



Mountain Valley

A step-by-step painting guide by Richard Robinson

Watch the full lesson at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/181-Mountain-Valley>

MY PAINTING CLUB

Introduction

Welcome to my studio, where I'm excited to guide you through painting one of my favorite New Zealand landscapes—a stunning mountain valley on a beautiful spring day. Picture the sun glistening on a cool mountain stream with snow-capped peaks in the background. In this chapter, I'll walk you through the entire process of capturing this scene, starting with footage from my photo expedition. Back in the studio, we'll dive into designing a composition, beginning with quick thumbnail sketches in my sketchbook and progressing to a detailed pencil sketch. These sketches are invaluable references when you embark on your larger painting. Before tackling the main piece, we'll create a color study, a small yet crucial painting that helps ensure your colors, values, and tonal dynamics are spot-on. I'll guide you through mixing colors and understanding color theory in a straightforward way, making it easy to apply to your own work. Whether you're just starting out or have been painting for years, this lesson offers tips to elevate your landscape painting skills and create art that truly captures the beauty of nature.



Mount Talbot Design



REFERENCE PHOTO 1

The scene as Richard found it.



REFERENCE PHOTO 2

The scene as Richard found it.

Materials

Gather these materials before you start. If you don't have the exact same supplies, use what you have and substitute freely.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- Titanium white
- Burnt sienna
- Yellow oxide (you can use yellow ochre instead)
- Cadmium yellow
- Cadmium red
- Quinacridone crimson (you can use alizarin crimson instead)
- Ultramarine blue
- Phthalo green
- No.10 flat
- No.8 flat
- No.6 flat
- No.4 flat
- No.2 flat
- No.6 filbert
- No.2 filbert
- No.1 round
- No.0 round
- 3/8 dagger
- 1/4 dagger

1 Composition Planning



Plan Your Composition

Begin by understanding that nature doesn't always provide perfect compositions. Use your artistic license to adjust elements for a better painting. Remember, the goal is to create a painting, not replicate a photo.

Use Reference Photos Wisely

While reference photos are helpful, avoid copying them directly. Use them as a guide to inform your composition, but feel free to rearrange elements to enhance the overall design.

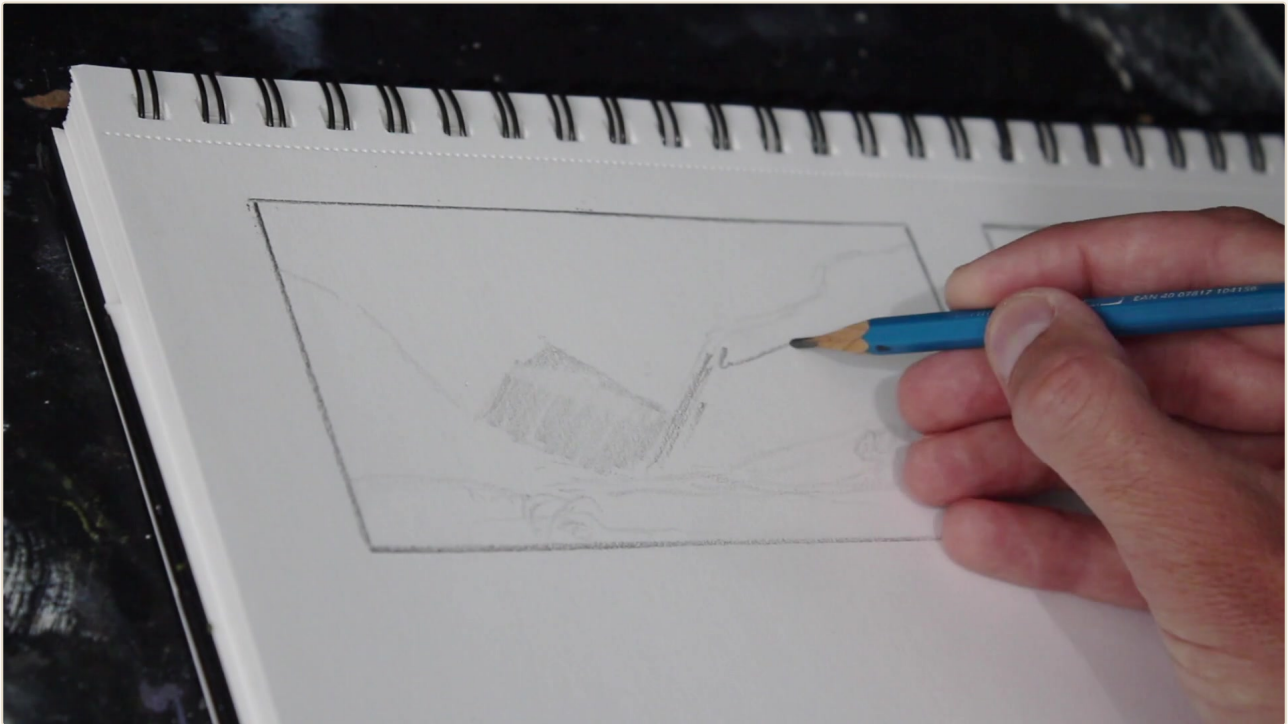
Sketch Your Ideas

Start with a sketchbook and pencils to quickly draft different compositions. This allows you to experiment with the arrangement of elements without committing too much time, ensuring your painting idea will work.

PRO TIP

Use a sketchbook to experiment with different compositions before starting your painting.

2 Sketching Techniques



Create Thumbnail Sketches

Spend two to three minutes on each thumbnail sketch to quickly test your composition ideas. This helps determine if your initial concept will work.

Select Graphite Pencils

Use five graphite pencils: 4H, 2H, HB, 2B, and 4B. The 4H pencil is hard and produces light marks, ideal for distant landforms. The 4B pencil is softer and perfect for dark shadows in the foreground.

Sketch the Composition

Begin with a 4H pencil to outline the form of mountains, streams, and other elements. This helps establish the composition and identify light and dark values.

Understand Value

Value refers to how light or dark a color is, represented on a scale from 1 to 10. In the foreground, use the full value scale, while distant landforms have a narrower range.

Review Final Sketch

Examine your final sketch to identify the darkest and lightest values. This will guide you when painting your color study.

PRO TIP

Use a 4H pencil for light marks and a 4B pencil for dark shadows to effectively plan your composition.

3 Colour Study Importance



Create a Colour Study

Before starting a large painting, create a small colour study. This helps you see if the larger painting will work and identify any issues not visible in the sketch.

Evaluate Colours and Values

Use the colour study to ensure that your colours and values are effective for the final painting. This step is crucial for matching the colours in your larger piece.

Consider the Colour Study's Value

Remember that colour studies can be valuable artworks on their own. They can be sold as small paintings if desired.

PRO TIP

Create a small colour study to test your painting's colours and values before committing to a larger piece.

4 Composition Details



Prepare Your Canvas

Tape some loose linen to a board using masking tape. Ensure the linen is directly proportional to the stretcher you will use for the final painting.

Identify the Focal Point

Choose Mount Talbot as the focal point of your painting. Avoid placing the focal point in the center to maintain a dynamic composition.

Guide the Viewer's Eye

Incorporate elements like the mountain stream and cloud direction to subtly lead the eye towards Mount Talbot. Use the natural shape of the mountain to guide the viewer's gaze back to the foreground and then towards the focal point.

PRO TIP

Avoid placing the focal point in the center to maintain a dynamic composition.

5 Palette and Colours



Prepare Your Palette

Use a limited palette to maintain harmony and cohesion in your painting. This approach helps you understand color mixing better and keeps your painting consistent.

Select Titanium White

Add Titanium White to your palette. This intense, opaque white offers exceptional covering power, making it ideal for areas where you need to cover underlying layers.

Add Burnt Sienna

Include Burnt Sienna, a dark orange earth color, to your palette. It's excellent for desaturating blues and useful for painting rocks, clouds, shadows, and earth tones.

Include Yellow Oxide

Use Yellow Oxide to soften and warm up greens. It's great for painting straw-colored grass and creating low chroma greens for distant hills. Yellow Ochre can be used as an alternative.

Add Cadmium Yellow

Incorporate Cadmium Yellow, an opaque, light-value yellow, to create rich greens when mixed with Ultramarine Blue. It's a beautiful yellow for landscape painting.

