



The French Alps

A step-by-step painting guide by Richard Robinson

Watch the full lesson at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/62-The-French-Alps>

MY PAINTING CLUB

Introduction

Learn to paint the beautiful French Alps, step by step. Ah, the French Alps in Summer! Magnifique! The hills are alive with the sound of cowbells and all we're missing is Heidi frolicking in the meadows. Follow me step by step as I show you the techniques I use to paint this beautiful alpine scene quickly and easily in acrylics. Painting a diffuse light effect, vast atmospheric depth, dynamic brushwork and inventing convincing rocks are all demonstrated in the video. Enjoy!



"The French Alps" 13 x 13" Acrylic on Canvas by Richard Robinson



REFERENCE PHOTO 1

The scene as Richard found it.



REFERENCE PHOTO 2

The scene as Richard found it.

Materials

Here's everything I use for this painting. Don't worry 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 Scene Selection and Materials

Why did you choose this particular scene in the French Alps to paint?

I chose this scene because, after a long walk up a valley, I found a spot that was breathtaking and difficult to capture in a photograph. The scene was vast, so I decided to focus on the beautiful rocks and the dark trees, using the ascending valley and mountain tops as a backdrop. You can explore more about this choice and the painting process on the sales page at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/62-The-French-Alps>.

What materials are you using for this painting of the French Alps?

For this painting, I'm using acrylics on an acrylic primed canvas. I have a limited selection of brushes and a glass jar full of water. I'm not using any painting medium, just straight acrylics. You can find more details about the materials and techniques on the sales page at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/62-The-French-Alps>.

What is your approach to layering in this painting?

My approach to layering in this painting is to work quickly, starting with the background, then moving to the mid-ground, and finally the foreground. This method helps me manage the drying time of the acrylics and tackle the painting one step at a time. For a deeper dive into this technique, visit the sales page at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/62-The-French-Alps>.

2 Grouping Elements Concept

How does Richard Robinson suggest sketching elements in a painting?

Richard Robinson suggests using a brush rather than a pencil to sketch elements in a painting. He prefers this method as it aligns with his painting style. For more insights into his techniques, you can explore the lesson on the sales page at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/62-The-French-Alps>.

What analogy does Richard Robinson use for grouping elements like rocks and trees?

Richard Robinson uses the analogy of a family grouping to describe how to paint groupings of rocks and trees. He suggests imagining one large 'father' tree, a slightly smaller 'mother' tree, a few 'children,' and some 'cousins' off to the sides. This approach helps in visualizing and organizing elements in a painting. For more detailed guidance, visit the lesson's sales page at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/62-The-French-Alps>.

3 Painting the Sky

How do you start painting the sky in the French Alps scene?

To start painting the sky in the French Alps scene, begin with a base of blue and white using down strokes. This creates a foundation for the sky that you can build upon. For more detailed guidance, you can explore the full lesson at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/62-The-French-Alps>.

What colors are used to create a gradation in the sky?

To create a gradation in the sky, start with blue and white, then add more white and a little bit of yellow in the middle to lighten and warm the area. This creates a transition from cool blue to a lighter, warmer middle section. You can learn more about this technique at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/62-The-French-Alps>.

Why is it important not to have too many streaks in the sky?

It's important not to have too many streaks in the sky to maintain a smooth gradation and avoid distracting from the overall composition. A smooth transition helps convey the vastness and serenity of the sky. For more tips on achieving this effect, visit <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/62-The-French-Alps>.

Is it okay to paint over the lines when painting the sky?

Yes, it's okay to paint over the lines when painting the sky because the mountains will come up into the sky later. This allows for a more fluid and natural integration of the elements in your painting. For further insights, check out <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/62-The-French-Alps>.

How do you adjust the sky color to make it slightly darker?

To make the sky slightly darker, you can add a touch of blue to your mixture. This adjustment helps in creating depth and contrast within the sky. For more detailed instructions, you can refer to the full lesson at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/62-The-French-Alps>.

