



*A view of Florence, about 1350 (from Bronowski, "The Ascent of Man")*



*"La Citta Ideale" (The Ideal City) by Piero della Francesca, about 1470*

The German artist Dürer made some of the best illustrations of the idea of perspective. In the following, the artist observes his subject by putting his eye at a particular location (the viewpoint) and looking through a "window" (an evenly-spaced grid of black strings tied to a wooden frame). The image of the woman as seen through that window *is* the picture, which the artist is copying onto the grid in front of him. Although a skilful, trained artist does not need an actual window to look through, or a copying grid, the *idea* of the picture being a window is fundamental to perspective. Also fundamental is the existence of a single viewpoint, so that if we want to see exactly what the artist saw then we must position ourselves at a viewpoint in front of the drawing which is identical to *his* viewpoint in front of the "window".