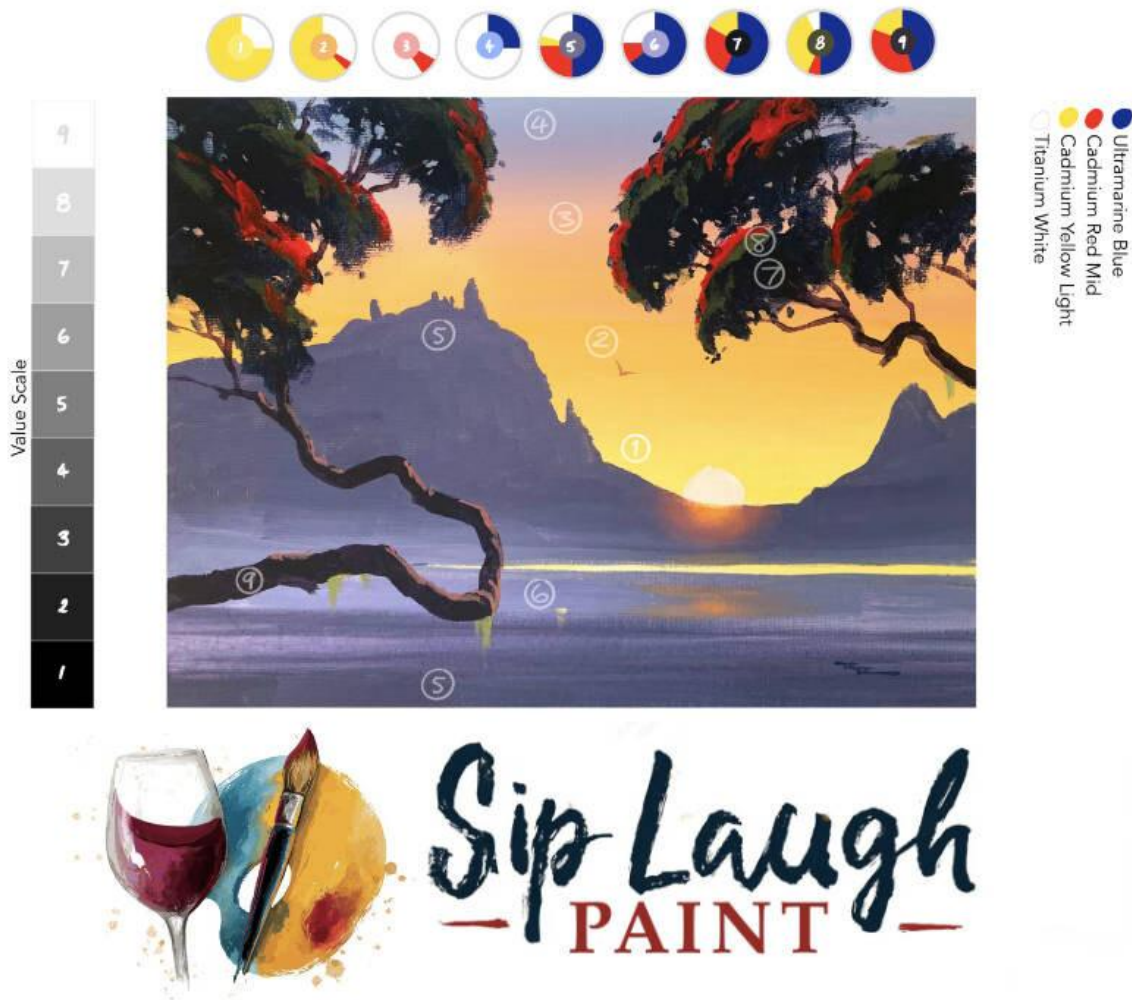




Harbour Sunrise

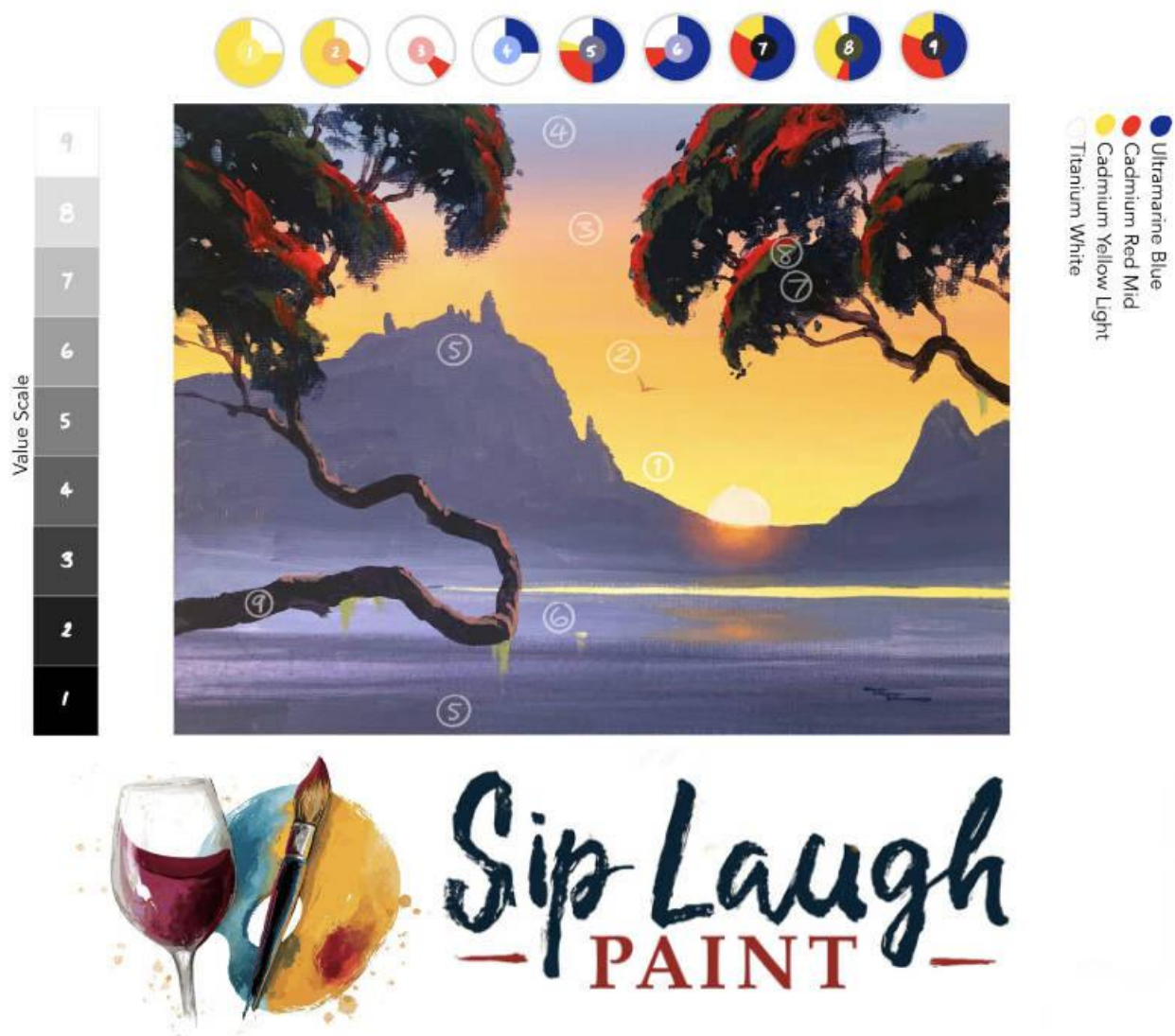
A step-by-step painting guide by Richard Robinson

