



Paint Your Memories

A step-by-step painting guide by Richard Robinson

Watch the full lesson at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/255-Paint-Your-Memories>

MY PAINTING CLUB

Introduction

In this chapter, I invite you to embark on a creative journey where we transform cherished memories into vibrant works of art. We all know the frustration of staring at a blank canvas, unsure of what to paint next. Yet, our memories hold a treasure trove of inspiration, waiting to be unlocked. Whether it's a beloved landscape, a moment in time, or the essence of a loved one, this lesson will guide you through capturing those memories on canvas. We'll explore the dynamic world of acrylics, though the techniques are equally applicable to oils. Starting with a loose approach, you'll learn to select colors and tools that resonate with your memory, experimenting with a variety of techniques like splattering, scratching, and even using metallic paints. As we progress, I'll show you how to digitally design your composition, preserving the abstract layer with varnish before adding depth with opaque colors. Finally, we'll refine the painting with finishing touches that evoke the dreamy, indistinct quality of memories. This process not only enhances your artistic skills but also offers a therapeutic outlet for expressing both joyful and somber recollections. Together, let's turn your memories into timeless art.



Bali!

Materials

Gather these materials before you start. If you don't have the exact same supplies, use what you have and substitute freely.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- Chroma Atelier Interactive Acrylics
- Pthalo Blue
- Ultramarine Blue
- Brilliant Magenta
- Naphthol Red Light
- Arylamide Yellow Light
- Titanium White
- Surface
- Fredrix Ultrasmooth canvas. 24x36".
- Brushes
- [Rosemary & Co. Richard Robinson Brush Set](#)
- Palette knife
- Paper towels
- Bucket of water

1 Canvas Preparation

Fix a Canvas Dent

Use a spray bottle of water to spray the back of the canvas around the dented area. This will help tighten the canvas and remove the dent.

Tighten a Sagging Canvas

If your entire canvas is sagging, spray the back of the whole canvas with water. This will tighten the canvas, much like giving it a facelift.

2 Materials and Initial Approach

Gather Materials

Use Italia Interactive Acrylics for good quality results. Include metallic paints, alcohol inks, salt, a spray bottle of water, and a variety of brushes, rollers, scrapers, a shower squeegee, and plastic to create interesting textures.

Conceptualize Your Painting

Focus on painting memories as blurry, impressionistic scenes. Aim to capture the feeling and broad sense of a scene rather than creating crystal clear pictures.

Initial Painting Approach

Begin with broad, colorful, and blurry strokes. Avoid using small brushes at the start to maintain the impressionistic style.

3 Setting Up the Workspace

Prepare the Canvas

Lay the canvas almost flat to facilitate splattering techniques. This positioning allows the paint to sit in little blobs without running, achieving the desired splattering effect without unwanted drips.

Protect the Workspace

Lay plastic around the workspace to manage paint splattering. This will help contain the mess and protect surrounding areas from paint splashes.

Use Plastic Pellets

Utilize big plastic pellets with edges to contain the paint and water. The edges prevent spills by keeping the paint and water within the workspace, which is essential for techniques involving a lot of paint and water.

Prepare Large Pots of Color

Have big pots of color ready, as the painting involves a large canvas and a lot of paint mixed with water. This ensures there is enough paint available for the entire project.

4 Color Selection and Memories

Select a Color Scheme

Choose from various color schemes such as a reduced palette, complementary colors, analogous colors, or monochrome. Select a scheme that best suits the mood and subject of your painting.

Use Phthalo Blue for Tropical Shades

Opt for Phthalo Blue when aiming to create vibrant tropical turquoise colors. This shade is ideal for capturing the beautiful and lively hues of tropical environments.

Keep Colors Vibrant

Maintain the vibrancy of your colors by keeping warm and cool colors separate. Be cautious when mixing them to avoid creating muddy colors like browns or greys.

Incorporate Yellow Ochre

Use Yellow Ochre to represent earthy colors found in tropical environments. This color helps in creating warmer greens and other natural tones.

5 Adjusting to Vibrant Colors

Adjust Your Palette

Observe the vibrant colors around you and compare them to your usual palette. Notice how the colors may appear more intense and saturated than what you are used to. Adjust your palette by selecting brighter and more saturated colors to match the vibrancy of your subject.

6 Using Additional Materials

Prepare the Canvas

Ensure your canvas is wet before applying any additional materials. This will help the inks and metallic colors spread more effectively.

Splash Alcohol Inks

Splash the alcohol inks onto the wet canvas. This technique creates dynamic and unpredictable patterns that add interest to your painting.

Keep Materials Wet

Give the materials a little squirt with water on the palette. Keeping them wet ensures they remain workable and blend smoothly.

