



Whiskey Slough

A step-by-step painting guide by Richard Robinson

Watch the full lesson at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/83-Whiskey-Slough>

MY PAINTING CLUB

Introduction

Welcome to Whiskey Slough in Pender Harbour, nestled on the stunning west coast of Canada. This charming spot, with its weathered old boat and rustic shed, offers a perfect backdrop for exploring the art of painting glowing light and vibrant color. In this chapter, I will guide you through the techniques I use to infuse a scene with warmth, rich hues, and captivating textures. You'll learn how to capture the essence of this idyllic location, transforming it into a canvas that radiates life and beauty. We'll start by adjusting the temperature of your reference image to achieve a pleasing warmth, setting the stage for a painting that truly glows. This scene is a rewarding subject, allowing us to delve into the interplay of light and color, and I'm excited to share my step-by-step process with you. Together, we'll bring this picturesque setting to life, creating a piece that captures the serene beauty of Whiskey Slough.



"Whiskey Slough - Plein Air" 14x14" Oil on Canvas by Richard Robinson.



REFERENCE PHOTO 1

The scene as Richard found it.



REFERENCE PHOTO 2

The scene as Richard found it.

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

- M. Graham & Co. Acrylic Paints
- Alizarine Crimson
- Phthalo Blue
- Ultramarine Blue
- Burnt Sienna
- Cadmium Red
- Cadmium Orange
- Yellow Ochre
- Cadmium Yellow Light
- Titanium White
- Canvas
- Fredrix ultrasmooth canvas (Giving it a light sanding first helps the paint stick better).
- You could use a canvas panel or anything you prefer.
- Brushes
- [Rosemary & Co. Richard Robinson Brush Set](#)
- Palette knife
- Paper towels
- Stay-wet palette
- Water spray bottle

1 Using technology to adjust color temperature



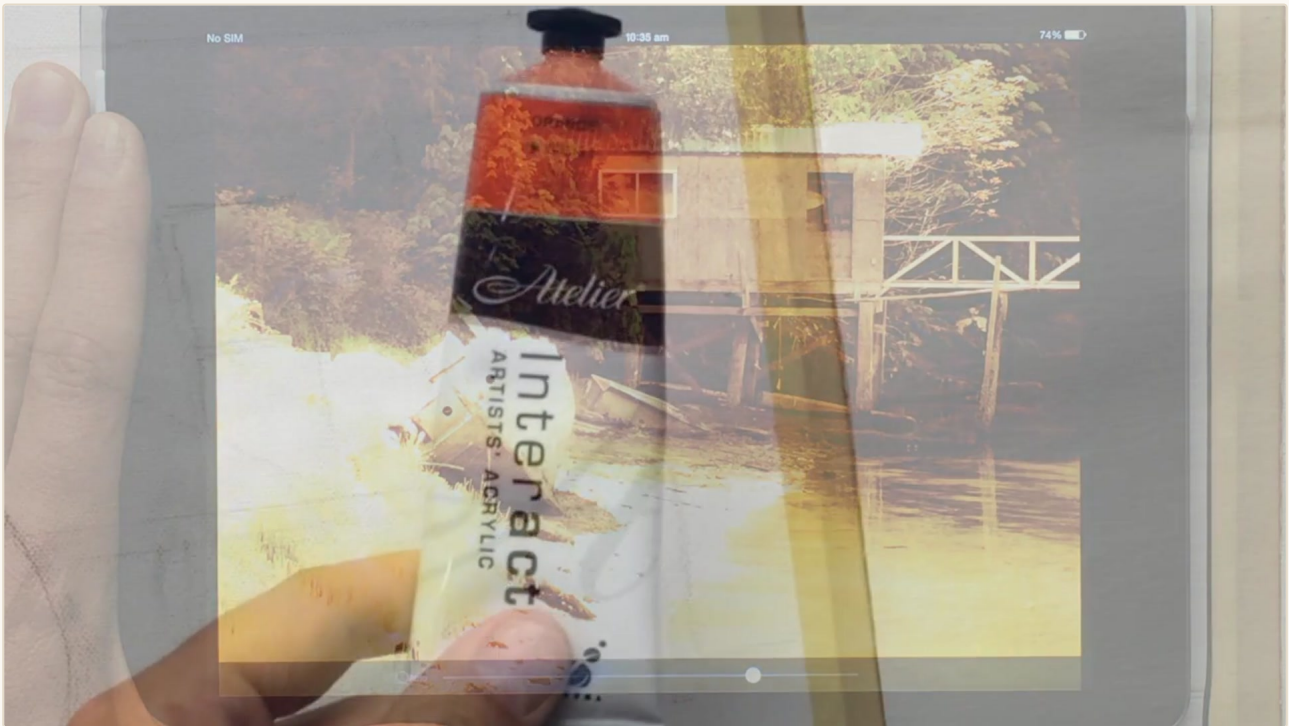
Use Technology to Adjust Color Temperature