4 Blocking in the Mountains

What is the importance of blocking in the shape of the distant mountain?

Blocking in the shape of the distant mountain helps establish the overall composition and flow of the painting. It allows you to set the scene and create a foundation for the rest of the landscape. You can explore more about this technique on the sales page at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/62-The-French-Alps>.

Do I have to follow the photograph exactly when painting the mountains?

No, you don't have to follow the photograph exactly when painting the mountains. You have the creative freedom to make the mountains whatever you want, just like Richard Robinson does in the lesson. This flexibility allows for personal expression in your artwork. For more insights, visit the sales page at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/62-The-French-Alps>.

How can I avoid duplicating the lines when painting the mountains?

To avoid duplicating the lines when painting the mountains, it's important to vary the shapes and lines slightly. This prevents the painting from looking like a clone of itself and adds interest to the composition. You can learn more about this technique on the sales page at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/62-The-French-Alps>.

What color adjustments should I make as I move forward in the landscape?

As you move forward in the landscape, you should add more blue and a little bit more yellow to make the landscape slightly darker and greener. This helps create a sense of depth and distance in the painting. For further guidance, check out the sales page at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/62-The-French-Alps>.

How does the color of the landscape change as it moves backward?

As the landscape moves backward, it gets lighter and bluer. This color change helps convey depth and atmospheric perspective in the painting. You can delve deeper into this concept on the sales page at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/62-The-French-Alps>.

5 Adding Details to the Landscape

How can I add details like trees and shadows to a landscape painting?

You can add details such as trees and shadows to your landscape painting by using a big brush to indicate these elements. It's important to remember that you only need to suggest the details rather than paint them precisely. This approach helps to create a sense of depth and complexity in your painting. For more techniques on adding details to landscapes, visit the lesson page at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/62-The-French-Alps>.

What is the process for painting shadow colors in a mountain landscape?

When painting a mountain landscape, start by applying the shadow colors to the mountains. This forms the base layer, and the lighter colors will be added on top. This technique helps to create a realistic sense of light and shadow in your painting. You can explore more about this process on the lesson page at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/62-The-French-Alps>.

How should I adjust the colors as they come closer to the viewer in a landscape painting?

As the landscape elements come closer to the viewer, the colors should become a little bit greener and darker. This technique helps to create a sense of depth and perspective in your painting. For more detailed guidance on color adjustments in landscape painting, check out the lesson at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/62-The-French-Alps>.

6 Mixing and Applying Light Colors

How do you mix a color for the light areas when painting the French Alps?

To mix a color for the light areas, start by examining the shadow color you will be painting over. Then, create a color that is slightly lighter and greener than the shadow color. This adjustment helps to capture the natural lighting effect on the mountains. For more detailed guidance, you can explore the full lesson at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/62-The-French-Alps>.

What should you consider when painting mountains that recede into the distance?

As mountains recede into the distance, they appear lighter and bluer. Therefore, the green color of the light should also become lighter and bluer to maintain the atmospheric perspective. This subtle shift helps create depth in your painting. For further insights, visit the full lesson at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/62-The-French-Alps>.

Why is it beneficial to paint wet into wet when working on the light areas?

Painting wet into wet is beneficial because it allows the layers to blend smoothly, creating a nice, juicy look to the paintwork. This technique is particularly effective when using oils, as the longer drying time supports this method. To learn more about this technique, check out the lesson at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/62-The-French-Alps>.

What challenges might you face when using acrylics for this painting technique?

When using acrylics, the fast drying time can be challenging, as it can affect the ability to paint wet into wet. This can make or break the painting, so it's important to work quickly or use mediums to extend drying time. For more tips on handling acrylics, explore the lesson at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/62-The-French-Alps>.

7 Acrylics Drying Time Tips

How can I extend the drying time of acrylic paints?

