

Buildings and Structures

Welcome to this audio guide for looking at paintings. This guidance is for looking at any of the paintings in our Buildings and Structures gallery.

The guide will help you notice details and points of interest, and explore the mood and composition of the painting.

Let's start with the painting itself. What do you think of it? Does it seem realistic to you, maybe like a photograph, or more stylised? Would you describe it as expressive, as if recording the atmosphere and mood of a place, or is it more objective, like a careful and detailed record of a scene?

Can you see any brushstrokes? You may be able to zoom in without losing detail so have a go. How would you describe the brushstrokes if you can see them? Are they smooth or rough?

What do you think of the colour scheme and the use of light in the picture? Try to describe these to yourself in a few words – for example a cool colour scheme with blues and greens, and the lighting might be overcast or muted or bright and strong.

Now let's rate the painting. So with 10 being a big thumbs-up and 1 being a big thumbs-down, on a scale of 1-10, how do you like the painting? Why do you feel as you do?

It's time now to tour around the actual buildings and structures in the picture. If there's more than one building or structure, choose one. What's it used for? Is it in good repair? Is it new? If it isn't new, how smart would you think it looked when it *was* newly built?

What materials can you see in the building or structure? Perhaps stone – if so what *colour* is the stone shown to be? If you can see more detail, can you spot brick or concrete, wrought iron work, glass, wood or steel? And looking at the rooftops in the painting, what types of materials and styles can you see here? Perhaps some of the buildings are rendered or painted - if so, what colours can you see?

What about other details? Are there windows, doors or balconies to notice? Can you see chimneys? Perhaps there are plants growing up the walls, or maybe window boxes, or gardens? If the building or structure is a bit dilapidated, maybe there are plants growing out of its nooks and crannies?

Tuning in to the wider environment in which the building is placed: what else besides the building can you see? Perhaps you're noticing that the building or structure fills up the entire canvas. Or perhaps the building is quite small, and you can see other buildings, a landscape, water or sky in the surrounding area.

What impression does the size of the building in relation to the canvas give you? So if the building or buildings are filling up the canvas, this could give a feeling of oppressiveness, or drama, or perhaps a cosy feel?

If the building is surrounded by space then how does that feel?

Just as a noticing exercise, let's think for a moment about the scale of the building. It's pretty easy for us to judge the scale of buildings in paintings – we do it without thinking, but it's interesting to just observe how this happens. What's given you that sense of scale? Doors and windows, trees, people, other buildings, experience of seeing buildings every day -these all enable us to make a really quick judgement of the scale in a picture. Our brains work so fast that we don't notice this happening.

Now let's try placing ourselves actually inside the painting, so using your imagination, visualize yourself standing at some vantage point in or on one of the buildings you can see. You could be inside a building, on a bridge, at a window or door, on a balcony or even on a roof top if you've got a good head for heights. What can you see? Does the scene look altered to you from this angle? Do you experience the picture differently now you're in it?

We've come to the end of this audio guide now, although you're welcome to spend more time looking at the painting on your own.

Next, you might like reflecting on what you most enjoyed about this brief activity so scroll down to **Wrap up your painting** to have a go at this.