



Boat Repairs

A step-by-step painting guide by Richard Robinson

Watch the full lesson at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/13-Boat-Repairs>

MY PAINTING CLUB

Introduction

Welcome to Moss Landing on the Californian coast, a charming boatyard filled with beautiful vessels. Today, we're focusing on an old fishing boat in for repairs, a scene that offers a rewarding challenge for any painter. In this chapter, I'll guide you through capturing the essence of this classic boat scene using broad, gestural brushwork. We'll start by painting big, beautiful shapes and learn how to adjust the colors within them. Then, we'll add those crisp finishing details that bring the whole composition to life. One of the key techniques we'll explore is creating a splashy, impressionistic foreground that draws the viewer's eye into the intricate details of the boat. This approach not only enhances your painting's depth but also adds a dynamic quality to the scene. Whether you follow my steps closely or use the resource photos to create something uniquely yours, this lesson will enrich your painting skills and deepen your appreciation for the art of capturing maritime beauty.



"Boat Repairs" 14 x 14" 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.

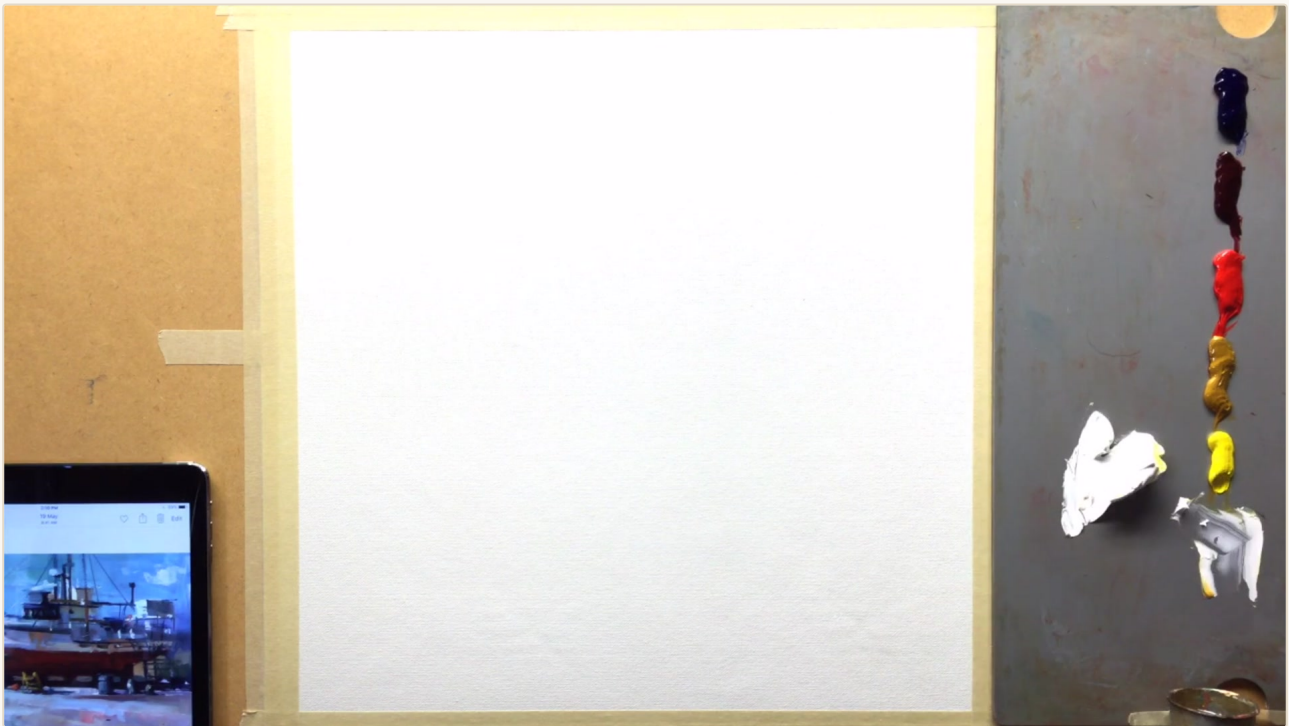
Materials

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

- ### What materials are used in this class?
- **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](http://www.rosemaryandco.com/gift-sets/richard-robinson-set)
- Palette Knife
Paper Towels
Container
for solvent
Container for painting medium

1 Beating the White



Prepare the White Paint

Add more oil to your white paint to make it more pliable. Use a horizontal palette to mix, aiming for a consistency similar to mayonnaise. This will help you manage the paint better, especially on a vertical surface.

