Kinds of Writers

So I was poking around on the FA Forums to kill a few minutes, and I ran across this 3-month-old thread about how much description in writing, which caught my attention because I'd been thinking about it lately. I thought this post by Ursa Maximus was really well put:

I think above all else, an author should stick to what they're best at. Writing engaging visual description is probably one of the harder literary skills, so for most authors, less is more. But if you stubbornly want to get deep into it, there are definitely not just two types. There aren't even just two ends to the spectrum of visual description.

None: The wolf stood in front of an office building.
The office building is not described, only named in a sentence about something else. It could look like anything. Who cares. This is not a choice to scoff at. It's the easiest way to not screw up!

Vague: The office building was grand and imposing.
The office building has just an adjective or two flavoring it. Three artists would produce three very different pictures but maybe this is all the reader needs to know. The words do double duty, offering both visual and emotional content, while the text stays light and easy to read.

Factual: The office building was three stories tall, the façade mostly glass, situated in the center of a large parking lot.
Though far from complete as a description, everyone is imagining pretty much the same thing. Sterile though, no emotional content. If this goes on for paragraphs or if you do it too often, readers are gonna die of boredom.

Evocative: The office building looked cheap, like the kind of

place you'd see on the news after a storm had torn off its roof.

No visual description is given but you can practically smell this place, with its damp air and moldy drywall. Hear the buzz of fluorescent lights. How clearly your vision comes through is a function of your skill as an author and the life experiences of your readers. So this type of description can easily miss the mark.

Metaphorical: The massive office building opened its mouth, consuming a stream of suited businessmen.
Who cares what this place looks like, it's eating people to survive, man. Abolish the wage system. Prepare for readers to roll their eyes if you ham it up too badly.

Vivid: The office building stood, majestic, inconceivably tall, its upper floors cloaked in resplendent, gossamer clouds.
You can do great things by piling a bunch of multisyllabic words on top of one another until you evoke exactly want you want, both visually and emotionally. But again, you're going to lose readers who just plain don't know the words you're using or, even worse, maybe you don't know the words you're using as well as you should.

I guess I shoot for a mixture of whatever seems right at the time, then edit aggressively until every single word is working in service of the story.