walter Foster's Book #29, Perspective Drawing.



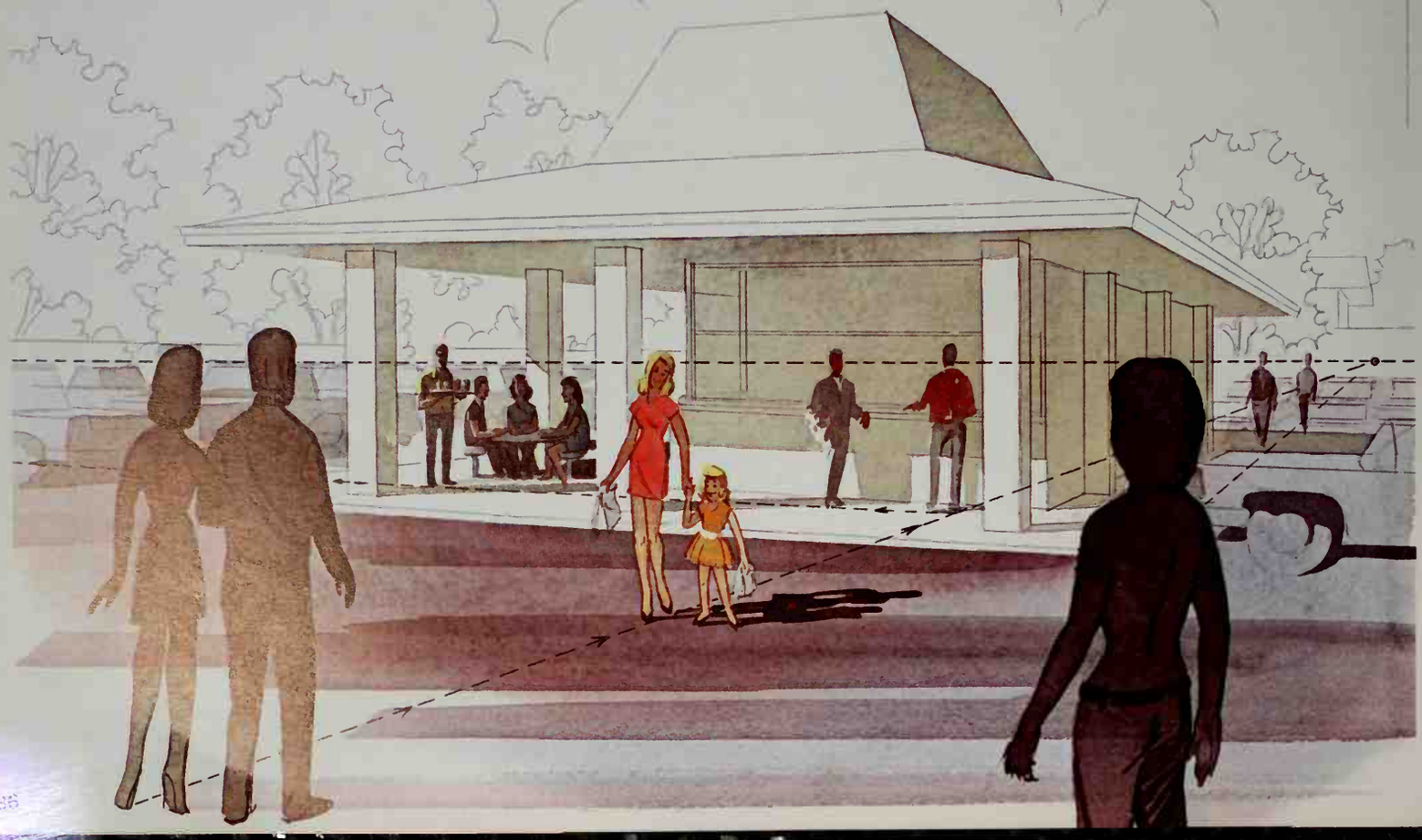
FIGURES GIVE SCALE: Above the figures are scaled against a standard 6'8" door. Below they are scaled to a standard automobile.