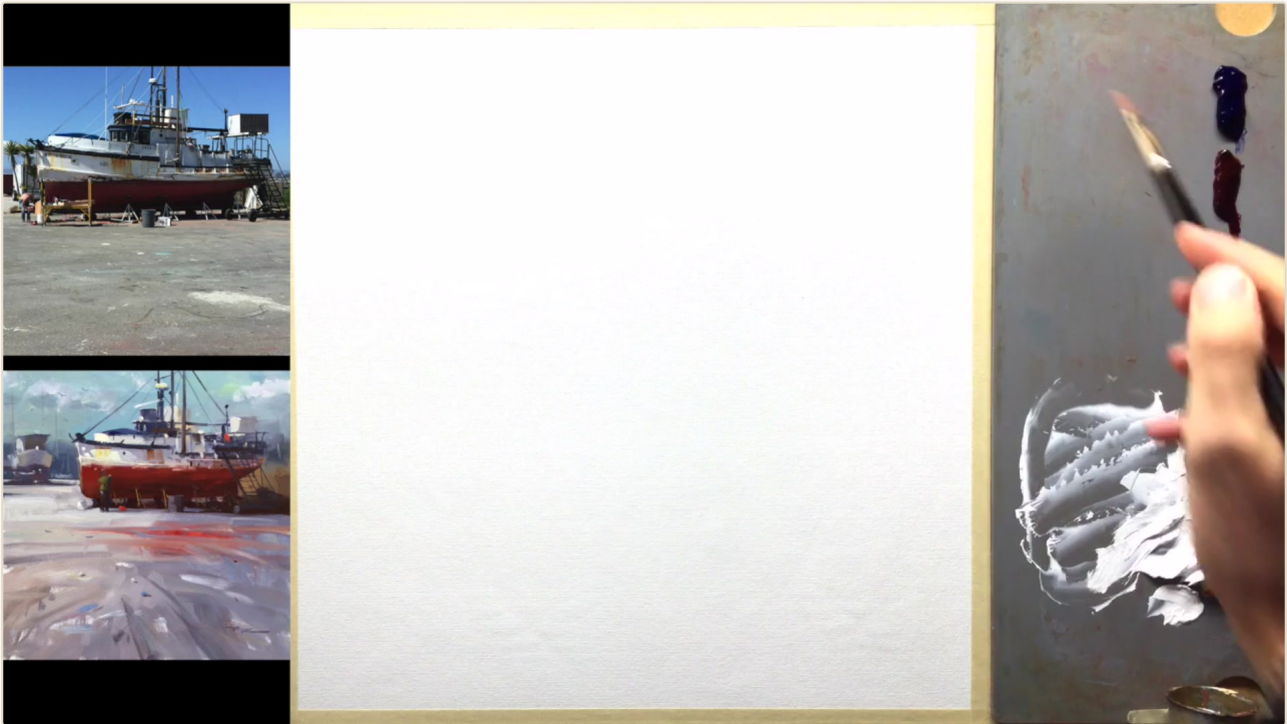
Choose Your Medium

If you want the paint to dry faster, mix in an alkyd medium with the white. This will speed up the drying process for the entire painting, as white is often used in most colors and usually takes the longest to dry. If you prefer a slower drying time, opt for walnut oil instead.

PRO TIP

Use a horizontal palette for easier mixing when adding oil to your white paint.

2 Drawing the Big Shapes



Choose Your Drawing Tool

Decide whether to use a brush or a pencil for your drawing. If you choose a pencil, draw very lightly to avoid heavy marks. A charcoal pencil is also an option; sketch lightly and dust off any excess.

Identify Big Shapes

Focus on identifying the big shapes in your scene. Determine where each element will sit within the composition.

Consider Transfer Methods

If you prefer, use a grid transfer method or a projector to transfer the drawing from a photograph. This can help ensure accuracy in your composition.

Practice Drawing with a Brush

Practice drawing with a brush as much as possible. Remember, painting is essentially drawing with a brush, so gaining confidence in this skill is beneficial.