Use Cadmium Orange

Add Cadmium Orange to your palette. This powerful, opaque color is ideal for making greens look more natural and combines well with Cadmium Yellow.

Select Quinacridone Crimson

Choose Quinacridone Crimson for violet tints in clouds and shadows. Remember, it's a violet with red undertones. Alizarin Crimson can be used as an alternative.

Add Ultramarine Blue

Include Ultramarine Blue, a bright, reddish blue, for its versatility. It's a great color to use throughout your painting for various effects.

Incorporate Phthalo Green

Add Phthalo Green, a powerful emerald green, to increase the saturation of your green mixes. Use it sparingly to avoid overpowering your mixtures.

PRO TIP

Use Phthalo Green sparingly to prevent it from overpowering your color mixtures.

6 Brushes and Colour Theory



Select Your Brushes

Use a range of bristle flat brushes, filberts, dagger brushes, and rounds. Start with larger brushes to cover broad areas and switch to smaller brushes for adding details.

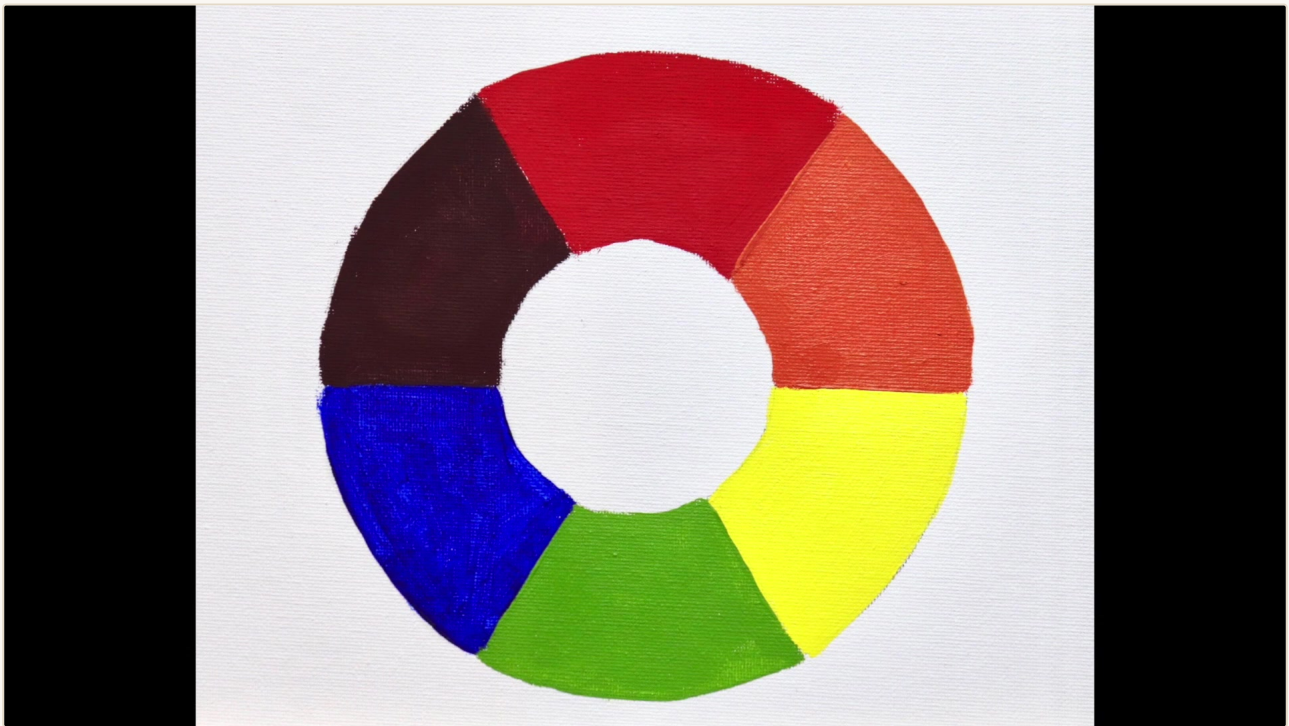
Understand Basic Colour Theory

Familiarize yourself with the colour wheel to simplify colour mixing. This knowledge will help you create harmonious and dynamic paintings.

PRO TIP

Begin with larger brushes to establish the painting's foundation, then use smaller brushes for detail work.

7 Colour Wheel and Complementary Colours



Understand the Colour Wheel

The colour wheel is made up of three primary colours: red, yellow, and blue. Mixing two primary colours creates a secondary colour. For example, red and yellow make orange, yellow and blue make green, and blue and red make violet.

Identify Complementary Colours

A complementary colour is the primary colour not used in creating a secondary colour. For instance, blue is the complementary opposite of orange, green is the complementary opposite of red, and violet is the complementary opposite of yellow.

Use Complementary Colours for Harmony

Incorporating complementary opposites in a painting can harmonize the colours. For example, adding red tones to green grass can create a more natural and pleasing effect.

Desaturate Colours with Complements

Mix complementary opposites to desaturate a colour. This can be useful for creating neutral grays and browns. Adding white to these mixtures can further neutralize the colour.

Adjust Colour Saturation

Saturation refers to the purity or vibrancy of a colour. To reduce saturation, mix in a neutral grey or the colour's complementary opposite. For example, mix green to desaturate red, violet to desaturate yellow, and orange to desaturate blue.

PRO TIP

To desaturate a colour, mix it with its complementary opposite on the colour wheel.

8 Canvas Preparation



Prepare the Burnt Sienna Mixture

Mix one part burnt sienna with three parts pure gum turpentine in an old jar. Add two parts Winsor & Newton Liquin Original to the mixture. Place a coin or washer in the jar, secure the lid, and shake for about a minute or two to ensure thorough mixing.

Apply the Toning Layer

Use a chip brush to apply the burnt sienna mixture in a thin layer across the linen canvas. Move the brush in different directions to avoid creating linear marks that might show through later.

Allow the Canvas to Dry

Leave the toned canvas for a day or two to ensure it is completely dry before starting to paint. This drying time ensures the surface is ready for the next layers of paint.

PRO TIP

Move the brush in different directions to prevent linear marks from showing through the canvas.

9 Sketching the Composition



Determine the Center

Hold up your brush in front of the canvas and imagine a cross to find the center. Make a small mark at the center of the painting to guide your composition.

Refer to Your Color Study

Use your color study as a reference for sketching the composition. Ensure it is directly proportional to the canvas you are working on.

Sketch Mount Talbot

With a number four round brush, mix burnt sienna with some liquid. Begin sketching the form of Mount Talbot, the focal area, using general lines and shapes.

Sketch Mount Crosscut

Sketch the form of Mount Crosscut, the large mountain on the right, making it slightly smaller than in real life to emphasize Mount Talbot.

Maintain Proper Mountain Height

Ensure the tops of the mountains are not too close to the top of the painting. Leave enough space for the sky to enhance the atmosphere and maintain a balanced composition.

PRO TIP

If you make a mistake while sketching, use a rag with turps to easily wipe it off and adjust.

10 Establishing Dark Values



Sketch the Composition

Mark in the lines of the mountain stream, which forms a major part of the composition. Create definite zones to guide where to apply paint later. Use heavier marks to indicate areas of shadow.

Adjust Composition as Needed

If the scale or perspective feels off, use a rag to wipe off and remark areas. For example, adjust the stream's edge if it seems too high. Add finer details like rocks, boulders, trees, plants, and clouds to complete the composition.

Incorporate Clouds for Drama

Add clouds to enhance the composition, even if they weren't present in the main reference photo. Use additional reference photos with clouds to guide their shape and placement.

Establish Dark Values First

Identify where your shadows and dark values are in the landscape. Consider converting your reference photo to black and white to clearly see these values. Establishing dark values first helps create an atmospheric perspective.

Match Values for Depth

Compare the values in your painting with those in the black and white photo. Remember that distant darks are not as dark, and distant lights are not as light. In the foreground, aim for the darkest darks and lightest lights to create depth.

PRO TIP

Convert your reference photo to black and white to easily identify and match dark values.

11 Blocking in Shadows



Block in Cloud Shadows

Use a number 10 flat brush to block in the cloud shadows. Mix ultramarine blue with some burnt sienna from the sketching phase. Lighten the value with titanium white and add a small amount of quinacridone crimson for a violet tint. Be cautious not to overpower the mixture with too much crimson.