Open an image editing app like Photoshop Express on your device. Locate the temperature adjustment feature, which allows you to alter the warmth or coolness of your image. To warm up your image, slide the temperature control towards orange and yellow. Be careful not to overdo it; adjust until you achieve a pleasing warmth.

PRO TIP

Use the temperature adjustment feature in image editing apps to fine-tune the warmth or coolness of your painting reference.

2 Preparing acrylics and stay wet palette



Prepare Stay Wet Palette

Use a stay wet palette made from canvas and paper towels. Tape the palette securely to your easel to prevent movement while painting.

Moisten the Palette

Spray water generously over the paper towels to thoroughly soak them. This moisture will help keep your acrylic paints wet for longer.

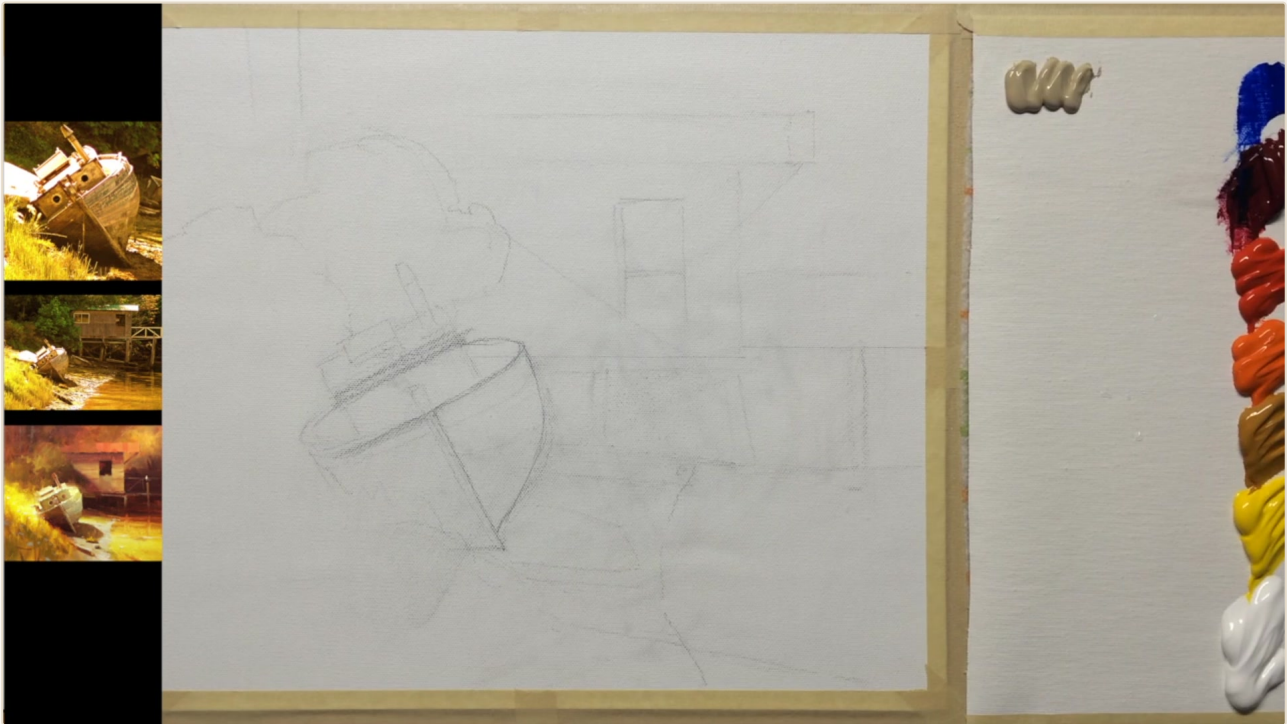
Spray the Canvas

Spray both the back and front of your canvas with water. This helps to keep the canvas moist and your paint workable.

PRO TIP

Ensure the iPad or any electronic device is moved away from the painting area to avoid water damage.