PRO TIP

Draw very lightly with a pencil or charcoal to avoid heavy marks.

3 Painting the Dark Hull



Prepare the Dark Hull Color

Use a large brush, such as a number 12, to mix a deep red for the boat's hull. Add a little blue to darken the red, then incorporate some alizarin to deepen the tone further. Thin the paint slightly with Gamsol to achieve a smooth consistency.

Adjust the Color Tone

Darken the mixture with more blue and dull it slightly with yellow. This will create a grayish tone by neutralizing the purple hue. Thin the paint again with Gamsol for easier application.

Paint the Shadow

Apply the dark mixture to create a strip of shadow along the hull and extend it to the back of the boat. Ensure the shadow reflects the sun's angle, casting a sharp line from the boat's front and sides.

Add Reflected Light

Consider the reflected light from the surrounding light-colored asphalt. This light will subtly illuminate the underside of the dark hull, creating a gentle color variation within the large shape.

PRO TIP

Thin your paint with Gamsol to achieve a smooth application and adjust the consistency as needed.

4 Adding Reflected Light



Prepare the Paint Mixture

Dip into the walnut alkyde medium instead of Gamsol to avoid thinning the paint too much. Lighten the red with a touch of yellow ochre and a hint of blue to prevent it from becoming too bright.

Apply Reflected Light

Drag the paint along the surface of the boat, making it as rough as you like to match the boat's texture. Add more reflected light at the front to help round the bow subtly.

Use Remaining Red for Foreground

With the red still on your brush, add a little white and yellow ochre. Apply this to the foreground to suggest reflections, as if the area has just had a shower.

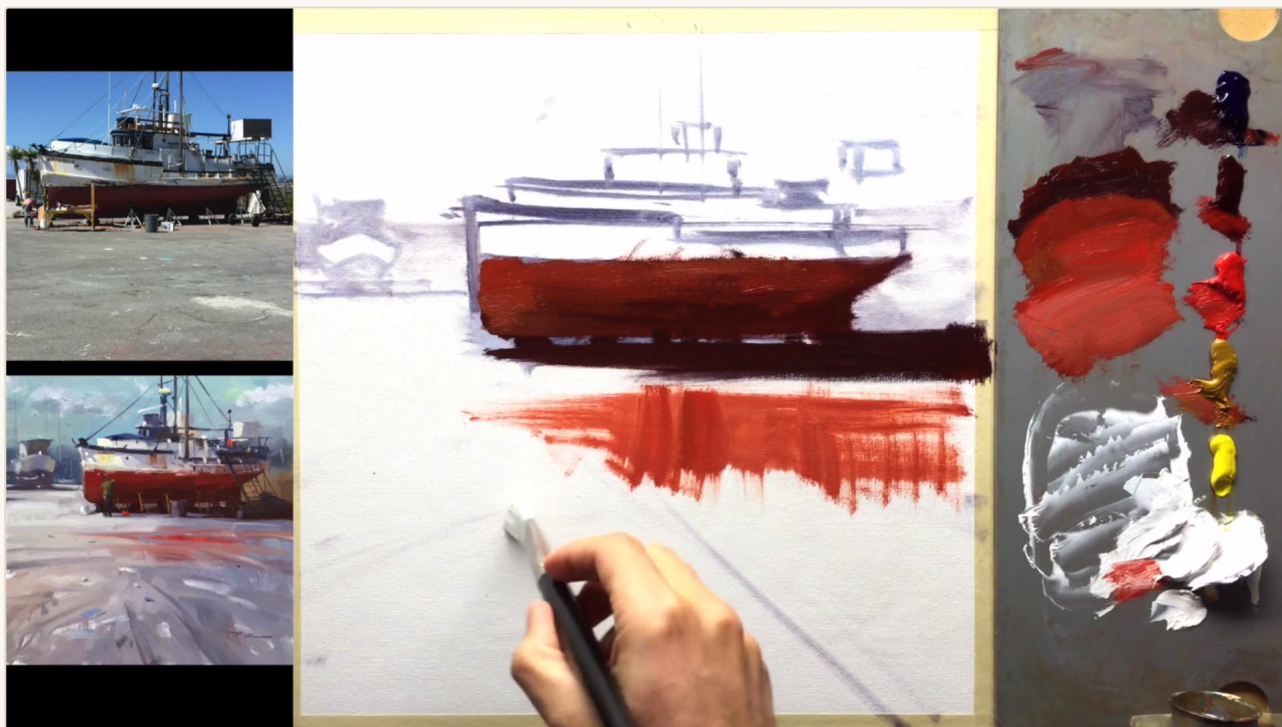
Switch to a Smaller Brush

Move to a slightly smaller brush to refine details and work over areas that need more precision.