To extend the drying time of acrylic paints, you can use large piles of paint on your palette, as thicker paint takes longer to dry. Additionally, incorporating a retarder medium into your mixtures and using it in your water or spray bottle can help. For more tips on managing acrylic drying times, visit the lesson page at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/62-The-French-Alps>.

What is a stay wet palette and why is it useful for acrylic painting?

A stay wet palette is a tool that helps keep acrylic paints moist for a longer period, preventing them from drying out quickly. This is particularly useful for acrylic painting as it allows you more time to work with the paint. For more insights on using a stay wet palette, check out the lesson page at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/62-The-French-Alps>.

What are some acrylic paint brands that have longer drying times?

Golden Open and Chroma Interactive Acrylics are two brands known for their longer drying times. These paints are designed to stay workable for extended periods, with some even being reworkable. To learn more about these options, visit the lesson page at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/62-The-French-Alps>.

What painting process should I follow to effectively use acrylics?

When painting with acrylics, it's effective to follow a process of painting the background first, then the mid-ground, and finally the foreground. This approach helps in managing the drying time and layering of the paints. For a detailed guide on this process, visit the lesson page at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/62-The-French-Alps>.

How can painting quickly benefit my acrylic painting process?

Painting quickly can be beneficial when using acrylics because it allows you to work with the paint while it's still wet, making blending and adjustments easier. This approach complements the use of tools like retarders and stay wet palettes. For more strategies on painting efficiently with acrylics, visit the lesson page at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/62-The-French-Alps>.

8 Finishing the Background

What colors did you use for the cloud in the background?

For the cloud in the background, I used a big blob of white with a little bit of yellow to give it a soft, natural look. This combination helps create a realistic cloud effect. For more details on this technique, you can visit the sales page at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/62-The-French-Alps>.

How did you soften the cloud in the painting?

I softened the cloud by blurring it with a paper towel, which helps to make the cloud appear more random and natural. This technique adds a gentle, blended effect to the cloud. To explore this technique further, check out the lesson at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/62-The-French-Alps>.

What did you use to add rocky features to the background hills?

I used a little bit of tinting grey to add some slightly rocky features and textures to the background hills. This color choice helps to create depth and interest in the landscape. For a deeper dive into this method, visit the sales page at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/62-The-French-Alps>.

How did you add dark accents to the mid-ground?

I added a few little dark accents to the mid-ground using a fine brush. This technique helps to define and enhance the details in the painting. You can learn more about this approach by visiting the lesson at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/62-The-French-Alps>.

9 Mid-ground Trees and Light Effects

How can I create the effect of light haze on the tops of mid-ground trees?

To create the effect of light haze on the tops of mid-ground trees, you can lighten and add a blue tint to the tops of the trees. This technique mimics the natural light coming down from the sky, as seen in the photograph. For more detailed guidance on capturing this effect, you can explore the full lesson at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/62-The-French-Alps>.

What technique can be used to create depth in the mid-ground trees?

To create depth in the mid-ground trees, you should lighten and add a blue tint to the trees that are further in the background. This helps to distinguish different layers of trees and enhances the sense of depth in your painting. For a deeper understanding of this technique, visit the full lesson at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/62-The-French-Alps>.

10 Painting Trees with Depth

What is the darkest tree color used in this painting technique?

The darkest tree color used in this painting technique is a dark grey-green. This serves as the base color from which lighter and bluer variations are created. For more details on this technique, you can visit the sales page at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/62-The-French-Alps>.

Why is it important to use a crisp square brush for painting trees?

A crisp square brush is important because it allows you to create nice sharp little marks, which are essential for painting trees with interesting and irregular shapes. This helps in achieving dynamic edges rather than soft, less defined ones. You can learn more about brush techniques on the sales page at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/62-The-French-Alps>.

Why should you use lots of paint when painting trees?

Using lots of paint is crucial because it ensures that the paint covers the canvas in one stroke, preventing the need for repeated dabbing. Repeated dabbing can soften the edges of the stroke, making them less dynamic. For further insights into this technique, visit the sales page at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/62-The-French-Alps>.