Create Shadow Mix for Mount Talbot

Use the same colors as the cloud shadows but with less titanium white. Add more ultramarine blue and a bit more burnt sienna to desaturate the color. Include a tiny amount of quinacridone crimson and apply with loose gestural strokes using the number 10 flat brush.

Block in Shadows for Mount Crosscut

Darken the shadow mixture by adding more ultramarine blue, burnt sienna, and quinacridone crimson. Use the number 10 flat brush to block in the shadow areas of Mount Crosscut, ensuring the shadows are darker than those on Mount Talbot.

Block in Shadows for Right-Hand Mountains

Continue using the same shadow mixture, adding more ultramarine blue, burnt sienna, and quinacridone crimson to darken the value further. Block in the shadows of the tier of mountains on the right, leaving gaps for future highlights.

PRO TIP

Use large brushes to cover ground quickly and achieve a painterly effect.

12 Foreground Shadows



Create Mountain Shadows

Use the same shadow mix from the left side of the painting for the mountain. Although the mountain is mostly in full sun, add a few vertical downward marks to suggest rock shadows. Follow the general direction of the mountain's contours to maintain a natural look.

Mix Foreground Shadow Colors

Mix ultramarine blue with a little yellow oxide to create a very dark green for the foreground shadows. Add burnt sienna to introduce a red element and harmonize the green. Use a clean number 10 flat brush to keep the mixture clean while economizing on brushes.

Paint Foreground Shadows

Form the edge of the mountain stream with your shadow colors, maneuvering the brush to create texture in the grass. For the rocks in the mountain stream, combine ultramarine blue and burnt sienna to achieve a near-black shadow.

Establish Dark Values

Begin by establishing all dark values to create depth and atmosphere in the painting. Start with the lightest shadows in the clouds, then move to darker shadows in Mount Talbot and the mid-ground mountain. The darkest shadows should be in the foreground, particularly at the edge of the stream.

PRO TIP

Combine ultramarine blue and burnt sienna to create a near-black for the darkest shadows.

13 Snow Shadows



Mix Snow Shadow Color

Use a number 10 flat brush to mix titanium white with ultramarine blue. Add a small amount of quinacridone crimson to give the mixture a violet tint.

Apply Snow Shadows on Mount Crosscut

Use loose gestural brush strokes to mark out the zones where the snow shadows will be on the side of Mount Crosscut. Focus on creating a solid foundation with atmospheric depth.

Lighten the Mixture for Distant Shadows

Add a tiny amount of titanium white to your existing mixture to lighten the value. This adjustment helps create the illusion that Mount Talbot is receding into the distance.

PRO TIP

Use a lighter value for distant mountains to enhance the sense of depth.

14 Painting the Sky



Highlight the Clouds

Use a number 10 flat brush to apply pure titanium white mixed with liquin to the clouds. Allow the white to mix with the burnt sienna outline and shadow mix to darken the value, creating a base for lighter highlights later. Blend the colors to add texture and form to the clouds.

Add Dimension to the Clouds

Mix titanium white with the existing Mountain Shadow Mix and apply it to the clouds. Adjust the mixture by adding ultramarine blue, burnt sienna, or quinacridone crimson as needed to create a neutral grey with a slight blue tint. Work the brush to blend colors and enhance the three-dimensional form of the clouds.

Paint Snow on the Mountains

Wipe excess paint from the brush used for the clouds and add more titanium white. Apply the snow mixture to the mountains, allowing it to mix with the burnt sienna outline to darken the value and add texture. Use the brush tip to highlight areas, creating the illusion of light on exposed rock tips.

Paint the Sky

Use a number 8 flat brush to mix titanium white with ultramarine blue for the sky. Add a touch of phthalo green to neutralize the red in the blue and enrich the mixture. Block in the sky quickly, then reload the brush with ultramarine blue alone to darken the top of the sky, blending it into the existing mixture for a textured, painterly look.

PRO TIP

Use ultramarine blue to enrich the sky, adding depth and texture by blending it into the lighter areas.

15 Mountain Details



Refine Clouds

Use a number 10 brush loaded with titanium white to sharpen the clouds. Add highlights and blend them into the existing shadow mix for a cohesive look.

Mid-ground Mountain Refinement

Fill in gaps on the mid-ground mountain where the underpainting is exposed. Use the shadow mix to add brush marks that suggest jagged rocks and a weathered surface.

Add Reflected Light

Mix a tiny amount of titanium white into the shadow mixture to paint reflected light on the mountain's rock surfaces. This enhances the three-dimensional form of the mountain.

Simplify Mountain Details

Adopt a 'less is more' approach to avoid overwhelming the composition with detail. Simplifying the painting can make it more effective and allow the viewer's brain to fill in missing information.

Tidy Up Mount Talbot

Use the original shadow mix to tidy up areas on Mount Talbot. Add a bit of titanium white to lighten the value and make vertical downward marks to follow the mountain's contours.

Enhance Snow and Valley

Use a snow mixture of titanium white, ultramarine blue, and quinacridone crimson to tidy up snow in shadow. Add more snow patches on exposed rocks and darken the valley slightly with additional ultramarine blue and quinacridone crimson.

Block in Left Mid-ground Mountain

Mix titanium white with burnt sienna, ultramarine blue, and a touch of quinacridone crimson for the rock faces exposed to sunlight. Use a number 10 flat brush to make vertical downward marks, creating a base for later detail.

Create Rock Texture

Vary the basic color mixture to create different shades and textures within the rocks. Use the same mixture for highlights on the mountain on the right, suggesting sunlight on the tops of rocks.

PRO TIP

Maintain a bit of looseness with your brushwork to make your painting look more alive.

16 Mixing Greens



Mix a Desaturated Green

Combine ultramarine blue with yellow oxide to create a base for the distant green mix. The yellow oxide lightens the value of the blue. Add titanium white to further lighten and desaturate the color.

Enhance the Green Mix

Incorporate burnt sienna into the mixture to give the green a more organic appearance. The red in burnt sienna helps balance and desaturate the green, making it suitable for distant areas.

Paint Distant Grass and Trees

Use the desaturated green mix to paint the distant grass and trees in the mid-ground. Adjust the values for the trees by adding more ultramarine blue and a touch of yellow oxide.

Avoid Over-Saturation

Ensure your greens are appropriately desaturated to maintain depth in the painting. Avoid cadmium colors for distant greens to prevent them from appearing too vibrant and jumping forward.

PRO TIP

For distant greens, avoid using cadmium colors to keep the illusion of depth intact.

17 Foreground Greens and Grass



Mix Base Green

Combine cadmium yellow and ultramarine blue to create a basic green. Adjust the darkness by adding more ultramarine blue. This forms the foundation for your tree and grass colors.

Warm Up the Green

Mix cadmium orange with quinacridone crimson to introduce warmth to the green. The red in these pigments balances the green, making it more natural.

Create New Zealand Tree Greens

Add burnt sienna, yellow oxide, and titanium white to your base green to reflect the olive and darker tones of New Zealand native trees. Use a number 8 flat brush for application.

Adjust for Light and Shadow

Lighten the green with titanium white for trees on the right side, where the sun highlights them. Desaturate slightly with yellow oxide, cadmium orange, and quinacridone crimson.

Paint Grass Areas

Use the same green mixture, lightened with titanium white, for grass. Adjust saturation by adding cadmium yellow or ultramarine blue as needed. Introduce cadmium orange, quinacridone crimson, and burnt sienna for earthy tones.

PRO TIP

Use consistent colors throughout the painting to create harmony and make it more visually cohesive.

18 Foreground Shadows and Highlights



Mix Mountain Grass Color

Combine yellow oxide, burnt sienna, and titanium white to create a light value grass color. Add some of your existing green mixture to make it look more organic. Use a number 8 flat brush to mark in zones of color where the golden grass will appear.

Enhance Grass Saturation

To increase the saturation, mix in a little cadmium orange, quinacridone crimson, and cadmium yellow. Make gestural brush marks in the direction of the grass growth to build up the form of the grass bank by the mountain stream.