PRO TIP

Use walnut alkyde medium to maintain paint thickness and control.

5 Painting Blue-Grey Tones



Mix Blue-Grey Tones

Start with a base of blue and white, adding a touch of red and yellow ochre. Aim for a mid-value blue-grey. Use walnut oil to help block in the big shapes on the side of the boat.

Block in Big Shapes

Extend the brush strokes past the boat's edge. This allows flexibility to paint back into it and adjust edges later. Leave some areas empty to add warmer, lighter colors where reflected light will be placed.

Add Warmth and Reflected Light

Warm up the blue-grey by mixing in a little yellow ochre and white. Keep the value similar, only a half step different. Use bright yellow under areas where light bounces off the white deck to add character.

Focus on Big Shapes

Concentrate on painting big shapes rather than details. This approach allows for a more artistic and less fussy painting process. Add details later with a calligraphic style.

Paint Similar Colors

Use the same color on other parts of the painting, like a small boat nearby, to save time. Look for similar colors in your painting to apply while the paint is on your brush.

PRO TIP

Extend brush strokes past the boat's edge to allow flexibility in defining edges later.

6 Softening Edges and Background



Add Reflected Light

Apply a little bit of reflected light on the sides of the boat. Use similar colors to those in the surrounding areas to maintain harmony. This will help integrate the boat into the scene.

Soften Background Edges

Lighten and soften the edges of the background by altering the color slightly as you move through the big shapes. Gradually lighten and add a hint of blue as you reach the top to create a smooth transition into the background.

Maintain Hull Line

Be careful to maintain the line across the bottom of the hull of the boat. Ensure the spacing is irregular to make it more visually interesting.