How do the colors of the trees change as they go further back in the painting?

As the trees go further back in the painting, they get slightly lighter and bluer. This change in color helps to create a sense of depth and atmospheric perspective. More details on creating depth in your paintings can be found at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/62-The-French-Alps>.

What happens to the color of the tree as it goes up into the sky?

As the tree goes up into the sky, the color gets lighter and bluer. This is because the shadow color for the tree becomes lighter and bluer, reflecting the infused light area of the sky. For more on this technique, check out the sales page at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/62-The-French-Alps>.

Why is it important to avoid too many strokes when painting light into dark paint?

It's important to avoid too many strokes because the paint beneath is still wet, and excessive strokes can cause the colors to mix too much, turning them to mud. Using a few careful strokes helps maintain the desired color and texture. You can explore more about this technique at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/62-The-French-Alps>.

How should the color green be adjusted for trees in the background?

For trees in the background, the color green should be adjusted by adding white and blue to make it lighter and bluer. This adjustment helps to create a sense of depth and distance in the painting. More about color adjustments can be found at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/62-The-French-Alps>.

11 Adding Color Variations to Trees

Why is the orange color in the tree not pure orange?

The orange color in the tree is not pure because blue has been added to tone it down. This creates a more subtle and realistic effect, rather than a vibrant and potentially overpowering orange. For more insights on color mixing and creating natural tones, you can explore the full lesson at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/62-The-French-Alps>.

What is the purpose of adding a darker brown as the shadow side?

The darker brown is used as the shadow side to create contrast and depth in the painting. By painting the shadow into the lights, it reverses the approach used on other trees, adding interest and variety. To learn more about creating depth with shadows, visit the lesson at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/62-The-French-Alps>.

How does thinking about trees in terms of a family help in painting them?

Thinking about trees in terms of a family helps to consider their size, spacing, and shape cohesively. It also aids in organizing light and dark shapes, ensuring that not all trees have the same lighting, which adds realism and variety. For a deeper understanding of this concept, check out the lesson at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/62-The-French-Alps>.

Why is it important to look for big shapes with darks and lights?

Looking for big shapes with darks and lights helps to simplify the composition and create a strong visual impact. It allows the painter to focus on the overall structure and balance of the painting. For more techniques on achieving this, explore the full lesson at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/62-The-French-Alps>.

What variations are added to the trees in the background?

A bluish dark grey is added to the base of the trees in the background to create subtle variations. This helps to differentiate the trees and adds depth to the scene. To see how these variations enhance the painting, visit the lesson at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/62-The-French-Alps>.

How does the tree on the right differ in color variation?

The tree on the right is painted with a greener hue, providing a subtle variation that distinguishes it from the other trees. This variation adds interest and helps to create a more dynamic composition. For more on using color variations effectively, see the lesson at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/62-The-French-Alps>.

12 Painting Grasses and Textures

How can I create the effect of sunlit grasses on top of a rock in my painting?

To create the effect of sunlit grasses on top of a rock, start by adding a warm golden color into the background area. Use thick paint for the lightest, brightest parts of the grasses to capture the sunlight. For more detailed guidance, visit the lesson page at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/62-The-French-Alps>.

What technique should I use to make my painted grasses look like a natural explosion of texture?

To achieve a natural explosion of texture in your painted grasses, use your brush in a random way. You can use the side, point, or corner of the brush and employ techniques like dragging, pushing, or splatting to create random marks. This will give your painting a dynamic and natural look. For more tips, check out the full lesson at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/62-The-French-Alps>.

How can I make my painted grasses look like finely trimmed shrubs?

If you want your painted grasses to resemble finely trimmed shrubs, use a consistent dabbing technique with your brush. Make the brush strokes uniform to achieve a neat, garden-like appearance. For more detailed instructions, visit the lesson page at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/62-The-French-Alps>.