3 Starting with the glowing foreground



Apply the Glowing Foreground

Load your biggest brush with yellow paint and thin it slightly with water. Brush this mixture broadly over the brightest area of the glowing foreground. Use a fine mist from a spray bottle to keep the paint workable and extend the coverage.

PRO TIP

Start with the brightest area to establish a strong base for the glowing effect.

4 Creating shadow shapes in the grass



Mix Yellow Ochre with Yellow

Add a little yellow ochre to your yellow paint. This will push the yellow towards red and slightly gray it down, creating a more natural shadow color for the grass.

Create Large Soft Edge Shapes

Use mostly vertical strokes to paint large, soft-edged shapes. These shapes will indicate the shadow side of large clumps of grass. Ensure that both the tops and bottoms of the strokes have soft edges to suggest grasses in front.

PRO TIP

Use vertical strokes with soft edges to create natural-looking grass shadows.

5 Adding depth and texture to the grass



Mix a Greenish Tinge

Add a little orange and blue to your palette to create a greenish tinge. This mix will result in a slightly darker and greyer color, perfect for adding depth to the grass.

Create Depth with Brush Strokes

Use bigger brush strokes as the grasses get closer to the foreground. This technique will help create the illusion of depth in your painting.

Lift and Add Texture

Use a balled-up paper towel to lift out some of the glowing areas in the grass. This will add more texture and interest to the scene.

Gradate Color in the Foreground

Apply a slightly darker color to the foreground, creating a gradual change from bright yellow to a dull warm green. This gradation enhances the depth of the landscape.

Add Texture with Water Flicking

Flick water with a clean brush onto the wet paint, then lift little dots off. This technique adds texture and interest without creating a repetitive pattern.

PRO TIP

Rotate the paper slightly after each new mark to avoid creating a pattern.

6 Painting the boat with glowing effects



Create Soft Edges at the Base

Use a number six brush to paint the base of the boat with soft edges where it meets the grass. Start with an orangey brown close to the grass, transitioning to a darker brown for the darkest areas. Apply fairly thin paint with mostly vertical strokes to blend into the grass, varying the brushstrokes to avoid uniformity.

Add Darkest Dark

Mix blue, alizarin, and red to create a slightly darker brown for the darkest areas of the boat. Apply this darker brown above the first layer, not extending as far down. Use a large dry brush to lightly blur some of the edges, softening the transition.

Reflect Yellow Light

Notice the yellow light reflecting on the hull at the front. Gradually add more yellow ochre as you move towards the bow, ensuring the edge gets lighter and softer to create a glowing effect.

Paint the Cabin Front

For the front of the cabin, use a mix of toning grey, yellow ochre, white, and yellow to capture the light reflection. Ensure the drawing is accurate with verticals parallel and tops perpendicular to maintain the boat's structure.

Enhance Glowing Spots

Lighten and warm the area off the right-hand deck for a glowing spot. On the left, use light to mid-value warm tones for an even bigger glowing area. For the front of the boat, use the same color as the cabin front, keeping the line straight but with irregularities to reflect wear.

PRO TIP

Ensure all verticals are parallel and tops are perpendicular to maintain the boat's structural accuracy.

7 Reflective light on the boat hull



Mix Reflective Light Color

Create a color for the shadowed side of the hull. Consider the reflective light from the beach and shallow water, making it slightly lighter than the other side. Include sky reflections to ensure the color is cooler.

Use Warm Toning Grey

Incorporate more warm toning grey into your mixture for this side of the hull. This grey is not as warm as other colors on the canvas, providing a neutral tone that appears cooler.

PRO TIP

Use a warm toning grey to create a cooler appearance in shadowed areas with reflective light.

8 Enhancing the glowing effect on the boat



Enhance the Glow

Add more yellow and white to the colors as they approach the glowing spot on the right-hand deck. This will enhance the glowing effect and make it more pronounced.

Add Texture and Character

Use a palette knife to roughen up the shapes slightly, making them more organic. This will help in reducing the shiny, new appearance of the boat.

Weather the Boat

Splatter some water onto the boat and dab it with crumpled paper. This technique adds painterly marks, giving the boat a weathered and beaten character.

Block in the Glowing Area

Prepare a light yellow mixture and block in the area around the glowing spot, dissolving the edges. Use a very thick mixture of white and yellow to block in the deck, enhancing the glow.

