



# Fishing Boats

---

A step-by-step painting guide by Richard Robinson

Watch the full lesson at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/15-Fishing-Boats>

MY PAINTING CLUB



# Introduction

---

In this chapter, we're diving into the captivating world of painting old fishing boats, a subject that offers a delightful blend of structure and spontaneity. There's something inherently charming about these classic vessels, their weathered surfaces telling stories of countless journeys. As we explore this scene, you'll learn to embrace broad gestural brushwork, which brings a dynamic energy to your painting. I'll guide you through the process of matching colors with ease, ensuring that your palette reflects the authentic hues of the boats and their surroundings. We'll focus on painting with masses, creating a strong foundation that captures the essence of the scene without getting lost in unnecessary details. As we progress, you'll discover the joy of adding calligraphic details, those final touches that bring your painting to life. This lesson is not just about replicating a scene; it's about capturing the spirit of these boats and the environment they inhabit. Whether you're a seasoned painter or just starting out, this subject offers a rewarding challenge that will enhance your skills and deepen your appreciation for the art of painting.



*"Sunday Repairs" 14 x 16" Oil on Canvas by Richard Robinson.*



**REFERENCE PHOTO 1**

*The scene as Richard found it.*





**REFERENCE PHOTO 2**

*The scene as Richard found it.*



**REFERENCE PHOTO 3**

*The scene as Richard found it.*





**REFERENCE PHOTO 4**

*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. Oil Paints
- Alizarine Crimson
- Phthalo Blue
- Ultramarine Blue
- Burnt Sienna
- Cadmium Red
- Cadmium Orange
- Yellow Ochre
- Cadmium Yellow Light
- Titanium White
- Painting medium
- M. Graham & Co. Walnut Alkyd Medium or Walnut Oil
- Solvent
- Gamsol
- 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
- Container for solvent
- Container for painting medium



## 1 Sketching and drawing techniques

### Create a Grid

Print out your reference image or display it on a device like an iPad. Draw grid lines over the image to help maintain accuracy in your sketch, especially with complex shapes like boats.

### Transfer the Grid to Canvas

Draw the same grid onto your canvas with a pencil. This will assist you in accurately transferring the drawing and checking points against each other.

### Use Recommended Brushes

Use Rosemary & Co brushes, specifically two number 10 long flats for most of the painting. For detail work, use a synthetic number 6 brush and a script liner or rigor brush for finer lines.

### Choose Bristle Brushes

Opt for bristle brushes as they provide a more textured finish, hold a lot of paint, and are easier to clean. This makes them ideal for creating the desired effects in your painting.

### Trace the Drawing

Print out the drawing at the right size and cover the back with pencil or charcoal. Place it on the canvas and trace it through to leave accurate guidelines for painting.

## 2 Painting darkest darks

### Mix the Darkest Darks

Combine burnt sienna, a little blue, and sometimes a touch of red with gamsole to achieve the desired darkness. This mixture will help you create depth and contrast in your painting.

### Identify and Apply Darkest Areas

Locate the darkest dark under the boat and extend it into other areas. Use broad, big strokes and shapes to cover large areas quickly and establish foundational tones.

### Transition from Dark to Light

Gradually add lighter colors such as red and yellow ochre, then incorporate white to lighten the tones further. This technique will help depict the effect of light hitting the boat.

### Adjust Shadows with White

Add white to the shadow areas to account for the light being reflected into those areas, lightening them significantly. This adjustment creates a more realistic depiction of light and shadow.

### 3 Painting shadows and reflections

#### Mix Shadow Color

Combine blue with a little bit of red to create a purple hue. Add a touch of white and dip your brush into Gamsol before applying to shadow areas. This creates a rich shadow color that can be adjusted with more white and blue for sky reflections.

#### Incorporate Sky Reflections

Add white and blue to the shadow color to incorporate sky reflections, enhancing the natural and dynamic appearance of the painting. This technique adds depth and realism.

#### Adjust for Light Transition

As the base of the boat moves into the light, add more white and blue to the mix to reflect increased light from the warm-colored concrete. Include a touch of yellow ochre to capture the warm light effect.

#### Create Depth with Background

Use a dull green for the background to create depth and contrast, making darker foreground elements stand out. Ensure this muted green is darker than the background but lighter than the foreground shadows.

### 4 Painting background and trees

#### Create a Darker Tree

Paint a darker tree in the background to create a center of interest. This contrast will help the foreground elements pop out more, drawing the viewer's attention to the main subject.