What brush technique can I use to create a bushy feel with soft edges in my painting?

To create a bushy feel with soft edges, use the side of your brush with thick paint and drag it across the canvas in a staccato rhythm. This technique helps in achieving a textured, bushy effect at the bottom of your painting. For further exploration of this technique, visit <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/62-The-French-Alps>.

13 Mixing and Applying Rock Colors

How do you mix a color for the shadow side of a rock?

To mix a color for the shadow side of a rock, start with a fairly neutral gray and add a little bit of warmth. You can achieve this by incorporating a touch of yellow. If the rock is in a greenish area, like surrounded by grass and trees, you might want to add a little bit of green. For more details, visit the lesson page at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/62-The-French-Alps>.

What technique can create texture in rock painting?

To create texture in rock painting, try not mixing the paint thoroughly on your palette. This will result in a nice streaking effect that can easily add texture to the rocks. For further exploration of this technique, check out the lesson at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/62-The-French-Alps>.

How can you avoid making rocks look too smooth when painting?

To avoid making rocks look too smooth, let your brush strokes lay where they fall and avoid overworking the paint. Stepping back from the painting every few brushstrokes helps ensure the texture reads well from a distance. For more tips on achieving the right texture, visit <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/62-The-French-Alps>.

Why would you add warmer, lighter orange to a rock in a painting?

Adding warmer, lighter orange to a rock can simulate the effect of warm grasses reflecting their light onto the rock's shadow side. This technique adds depth and realism to your painting. Learn more about this approach at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/62-The-French-Alps>.

How do you strengthen shadows on rocks in a painting?

To strengthen shadows on rocks, use a warm, darker gray. This can enhance the depth and contrast in your painting. For additional guidance on shadow techniques, visit the lesson page at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/62-The-French-Alps>.

What is the purpose of using a mid-gray palette?

Using a mid-gray palette helps you judge other values more accurately. It provides a neutral background that allows you to better assess the colors and tones you are mixing. For more insights on using a mid-gray palette, check out <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/62-The-French-Alps>.

How do you mix a bluish mid-gray for the lights on the top of a rock?

To mix a bluish mid-gray for the lights on the top of a rock, start with a mid-gray and add a touch of blue. This color reflects the bluish sky and gets darker and bluer as it moves into the shadow. For a deeper understanding of this technique, visit <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/62-The-French-Alps>.

14 Highlighting Rocks

What color should be used for highlighting rocks in the painting?

For highlighting rocks in this painting, a warm grey should be used. This color is applied very thickly to create the desired effect. You can explore more about color choices and techniques for painting rocks on the sales page at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/62-The-French-Alps>.

How should the highlights be applied to the rocks?

The highlights should be applied very thickly and with care to avoid duplicating lines. It's important to consider the contours you create and think about joining some lines to form big shapes. This technique helps in adding depth and realism to the rocks. For further insights into applying highlights, visit the sales page at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/62-The-French-Alps>.

What should be considered when deciding where to place highlights on the rocks?

When placing highlights, consider where the light would naturally make the rock appear lighter or slightly darker. For instance, some areas might catch a glint of light, making them lighter. This thoughtful placement of highlights completes the look of the rocks. To learn more about strategic highlighting, check out the sales page at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/62-The-French-Alps>.

Why is it important to avoid duplicating lines when highlighting rocks?

Avoiding the duplication of lines is important to maintain a natural and varied appearance in the rock's texture. Repeating lines can make the painting look artificial and less dynamic. For more tips on creating realistic textures, you can visit the sales page at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/62-The-French-Alps>.

15 Backlighting and Rim Lighting

How can I create a soft glowing edge when painting highlights?

To create a soft glowing edge when painting highlights, you can use a dry brush to adjust hard edges and make them softer. By using the side of the brush, you can scoop back any hard edges to achieve a nice, soft glow. This technique helps in making the highlights appear more natural and integrated with the rest of the painting. For more detailed guidance, you can explore the lesson on the sales page at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/62-The-French-Alps>.