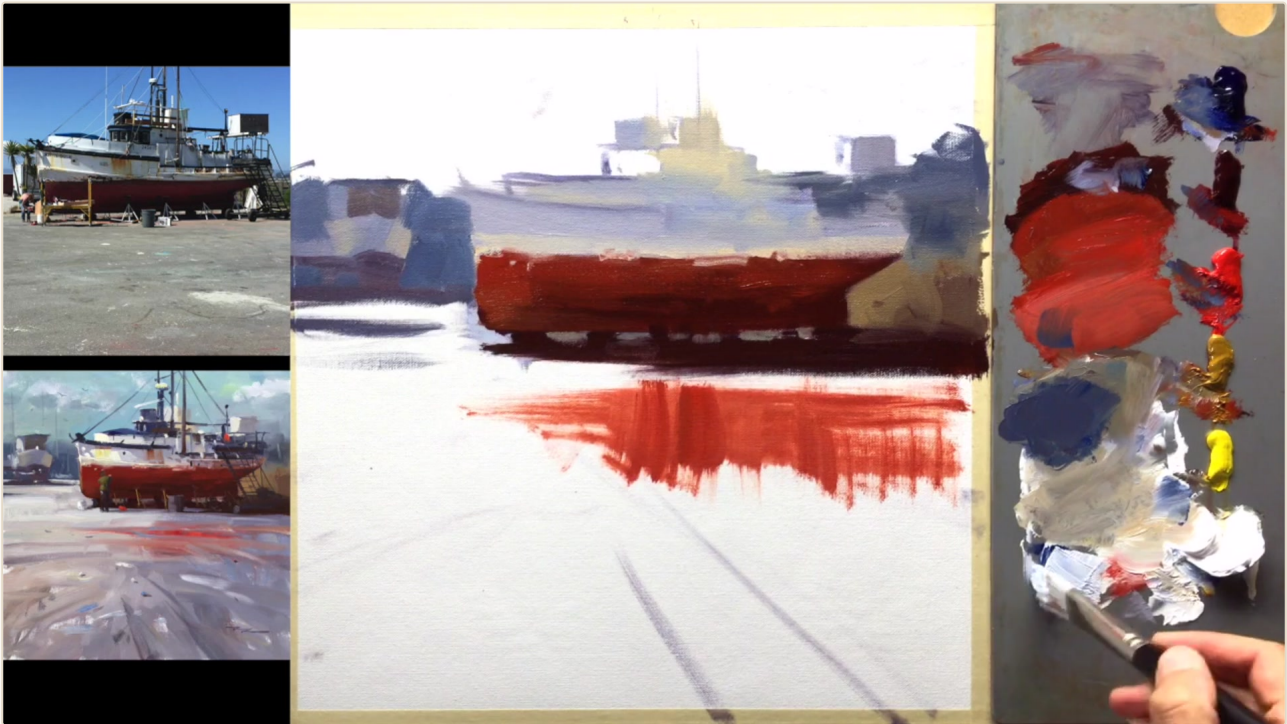
Blend Sky and Background

Blend the sky color down into the darker blue areas of the background. This will create a soft edge that allows the background to recede, enhancing the focus on the foreground.

PRO TIP

Soften edges in the background to make the foreground stand out more prominently.

7 Blending Sky and Distant Land



Mix Sky Colors

Combine blue, white, and a touch of yellow to create a slightly greenish sky color. This will contrast nicely with the red of the boat.

Paint the Sky

Apply the sky color without being too finicky, but take care around the boat to maintain its shape with square edges. Ensure it looks like a boat, not a beanbag.

Add Cloud Space

Leave some space in the sky for clouds. Consider adding a slightly dirtier tone where the sky meets the land, suggesting dust or earthworks.

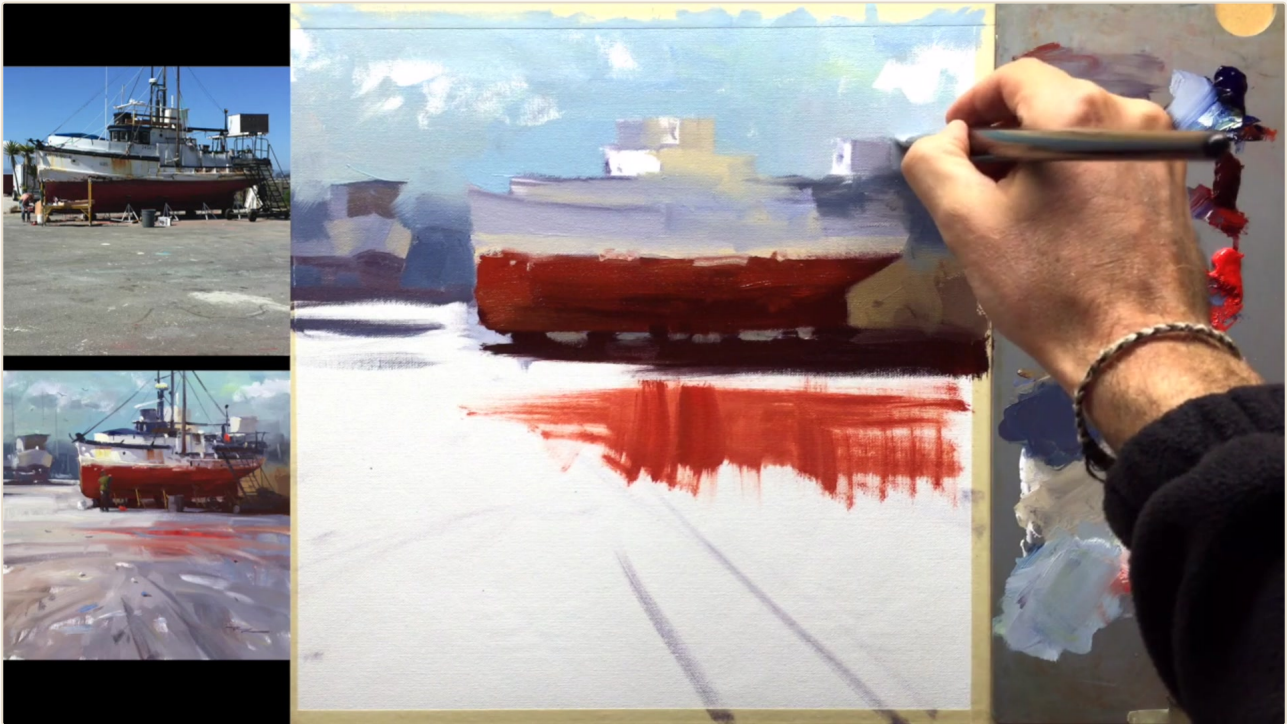
Blend Sky and Land

Create a very soft edge where the sky meets the distant land. This softness helps the land recede into the background, allowing sharper edges to come forward.