#### Use Loose Strokes for Background

Apply loose strokes when painting the background. This looseness contrasts with the detailed foreground, making it stand out more. Use big strokes and keep the background simple to enhance the detailed elements in the foreground.

#### Add Depth with Lighter, Bluer Trees

Make trees appear to disappear into the distance by painting them lighter and bluer. This technique creates a sense of depth and distance in your painting.

#### Warm Up Shadow Areas

Add interest to shadow areas by warming them up slightly. Warm up the blocks of color in the shadow areas to add subtle variation and enhance the overall composition.



## 5 Color checking and mixing greys

### Focus on Shadowed Areas

Close one eye and squint with the other to focus on the big shape in the background. Flick your eye back and forth between the painting and the subject to spot any big differences in color.

### Identify Ambiguous Colors

If a shadowed area appears ambiguous, it's likely a grey. Mix a neutral grey of the right value and dab it onto your painting to test it.

### Adjust Grey Tones

After testing the grey, adjust it to be warmer or cooler as needed against its surroundings to achieve the desired effect.

## 6 Adjusting greys and adding details

### Mix a Neutral Grey

Combine blue and burnt sienna with white to create a neutral grey. Adjust the mixture until you achieve the desired neutrality. If the grey appears too blue, continue adjusting until it matches the desired tone.

### Adjust Grey Value

Add white to the grey mixture to lighten it if necessary. Compare it with your reference photo by squinting to ensure the values align.

### Modify Grey Temperature

Add blue to cool the grey down or yellow ochre or bright yellow to warm it up. Use small amounts to maintain subtle temperature differences.

### Consider Environmental Reflections

Cool the grey if blue sky reflections are present, or warm it if light reflects off a deck. Adjust based on the surrounding environment and light reflections.

### Add Texture to Enhance Interest

Incorporate subtle variations and broken lines to add texture, especially on areas like the side of a boat. This adds character and interest to your painting.

### Clarify Overlapping Lines

Adjust the position of overlapping lines, such as lowering one slightly, to create a clearer composition and avoid confusion.

### Consider Light Direction

Account for the direction of light, as it affects the color and value of surfaces. For instance, a face turned towards the sky might appear more bluish due to reflection.



## 7 Painting light areas and foreground

### Use Thicker Paint for Light Areas

Apply much thicker paint to the light areas compared to the dark areas, which should be thinned with Gamsol and a little walnut oil. This technique enhances depth and texture in your painting.

### Add Texture with Thin Lines

Paint thin directional lines using Gamsol in the light areas. These lines will show through the thicker paint, adding interest and depth.

### Experiment with Sky Colors

Mix a little blue, white, and a touch of yellow ochre to create a more interesting sky. Feel free to experiment with different colors and tones, as the sky doesn't always have to be blue.

### Enhance Background with Light

Add light in the background to break up large areas and make them more interesting. This technique contributes to the composition by creating depth and directing the viewer's eye.

### Create Foreground Reflections

Use a lot of white paint with a touch of brown, adding some red and yellow to create a puddle effect. Apply this very thinly to avoid interfering with the lights.

### Vary Brush Strokes for Perspective

Use smaller, thinner, more horizontal strokes in some areas and larger, more directional strokes in others. This variation helps guide the viewer's eye into the painting.

### Build Contrast at Focal Point

Build up the lightest area with lots of paint to create a strong contrast in the center of interest. Soften and darken the surrounding areas slightly to draw the viewer's eye to the focal point.

## 8 Adding highlights and final touches

### Re-establish Darks

Ensure the darks are not too prominent by keeping them balanced. They should add depth without overpowering the highlights.

### Add Strong Light Highlights

Clean your brush thoroughly and scrape off an area to work with. Mix a lot of titanium white with a little bright yellow and yellow ochre, and apply it thickly in an impasto style to create vibrant highlights.

### Tone Down Highlights

Mix a little blue and brown into the highlights to soften them. This helps integrate the highlights more naturally into the painting.

### Create Calligraphic Strokes

Roll the brush as you apply the paint to capture the shape of the boat. This technique produces a dynamic and expressive line that follows the boat's contours.

### Add Warmth to Highlights

In the light areas, use a very light reddish orange color. This adds warmth and complexity to the highlights.

## 9 Calligraphic details and finishing touches

### Use Calligraphic Strokes

Select a number 6 brush with long hair for calligraphic strokes. This brush holds a lot of paint, allowing for longer, expressive strokes. Aim for organic, not precise, lines to create a natural effect.