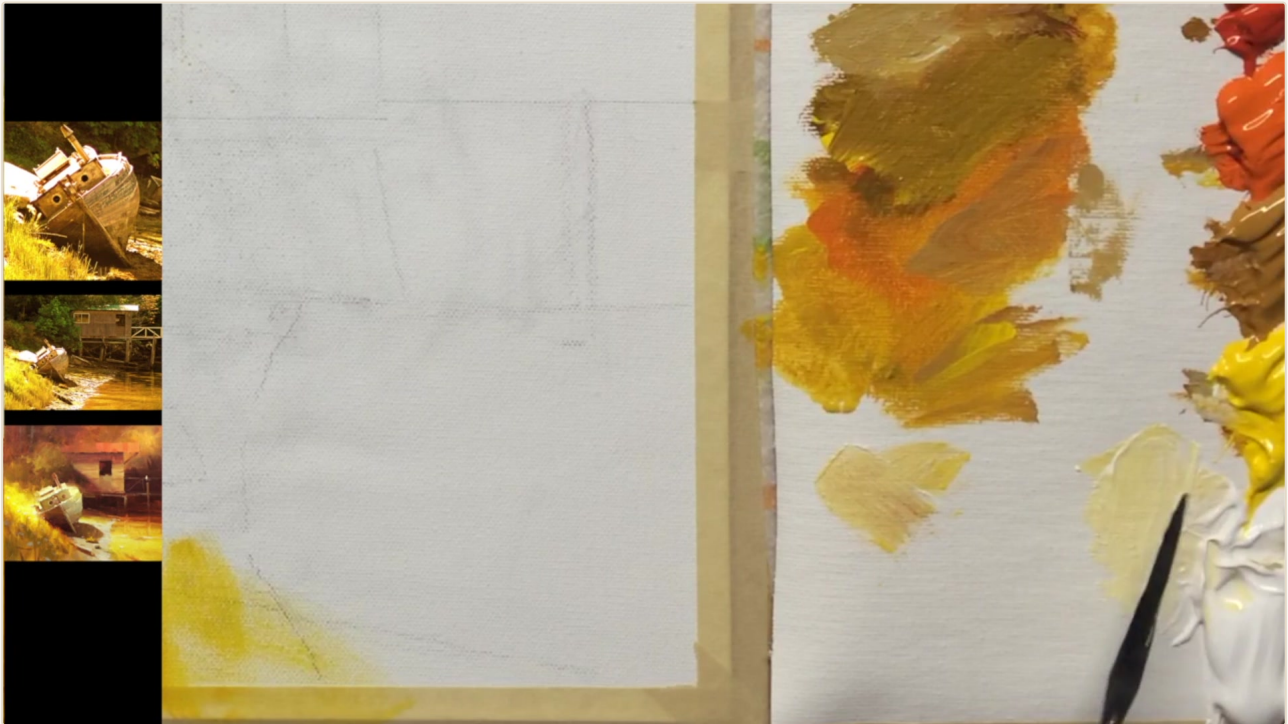
Blend into the Background

Brush the edges of the glowing area to blend the color into the background. This will help in achieving a seamless transition and enhance the overall glowing effect.

PRO TIP

Use a palette knife to create organic shapes and add texture to your painting.

9 Detailing the boat's edges and textures



Create Thin Strips of Light

Mix a light color and flatten it out on the canvas. Clean your palette knife, then press the edge into the flat pile of paint to pick up a crisp line. Press the palette knife down hard onto the canvas where you want the light strip and drag it off carefully.

Add Weathered Texture

Repeat the process to create another line, but break the edge slightly to give it a weathered, beaten look.

Highlight Portholes

Add a lighter border around the portholes at the front to enhance the whites of the eyes.

PRO TIP

Use the edge of a clean palette knife to create crisp lines of paint for precise detailing.

10 Final details on the boat



Add Light Borders to Portholes

Paint a lighter border around the portholes at the front of the boat. Ensure this border is just a bit lighter than the surface it covers to create contrast.

Paint Dark Brown Portholes

Use a dark brown to paint the portholes. Apply careful pressure with the brush to achieve a clean, circular shape.

Lighten Porthole in Glowing Area

For the porthole on the right, mix in a little more white and yellow to lighten it. This adjustment complements the glowing area around it.

Mix Shadow Color

Mix a dark warm grey for the shadow of the boat on the beach. This shadow adds depth and anchors the boat to the scene.

PRO TIP

Use careful brush pressure to achieve clean, circular shapes for the portholes.

11 Painting shadows and rocks on the beach



Mix Shadow Color

Mix a dark warm grey for the shadow of the boat on the beach using toning grey, blue, red, and yellow ochre. Adjust the mixture to be slightly warmer and lighter as it moves to the right by adding a little yellow and white.