What is the effect of backlighting in a painting?

Backlighting in a painting creates a beautiful light effect where the light source is behind the subject, causing shadows to face towards the viewer and lighting to appear around the rim of objects. This technique, also known as 'contre-jour,' enhances the form and adds a dramatic effect to the painting. You can learn more about this technique in the full lesson available at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/62-The-French-Alps>.

What is rim lighting and how is it used in painting?

Rim lighting is a technique where light outlines the edges of an object, creating a glowing effect around its rim. This is particularly effective in backlighting scenarios, where the light source is behind the subject. Rim lighting can add depth and interest to a painting by highlighting the contours of objects. For a deeper dive into this technique, check out the lesson at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/62-The-French-Alps>.

How can I avoid overdoing highlights in my painting?

To avoid overdoing highlights in your painting, it's important to use them sparingly and with intention. Highlights should enhance the painting without overpowering it. Using a dry brush to soften edges can help maintain balance and ensure that the highlights blend naturally with the rest of the scene. For more tips on managing highlights, visit the lesson at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/62-The-French-Alps>.

16 Using Black and Creating Shadows

Why does Richard Robinson not normally use black on his palette?

Richard Robinson typically avoids using black on his palette because it can deaden colors when mixed, leading to a gray, muted painting with less vibrancy. Instead, he prefers creating a chromatic black by mixing dark colors like dark blue and burnt sienna, which preserves more color vibrancy. For more insights, you can visit the sales page at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/62-The-French-Alps>.

What is a chromatic black and how can it be created?

A chromatic black is a mixture of dark colors that results in a black-like hue without the dulling effect of traditional black paint. Richard Robinson suggests mixing dark blue with burnt sienna to achieve this effect. This method helps maintain the vibrancy of colors in your painting. To explore this technique further, check out the lesson at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/62-The-French-Alps>.

What is the risk of using black in painting, according to Richard Robinson?

The risk of using black in painting, as explained by Richard Robinson, is that it often gets mixed into mid-tones and light areas, resulting in a gray, muted painting. This can leach the vibrancy out of your colors. He advises using black sparingly and only in very dark mixtures to avoid this issue. For more advice on using black in your paintings, visit <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/62-The-French-Alps>.

Why did Richard Robinson decide to use black in this particular painting video?

Richard Robinson decided to use black in this painting video to see if it would speed up the process, especially since he was working with acrylics. He found that using black helped make creating shadows and greys a bit quicker. For more on his approach in this lesson, visit <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/62-The-French-Alps>.

How can black be used effectively in painting according to the lesson?

To use black effectively in painting, Richard Robinson suggests using it sparingly and only in very dark mixtures. This approach helps prevent the black from dulling the vibrancy of the painting. For more detailed guidance on using black in your artwork, you can explore the lesson at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/62-The-French-Alps>.

17 Foreground Details and Highlights

How do you create the appearance of tussock grasses in a painting?

To create the appearance of tussock grasses, use mostly upstrokes with your brush. This technique results in a soft edge at the top of the stroke, mimicking the look of grasses. For more detailed guidance, you can explore the full lesson at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/62-The-French-Alps>.

How do you adjust the color of the foreground as you move into the corner of the painting?

As you move into the corner of the painting, you can make the colors gradually darker and cooler by adding more blue to your brown mixture. This helps create depth and a sense of shadow in the painting. For further insights, visit the lesson at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/62-The-French-Alps>.

What is important to consider when drawing rocks that are further away in a painting?

When drawing rocks that are further away, it's important to make them smaller, skinnier, and closer together. This creates a sense of distance and perspective in your painting. To learn more about this technique, check out the full lesson at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/62-The-French-Alps>.

How can you create the effect of a log lying in the grass in a painting?