Watch the full lesson at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/264-Harbour-Sunrise>

MY PAINTING CLUB

Introduction

As we embark on this painting journey together, we'll be working on an 11x14 inch canvas, which I've prepared by taping the edges to create a crisp white frame once your masterpiece is complete. This chapter will guide you through the vibrant scene of a harbour sunrise, a subject that promises both tranquility and a burst of color. We'll be using a palette of ultramarine blue, cadmium red, cadmium yellow light, and titanium white, alongside a selection of brushes including a large bristle filbert, a synthetic square, and two round brushes for finer details. To keep our paints fresh, a light misting of water will prevent them from drying out too quickly. The lesson is structured in clear, numbered stages, allowing you to follow along with ease. Each step is designed to build your confidence and skill, from mixing the perfect hues to adding those final delicate branches. This scene is a rewarding subject because it captures the serene beauty of dawn, offering a perfect blend of challenge and satisfaction. So, let's dive in, enjoy the process, and watch as your canvas comes to life with the colors of a new day.



11x14" Acrylic on Canvas

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

- Atelier Interactive Acrylics
- Ultramarine Blue
- Cadmium Red Mid
- Arylamide Yellow Light / Cadmium Yellow Light
- Titanium White
- Canvas
- 11x14" Canvas Board
- Brushes
- [Rosemary & Co. Richard Robinson Brush Set](#)
- Palette knife
- Paper towels
- Stay-wet palette
- Water spray bottle

1 Mixing the first color



Mix the First Color

Combine three parts yellow with one part white to achieve the desired color. Aim to match the color in the middle of the circle as closely as possible.

Mix the Second Color

Blend mostly yellow with a fair amount of white and a small speck of red. Adjust the proportions to match the target color accurately.

PRO TIP

Focus on matching the color in the middle of the circle for accuracy.

2 Painting the first layer



Prepare the Brush

Dip a large brush into water to prevent paint from drying in the ferrule and affecting the bristles.

Mix Yellow and White

Combine three parts yellow with one part white. Add a little water to the mix to help it spread easily over the canvas without becoming too thin like watercolor.

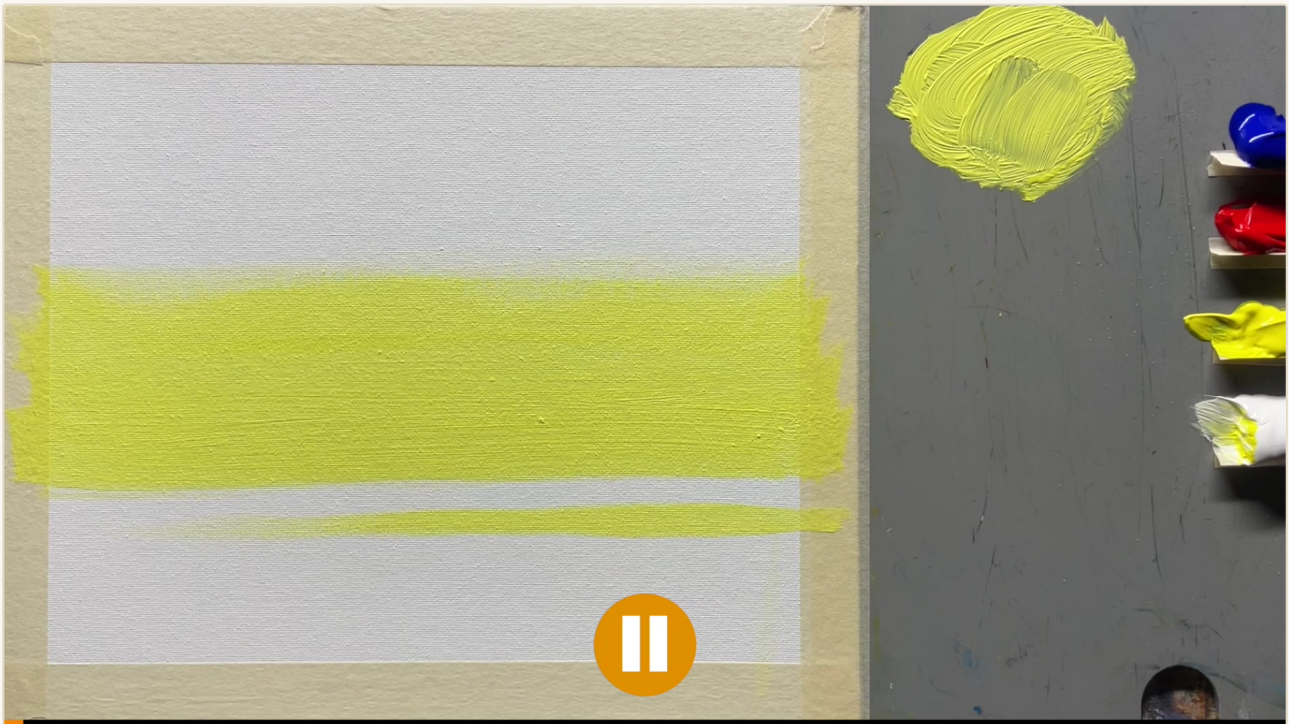
Apply the First Layer

Start about a third of the way up the canvas. Brush the yellow-white mix across the canvas, moving slowly upwards until you reach close to a third of the canvas. Also, paint a strip of this color at the bottom, but don't worry about making it too thin, as it will be painted over with blue-grey later.

PRO TIP

Dip your brush in water before painting to keep the bristles in good condition.

3 Mixing and applying the second color



Mix the Second Color

Add a little less yellow and a tiny bit of red to your previous mix to create an orange. Ensure the mixture is thick and vibrant.

Apply the Orange

Start painting at the top of the previous section, moving horizontally across the canvas. Gradually move upwards with the brush strokes, maintaining a consistent application.