Dribble Metallic Colors

Dribble the metallic colors onto the canvas. These colors will add a shimmering effect and enhance the overall texture of your artwork.

7 Initial Painting Techniques

Prepare Your Brush

Wet the brush before starting with acrylics to prevent paint from drying in the ferrule. Keeping the brush moist helps maintain its condition and prolongs its life.

Spray the Canvas

Spray parts of the canvas with water to create areas where the paint will take differently. This technique allows for smoother effects when the brush drags over wet areas compared to dry areas.

Control Brush Speed

Adjust the speed at which you pull the brush across the canvas to affect the brush stroke effect. Faster strokes create dynamic textures, while slower strokes allow for more control and smoother application.

Protect Your Workspace

Lay down plastic to protect surfaces like a kitchen table or floor from paint spills and water. This precaution helps prevent damage and keeps your painting area clean.

Experiment with Tools

Use different tools like a scraper to create varied textures and effects in your painting. Experimenting with tools allows you to explore different techniques and achieve unique results.

8 Creating Expressive Marks

Understand Paint Transparency

Recognize that transparent paints like phthalo blue allow underlying layers to show through, similar to a watercolor wash. Opaque paints, such as ultramarine blue, will cover underlying layers more completely.

Use Phthalo Blue for Vibrancy

Utilize phthalo blue to create vibrant, punchy colors. Its transparency and dynamic quality can add a lively, race car-like energy to your painting.

Vary Brush Strokes for Expression

Experiment with your brush strokes to create expressive marks. Use short, staccato strokes for a distinct effect, or try more fluid, seagull-like strokes for a softer blend.

Consider Paint Transparency in Layering

When overlaying colors, remember that transparent colors will blend lightly and allow underlying colors to show through, whereas opaque colors will cover them more.

9 Using Salt and Alcohol Inks

Apply Salt to Wet Watercolors

Sprinkle salt onto the wet watercolor paint. The salt will absorb the paint around it, creating a sparkling effect on the surface. Allow the paint to dry completely before proceeding.

Remove Salt from Painting

Once the paint is dry, gently brush the salt off your painting. This will reveal the sparkling texture left by the salt.

Use Alcohol Inks for Intense Colors

Apply a dark alcohol ink to the painting. Experiment by stripping, drawing, or adding splatters with the ink to create interesting effects and textures.

Prepare Metallic Paint

Shake the metallic paint well before using it to ensure it is thoroughly mixed.

10 Maintaining Color Vibrancy

Keep Colors Vibrant

Use separate brushes for warm and cool colors to prevent mixing them and creating a muddy appearance. Alternatively, wash your brush thoroughly between using different color temperatures.

Gain New Perspectives

Turn your painting around to view it from a different angle. This can help you see it as a new piece and discover fresh ideas.

Create Unique Effects

Use paint on the brush that is not fully mixed to achieve unique effects. This technique adds interest and texture to your painting.

Achieve Color Harmony

Use a color in a large area and then repeat it in other parts of the painting. This repetition helps to unify the composition.

Revive a Messy Painting

If your painting looks messy, squirt it with water and rub it back, scrape some off, or start over. Experimenting with these techniques can lead to unexpected and pleasing results.

Preserve Focal Points

Preserve areas as glowing or central to maintain focal points and interest in your painting. This prevents the painting from becoming too uniform or dull.

11 Creating Variety in Abstracts

Maintain Variety

Ensure your painting remains engaging by incorporating a variety of shapes, sizes, and textures. Avoid repetitive patterns that can make the artwork appear contrived.

Mix Paint Applications

Use a combination of thick and thin paint applications to add depth. Integrate smooth and rough textures to create visual interest.

Balance Complexity

Balance complex areas with simpler ones to provide visual breaks. This prevents the painting from overwhelming the viewer and maintains engagement.

Vary Shapes and Patterns

Consider the variety of shapes in your painting, from large areas to individual brush strokes. Avoid making all shapes the same size or pattern to maintain spontaneity.

12 Varnishing and Drying

Choose Your Varnish

Select a gloss varnish to protect your acrylic painting. This will enhance the colors, giving them a brighter and more vibrant appearance.

Prepare the Varnish

Thin the varnish by adding about 10% water. This makes it easier to apply and helps it dry faster.

Apply the Varnish

Use a big brush to apply a light coat of varnish. This minimizes brush strokes and reduces the risk of air bubbles, which can make the varnish appear milky.

Avoid Overworking

Avoid using too many brush strokes when applying the varnish. Excessive strokes can introduce air bubbles and result in a milky appearance.

Allow to Dry

Let the varnish dry for a couple of hours before working over it. This ensures a proper protective layer is formed.

