

Richard Mayhew

Born 1924, Amityville, New York, US; died 2024, Soquel, California, US



Richard Mayhew grew up in New York and studied and worked with many of the great artists there, including the Spiral Group, a collective of African American artists who aimed to use the arts to fight for civil rights and racial equity in the 1960s. Mayhew became captivated by the California landscape after a cross-country road trip. He later moved to Northern California, and the views from his home near Santa Cruz inspired his colorful landscape paintings. Although he was inspired by real landscapes, the landscapes in his paintings are imaginary.



Richard Mayhew, *Delusions*, 2000; collection SFMOMA, gift of The Pamela J. Joyner and Alfred J. Giuffrida Collection; © Richard Mayhew; Photo: Katherine Du Tiel

When artists paint scenery such as trees, sky, mountains, or other views of nature, their works are called **landscapes**. Richard Mayhew, however, liked to call his landscapes “mindscapes.” He once said, “My paintings are not conscious, they’re subconscious. The landscapes are just mindscapes. They’re based on a feeling when I start to paint. And if there’s a path in my painting, I’m walking that path. So I’m inside painting out instead of outside painting in.”

Explore

What colors do you see in this work? Which is the lightest color? Which is the darkest? Which is the brightest? And which is the dullest?

Imagine you are wandering through this landscape — how would it feel? What would the temperature be—warm, cool, or somewhere in between?

How would you describe the feelings, emotions, or mood of this painting? What do you see that makes you say that?

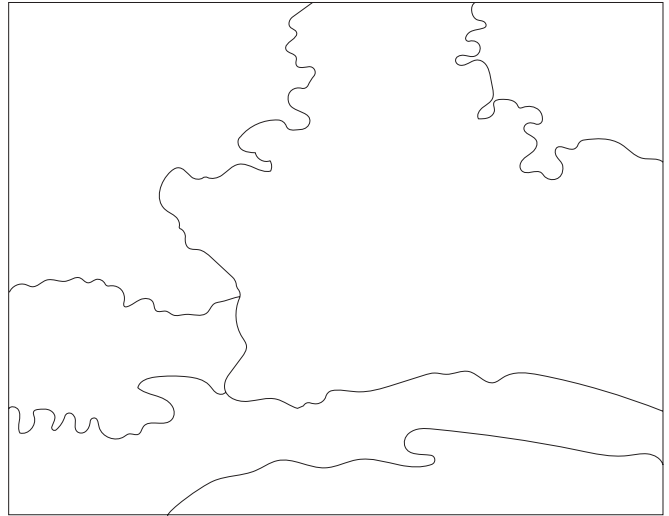
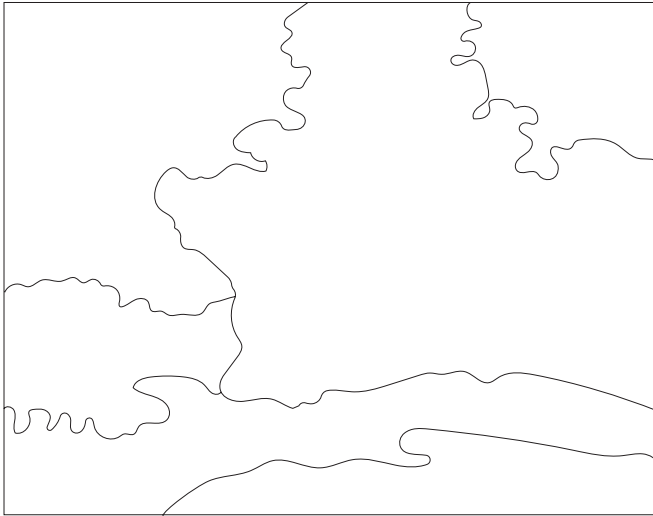
Fun Fact!

Richard Mayhew is perhaps best known for the landscapes he created using oil or acrylic paints, but he also worked with watercolors. While living in California, Mayhew often wet his paper with salt water from the Pacific Ocean before adding color. He also sprinkled salt on some of his watercolor paintings to add texture and interesting effects.

Create

When someone asked Richard Mayhew how he picked the colors for his paintings, he said, “It’s about feeling. You paint love, hate, fear.”

In the boxes below, color each landscape using various shades to show a different feeling, emotion, or mood. Will you use colors that express love? Will you create work that feels quiet or sad? What colors convey these different feelings for you?



Cover: Richard Mayhew, *Delusions*, 2000 (detail); collection SFMOMA, gift of The Pamela J. Joyner and Alfred J. Giuffrida Collection; © Richard Mayhew; Photo: Katherine Du Tiel

For more information about the artist and this work, check out sfmoma.org/artist/Richard_Mayhew

This guide is part of SFMOMA's Art Express outreach program, which is generously supported by Deborah and Kenneth Novack.

Presenting support for Education and Community Engagement at SFMOMA is provided by the Leanne B. Roberts Fund for Education.

Major support is provided by the William K. Bowes, Jr. Foundation, Randi and Bob Fisher, the Hearst Foundations, the Koret Foundation, and the Pritzker Education Fund.

Significant support is provided by Barbara & Gerson Bakar Foundation, The Coulter Family Foundation, Jung Min and Jane Kim, Deborah and Kenneth Novack, and Sarah Wigglesworth and Asiff Hirji.

Meaningful support is provided by The Morrison & Foerster Foundation, PwC, U.S. Bank, and Geoffrey and Priscilla Weber.