Paint Foreground Grass

Use your existing green mix, which is light in value, with a base of cadmium yellow and ultramarine blue. Add cadmium orange and quinacridone crimson for an organic look. If the green appears cold, warm it with more cadmium yellow, cadmium orange, or yellow oxide.

Adjust Green Saturation

Increase the saturation of the green by adding a little phthalo green, but be cautious as it's a strong color. Use loose gestural brush marks to create texture, providing a base to work from once the painting is dry.

Lighten Foreground Grass

Mix a fresh batch of green starting with cadmium yellow and ultramarine blue. Add yellow oxide for color harmony, phthalo green for saturation, titanium white to lighten, and cadmium orange for a natural look. Use a number 8 flat brush to mark in lighter areas of grass.

Reinforce Shadows

Mix ultramarine blue with yellow oxide and burnt sienna, adding phthalo green for easy blending with highlights. Use a number 6 flat brush to reinforce shadows along the mountain stream bank and in the trees, blending with the green to add texture and depth.

PRO TIP

Use phthalo green sparingly to increase saturation without altering the value too much.

19 Painting the Stream



Mix Green for Mountain Ridges

Combine your distant green mix with the foreground green mixture for the mountain ridges. Adjust the saturation by adding a color opposite, such as cadmium orange, quinacridone crimson, or burnt sienna, if needed. Use a number 8 flat brush to mark the contours of the mountain ridges.

Sharpen Mid-ground Shadows

Use your existing shadow mix to sharpen the shadows in the mid-ground mountains. This will enhance the depth and contrast in your painting before moving on to the stream.

Paint Stream Shadows

With a number 8 flat brush, mix ultramarine blue with a little yellow oxide and phthalo green for the stream shadows. Mark flat horizontal lines to form the ripples, starting with dark values. Add burnt sienna to certain areas for variation.

Block in Water Areas

Mix titanium white with ultramarine blue and a small amount of phthalo green for the main water areas. Reflect the sky in the water, but keep the blue darker than the sky. Add yellow oxide in some areas for color variation and lighten with titanium white as needed.

Create Water Texture

Apply the paint in medium-sized linear brush strokes to establish a base. Ensure the blue remains the dominant color. This base will help when adding detail to the ripples and white water later.

PRO TIP

Use a tiny amount of phthalo green to avoid overpowering your water mixture.

20 Stream Details



Darken the Foreground Water

Mix more ultramarine blue into your existing paint mix to add darker value to the water in the foreground. This will help create depth and contrast in the scene.

Reflect Mountain Shadows

Add quinacridone crimson to your water mix to reflect the shadows of the mid-ground mountains into the stream. Focus on the area by the bank in the foreground to enhance realism.

Fill in Water Areas

Fill in the blank areas of the stream with your water mix, leaving some gaps for white water. This will allow you to add dynamic movement later with titanium white.

Re-establish Rocks

Use a number 8 flat brush to re-establish the rocks in the stream. Mix ultramarine blue with burnt sienna to create a near-black for the shadows, ensuring variation in rock size and form to avoid repetitive shapes.

Add Highlights and White Water

Mix titanium white with a tiny bit of ultramarine blue, burnt sienna, and quinacridone crimson for highlights. Use a number 6 flat brush to mark lines where the white water will go, allowing some paint to mix with the existing water for lighter areas.

PRO TIP

Avoid using pure titanium white initially to prevent the stream from looking flat; save the lightest values for the final touches.

21 Rock Highlights



Reinforce Shadow Areas

Use your mountain stream shadow mix to reinforce the shadows in the water. Think of the ripples like little hills and remember the light source is behind, so the faces of the ripples are in shadow.

Paint Rock Highlights

With a number 6 flat brush, apply highlights to the rocks using a mix of Titanium White, Ultramarine Blue, and Burnt Sienna. Focus on getting the values right to establish a base for future layers.

PRO TIP

Consider ripples in water as small hills to determine where shadows and highlights should fall.

22 Blocking in Completion



Check Colors and Values

Ensure that your colors and values are harmonious and provide a solid foundation for adding detail later. This will make it easier to enhance the painting with finer details.

Tidy Up and Add Highlights

Tidy up any areas that need refinement and add highlights to the mountains. This will prepare the painting for the next stage of adding detail.

Add Foreground Plants

Complete the blocking in stage by adding more plants in the foreground. Use the same green mix as before, but darken it slightly with ultramarine blue.

Adjust Green Mixture

If the green mixture appears too blue, warm it up by adding cadmium yellow or yellow oxide. Harmonize the greens by incorporating complementary colors like cadmium orange, quinacridone crimson, or burnt sienna.

Enhance Scene Variety

Apply the adjusted green mixture to the other side of the mountain stream to add variety and interest to the scene.

Final Check and Drying

Ensure all colors and values work well together, keeping the painting tonally darker for future lighter additions. Once satisfied, let the painting dry for a day or two before adding details.

PRO TIP

Darken the green mix with ultramarine blue and warm it with cadmium yellow or yellow oxide for a balanced hue.

23 Cloud and Sky Refinements



Create Cloud Highlights

Use a number eight flat brush to begin working on the cloud highlights. Mix titanium white with ultramarine blue, burnt sienna, and quinacridone crimson to darken the white slightly. This lighter value compared to the first layer helps the clouds recede and adds depth.

Add Cloud Edges and Wisps

Mark the edges of the clouds where the sun shines through. Paint wisps on some cloud edges to create the illusion of windy conditions at the mountain tops.

Mix and Apply Cloud Shadows

Add ultramarine blue, burnt sienna, and quinacridone crimson to your cloud highlight mix for shadows. Edge the mixture towards blue for cleaner, natural-looking clouds. Blend the shadow mix with the highlights to build form and texture.

Refine Sky and Clouds

Repaint the sky using titanium white, ultramarine blue, and a touch of phthalo green. Adjust the sky mix with more titanium white to define negative spaces around clouds and mountains. Add highlights to clouds as needed.

Evaluate and Adjust Composition

Remove any distracting elements, such as a small cloud near the canvas center. Adjust as you paint to maintain a harmonious composition.

PRO TIP

Edge your cloud shadow mixture towards blue for cleaner and more natural-looking clouds.

24 Mountain Refinements



Refine Mountain Shadows

Use a number 6 flat brush to rework the shadow areas of the mountain. Mix more ultramarine blue, quinacridone crimson, and a tiny bit of burnt sienna into your existing cloud mix. Ensure the value matches the initial blocking in stage, and model the mountain shape with loose, gestural brushwork.

Add Reflected Light

Add a tiny bit of titanium white to your shadow mix to create a subtle difference in value. Use this to indicate form and texture on the mountain face. Paint cracks using the edge of your number 6 flat brush with the shadow mix, adjusting the darkness with ultramarine blue and burnt sienna as needed.

Paint Snow in Shadow

Mix titanium white with ultramarine blue and a little quinacridone crimson for a violet-tinted snow shadow. Apply this with a number 4 short flat brush, considering the mountain's topography to depict snow on ledges and rock sides. Lighten the snow value compared to the blocking stage for added dimension.

Highlight Snow on Mount Talbot

Use a number 6 flat brush to paint snow in light on Mount Talbot. Mix ultramarine blue, burnt sienna, and quinacridone crimson with titanium white to darken the value. Allow snow shadows to blend with the highlight mix for depth, and save the lightest values for the final touches.

PRO TIP

Use the edge of your brush to paint cracks and fissures for added texture and detail.

25 Snow and Mountain Details



Create Snow Ridges

Add some of your snow shadow mix into the snow highlights to create the illusion of ridges in shadow. Twist and turn your brush to create random shadows on the highlighted snow, building up detail without being overly precise.

Detail Mid-ground Mountain

Re-establish cracks and fissures on the mid-ground mountain using the same color combinations as for Mount Talbot. Mix Titanium White with Ultramarine Blue, adding Burnt Sienna to desaturate and a touch of Quinacridone Crimson for a violet tint. Use less Titanium White to darken the value, as the mountain is closer to the viewer.

Add Texture to Mountain Surface

Use a number 6 flat brush to paint cracks on the rocky surface where little light hits. Twist and turn the brush to create texture and exposed rock areas where snow hasn't stuck. Gradually build up detail to prepare for adding snow and reflected light.