PRO TIP

Maintain soft edges where the sky meets the distant land to enhance depth in the painting.

8 Adding Darker Shapes and Details



Add Darker Blue-Gray to Clouds

Use a very soft edge to add a little darker blue-gray to the underside of some clouds. Aim for a subtle difference to create depth and dimension.

Paint Darker Shapes

Mix mainly blue with a touch of red, but keep it light enough to avoid looking like a hole through the canvas. Use the very tip of your brush, pushing into the paint to flatten it and create a ridge for sharp edges.

Add Warmer Details

Warm up the painting by adding a few warmer details. Look closely at the reference photo to identify these areas, but remember you don't need to include every detail. Adding more details will give the boat more character.

Include Rusty Shadows

Incorporate some nice orange rusty tones in the shadows to enhance the character and realism of the boat.

PRO TIP

Use the tip of your brush to create sharp edges by pushing into the paint and flattening it.

9 Highlighting and Light Effects



Prepare the Highlight Color

Mix white with a hint of yellow ochre to warm it up. Add a little bit of blue to create a half tone for the initial highlights. This will help in building the form gradually without jumping to the strongest highlights immediately.

Apply Initial Highlights

Use the prepared color to highlight areas where the light rakes across the bow. Focus on the sections where the shape curves and gets lighter. These catch lights add crisp details in the shadow areas, enhancing the form.

Create Crisp Lines

Use a palette knife to apply the same color for very crisp lines. This technique helps in achieving precise and sharp details where needed.

Add Strongest Highlights

Lighten the color further with white and a little bright yellow for the lightest highlights. Apply these thickly to create a strong sense of form and rounding.

Paint the Rust Stain

Add the rust stain crossing from shadow into light using the two yellows. This will serve as a beautiful color spot, enhancing the painting's depth and interest.

PRO TIP

Use a palette knife for crisp lines to achieve precise and sharp details.

10 Foreground and Concrete Texture



Prepare the Large Brush

Clean your large brush thoroughly and prepare to mix big batches of color. Start by moving from dark to light, focusing on the area closer to the center of interest for the lightest portion.

Mix and Apply Colors

Mix your colors without over-mixing to achieve a more interesting painterly effect. Use white and a touch of other colors, joining the light to the light sky reflection. Avoid covering the entire canvas to let some bits show through, enhancing the rough, splattered paint effect typical of concrete.

Create Foreground Texture

Use big, bold brush strokes in the foreground, getting lighter and warmer with white, yellow ochre, and a bit of warm colors. Apply thick paint for a rich texture.

Adjust Brush Strokes

As you move further away in the painting, make your brush strokes more horizontal and thinner. This mimics the elliptical shape of paint splatters seen in photographs, transitioning from vertical in the foreground to horizontal in the mid-ground.

PRO TIP

Avoid over-mixing your colors to maintain an interesting painterly effect.

11 Adding Details with Rig-A-Brush



Create Crisp Details

Switch to a smaller brush to achieve crisp, smaller brush strokes. Use a darker paint mixture to add details like tire tracks leading into the scene. This will add interest and depth to your painting.

Add Foreground Texture

Consider adding a splash of blue paint to the foreground for texture. You can use impasto technique with thick paint to create dynamic, textured areas. Feel free to experiment with splattering paint for a more expressive look.

Paint Soft Clouds

Use a dry brush technique to add clouds with soft, broken edges. Mix white with a little blue to achieve a light, airy cloud effect. This will enhance the sky and add contrast to your painting.

Detail the Boat

Add details to the boat, such as an orange life preserver at the back. This creates a lovely color spot and draws attention. Use a dark mixture of blue, red, and a touch of yellow ochre for shadows and depth.

Enhance with Shadows

Use the rigour brush to create elegant lines and add light spots with drop shadows. These shadows will make elements pop and add a realistic touch from a distance.

PRO TIP

Use a rigour brush to add elegant lines and enhance details with drop shadows for a realistic touch.