Paint Rocks

Use brown for the sides of the rocks and toning grey for the light on top. Add a touch of algae color on top of the rocks for a nice color note.

Add Log Shadow

Use an orangey brown for the shadow side of a log in the foreground. Brush softly down into the grass to create the effect of the log disappearing into the grass.

PRO TIP

Brush softly into the grass to make objects appear as if they are disappearing into it.

12 Soft transitions on the beach



Apply Base Color to the Beach

Use toning grey, white, and a little bit of yellow to broadly brush the foreground of the beach. This creates a base color that sets the stage for the light transition.

Enhance Light Areas

As the beach moves into the light, add more white and yellow to the mix. This will brighten the area and create a sense of sunlight hitting the sand.

Create Soft Transition into Shadow

To achieve a soft transition as the light beach disappears into shadow, apply the paint in stages. Start by placing some yellow, then gradually darken the mix and paint nearly up to the previous color. Repeat this process, making the color darker each time to blend smoothly into the shadow.

PRO TIP

Gradually darken the color in stages to create a soft transition from light to shadow on the beach.

13 Background and shed details



Add Dark Accents

Use the dark brown to create the darkest areas in the background. Apply it to the window and under the roof line to enhance depth.

Create a Glowing Transition

Mix a lighter, warmer color near the light spot on the boat to make it glow against the dark background. Gradually fade this color into the darker areas to create a smooth transition.

Adjust Bush Colors

Paint the bush behind the boat with a browner tone instead of green. As you move left into the light, add more yellow ochre to lighten and warm the color.

Add Warm Gray to Shed

Use a little alizarin crimson to mix a warm gray for the shadow on the shed. This adds depth and complements the overall color scheme.

Enhance Shed Interest

Consider adding a triangular-shaped light area on the side of the shed. This breaks up the blocky rectangular shape and adds visual interest, though it's optional since the boat is the main focus.

PRO TIP

Use a lighter, warmer color near light spots to create a glowing effect against dark backgrounds.

14 Roof gradient and background gradations



Soften Edges

Soften the edges of the large shapes to prevent them from competing with the sharp edges of the boat. This will help maintain focus on the main subject.

Add Shed Details

Introduce a few small details to the shed without painting every weatherboard. Break up the window shape by adding a few other small shapes to suggest detail.

Create Roof Gradient

Mix a subdued light orange with toning grey and a touch of white. Apply this mixture to the end of the roof, brushing it around to create a slight glowing effect. Gradually add more red and blue as you move left to darken and cool the color.

Background Gradations

Fill in the background with gradations of color, similar to the roof technique. Ensure the top of the roof is straight and aligned, and vary your strokes to avoid monotony.

PRO TIP

Ensure the top of the roof is straight and aligned for a clean, professional look.

15 Painting trees and water reflections



Paint Tree Trunks

Use toning grey to paint the trunks of the trees in the background. Soften the edges to ensure they blend well and don't stand out too much.

Create Water Gradation

Paint the water with a gradation of colors from dark brown to mid orangey brown to yellow. This creates a natural transition and depth in the water.

Add Glow and Texture

Add some white to create a glowing patch in the water. Introduce texture by lightly spraying the area and dabbing it with a paper towel.

Lift Light Reflections

Use a clean, wet brush to lift out light reflections from the painted water. Ensure these reflections align with the poles for accuracy.

Align Pole Bases

Pay attention to the placement of the poles' bases where they touch the ground and water. Adjust them to follow the slope of the ground, ensuring they appear flat on the water.

PRO TIP

Ensure light reflections in the water align with the poles for a realistic effect.

16 Final touches and signing



Add Grey Flowers

Use toning grey to indicate white flowers in the foreground. These flowers are in the shadows, so the grey color is appropriate.

Highlight with Pure White

Add pure white flowers in the glowing spot to create contrast and draw attention to the area.

Paint a Rope

Use a very fine line to depict a rope extending into the water. This adds an element of interest and depth to the scene.

Add a Seagull

With just two brush strokes, paint a small seagull watching the scene. This simple addition can bring life to the painting.

Sign Your Painting

Sign your painting to complete it and add a personal touch. Carefully remove the tape to reveal clean edges.

PRO TIP

Use a fine line to add small details like a rope or a seagull to enhance the composition.

Summary & Key Takeaways

Embark on your painting journey by first adjusting the color temperature of your reference image using an editing app. This step helps you envision the warmth or coolness you want to capture on your canvas. Prepare your acrylics on a stay wet palette to keep them workable, and ensure your canvas is moist to facilitate smooth application.