To create the effect of a log lying in the grass, brush in the log quickly and then add some grasses in front of it using quick upward strokes. This makes it look like the log is sitting naturally in the grass. For more detailed instructions, visit the lesson at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/62-The-French-Alps>.

How do you add highlights and shadows to rocks in a painting?

After blocking in the shadow and mid-value sides of the rocks, you can add highlights on the top. Then, make the areas around the rocks darker and cooler by adding a bit of blue and grey to create shadows. For a comprehensive guide, refer to the lesson at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/62-The-French-Alps>.

What technique can be used to add vibrant green spots in a painting?

To add vibrant green spots in a painting, you can use them sparingly to add a little bit of 'spice' or interest to the scene. These spots can enhance the overall vibrancy and appeal of your painting. For more techniques like this, explore the lesson at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/62-The-French-Alps>.

18 Adjusting Foreground Elements

How should I adjust the shadows on the tree in the foreground?

To adjust the shadows on the tree in the foreground, make sure the shadow side is a little bit darker. This helps to create depth and make the tree stand out as a foreground element. For more detailed guidance on painting techniques for the French Alps, visit the sales page at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/62-The-French-Alps>.

What color should I use for the shadows on rocks and logs in the foreground?

For the shadows on rocks and logs in the foreground, you can use a bluish color to represent the reflected light. This adds a realistic touch to your painting by mimicking natural light conditions. To explore more about painting landscapes like the French Alps, check out the lesson at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/62-The-French-Alps>.

19 Adding Final Details to Rocks

What tool is used to add details to the branches and trunks in the painting?

To add details to the branches and trunks, a script liner brush is used. This tool helps in creating fine lines that add vertical interest and break up the forms in the dark bushes. For more tips on using different brushes, visit the lesson page at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/62-The-French-Alps>.

How can you add three-dimensionality to the rocks in a painting?

To add three-dimensionality to the rocks, you can intensify the shadows by creating dark accents. This technique helps to enhance the depth and form of the rocks, making them appear more realistic. For further exploration of this technique, check out the full lesson at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/62-The-French-Alps>.

What is the effect of adding darks and lights to the rocks?

Adding darks and lights to the rocks helps them to 'grow' and develop their own form, creating an interesting and dynamic effect. This technique allows the rocks to appear more natural and integrated into the landscape. To learn more about this approach, visit the lesson at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/62-The-French-Alps>.

20 Reflection on Painting Process

How long did it take to complete the painting of the French Alps in acrylics?

It took just over an hour to complete the painting in acrylics. This quick pace was intentional to achieve a fluid look, which is challenging with acrylics due to their fast drying time. For more insights into this painting process, visit the sales page at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/62-The-French-Alps>.

Why did the instructor choose to paint quickly with big globs of paint?

The instructor painted quickly with big globs of paint to achieve a fluid look similar to wet-on-wet painting, which is difficult with acrylics because they dry quickly. This technique was part of an exercise to paint fast and confidently. You can explore more about this technique on the sales page at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/62-The-French-Alps>.

How many times did the instructor paint the French Alps, and why?

The instructor painted the French Alps three times. The first was for personal practice, the second was intended for a video that unfortunately stopped working halfway through, and the third was to successfully complete the video lesson. Each attempt helped improve speed and confidence. For further details, check out the sales page at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/62-The-French-Alps>.

What benefit did the instructor find in painting the French Alps multiple times?

Painting the French Alps multiple times helped the instructor paint faster and with more confidence. Repeating the process allowed for refinement of technique and a better understanding of the painting. You can learn more about the benefits of practice in painting on the sales page at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/62-The-French-Alps>.

Summary & Key Takeaways

Reflecting on our journey through painting the French Alps, I aimed to capture the breathtaking scene that I encountered on my hike. The vastness of the landscape was challenging, yet rewarding, as we focused on the intricate details of the rocks and trees against the majestic backdrop of the mountains. By using acrylics, we embraced the quick-drying nature of the medium, allowing us to layer and build depth effectively.