12 Painting Figures and Seagulls



Position the Figure

Determine where the figure's head and feet will be placed in relation to the boat. This will help establish the correct scale of the figure and the boat. Ensure the head is smaller than you might instinctively draw it.

Paint the Figure

Use a nice green for the shirt to contrast with the red of the boat. Add blue for the jeans. Brighten the green slightly for a more vibrant appearance. Include a cast shadow to ground the figure in the scene.

Add Details

Include small details like a hand holding a rag to add character to the figure. These details enhance the realism and narrative of the scene.

Paint Seagulls

Add a few seagulls to the scene for additional interest and to create a sense of life and movement.

PRO TIP

Always check your reference photo to ensure the figure's height and proportions are accurate.

Summary & Key Takeaways

Embark on your painting journey by preparing your materials and setting the stage for a vibrant composition. Begin by mixing your white paint to the right consistency, ensuring it flows smoothly across your canvas. Establish the foundational shapes with light, confident strokes, setting the framework for your scene. As you progress, focus on the interplay of light and shadow, using rich, dark tones to define the hull of the boat and subtle reflected lights to add depth and dimension.

As your painting evolves, pay attention to the harmony of colors and the balance of shapes. Use a variety of brush techniques to create texture and interest, from the roughness of the boat's surface to the soft, receding edges of the distant land. Incorporate mid-value tones to build form and add character, ensuring each element contributes to the overall composition.

In the final stages, refine your painting with precise details and highlights that bring it to life. Use a palette knife for crisp lines and a rigour brush for elegant details, enhancing the realism and narrative of your scene. Add figures and seagulls to inject movement and vitality, ensuring your painting tells a compelling story. Remember, each stroke is an opportunity to express your artistic vision and bring your scene to life.

LESSON POINTS TO REMEMBER

- Add more oil to your white paint for better pliability.
- Draw big shapes lightly with pencil or charcoal.
- Thin paint with Gamsol for smooth application.
- Use walnut alkyde medium to maintain paint thickness.
- Extend brush strokes past edges for flexibility.
- Soften background edges to enhance foreground focus.
- Use the tip of your brush for sharp edges.
- Avoid over-mixing colors for a painterly effect.



"Boat Repairs" 14 x 14" 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.

"Painting the White Dove" by Jon Main



"Painting the White Dove" 50x65cm Oil on Canvas by Jon Main

Nice colour work Jon! Great to see you pushing the envelope. Good energy in the brushwork although not so much on the ground. Drawing is good and you're the first I've seen who made really straight thin rigging. Nice! I probably wouldn't have put the yellow scaffolding smack dab in the middle there because it catches the eye more than anything else, though the subject is really the boat itself. You could glaze over it with brown to knock it back a bit, especially considering that it is in the shade. Hang on, your shadows are not all headed in the same direction - shock horror! Something to think about next time. A great looking painting nonetheless.

"Boat Repairs" by Tone Larsen



"Boat Repairs" 12x12" Acrylic on Canvas by Tone Larsen

Welcome to the club, Tone and you've made quite an entrance with this painting. Great painterly work! Drawing, colour and brushwork are all good. I can't see anything I'd change AND it looks like you got the most votes from everyone. Nice one!

"Wet Paint" by Katherine Daack



"Wet Paint" 18x18" Oil on Canvas by Katherine Daack

Nice work Katherine. Your drawing is pretty accurate, colours are good, if a little light in the background boat on the left which leaves the painting a little right-heavy. Brushwork is lively and exciting, big strokes in the foreground leading our eye into the finer details. A little overworked in a few places tending to muddy colour like at the rear of the boat and in the bushes. If you're going to use a brush to blur edges you need to wipe it clean between each soft stroke otherwise you'll get mud every time. Hope that helps. Good work!

"Repairs" by Manneherrin



"Repairs" 12x12" Oil on Canvas by Manneherrin

Love the energy in this, Mannerherrin - vibrating with life! Despite the frenetic treatment you've managed to keep the drawing pretty solid, which is not easy to do. I would like to see a little more colour variety within the big shapes - mauves, turquoises, pinks. It's already visually rich but dashes of vibrating complements would be the icing on the cake. Check my Broken Colour Basics course here: www.livepaintinglessons.com/workshop31.php