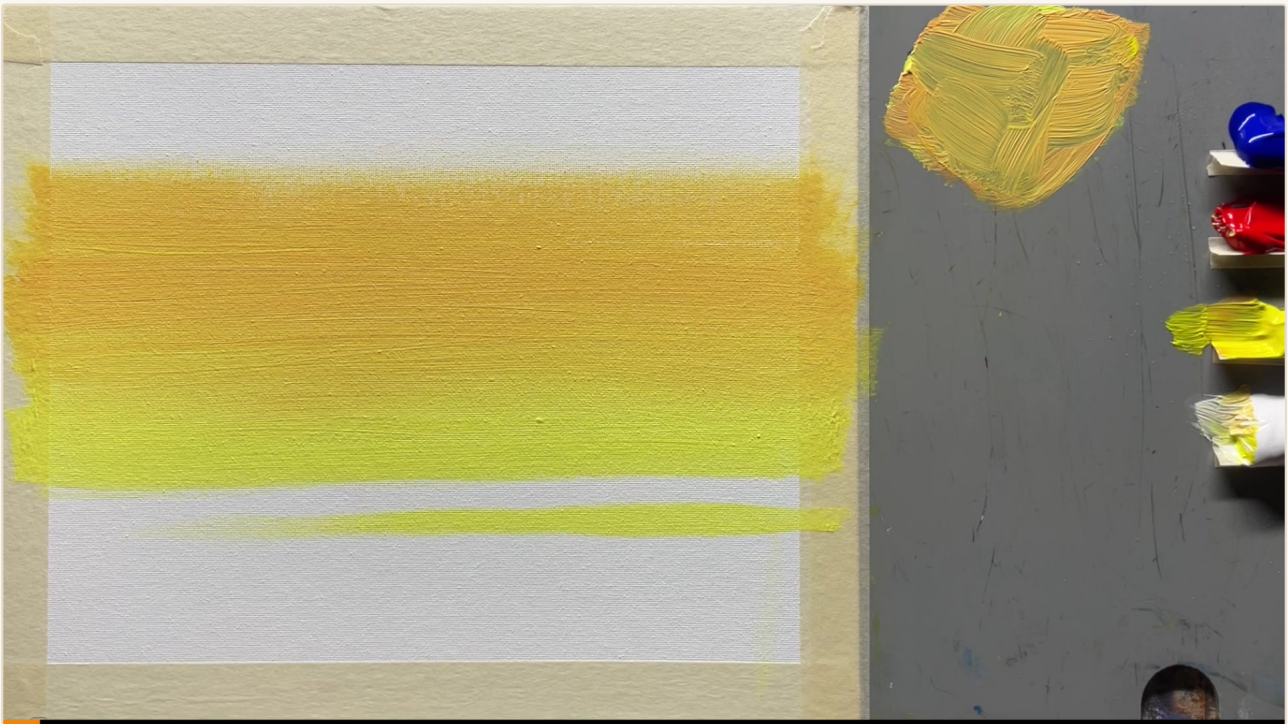
Blend with the Yellow

Reload your brush with the orange mix and begin again at the starting point. This time, paint downwards into the yellow area, allowing the colors to blend naturally. Stop a couple of inches before reaching the bottom to maintain a smooth transition.

PRO TIP

Ensure the paint is applied thickly to achieve a vibrant blend between colors.

4 Mixing and applying the pink color



Clean Your Brush

Wipe off any excess orange paint from your brush, then thoroughly wash it to remove all the orange paint. This ensures that your next color mix will be clean and accurate.

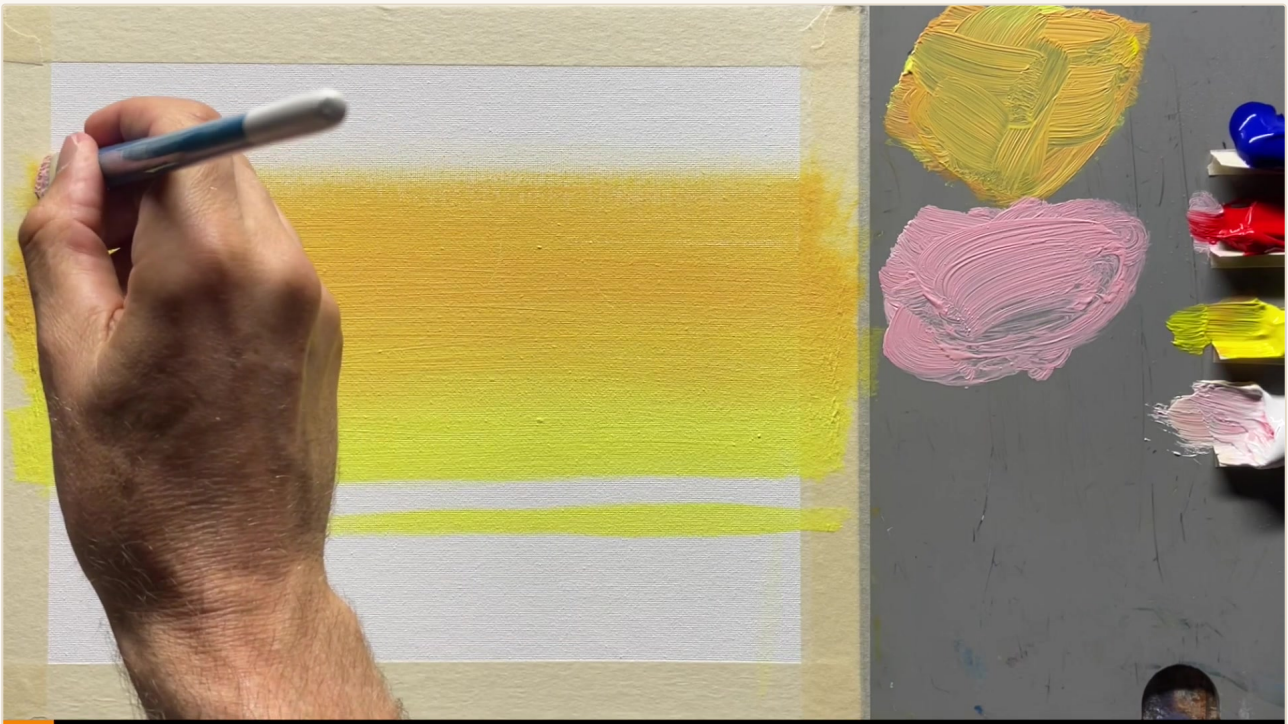
Mix the Pink Color

Take a small amount of red paint and add some white to it. Mix them together to create a soft pink color. When taking paint from the pile, always grab it from the edge and smush outwards to maintain a clean and organized palette.

PRO TIP

Always mix paint from the edge of the pile to keep your palette clean.

5 Blending the pink layer



Blend the Pink Layer

Add a tiny bit of water to your paint. Start at the top of the last section and use the tip of your brush to blend the paint by moving it backwards and forwards gently. Avoid pressing hard to maintain a soft blend.

Extend the Blend

Continue blending by moving upwards, but stop before reaching the top. This creates a smooth transition in the sky.

Add Cloud Details

Grab more paint and start blending from the initial point, moving downwards. Add small cloud shapes by making quick, light brushstrokes for added interest.

PRO TIP

Use the tip of your brush with gentle pressure to achieve a soft blend.

6 Mixing and applying the blue color



Clean the Brush

Wash your brush thoroughly and dry it slightly to prepare for the next color mix.

Mix the Blue Color

Combine mainly white with about a quarter blue. Add a tiny bit of water to achieve the right consistency.

Apply the Blue Color

Start applying the mix on the tape or halfway over the tape using the tip of the brush. Blend it down into the pink area, being careful not to go into the orange to avoid creating green.

Wash the Brush Again

Clean your brush after applying the blue to keep your colors pure for the next steps.

PRO TIP

Be patient and use only the tip of the brush for a gentle blend into the pink area.

7 Drawing the mountains



Prepare the Canvas

Use an HB pencil to prepare your canvas for drawing the mountains. Make halfway marks on the edges of your canvas and on your painting to help with alignment.

Draw the Main Shape

Identify the general S curve shape of the mountains. Determine the lowest and highest points of the mountains and mark them on your canvas.

Connect the Dots

Start at the halfway mark and draw a wiggly line connecting your marks to form the S curve. Ensure the line has little bumps to mimic the natural mountain shape.