Paint Snow in Shadow

Use a number 4 flat brush with a mix of Titanium White, Ultramarine Blue, and Quinacridone Crimson, slightly darker than the snow shadow mix for Mount Talbot. Apply the paint following the mountain's contours to create the illusion of ledges and add interest.

Add Reflected Light in Snow

Lighten the snow mix slightly with more Titanium White and a hint of Quinacridone Crimson for a subtle violet tint. Apply this mix to areas of reflected light, mainly on the right side of the mid-ground mountain, ensuring a subtle difference from the shadowed snow.

Paint Snow on Mountain Top

Using a number 6 flat brush, paint the snow on the mountain top with a mix of Titanium White, Ultramarine Blue, Burnt Sienna, and Quinacridone Crimson. Keep the value slightly dark, reserving the lightest value for later to make the snow pop.

PRO TIP

Use larger brushes to maintain a painterly style, but switch to smaller brushes if you feel more comfortable.

26 Tree and Foliage Details



Enhance Snow Details

Mix some of the snow shadow mix into the snow highlights. This will create the illusion of ridges within the snow, adding depth and interest.

Reinforce Mountain Shadows

Darken the shadows on the foreground mountain using ultramarine blue, burnt sienna, and quinacridone crimson with less titanium white. This will emphasize its proximity to the viewer and enhance the three-dimensional form.

Refine Mountain Shapes

Tidy up the mountain areas by adding more shadows and refining shapes. Paint in the reflected light on the rock faces to add to the three-dimensional effect.

Add Tree Details

Begin detailing the trees in the mid-ground. Ensure the green remains relatively desaturated to maintain atmospheric perspective and prevent the trees from jumping forward in the painting.

PRO TIP

Keep mid-ground greens desaturated to maintain atmospheric perspective.

27 Tree and Foliage Highlights



Mix Base Green

Combine ultramarine blue with a tiny amount of burnt sienna. Add yellow oxide to create a green. The red in burnt sienna will desaturate the green, balancing the color.

Adjust Green Saturation

Lighten the green by adding titanium white, which also desaturates it. Increase saturation by adding small amounts of cadmium yellow, cadmium orange, and quinacridone crimson. Create variations by adjusting ultramarine blue, burnt sienna, or cadmium orange to add interest to the trees.

Paint Tree Highlights

Use a number 6 flat brush to paint tree highlights with the green mix. Add more titanium white to lighten the highlights, adjusting with cadmium yellow, cadmium orange, or ultramarine blue if necessary. Experiment with the mix to achieve the desired saturation and color.

Enhance Mountain Ridges

Use the same green mix to paint sunlit areas on the mountain ridges. Let the green bleed into the mountain shadows for a cohesive look. Increase saturation with cadmium yellow, cadmium orange, quinacridone crimson, or a touch of phthalo green if needed.

Refine Tree Shadows

Mix ultramarine blue, yellow oxide, and burnt sienna for a dark, desaturated green. Add cadmium yellow and cadmium orange to maintain color harmony for the tree highlights.

PRO TIP

Adjust green saturation by adding cadmium yellow, cadmium orange, and quinacridone crimson to achieve the desired vibrancy.

28 Foreground Grass and Plants



Mix Tree Foliage Green

Combine ultramarine blue with yellow oxide to create a natural green. Enhance the saturation by adding cadmium yellow, then round off with cadmium orange for an organic look. Apply this mixture with a number 6 flat brush to highlight the foliage on the trees.

Adjust Green Saturation

For areas requiring more saturation, add phthalo green to the mix. Balance the color with additional cadmium orange and a touch of quinacridone crimson to maintain harmony.

Paint Foreground Shadows

Use the existing shadow mix for the trees to paint shadows in the foreground. Darken with ultramarine blue and burnt sienna if needed, while maintaining green tones by adding yellow oxide. This adds texture and interest to the foreground plants.

Mix Grass Colors

Create a basic green mix using ultramarine blue and cadmium yellow. Lighten the value with titanium white, then enhance saturation with cadmium yellow. Add yellow oxide to warm the green and make it more organic.

Create Golden Grass Color

Mix yellow oxide with cadmium orange and a bit of quinacridone crimson for a saturated golden hue. Add burnt sienna, then lighten and desaturate with titanium white. Blend a small amount into the green mix for harmony.

PRO TIP

Use titanium white to lighten the value of your greens, but remember it can desaturate the color, so adjust with cadmium yellow if needed.

29 Foreground Grass Details



Apply Base Grass Strokes

Use a number 6 flat brush to apply paint for the grass. For grass further away, use horizontal brush strokes. For immediate foreground grass, paint in an upwards direction to mimic natural growth.

Mix and Apply Grass Colors

Mix different greens and golden yellows. Use these colors to paint the golden grass, green grass, and plants in full sunlight. Keep brush strokes random to avoid uniformity and distraction in the composition.

Add Shadows and Warmth

Add shadows to the riverbank and base of plants using a mix of ultramarine blue, yellow oxide, and burnt sienna. To create warmth, mix in a tiny bit of quinacridone crimson and cadmium orange.

Enhance Riverbank Texture

Use the number 6 flat brush to add texture to the riverbank and form the base of plants. This prepares them for more detail later once they're dry.

Detail Grass and Riverbank

Add further detail to the grass by creating ledges and little mounds in the riverbank. This adds depth and interest to the landscape.

PRO TIP

Keep brush strokes random to avoid uniformity and distraction in the composition.

30 Tree Shadows and Highlights



Mix Tree Shadow Color

Combine ultramarine blue with yellow oxide, burnt sienna, and a touch of phthalo green. This mix will create a dark, saturated color suitable for the tree shadows.

Paint Tree Shadows

Apply the shadow color to the tree on the right in the foreground. Paint in the direction of the foliage growth to enhance the natural look.

Outline Tree with Light Green

Use your existing green mix to paint the outline of the tree where the foliage is in full light. This will contrast with the shadow areas and highlight the tree's form.

Create Leaf Clumps

Use the side of a number 6 flat brush to paint the foliage. This technique helps create the illusion of clumps of leaves.

PRO TIP

Paint tree shadows in the direction that the foliage is growing to enhance realism.

31 Stream Ripples and Highlights



Mix Stream Color

Use a number 6 flat brush to mix ultramarine blue with titanium white to lighten the value. Add a small amount of yellow oxide for a green element, then a touch of phthalo green for a rich, natural blue.

Paint Ripple Shadows

Mix ultramarine blue with yellow oxide for the ripple shadows. Apply these shadows over the previous ones from the blocking stage, treating the ripples like little hills with shadows facing you. Keep brush marks fluid and gestural.

Add Stream Color to Ripples

Apply the mountain stream mix to the crests and troughs of the water using the tip of your brush. Paint over the shadowed areas, leaving gaps for highlights where the white water will be.

Enhance Ripples with Highlights

Lighten your water mix with titanium white and add this to the troughs of the ripples. Use linear, gestural brush marks, making them smaller as the water recedes to convey movement.

PRO TIP

Use fluid and gestural brush marks to create natural-looking ripples and water movement.

32 White Water Details



Prepare the White Water Mix

Mix titanium white with a touch of ultramarine blue, quinacridone crimson, and burnt sienna. This will darken the value slightly, allowing room for lighter highlights later.

Paint the White Water

Use a 3/8 inch bristle dagger brush to apply the white water mix over the tops of some ripples. This brush is ideal for capturing the look of turbulent, oxygenated water in a fast-flowing mountain stream.

Define Stream Edges

Use the white water mix to define the edges of the mountain stream along the riverbanks. Let the mix blend slightly with the blue of the water to soften the appearance.

Adjust Sun Reflections

Reduce the amount of white water and sun reflections in the lower right corner to avoid distraction. This keeps the focus balanced across the painting.

PRO TIP

Darken the white water mix slightly to save the lightest values for later highlights.

33 Final Refinements



Refine the Sky

Use a number six flat brush to work on the cloud highlights. Mix Titanium White with a small amount of ultramarine blue, quinacridone crimson, burnt sienna, and yellow oxide. This mixture should not be pure white to prevent the clouds from appearing too cold.

Highlight the Clouds

Apply the mixed color to the edges of the clouds to enhance their three-dimensional form. Be selective with the placement to maintain some darker values, which contribute to the overall form of the clouds.

PRO TIP

Always add a yellow element to cloud highlights to soften the coldness of pure white.