Throughout this lesson, I encouraged you to see beyond the photograph, to interpret and express the scene with your own artistic flair. By grouping elements like trees and rocks into familial clusters, we created a harmonious composition that guides the viewer's eye through the painting. The sky, with its smooth gradation and subtle transitions, set the tone for the entire piece, while the mountains provided a solid foundation for our landscape.

I hope you take away the importance of working quickly with acrylics, using tools like stay wet palettes and retarders to manage drying times. Remember, the key to a successful painting lies in the details—suggesting rather than defining, and allowing the viewer's imagination to fill in the gaps. I look forward to seeing how you apply these techniques in your future works.

LESSON POINTS TO REMEMBER

- Start with the background and work forward to manage drying time.
- Use a brush to sketch elements, not a pencil.
- Imagine trees and rocks as a family group to organize your composition.
- Create a smooth sky gradation to convey vastness.
- Feel free to deviate from the photograph for creative expression.
- Use a stay wet palette to keep acrylics workable longer.
- Add depth with color shifts—darker and greener in the foreground, lighter and bluer in the distance.
- Suggest details rather than painting them precisely.



"The French Alps" 13 x 13" Acrylic 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.

“The French Alps II” by Susan Burke



"The French Alps II" 8x10" Acrylic by Susan Burke

Your painting has good colour and tones Susan - good lights and darks that give a nice sense of sunlight. I like the blues that you have used to get a sense of distance into the mountains but you need to be careful when you apply the highlights to those distant peaks - they are too green for that distance. I like the colours used in your trees too but you may notice that the tops of the trees are in a straight line sloping down steeply to the left, as do the hills that we are standing on so that the painting has developed a strong feeling of sliding towards the bottom left corner.

When I look at your rocks, I get the feeling that you are painting what you know, not what you see. The shapes of your rocks and their whole character suggest that you are making them up. Probably the easiest way to solve that problem is to go outside, find some really nice boulders, and sketch and paint them. If you can get the choice of coastal and inland boulders, all the better!

“Explore III” by Silke Sauritz



"Explore III" 29x32" Oil on Canvas by Silke Sauritz

Wellâ€¦This is certainly different Silke. A painting loaded with nice colour and ambience.

Two things that I need to mention. The natural landscape is normally random in its design - we may see things that look like each other but they are more the exception rather than the rule. If, when we design a painting, we repeat shapes or have equidistant elements or perhaps have intersecting edges all at one point, then we eliminate that sense of random. Our painting begins to look like an arrangement.

You will notice when you look at your painting that the rocks and the trees behind those rocks are arranged neatly in the corners of the painting, that the hills coming down from both the left and the right sides of your painting are almost exactly the same angle and form a very nice 'u' in the centre of the picture, and that the band of trees in the centre of the valley look very neatly arranged - a man-made plantation. Small points but they can so easily take away the feeling of reality in your painting.

Painting or sketching from nature outdoors can often help.

“The Way to the Valley” by Nili Tunis



"The Way to the Valley" 10.5x11" Acrylic by Nili Tunis

This is a bold approach! Lots of colour and strong lights and shadows. A nice arrangement of the elements in the painting with the path helping us to get to the background.

Two things to be aware of though - yellow is the first colour to fade with distance. The yellow slopes back behind the trees and the path as it turns the corner are shouting for attention - their colour is too strong. The other slight problem is that the tallest tree and the mountain top on the right are too close to the edge/ frame- they are creating 'tension points.' Best avoided.

“Workshop 46” by Tammy Wolcott



"Workshop 46" 12x12" Acrylic by Tammy Wolcott

This too is a very good effort – lots of imagination in the way the rocks have been presented. They lead us back into the painting very nicely. The trees however are quite a visual barrier - they virtually forbid us from going any further! (This is true for several of the paintings). In this situation, I would lower the trees and simplify them into a more general shape rather than a series of conspicuous points.

Overall, the sense of colour, particularly in the background, is very good.