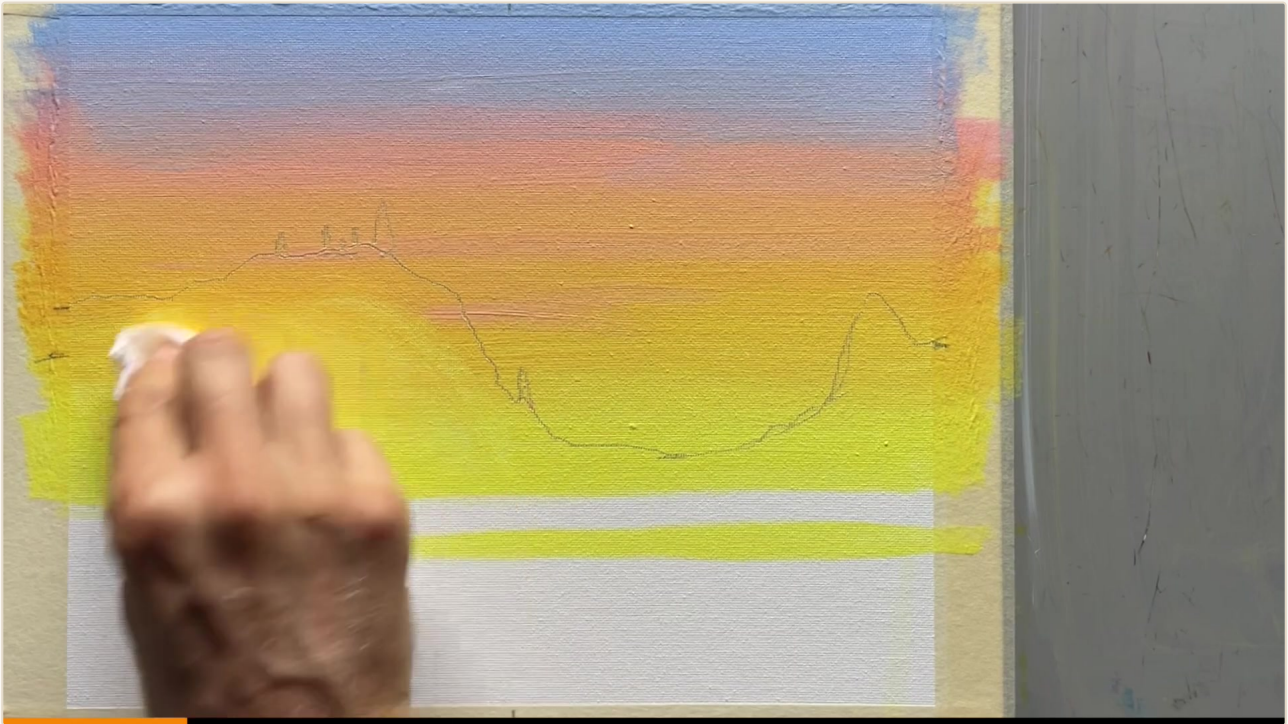
Add Details

Steady your hand using your little finger on the tape and add the lumpy bits to the mountain outline for more detail.

PRO TIP

Use halfway marks on your canvas to help align and proportion your mountain drawing accurately.

8 Mixing and applying the mountain color



Prepare Your Brush and Paints

Wet your square synthetic brush and ensure your paints are moist by giving them a light spray to keep them workable.

Mix the Mountain Color

Combine half blue, a quarter red, a quarter white, and a touch of yellow to create the mountain color. Mix a generous amount as it will cover a large area. The yellow helps to grey down the mixture slightly.

Apply the Mountain Color

Begin painting the mountain area, leaving a small space for the sun glow. Brush around this area softly to create a smooth transition.

Finish the Mountain Details

Use a smaller brush for the lumpy bits at the top of the mountains. If needed, use the flat brush to soften any marks and ensure a smooth finish.

PRO TIP

Leave a small space for the sun glow and brush softly around it to create a smooth transition.

9 Painting the mountain details



Paint the Sharp Triangle

Use a square brush to paint a sharp little triangle at the mountain's base. Start from the bottom and work your way out patiently, creating a soft edge as you go halfway up.

Mix Lighter Blue-Grey

Add some white and blue to your existing mixture to create a lighter blue-grey. Use this to fill in the middle section of the mountain.

Achieve a Straight Line

Lock your hand, wrist, and arm, and rotate at the hips to paint a smooth, straight line. This technique helps maintain control and precision.

Create Soft Waves

Start on the masking tape and brush inwards, gradually letting the pressure off to create soft waves. Repeat this process to enhance the effect.

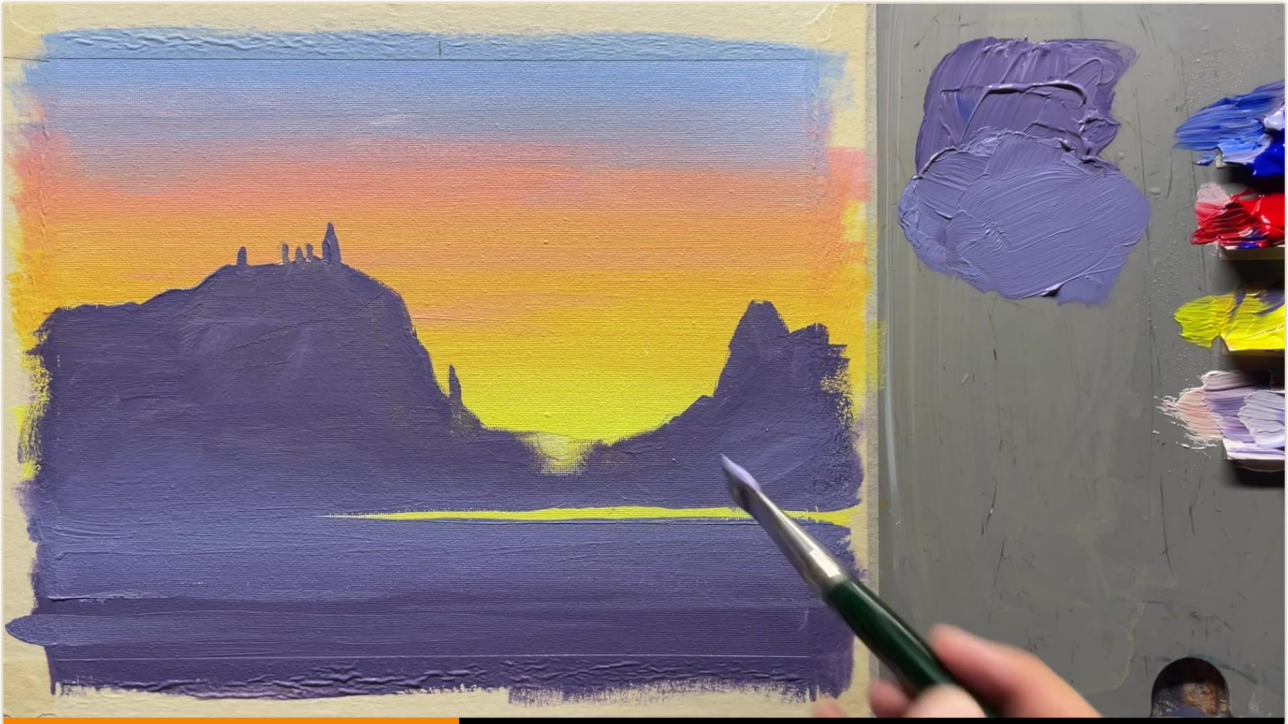
Paint the Crisp Yellow Triangle

For a crisp edge, hold the brush horizontally and use the very tip. Rotate at the waist to maintain a steady line, then paint upwards to soften into the misty morning base.