Begin with the glowing foreground, establishing a vibrant base with broad strokes of yellow. As you progress, add depth and texture to the grass using a combination of colors and techniques like lifting out areas with a paper towel. Transition into painting the boat, focusing on creating glowing effects with careful color transitions and soft edges to blend it seamlessly into the landscape.

As you refine the details, pay attention to the reflective light on the boat and the surrounding environment. Use a palette knife for crisp lines and organic textures, enhancing the weathered look of the boat. Finally, complete your scene with thoughtful details like shadows, rocks, and water reflections, ensuring all elements harmonize to create a cohesive and captivating painting.

LESSON POINTS TO REMEMBER

- Use image editing apps to adjust the color temperature of your reference.
- Keep your acrylic paints moist with a stay wet palette and a misting spray.
- Start with the brightest areas to establish a strong base for glowing effects.
- Use vertical strokes with soft edges to create natural-looking grass shadows.
- Rotate your paper towel slightly after each mark to avoid creating patterns.
- Ensure all verticals are parallel and tops are perpendicular for structural accuracy.
- Use a warm toning grey to create cooler shadowed areas with reflective light.
- Use a fine line to add small details like a rope or a seagull to enhance the composition.



"Whiskey Slough - Plein Air" 14x14" Oil on Canvas by Richard Robinson.

Student Critiques

Club members painted their own versions of this scene and I critiqued each one. Their paintings — and my feedback — are a wonderful way to see this lesson's ideas in action.

"Workshop35" by Hyun (Jane) Kim



"Workshop35" 9x12" Oil on Canvas by Hyun (Jane) Kim

Nice work Hyun as usual. Great colour, values and attention to the glowing areas. The drawing seems a little askew on the boat, I think mainly because the roof extends further to the right than to the left, and the chimney isn't parallel with the boat's centre line. The flowers in the foreground are spaced evenly which is making a pattern of them - easy to do! The right-most post on your walkway is not connecting with it's reflection convincingly. Other than those very few minor things I think you've done very well with this. Good work.

“Workshop35” by Casey Toussaint



"Workshop35" Oil on Canvas by Casey Toussaint

Hi Casey, nearly there with this one - just a few changes I can suggest as I've illustrated in the photoshopped version. I've added more colour vibrant colour (less grey) to the bushes behind the boat and given it some form with a shadow on the right and also the cast shadow onto the building which breaks up that big rectangle shape. I've added more yellow to the highlights on the boat so it fits in with the idea of a large yellowish glowing area amongst the grasses with I've also lightened just where they merge with the light on the boat. The dark transition you had there was interfering with the glowing effect. I also straightened the building a little. Other than that it's great to see you using plenty of paint and being free with your brushwork.

"Vance Birthplace, Weaverville, NC" by Eddie Morris



"Vance Birthplace, Weaverville, NC" 12x16" Oil on Canvas by Eddie Morris

Great glowing effect through the trees Eddie and beautiful shape work and subtle colour work there too. Your dilligent work on trees for the past year has really paid off in spades. Beautiful interesting texture through the painting. A good design where the fairly central building has been offset by the bulk of the trees on the left. The path leading us in is good but I have the feeling it's a little too perfect - dead centre and the s-curve is 'just so'. How about a shape that's a little less expected? Just breaking it up a little more perhaps. Maybe it's just me - I've seen enough paths like this in my own work perhaps. Adding a few more neutral grays throughout the scene as you have done in the tree trunks will just pull it back from looking like a sepia toned photo. Also beware the dark outlining effect around the cabin which tends to flatten it a little. A hint of structural detail on the front roof will add some more interest there - a loose panel for instance. Small things. Overall it's a great painting.

"Sanctuary" by Russell Kells



"Sanctuary" 15x19" Acrylic on Canvas by Russell Kells

Great glowing effect Russell and a strong design where you've linked all your major lights together. The success of your glowing effect is in the control of the values, keeping everything in the glowing area in the mid to light value range. You've done that really well. The drawing of the boat could be a lot better unfortunately - especially look at the angle of the waterline.

I've done a little photoshop work on your painting to try out a few other ideas. For instance, more unified colour in the glowing area to the right, darker shadow area in the rocks on the right and more contrast in the pole there. Vertical strokes in the water help with a more reflective feel. Cooling off the background into warm muted greens helps it to sit back and provides a colour complement for the reds in the boat. I hope that helps a little.