34 Cloud and Snow Highlights



Mix Cloud Shadow Color

Combine Titanium White with ultramarine blue, quinacridone crimson, and burnt sienna. Add a bit more ultramarine blue to ensure the cloud shadow leans towards the blue side, reducing the risk of muddy colors.

Refine Cloud Forms

Use a number 6 flat brush to sharpen the cloud forms, ensuring they communicate well to the viewer. If needed, use a dry clean brush to blend and soften the cloud edges for a smoother appearance.

Add Snow Highlights

Use the cloud highlight mix to paint highlights on the snow of the mountains. Adjust the value of the snow by adding lighter tones to enhance the three-dimensional form and realism.

Detail Snow on Mount Talbot

Switch to a number 2 flat brush to add more detailed snow highlights on Mount Talbot, ensuring the snow stands out against the clouds.

PRO TIP

Use a dry brush to blend and soften cloud edges for a smoother appearance.

35 Mountain Snow Details



Create Textured Snow

Leave a few gaps in the sunlit areas to expose the paint layers underneath. This will help communicate a textured, snow-covered mountain top.

Paint Reflected Light in Snow Shadows

Mix titanium white with ultramarine blue and a little quinacridone crimson for a violet tint. Use a number four flat brush to paint the reflected light in the snow shadows on the mountain's side, defining the mountain edges.

Tidy Cracks and Fissures

Use the original color mixture of ultramarine blue, burnt sienna, quinacridone crimson, and titanium white. Ensure the cracks aren't too dark to prevent them from coming forward in the painting.

Add Exposed Rock Details

Use a number two flat brush to mark small dabs of color for exposed rock faces where the snow hasn't stuck. Adjust to a smaller brush if needed to indicate small areas of exposed rocks.

PRO TIP

Leave gaps in the sunlit snow areas to create a textured effect.

36 Tree and Grass Highlights



Add Reflected Light to Mountain Shadows

Use a number two flat brush to paint reflected light in the shadows of the snow on the side of the mountain. This will add form to the mountain and indicate steep slopes. Add a tiny bit more quinacridone crimson to the snow mix for the right side to create a more violet tint, as seen in the photo reference.

Highlight Tree Crowns

Focus on the trees on the left and add highlights to the tops of their crowns to emphasize their form. This will make it appear as though strong sunlight is hitting the tops of the canopies.

Mix Vibrant Green for Tree Highlights

Start with a combination of ultramarine blue and cadmium yellow, ensuring plenty of blue for a darker green. Add yellow oxide to desaturate and warm up the green, giving it an olive color. Balance the color by mixing in quinacridone crimson and cadmium orange to desaturate and make it look more organic.

PRO TIP

Add quinacridone crimson to the snow mix to create a violet tint in the reflected light.

37 Tree Shadow Mix



Mix Tree Shadow Green

Combine various shades of green with a touch of burnt sienna. Add titanium white to lighten the value and desaturate the color. Adjust the mixture by adding quinacridone crimson and cadmium orange if the green appears too vibrant.

Fine-Tune Your Green

Experiment with the mixture to achieve the desired color. Use burnt sienna for further desaturation if needed. Be cautious with the amounts of cadmium orange and quinacridone crimson, as only a small amount is necessary.

Detail Tree Canopies

Use a number 4 flat brush to add more detail to the tops of the tree canopies. Focus on painting with precision to enhance the detail.

Adjust Green Saturation

If the green appears too desaturated, add a small amount of phthalo green to your existing mixture to increase saturation without significantly altering the value.

PRO TIP

Keep your colors clean by carefully controlling the amounts you use, especially with strong pigments like cadmium orange and quinacridone crimson.

38 Grass and Plant Details



Adjust Green Tones

Ensure the green doesn't appear too cold. If it does, mix in more cadmium yellow, yellow oxide, or even cadmium orange to warm it up.

Create Tree Foliage Shadow Mix

Mix ultramarine blue with yellow oxide, adding cadmium orange and a bit of quinacridone crimson. Include a tiny amount of burnt sienna and lighten the value with cadmium yellow to harmonize with the tree highlights.

Paint Tree Shadows

Use a half-inch bristle dagger brush to apply the shadow mix to the tree foliage. This brush is ideal for capturing the natural randomness of foliage and grass.

Balance Grass Colors

Focus on the grass in the foreground, balancing green with gold and yellow tones. Mix ultramarine blue with cadmium yellow, lighten with titanium white, and add yellow oxide to warm and desaturate the mixture.

PRO TIP

Use a dagger brush to achieve natural, random effects in foliage and grass.

39 Grass Texture and Colour



Mix Grounding Green

Add some cadmium orange to your green mixture to ground it and make it look more natural. Alternatively, use a small amount of cadmium red if you prefer. Remember, mixing red and yellow creates orange, but cadmium orange is often more convenient for landscapes.

Adjust Grass Value

Ensure the value of your grass is quite light, much lighter than the trees, to help the grass read well and allow the trees to stand out.

Paint Grass Texture

Use a number six short flat brush, also known as a bright, to paint in a general upwards motion following the direction of the grass. Vary your green mixture by adding more cadmium orange or phthalo green to create interest in the foliage and grass.

Enhance Green Saturation

Make the green of the grass richer and more saturated by adding phthalo green, ultramarine blue, and cadmium yellow to your mixture.

Apply with Dagger Brush

Use a half-inch dagger brush to paint grass along the banks of the mountain stream. Work your brush in an upwards motion, occasionally using downwards strokes, to create a variety of marks perfect for painting grass.

PRO TIP

Use a dagger brush for varied marks that are ideal for painting grass.

40 Foreground Grass Refinements



Mix Orange-Olive Hue

Add cadmium orange to your green mix to create an orange-olive hue. This will add interest and variety to the plants and foliage in the foreground.

Create Golden Straw Grass

Enhance your existing green mix by adding a bit of cadmium yellow, titanium white, yellow oxide, and burnt sienna. This combination will produce a golden straw color for the grass.

Sharpen and Soften Shadows

Use a half-inch dagger brush to sharpen shadows in the grass clumps and soften edges of shadows along the riverbanks. This adds depth and dimension to the scene.

Build Up Lighter Layers

Continue building lighter layers over darker ones to enhance the three-dimensional form. Use upward brush strokes to follow the form of the grass.

Add Straw Grass to Stream Bank

Apply the straw-colored grass to the bank of the mountain stream on the opposite side. This adds balance and continuity to the composition.

Enhance Foreground Grass Shadows

Introduce more shadow mix into the large clump of grass in the foreground. Work your brush upwards to enhance the form and structure.

PRO TIP

Use a half-inch dagger brush to refine shadows and add texture to the grass, enhancing the three-dimensional form.

41 Tree and Grass Shadows



Add Green Mixture to Leaves

Apply the green mixture made earlier on top of the strap-like leaves. Focus on covering the area without worrying about too much detail at this stage. More detail will be added later.

Paint Tree Shadows

Shift attention to the tree on the right, where the sun creates a strong shadow. Ensure the shadow is dark but harmonious with the highlight colors planned for the tree's outline. Avoid muddy or unpleasant shadow tones.

Enhance Light and Shadow Contrast

Recognize that the outer canopy of the tree has thinner foliage, allowing more light to pass through and reflect off the leaves. Use the contrast between dark shadows and light areas to enhance the realism of shapes and forms in the landscape.

PRO TIP

Ensure tree shadows are dark but harmonious with highlight colors to avoid a muddy appearance.

42 Tree and Grass Highlights



Mix Tree Shadow Colors

Use your existing shadow mix and add cadmium yellow and ultramarine blue. Incorporate burnt sienna, cadmium orange, and quinacridone crimson to maintain harmony with the rest of the painting. Finally, add phthalo green to blend well with the highlight colors.

Paint Tree Shadows

With a number six short flat brush, apply the shadow mixture to paint the bulk of the tree's shadow. This will create depth and contrast with the highlights.

Add Tree Highlights

Use a dagger brush to apply the highlight green mixes prepared earlier. This brush is ideal for defining the form and outline of the tree.

Lighten Mountain Stream Colors

Mix ultramarine blue with titanium white to lighten the color. Add yellow oxide to create an olive green hue, then incorporate phthalo green for a turquoise effect. Adjust with more ultramarine blue if the mixture appears too green.