PRO TIP

Lock your arm and rotate at the waist for a smooth, straight line.

10 Painting the sun glow



Prepare the Brush

Wipe and wash your brush thoroughly to ensure it's clean for the sun glow area. This step is crucial for maintaining bright colors.

Mix the Sun Glow Color

Combine red, a little yellow, and some white to create a color slightly lighter than the blue-gray background. This will help the sun glow stand out.

Paint the Outer Sun Glow

Start on the outside of the sun glow area and paint softly in circular or semi-circular motions. Aim for a gentle, soft color application.

Add Orange to the Glow

Clean your brush again, then mix yellow with a little red to create an orange hue. Begin in the center and brush softly outwards, preserving some of the pink from the previous layer.

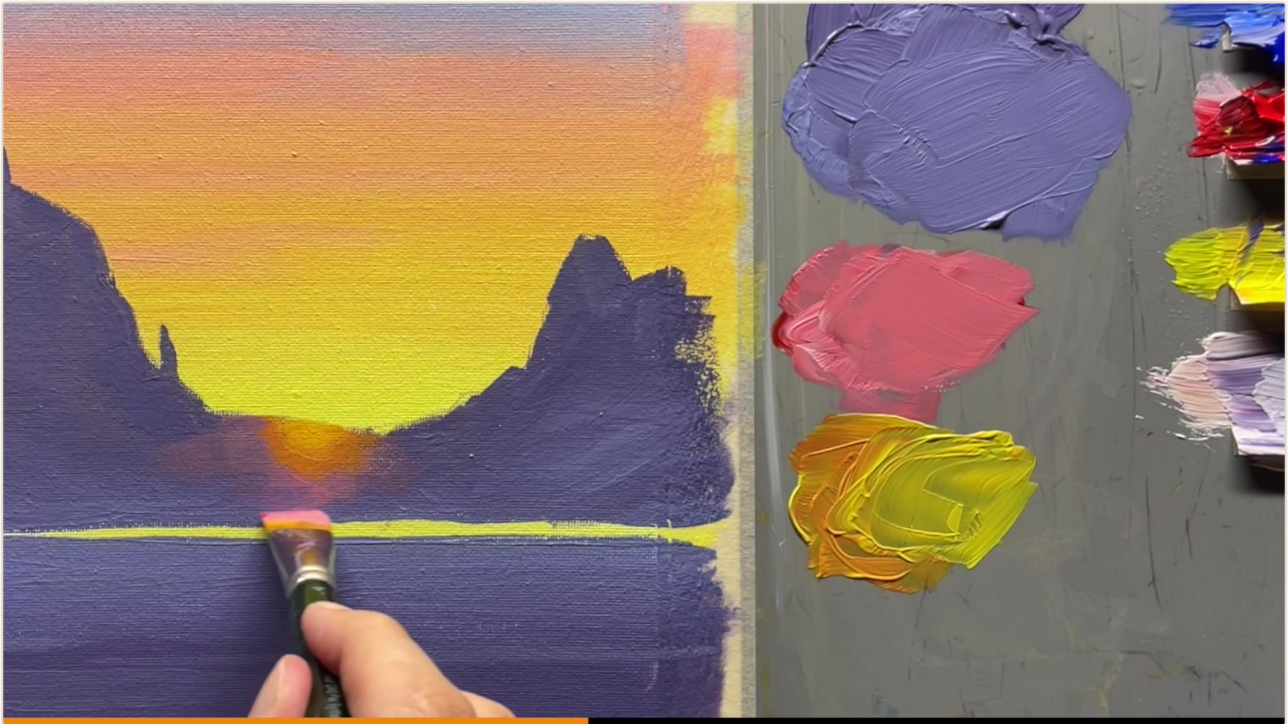
Enhance the Center

Wash your brush, add more yellow and a touch of white to the mix, and paint an even smaller circle or semi-circle in the middle. This adds a bright focal point to the sun glow.

PRO TIP

Keep your brush clean to maintain bright, vibrant colors in the sun glow area.

11 Creating water reflections



Create Water Reflections

Use the same colors from the sky to create reflections in the water. Hold the brush on its side and gently drag it across the canvas to mimic the water's surface.

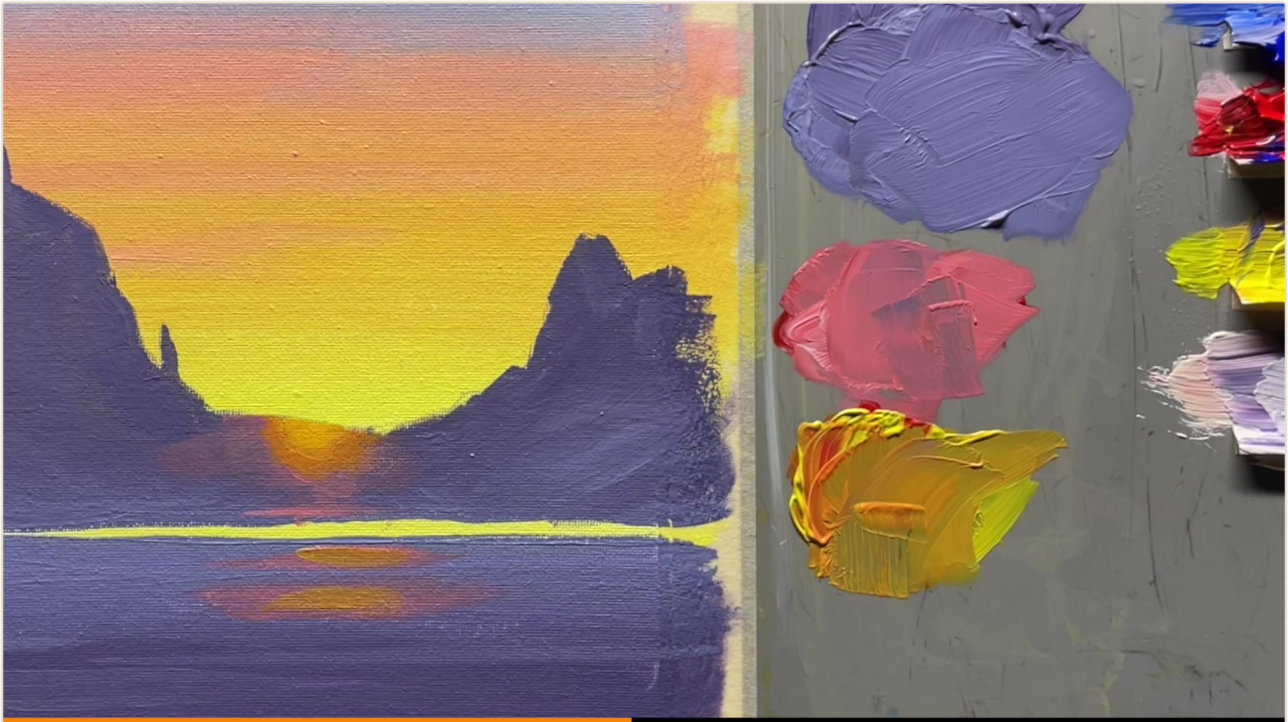
Add Orange Highlights

Clean and dry the brush, then pick up some orange paint. Softly apply it to the middle of the reflection sections to enhance the glow.

