

# Compositional Elements

S.C. Mummert • Guest Artist



S.C. Mummert

*“Throw your heart into the picture and then jump in after it!”*

—Howard Pyle (1853–1911)  
American illustrator and author

One of my key objectives while creating a painting is to hold the attention of my audience—for as long as possible. Strong patterns of light and dark help us with that, but there is more.

For instance:

Our vision is frequently drawn to high-contrast, sharp edges, and saturated color. Consequently, placing your painting’s hardest (sharpest) edge, maybe your darkest dark against your lightest light (high-contrast) and even your painting’s strongest color at (or near) your center of interest, will often help pull the viewer’s attention there.

Norman Rockwell repeatedly purposed to place his painting’s lightest light and darkest dark near his center of interest.

Corners are often seen as opportunities for the viewer’s eye to “escape.” As a

result, you might notice compositions where an artist has endeavored to “close off” a painting’s corner through a design component.

The foreground in a piece may have a linear compositional item strategically placed there (a road, river, fallen tree, etc.) to help lead the observer up into the painting. Other “lines” within the composition can also be used to try and direct the viewer toward your center of interest.

Your painting’s audience will often “look where your painting’s characters are looking”—something N. C. Wyeth repeatedly used.

Several of the elements I’ve been trying to describe have been highlighted in the painting below to illustrate my points.

## About the Author

S.C. Mummert is an oil painter and a regular contributing writer for *Fine Art Views*. He is best known for his romanticized vision of the American West. Trained to paint by a commercial artist at a young age, Mummert later received one-on-one instruction from Tom Ryan and John Asaro.

Regardless of the time period he’s portraying, adventure and optimism are recurrent themes found in his work. Like Rockwell and Sundblom before him, Mummert’s paintings regularly offer us a world filled with an infectious enthusiasm and confidence to overcome.

Visit his website at [scmummert.com](http://scmummert.com).



*East Meets West*, S.C. Mummert  
Oil on canvas, 40" x 60"