PRO TIP

Use a dagger brush to effectively create the form and outline of trees.

43 Stream and Water Highlights



Paint Distant Water

Use a number 6 flat brush to paint the water that is farthest away before it turns off into the distance. Lighten the value with titanium white if needed to create depth.

Add Ripple Details

Switch to a number 2 flat brush to paint the water in the troughs of the ripples. Paint a series of wiggly lines to form the shape of the ripples, reflecting the lighter value of the sky.

Reflect Mountain Shadows

Mix ultramarine blue and quinacridone crimson into the existing water mixture to add a violet edge. Brush this over the calmer areas of water by the river bank, reflecting the shadow of the mountain.

Highlight Rapid Water

Create a new mixture with titanium white, ultramarine blue, burnt sienna, and quinacridone crimson. Use this to paint areas of rapid moving water and those reflecting direct sunlight, keeping the value slightly darker for final highlights.

PRO TIP

Use wiggly lines to capture the energy and movement of water ripples.

44 Mountain and Rock Details



Add Water Details

Use a quarter inch dagger brush to apply marks to the heavier areas of water. Switch to a number one round brush to add finer sparkles and highlight areas reflecting direct sunlight. Prepare the water for final details by adding the lightest values, which will be completed at the end of the painting.

Enhance Mid-ground Mountain

Focus on the mid-ground mountain by adding more reflected light to the existing layers. Be mindful of your values, ensuring they are neither too dark nor too light. Use a combination of ultramarine blue, burnt sienna, quinacridone crimson, and titanium white to achieve the desired effect.

Emphasize Rock Surfaces

Apply the paint with a number two flat brush over the rock surfaces on the mountain face. Emphasize the forms to enhance the three-dimensional effect of the mountain.

PRO TIP

Use a number one round brush for adding finer sparkles and highlights to the water.

45 Mountain Refinements



Enhance Mountain Cracks and Fissures

Mix a darker hue using the same colors with less titanium white. Paint over the cracks and fissures, following their natural direction to ensure the mountain communicates effectively to the viewer.

Add Rugged Details

Use your shadow mixture to apply more detail to the mountain face. Add small areas of exposed rocks to enhance the ruggedness of the mountain. Be patient, as this involves dabbing small marks to build texture.

Refine Snow and Rock Details

Once the rock details are dry, add more details to the snow. Alternate between the snow shadow mix and the rock shadow mix to create texture and a three-dimensional form, enhancing the painting's ruggedness.

Sharpen Shadows on the Right Mountain

Focus on the mountain on the right by sharpening shadows and refining rock fissures and cracks. Use ultramarine blue, burnt sienna, quinacridone crimson, and a small amount of titanium white to achieve a darker value, as this mountain is closer to the viewer.

PRO TIP

Be patient and use small dabbing marks to build texture and detail in the mountain face.

46 Mountain Highlights



Add Reflected Light to Shadows

Lighten the shadow color mix slightly with titanium white. Use a number two flat brush to apply this mix to the shadows on the mountain, adding cracks and shadows to the mountain on the left.

Enhance Mountain Highlights

Mix burnt sienna with titanium white, adding a tiny amount of ultramarine blue to neutralize the mixture. Optionally, add quinacridone crimson for a violet tint. Apply this mix over the existing layers to define the mountain's form, following the slope direction.

PRO TIP

Use the same color mixes for shadows and highlights to maintain harmony in your painting.

47 Grass and Plant Highlights



Mix Grass Green

Combine ultramarine blue with cadmium yellow to create your basic grass green mix. If the green appears too cold, add quinacridone crimson and cadmium orange to introduce a red element. This will desaturate the green slightly, giving it a more natural appearance. Lighten the value with titanium white, and adjust saturation with more cadmium orange or yellow if needed.

Mix Straw-Colored Mountain Grass

Start with yellow oxide and mix in ultramarine blue to add a green element. Add burnt sienna to deepen the color, then lighten the value with titanium white. If the mix looks too pale, enhance it with more yellow oxide or burnt sienna. For a slight increase in saturation, add a tiny bit of cadmium yellow and cadmium orange, but keep the color naturally pale and low in chroma.

PRO TIP

Add quinacridone crimson and cadmium orange to your grass green mix to desaturate it slightly and achieve a more natural look.

48 Foreground Plant Details



Enhance Straw-Colored Grass

Use a half-inch dagger brush with a straw-colored mountain grass mix. Apply the paint over existing areas with a slightly lighter value to create texture. Utilize the flat edge of the dagger brush for a textured effect.

Harmonize Grass Colors

With a clean half-inch dagger brush, mix some of the green mix with the straw-colored grass. This harmonizes the colors with surrounding green grass, bushes, and plants, making the scene more cohesive.

Add Grass Details

Paint the straw-colored grass in an upward direction, mimicking natural growth. Add burnt sienna to the bases to create clumps of grass for added depth.

Detail Foreground Plants

Switch to a number two flat brush and use the green mix to paint individual leaves and clumps of grass along the mountain stream. Focus on adding detail to enhance the foreground.

PRO TIP

Use the flat edge of the dagger brush to create texture in the grass.

49 Grass and Plant Refinements



Prepare the Green Mixture

Use your existing green mix and lighten the value by adding more cadmium yellow. This will also increase the saturation. If needed, add some titanium white to adjust the brightness.

Adjust the Green Tone

If the mixture appears too yellow, add phthalo green to balance it without altering the value significantly. To warm up a cold green, incorporate cadmium yellow, cadmium orange, and quinacridone crimson to harmonize the color.

Detail the Grass

Use a number one round brush to paint the individual strap-like leaves of the grasses. Paint from bottom to top, following the natural growth pattern of the grass, to enhance the three-dimensional form.

PRO TIP

Lighten the green mixture with cadmium yellow to increase saturation and enhance the form of the grass.

50 Final Grass Highlights



Darken the Green

Add more ultramarine blue to your green mix to darken it. This will help create depth in the grassy areas.

Add Warm Tones to Grass

Incorporate cadmium orange and quinacridone crimson into the green mix. This will mimic the orangey-red tips of the grass leaves.

Enhance Shadows

Mix ultramarine blue with cadmium yellow and quinacridone crimson to add shadow to the grass. This increases saturation and defines the shape of the grass.

Prepare Highlight Mix

Combine titanium white with a small amount of yellow oxide to create a warm highlight mix. Use this for the lightest areas, ensuring it doesn't become too yellow.

Apply Snow Highlights

With a number two flat brush, apply the highlight mix to the tops of ridges or sunlit snow areas. Avoid covering the entire area to maintain tonal variation and prevent flatness.

PRO TIP

Save the lightest values for the end to add impactful highlights and depth.

51 Final Mountain Highlights



Add Highlighted Snow

Selectively add areas of highlighted snow to make the snow on top of the mountain pop. Use a thicker layer of paint for these highlights, as the thinner layers underneath will support them without cracking.

Highlight Mid-ground Mountain

Apply the same technique to Mount Crosscut, the mid-ground mountain. Use a number two flat brush to apply a lighter color to the shadow areas of the snow, enhancing the reflected light.

Mix Lighter Snow Color

Mix titanium white with ultramarine blue and a tiny bit of quinacridone crimson to create the snow color. Make the value even lighter than before to add finishing touches to the mountains.

PRO TIP

Use thicker paint for highlights to ensure they stand out and add depth to the snow.

52 Final Grass and Tree Highlights



Mix a Light Green

Start with cadmium yellow and ultramarine blue to create a green base. Add phthalo green to increase saturation, but be cautious as it may look too electric.

Naturalize the Green

Incorporate cadmium orange to make the green appear more organic. Add yellow oxide to soften and warm the green.

Lighten the Green

Introduce titanium white to the mixture to lighten the value, preparing it for highlights.

Paint Grass Highlights

Use a number two flat brush to apply the light green in clumps. Employ an up and down motion with a general upward direction to suggest blades of grass without needing intricate detail.

PRO TIP

Use a number two flat brush with an upward motion to create the illusion of grass blades.

53 Tree and Grass Final Touches



Mix Tree Highlight Color

Combine yellow oxide with ultramarine blue and burnt sienna. Add Titanium White to lighten the value, but avoid making it too light to prevent it from standing out too much.