PRO TIP

Use the side of the brush to create natural-looking water reflections.

12 Painting the sun



Prepare the Brush

Wash your brush thoroughly to remove any previous paint. Wipe off excess water to ensure the brush is dry.

Load the Brush with White Paint

Load your brush with thick, pure white paint. Smooth the paint onto both sides of the brush for an even application.

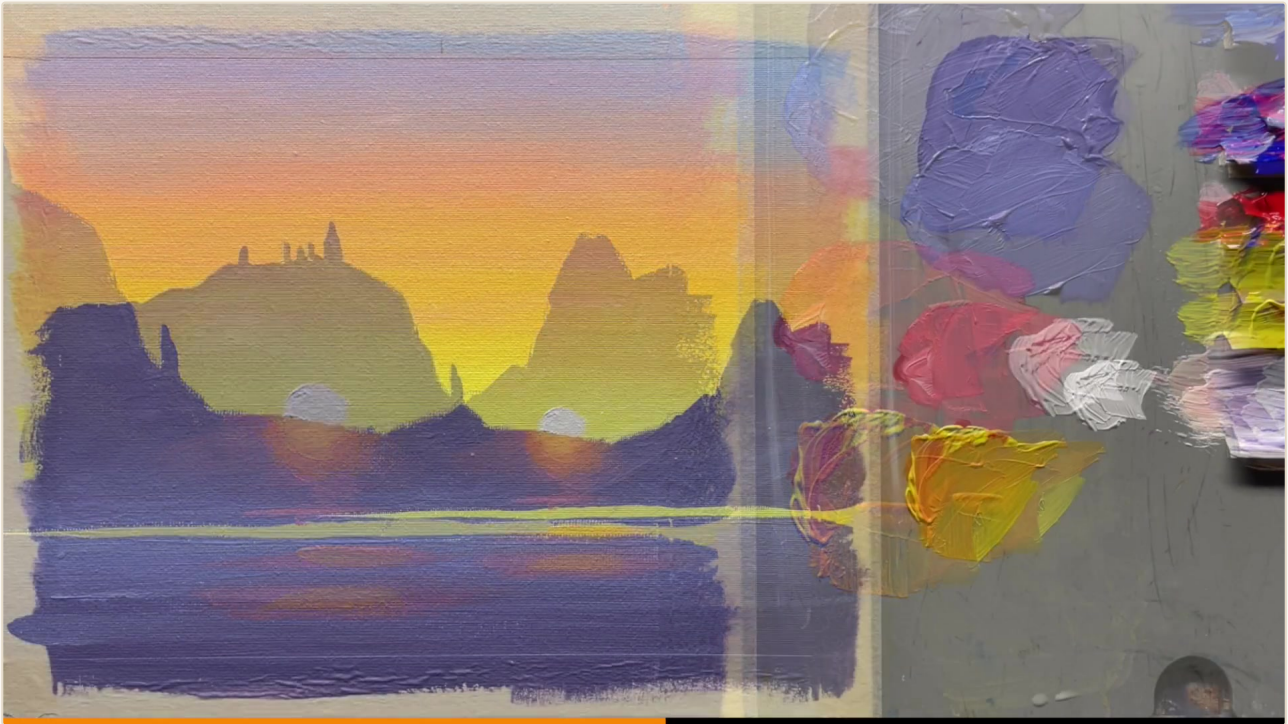
Paint the Sun

Use the corner of the brush to create a small semi-circle. Fill in the semi-circle to complete the sun.

PRO TIP

Ensure the brush is dry and loaded with thick white paint for a bright, opaque sun.

13 Adding details: Seagull



Prepare Your Brush

Grab a small brush and dip it into the orange paint. Twirl the brush in the paint to achieve a nice, crisp end.

Practice on Palette

Before painting on the canvas, practice drawing a seagull on your palette. This helps you get comfortable with the brush and shape.

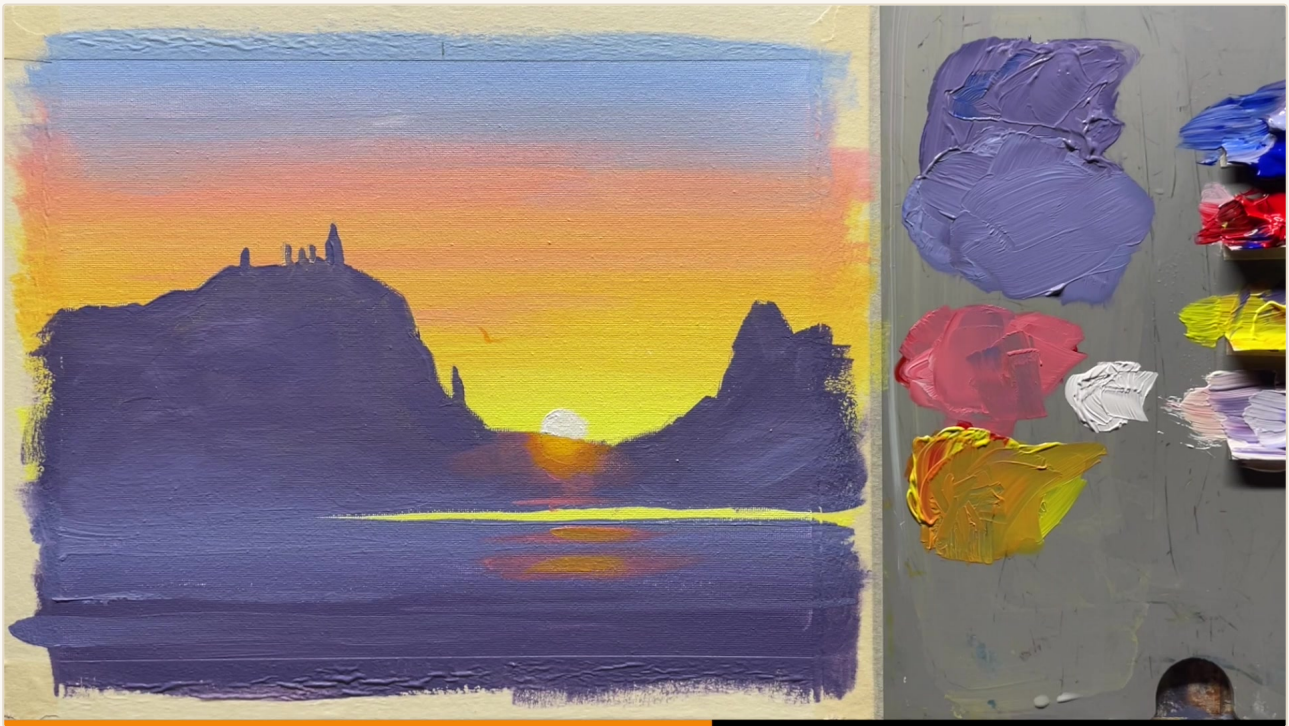
Paint the Seagull

Place your little finger on the canvas to support your hand. Using the very tip of the brush, paint a small seagull with curved wings in a likely spot on the painting.