Here are two pools of the exact same size but the scale of the human figure makes one look like a wading pool and the other a good-sized swimming pool.



Andy Loomis, through his books, has given you who wish to know about the human figure more than any other artist. Look them over at a book or art store or at your library. Some of the titles are: **"Fun With a Pencil,"** **"Creative Illustration,"** **"Figure Drawing,"** *and* **"Successful Drawing."** *If you are unable to locate these books in your favorite book store, you may write to:* **The Viking Press,** *625 Madison Ave., New York, New York 10021. W.J.T.*



ATKINS

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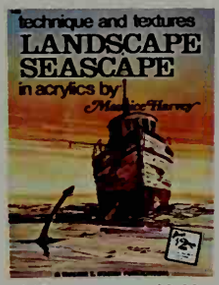

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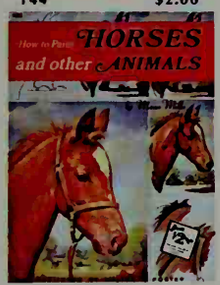

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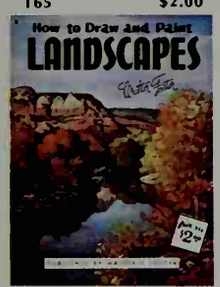

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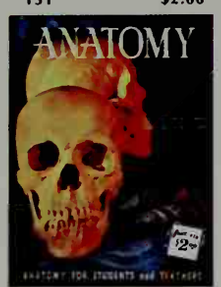

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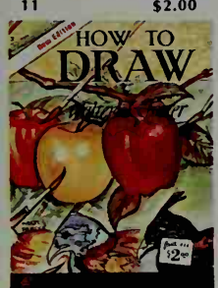

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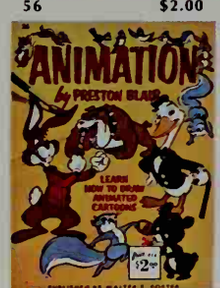

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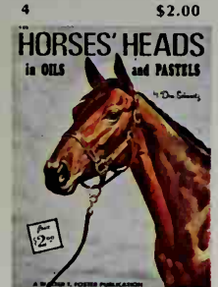

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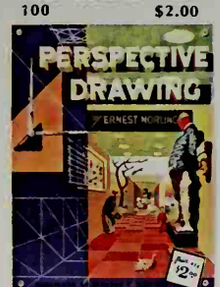

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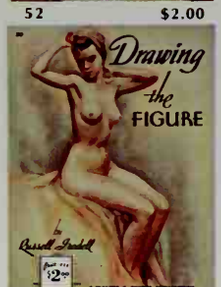

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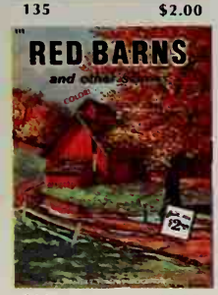

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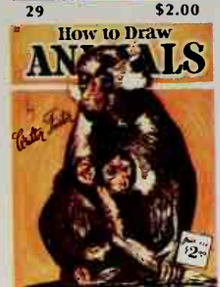

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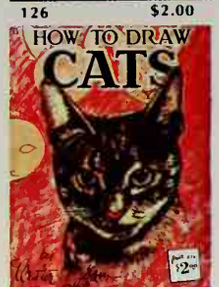

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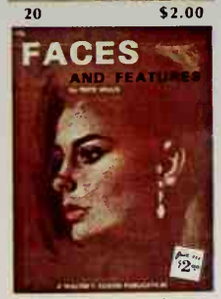

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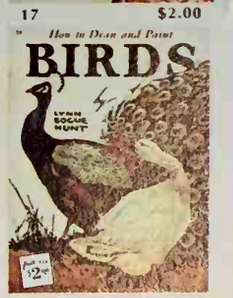

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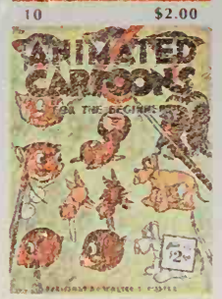

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