13 Using Photoshop for Composition

Choose Your Software

Select a digital painting software like Photoshop, GIMP, or Procreate. Each offers unique features, with GIMP being a free alternative and Procreate as a cost-effective option for iPad users.

Import Your Abstract Painting

Photograph your abstract painting and import it into your chosen software as a new layer. This will serve as the base for your composition.

Add and Manipulate Layers

Copy and paste additional images onto new layers above your abstract painting. Use layers to build up your composition, allowing for individual manipulation of each element.

Adjust Opacity for Blending

Lower the opacity of the added images to help them blend with the abstract painting. This creates a softer, more integrated look, reminiscent of a memory.

Use the Eraser Tool

Select the Eraser tool with a large soft brush to gently remove parts of the image. This technique merges some areas into the background while keeping others distinct.

Apply the 'Darken' Effect

Utilize the 'Darken' effect to highlight dark areas of an image. Paint in these spaces, allowing light areas to reveal underlying colors, adding depth to your composition.

14 Alternative Methods and Planning

Use Digital Tools for Planning

Consider using the Procreate app on an iPad with an Apple Pen for digital painting. It's an affordable alternative to Photoshop and can help you plan your painting effectively.

Print or Sketch Your Memories

Print out or sketch your memories to the desired size and plan their placement on the canvas. Focus on the size and central image to organize your composition effectively.

Use Black and White Photos

Print photos in black and white to avoid being influenced by the colors in the photograph. This approach helps you integrate the images into your painting's color scheme more effectively.

Embrace a Daring Approach

Paint without a strict plan to allow for a more organic process. This method can result in richer textures and a more exciting painting that doesn't appear overly planned.

Start with Abstract

Begin with an abstract painting and add imagery on top. This technique allows the painting to develop naturally and can inspire new ideas as you work.

15 Painting the Background

Prepare the Canvas

Spray some water on the canvas to wet it. This makes it easier to work with the paints.

Loosen Stiff Paints

If your acrylic paints are too stiff, add a little bit of water to them. This will help loosen the paint and make it easier to apply.

Tone Down Beach Colors

Add a touch of ultramarine blue and yellow to the beach colors in the background. This helps the colors blend well with the existing ones.

Create Turquoise for Pool Area

Mix phthalo blue with a touch of bright yellow to create a turquoise color for the pool area. This combination will give you beautiful turquoise colors.

Deepen Water Color Effect

Add more phthalo blue and some yellow to achieve a deeper water color effect. This creates a sense of depth in the water.

Preserve Key Elements

Paint around certain areas to preserve elements you want to keep in the painting. This maintains the integrity of specific features while adding new colors.

16 Integrating Images with Background

Create a Wash for Integration

Apply a wash at the top of the painting to integrate the colors and establish a base. This wash helps blend the elements into the existing painting, contributing to a cohesive look.

Add Detail with a Synthetic Brush

Use a smaller square synthetic brush to add more detail to the painting. This brush allows for precise application of color, helping define specific elements like the bungalow and palm trees.

Achieve a Dreamy Look with Color Families

Use colors that stay within the same family as the existing painting to achieve a dreamy look. This approach helps some elements blend into the background while others pop forward, creating depth.

Let the Background Show Through

Allow some of the background to show through to add depth and integration. This prevents the painting from looking too opaque and helps elements sit naturally within the scene.

Use Contrasting Colors for Emphasis

Paint elements meant to stand out, like the fish and the little boat, with colors that contrast more. This makes them pop forward against the background.

17 Enhancing Memory Elements

Enhance Color Vibrancy

Block in the area with white before adding your chosen color. This technique ensures the color appears more punchy and vivid against the background.

Create Background Depth

Allow certain images to 'sit back' by making them less defined and more obscure. This approach mimics the fuzzy and hard-to-focus nature of distant memories.

Emphasize Key Elements

Use sharper edges, stronger color, and more contrast to emphasize specific elements. This highlights parts of the painting that represent stronger, more vivid memories.

Balance Definition

Define some parts more clearly than others to reflect the nature of memories. This creates a dynamic and engaging painting by showing which aspects are clearer and more vivid.

18 Incorporating Happy Accidents

Identify Happy Accidents

Look for unexpected shapes or patterns in your paintwork that resemble something familiar, like a palm tree. Use these as opportunities to enhance your painting by adding details and turning them into a creative element.

Enhance Color Vibrancy

Apply white paint first to the area where you want punchy color. This will help the colors you add on top to stand out more vibrantly.