PRO TIP

Support your hand with your little finger to steady your brush when painting fine details.

14 Mixing and applying the tree base color



Prepare Your Brush and Palette

Wash your brush thoroughly, as you won't need it immediately. Ensure your palette has enough space for mixing; clean it if necessary.

Mix the Tree Base Color

Use a large, rounded brush to mix the tree base color. Combine 60% blue, 30% red, and a bit of yellow to create the desired shade. Avoid adding white to this mixture.

Apply the Tree Base Color

Use the rounded brush to create cloud-shaped clumps for the tree. Adjust your grip for easier application, especially if you're right-handed, to paint the mirrored shapes effectively.

PRO TIP

Use a rounded brush to create cloud-like shapes for the tree clumps.

15 Painting tree clumps



Plan Tree Clump Placement

Determine where the tree clumps will start and how far they will extend downward. Use circular motions to create the initial shape of the clump.

Create Sky Holes

Leave gaps within the clump to represent sky holes. These will be painted in later, so don't worry about them now. Larger gaps can be left for bigger sky holes if desired.

Extend and Shape Clumps

Continue extending the clump using circular motions. Use 'C' shaped strokes on the right side and 'D' shaped strokes on the left to form the clump edges. These will be refined later, so focus on general shapes.

Add Leaf Details

Switch to a smaller brush to add leaves on the outskirts of the clumps. Vary the size and placement of the leaves to avoid creating a pattern.

PRO TIP

Use circular motions to form the basic shape of tree clumps, leaving gaps for sky holes.

16 Adding green highlights to the tree



Mix Green for Tree Highlights

Mix half blue with a lot of yellow, a bit of white, and a touch of red to create a vibrant green. Adjust by adding more yellow to achieve the desired shade.

Prepare the Brush

Flatten the green paint on both sides of the brush to ensure even application. This will help in creating consistent strokes.

Apply Green Highlights

Use the brush to make small, curved shapes on the tree. Vary the sizes of these shapes to avoid a repetitive pattern and create a natural look.

Reload the Brush Frequently

Reload the brush often to maintain a clean, bright color. This prevents the green from becoming muddied by the dark paint underneath.

PRO TIP

Flatten the paint on both sides of the brush for even application.

17 Adding red blossoms to the tree



Prepare the Brush

Wipe and wash your brush thoroughly to remove any water or paint. Smooth out the red paint on both sides of the brush to achieve a sharp point. Ensure the bottom half of the brush is free of paint or water to maintain a sharp edge.

Apply Red Blossoms

Dip the brush into the red paint, forming a small ridge of paint at the tip. Lightly touch the canvas on top of the green curves to place the red blossoms. Reload the brush after one or two touches to maintain the paint's thickness and brightness.

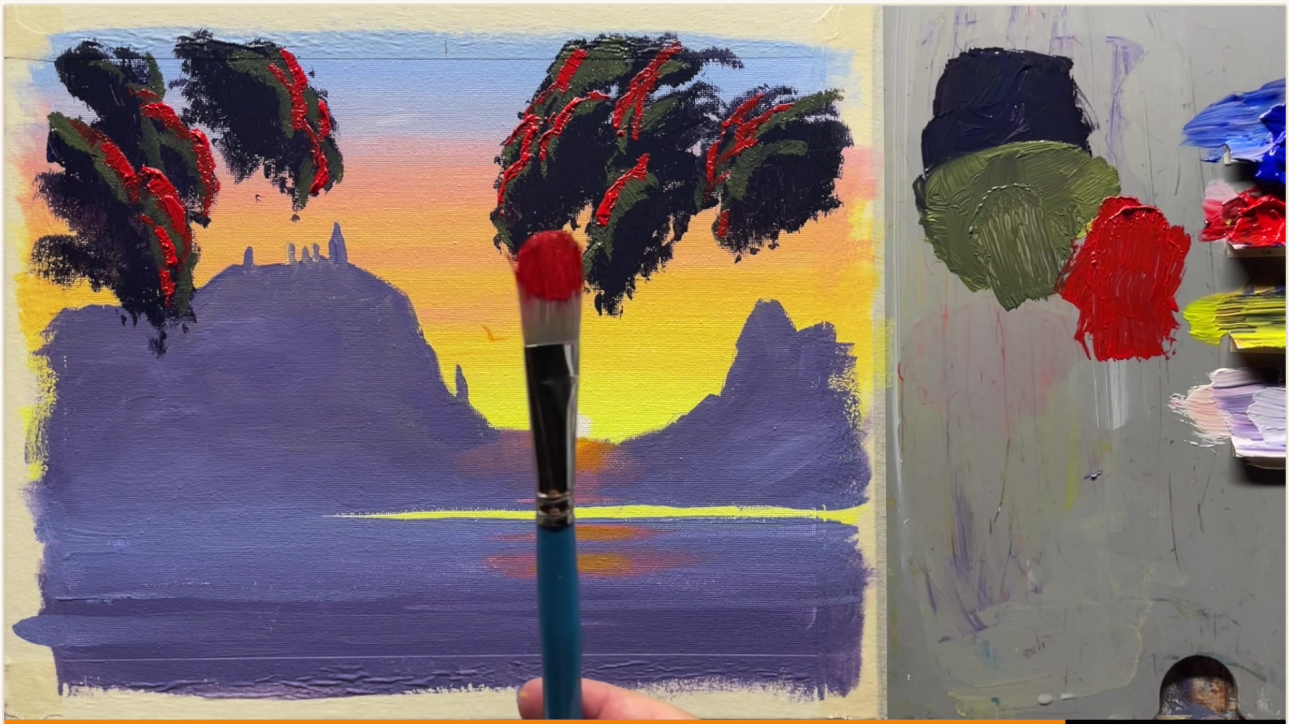
Create Light-Catching Blossoms

Avoid flattening the paint by pressing too hard, as this will diminish the effect. Allow the paint to form small lumps that catch the light, enhancing the tree's vibrant appearance.

PRO TIP

Smooth the paint on both sides of the brush to achieve a sharp point for precise application.

18 Painting tree branches



Prepare the Branch Color

Mix a slightly browner version of the dark tree color by adding a little more red and yellow. You can either mix it from scratch or adjust the existing dark color. This will give the branches a natural, warm tone.

Sketch the Branches

Draw the branches lightly with a pencil first. Observe the wriggly nature of the branches and where they start. The exact shape doesn't need to be perfect, just capture the general movement.

Paint the Branches

Use a medium-sized brush and add water to the paint for better flow. Start painting from the thickest part of the branch, following your pencil line. If the paint doesn't cover well, add more paint or water to fill the canvas texture.

Refine with a Smaller Brush

Switch to a smaller brush as the branches get thinner. Roll the brush in the paint to achieve a fine point. Use your little finger on a dry part of the canvas to steady your hand for precise lines.

PRO TIP

Rotate the brush as you paint to keep fresh paint on the surface and achieve smoother lines.

19 Adding highlights and sky holes



Add Highlights to Tree Branches

Mix a little white with the color you used for the branches, adding a touch of yellow and red. Apply this mix to the side of the trunk facing the sun, creating small highlights. Ensure these highlights are on the right side of the branches to capture the light correctly.