### Enhance Expressiveness

If a stroke lacks expression, break or scratch it slightly to make it rougher and more organic. This technique adds to the desired expressive quality of the painting.

### Resist Tiny Brushes

Avoid using a tiny brush for details until the final stages. Instead, use shorthand strokes to convey detail effectively from a distance.

### Use a Mahl Stick for Straight Lines

Employ a mahl stick to steady your hand for painting straight lines. Rest it on the floor or your canvas to assist with precision.

### Add Finishing Touches

Incorporate elements like a ladder, shadow under the boat, a person working, stays, and a seagull to enhance the scene. These details bring life and realism to your painting.

### Adjust Details for Realism

Shape elements like the seagull with the background to ensure accurate depiction. This attention to detail ensures your painting remains realistic.



# Summary & Key Takeaways

---

Embark on your painting journey by carefully sketching your composition using grid lines to ensure accuracy, especially with complex shapes like boats. Choose the right brushes to achieve the desired texture and effect, and use bristle brushes for a textured finish and ease of cleaning. Begin by laying down the darkest darks with broad strokes to establish depth and contrast, gradually introducing lighter tones to reflect light and shadow realistically.

As you progress, focus on painting shadows and reflections, incorporating sky reflections to add depth and realism. Use loose strokes in the background to make your detailed foreground stand out, and adjust the colors by mixing greys to match your reference. Pay attention to the direction of light and how it affects the color and value of surfaces, ensuring your painting captures the dynamic interplay of light and shadow.

In the final stages, add highlights and calligraphic details to bring your painting to life. Use thicker paint in light areas to enhance depth and texture, and apply vibrant highlights with an impasto style for a striking effect. Incorporate expressive strokes and fine details to create a natural and engaging scene, ensuring your painting captures the essence of the moment with both precision and artistic flair.

## LESSON POINTS TO REMEMBER

- Use grid lines to maintain accuracy in your sketch.
- Opt for bristle brushes for a textured finish and easy cleaning.
- Apply broad strokes for darkest darks to establish foundational tones.
- Add white and blue to shadow colors for sky reflections.
- Use loose strokes in the background to enhance the detailed foreground.
- Squint at your reference photo to compare and adjust values.
- Use thicker paint for light areas to enhance depth and texture.
- Mix titanium white with bright yellow and yellow ochre for vibrant highlights.



*"Sunday Repairs" 14 x 16" 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.

## 'On the Hard' 8x100" Oil on Canvas by Laurena Beirnes



*'On the Hard' 8x100" Oil on Canvas by Laurena Beirnes*

Love the bold design here Laurena. Good drawing. Great sense of the power, colour and direction of the light. Note that you've mixed your shadows a bit though - a strong light like this would give the boats sharper edged cast shadows on the ground. I'd like to see you try using much thicker paint in the lights - this will help create a more painterly look.



## 'Dry Dock' 30x40cm Oil on Canvas by Gunther Andree



*'Dry Dock' 30x40cm Oil on Canvas by Gunther Andree*

Beautiful detailed work here Gunther, especially in the modelling of the form of the hull with light and shadow. Love the sky glinting of the window too. Nice! The drawing of the boat is excellent, but not so for a few other details - the placement of the bases of the stabilisers on the ground, the spacing of the rungs on the ladder and the left most boat. They're letting the team down, but the team is great.

Last thing, the cast shadow on the ground is looking a bit flat and stand-up-ish. To connect this better to the light on the ground you can run a couple of subtle darkish lines from the foreground light, through the shadows and into the background light. The lines should diminish in size darken with the shadow. When you do this with shadow areas it makes them irrefutably connected to the lights. Here's an example:

**'Dry Dock' 30x40cm Oil on Canvas by Gunther Andree - Altered**



*'Dry Dock' 30x40cm Oil on Canvas by Gunther Andree - Altered*

Foreground directional lines added to make the shadow areas lie flatter and to help direct the eye.



**'Drydock' 8x10" Oil on Panel by Jim Baldoumas**



*'Drydock' 8x10" Oil on Panel by Jim Baldoumas*

Great energy in this Jim, beautiful colours versus subtle greys. Your drawing like many of the paintings submitted needs some tweaking and for that I suggest viewing this reversed in a mirror. As SOON as you do that you'll be able to see the problems in the drawing. Works every time.