19 Preserving Paint Overnight

Preserve Acrylic Paints Overnight

Spray your palette with water to keep the acrylic paints moist. Cover the palette with a lid to maintain the moisture and prevent the paints from drying out. This method ensures your paints remain wet and ready to use the next day, saving paint and money.

20 Adding Vibrant Colors

Prepare the Canvas

Apply a layer of white paint on the canvas. This base layer will make the red paint appear more vibrant when applied over it.

Apply Red Paint

Add the red paint directly onto the canvas rather than mixing it on the palette. This approach creates a spontaneous and vibrant effect, enhancing the liveliness of the color.

21 Abstract to Semi-Abstract Transition

Embrace Personal Expression

Focus on painting your own memories and developing your unique style. Allow your personal experiences to guide your color choices and composition.

Create Harmony

Ensure your colors work together in a way that feels personal and cohesive. This will help your painting resonate with your own memories and emotions.

Merge and Highlight Elements

Let some elements of your painting merge into the abstract while allowing others to stand out. This balance creates a semi-abstract piece that is both expressive and personal.

22 Maintaining Pure Colors

Clean Your Palette

Thoroughly clean your palette to maintain pure colors. Messy paint can mix with your colors and make them muddy, so start with a clean surface.

Prevent Color Contamination

Ensure your palette is free of leftover paint to avoid contaminating new colors. This keeps your colors vibrant and bright.

Prepare for a Glow Effect

Add a little more white to your palette to prepare for a strong glow effect, such as a sunset. This helps create a bright, glowing effect in your painting.

23 Glazing Techniques

Understand Glazing Benefits

Glazing allows the underlying layers to show through, enhancing the vibrancy of the colors. It can achieve much brighter colors than using opaque paint.

Mix Glazing Colors

Combine permanent alizarin and ultramarine blue for your glazing mixture. This combination is effective for darkening purple or red areas, especially at the edges.

Apply Glaze for Contrast

Glaze around the outside edges of the painting to darken those areas. This technique will make the central areas appear brighter and more focused, creating a spotlight effect.

24 Balancing the Composition

Balance Red Colors

Add red in other areas of your painting to create harmony. This helps distribute the color evenly and prevents it from overpowering one section.

Integrate Elements

If certain elements interfere with the composition, consider if they are too accurately drawn. Work over them with a different color, like sky color, to integrate them better into the scene.

Refine Composition

Adjust elements while waiting for the paint to dry. This allows you to refine the composition and balance without disrupting the drying process.

25 Final Adjustments and Reflection

Glaze with Yellow and Magenta

Apply a glaze of yellow and magenta to add variety in texture and paint thickness. This technique enhances contrast and balance, making the painting more visually interesting.

Warm Up White Areas

Glaze lightly over white areas with a yellowy mixture. This adds warmth and prevents the white from appearing too stark or lifeless, contributing to the painting's overall balance.

Step Back and Reflect

Regularly step back to view the entire painting. This helps you see how all the elements relate to each other and ensures the composition remains balanced and cohesive.

Stay Open and Reflective

Adopt a playful mindset by asking your painting what it needs. This approach helps you connect with your work and make intuitive adjustments that enhance its overall impact.

26 Adding Final Details

Photograph and Flip

Photograph your painting and flip the image. This allows you to see it as a whole new painting, helping you identify any problems more easily.

Use a Mirror

View your painting in a mirror. This gives you a different perspective, making it easier to spot issues that might not be noticeable otherwise.

Summary & Key Takeaways

Embark on your painting journey by preparing your canvas and gathering a diverse array of materials. Begin with broad, impressionistic strokes to capture the essence of your memories, focusing on the feeling rather than precise details. Set up your workspace to accommodate splattering techniques and ensure you have ample paint ready for your creative exploration.

As you delve into color selection, choose palettes that evoke the mood of your memories. Keep warm and cool colors separate to maintain vibrancy and avoid muddiness. Experiment with additional materials like alcohol inks and metallic paints to add dynamic textures and shimmering effects to your artwork.

Throughout the painting process, embrace a variety of techniques to create depth and interest. Use different tools and strokes to achieve expressive marks, and incorporate elements like salt for unique textures. As you finish, consider using digital tools to refine your composition, and apply a varnish to protect and enhance your vibrant creation.

LESSON POINTS TO REMEMBER

- Spray the back of the canvas with water to tighten it.
- Begin with broad, colorful strokes to capture the essence of memories.
- Lay the canvas almost flat to achieve splattering effects without drips.
- Keep warm and cool colors separate to maintain vibrancy.
- Use phthalo blue for dynamic, transparent layers.
- Sprinkle salt onto wet paint for a sparkling effect.
- Thin varnish with 10% water for easier application.
- Lower the opacity of images in digital compositions for a memory-like effect.



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