Paint Moss Details

Mix bright yellow with a little blue to create a thick paint for the moss. Paint small drippy triangles hanging from the tree branches to represent moss catching the light.

Add a Boat and Reflection

Use white with a spot of yellow to paint a small boat in the water. Draw a line under the boat and drag it down with your finger to create a reflection effect.

Incorporate Sky Holes

Mix yellow, blue, and a little red to create an orange tone for the sky holes. Paint these holes slightly darker than the surrounding sky, avoiding areas with branches or foliage. Vary the size and shape of the sky holes for a natural look.

PRO TIP

Ensure highlights on tree branches are on the side facing the sun to capture the light accurately.

20 Finishing touches and signature



Add Final Details

Use a mix of pink and blue, slightly darker than the sky, to add some final touches. Vary the size of these details with some tiny ones and some bigger ones to create interest.

Remove the Tape

Carefully pull off the tape to reveal the clean edges of your painting. This will give your work a polished and professional look.

Sign Your Painting

Use a small brush with a mix of blue and a spot of red, adding a little water to the mixture. Twirl the brush in the color and practice your signature on the palette before applying it to the painting.

PRO TIP

Practice your signature on the palette before adding it to the painting to ensure it looks just right.

Summary & Key Takeaways

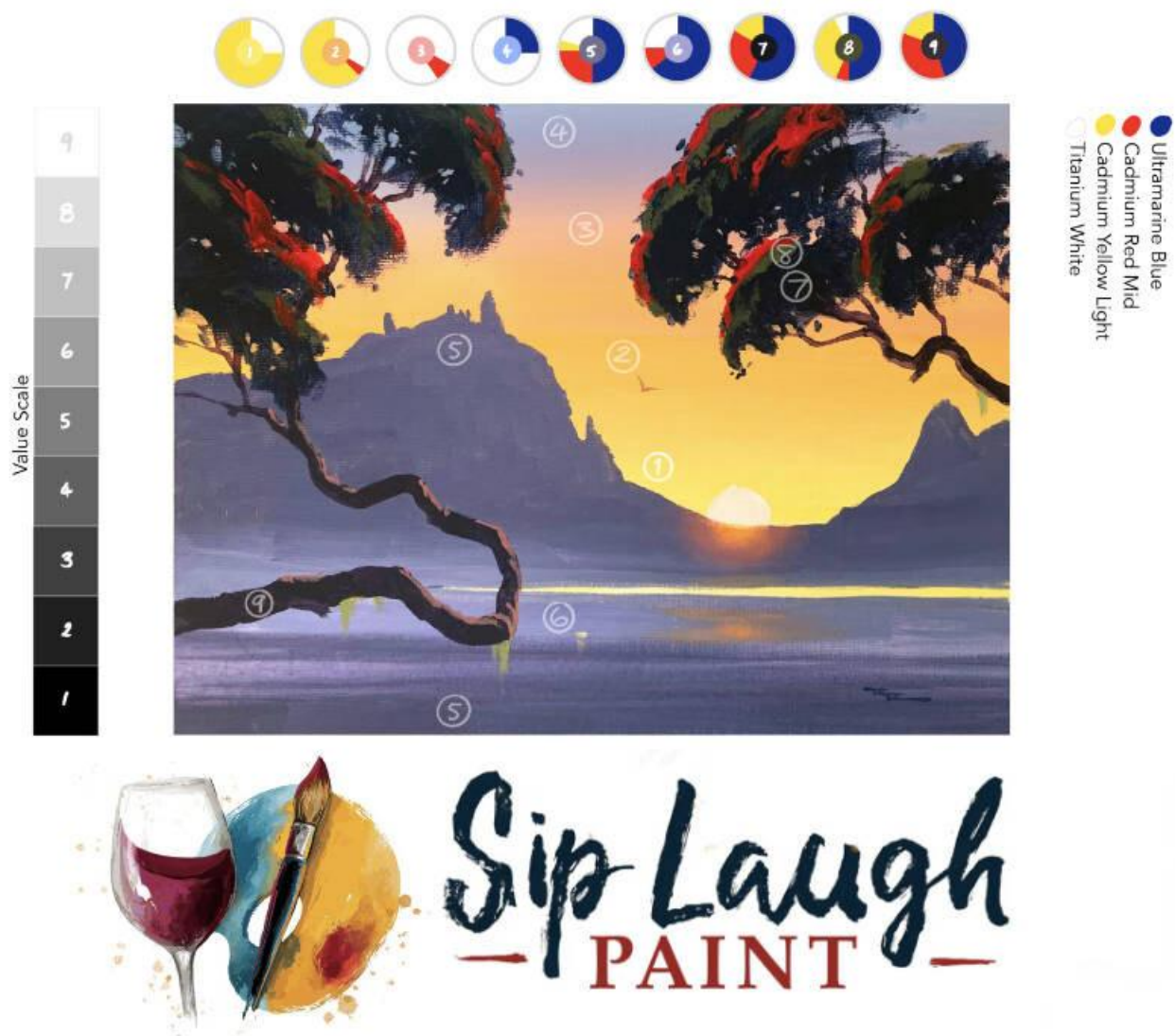
In this lesson, you embarked on a vibrant journey to capture the serene beauty of a Harbour Sunrise. Starting with the foundational colors, you learned to mix and apply layers of yellow, orange, pink, and blue to create a harmonious sky. Each layer required careful blending to achieve smooth transitions and capture the subtle shifts in light as the sun rises.

As you progressed, you added depth and dimension by painting the mountains and incorporating details like the sun glow and water reflections. These elements required precision and a steady hand, especially when drawing the mountain outlines and creating the soft, misty effects at their base.

Finally, you brought life to the scene with intricate details such as seagulls, trees, and blossoms. These finishing touches added character and vibrancy, transforming your canvas into a lively depiction of a sunrise over a tranquil harbour. Remember to embrace the process, enjoy the blending of colors, and let your creativity flow as you paint.

LESSON POINTS TO REMEMBER

- Focus on matching the color in the middle of the circle for accuracy.
- Dip your brush in water before painting to keep the bristles in good condition.
- Ensure the paint is applied thickly to achieve a vibrant blend between colors.
- Use the tip of your brush with gentle pressure to achieve a soft blend.
- Be patient and use only the tip of the brush for a gentle blend into the pink area.
- Lock your arm and rotate at the waist for a smooth, straight line.
- Keep your brush clean to maintain bright, vibrant colors in the sun glow area.
- Use circular motions to form the basic shape of tree clumps, leaving gaps for sky holes.



11x14" Acrylic on Canvas

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.

“Harbor Sunrise oil on canvas 11x14” by Nancy Newton



Harbor Sunrise oil on canvas 11x14

Nice job, Nancy. Only thing I'd change is to make the sun-glow more gradual - not such a hard edge to it.

""Harbour Sunrise" in acrylics, Toronto, ON,Canada" by **Eric Hillmer**



"Harbour Sunrise" in acrylics, Toronto, ON,Canada

Hey Eric, this all look good except for the colour of the mountains - they're a little too light, and the sun-glow needs to be lighter than the mountain. If the mountain colour were darker it would be perfect. Also, avoid any hard edges from brushstrokes within the mountains and water.