Adjust Color Saturation

Incorporate some of your existing green mix into the highlight color to enhance its vibrancy and avoid a pale, desaturated look.

Apply Highlights to Tree Canopies

Use a number 2 flat brush to gently apply the highlight color to the edges of the tree canopies. This will define their forms and create the illusion of leaves glistening in sunlight.

PRO TIP

Mix existing green into the highlight color to maintain vibrancy and avoid desaturation.

54 Mountain Ridge Highlights



Highlight Grass Leaves

Use a number 0 round brush with your grass highlight mix. Paint highlights on the strap-like leaves in the bottom left corner. This creates the illusion of sunlight shining through the leaves.

Highlight Mountain Ridges

Use the same color mix from the tree highlights for the mountain ridges. Apply the lighter value color to the tops of the ridges. This emphasizes a three-dimensional form.

PRO TIP

Apply lighter colors to the tops of forms to create a sense of dimension and sunlight.

55 Mid-ground Tree Highlights



Adjust the Paint Mixture

Add more ultramarine blue and titanium white to your existing mixture to desaturate and lighten the value slightly. Include a touch of burnt sienna to give the mixture a more organic appearance.

Highlight the Mid-ground Trees

Apply the adjusted mixture to the tops of the trees in the mid-ground. This will create a natural highlight effect, enhancing the depth and realism of the scene.

PRO TIP

Use burnt sienna to desaturate the color and give it an organic look.

56 Stream Rock Details



Mix Shadow Color

Combine ultramarine blue and burnt sienna to create a near-black shade. Add a small amount of quinacridone crimson to the mix for depth. This dark value will be used for the shadows of the stones in the stream.

Paint Rocks and Boulders

Use a number two flat brush to paint additional rocks and boulders in the mountain stream. Vary the sizes of the stones to create visual interest and break up the line of the riverbank. Avoid overcrowding the composition by placing stones randomly rather than in a large pile.

PRO TIP

Vary the sizes of the stones to add interest and avoid overcrowding the composition.

57 Rock and Boulder Highlights



Paint Reflected Light in Shadows

Identify the areas where the rocks and boulders will sit within the mountain stream. Apply reflected light in the shadows of these rocks to create depth.

Mix Colors for Rocks

Mix your existing shadow mixture with a bit of titanium white and more ultramarine blue to achieve a metallic blue color for the rocks. For rocks that are more cream or brown, add burnt sienna to your mix instead.

Maintain Color Harmony

Use these mixed colors to keep the rocks in harmony with the rest of the painting. This is especially important for maintaining consistency with the shadows of the mountains and clouds.

Allow Shadows to Dry

Leave the painted shadows of the rocks to dry before proceeding with further details. This will ensure a stable base for additional layers.

PRO TIP

Use a mix of titanium white and ultramarine blue for metallic blue rocks, and add burnt sienna for cream or brown rocks.

58 Tree and Grass Final Details



Enhance Tree Highlights

Mix your original green with more titanium white, cadmium yellow, and cadmium orange to increase saturation while maintaining the green tone. Use a number two round brush to apply individual leaves and outline the tree, defining its shape and adding realism.

Add Sunlight Reflections on Grass

Incorporate strong sunlight reflections on the grasses to capture the essence of a sunny spring day in the mountains. Apply these highlights sparingly to mimic the effect of sunlight on the leaves.

PRO TIP

Use a number two round brush to add individual leaves and outline the tree for a more realistic appearance.

59 Final Grass Highlights



Mix Highlight Color

Take the highlight mix used for the tree and add more titanium white and cadmium yellow to it. This will create a very light value color suitable for highlighting.

Apply Highlights to Leaves

Use a number zero round brush to apply the highlight mixture to a few leaves. Make flicks with the brush to indicate the direction of the leaves, enhancing their three-dimensional form.

Highlight Grass Clumps

Use the same light value mixture to highlight the clumps of grass in the foreground on the left. This will help define the curvature of the strap-like leaves.

Add Sunlight Reflections

Add some sunlight reflections to the leaves of other grasses in the foreground. This will enhance the overall brightness and realism of the scene.

PRO TIP

Use a number zero round brush to make flicks that indicate the direction of the leaves.

60 Stream and Water Final Highlights



Add Lighter Areas to the Stream

Mix titanium white with ultramarine blue and phthalo green to create a lighter value than the previous layer. Use a number two flat brush to paint lighter areas of water in the troughs of the ripples. This will help convey the light being refracted by the water.

Tidy Up Shadows in the Ripples

Create a shadow mix with ultramarine blue, yellow oxide, and a bit of phthalo green. Use this mix to tidy up shadows within the ripples, enhancing the depth and realism of the water.

Highlight White Water and Sunlight Reflections

Use a number one round brush to add highlights to the white water and sunlight reflections. Mix titanium white with a small amount of ultramarine blue, burnt sienna, and a very small amount of quinacridone crimson for a slightly darker value than pure white.

Prepare for the Final Lightest Layer

Mix titanium white with a bit of yellow oxide for the final lightest layer. This will be applied after the current highlights to bring out the brightest areas in the painting.

PRO TIP

Use a number two flat brush to paint lighter areas in the troughs of the ripples to effectively communicate light refraction.

61 Rock and Bush Highlights



Add Reflected Light to Rock Shadows

Mix ultramarine blue with burnt sienna, a tiny bit of quinacridone crimson, and a little titanium white. Apply this mixture to the shadow areas of the rocks to create a soft, reflected light effect.

Paint Warm Reflected Light on Rocks

Combine yellow oxide with burnt sienna and ultramarine blue. Use this mixture to paint warm reflected light on selected rocks, enhancing their depth and warmth.

Mix and Apply Rock Highlight Colors

Create low-chroma rock highlights by adding titanium white to your existing shadow mixtures. Use the warm shadow mix of yellow oxide, burnt sienna, and ultramarine blue, and the cooler mix of ultramarine blue, burnt sienna, and quinacridone crimson. Apply these greys with a number one round brush to highlight the rock surfaces and define their form.

Highlight Shrubs and Bushes

Add highlights to the shrubs and bushes in the foreground to bring them to life and add dimension.

PRO TIP

Use a number one round brush to carefully apply highlights to rock surfaces, enhancing their form and texture.

62 Final Water Sparkles



Mix the Green Foliage Color

Combine Cadmium Yellow with a touch of Ultramarine Blue and some Phthalo Green for a saturated green mixture. Add Cadmium Orange and Quinacridone Crimson to earth the green and calm it down. Lighten the value with Titanium White.

Apply Foliage Highlights

Use a 3/8 inch dagger brush to apply the green mixture to areas on the bushes and shrubs where the foliage reflects direct sunlight.

Add Water Sparkles

Mix Titanium White with a tiny amount of Yellow Oxide for a warmer light value. Use a zero round brush to add small dots where the water sparkles in the sun. Focus on areas around the base of boulders and rocks in the stream.

Enhance White Water Highlights

Selectively add more highlight mix to the tops of the white water to make it pop. This enhances the illusion of movement and light in the water.

Highlight Wet Rocks

Add highlights to some rocks to suggest that their surfaces have been wet by the water and are glistening in the sun.

PRO TIP

Use Titanium White with a hint of Yellow Oxide to create warm highlights that mimic sunlight on water.

Summary & Key Takeaways

Embark on your mountain valley painting journey by thoughtfully planning your composition. Nature is your muse, but not your master—use your artistic license to rearrange elements for a more compelling design. Begin with quick sketches to explore different compositions and establish a solid foundation for your painting. This preparatory work ensures that your painting will capture the essence of the scene while maintaining artistic integrity.

As you progress, focus on the interplay of light and shadow. Use a variety of pencils to sketch and define your values, and create a small color study to test your palette choices. This step is crucial for ensuring that your colors and values are effective in conveying the mood and depth of your scene. Pay attention to the harmonious use of colors, employing a limited palette to maintain cohesion and using complementary colors to enhance vibrancy.

Finally, bring your painting to life by carefully layering colors and textures. Use larger brushes to establish the foundation and smaller ones for detail work. Remember to prepare your canvas properly and use the color wheel to guide your color mixing. As you block in shadows and refine details, keep the atmospheric perspective in mind to create a sense of depth and realism. With these techniques, your mountain valley painting will be a testament to your growing skills and artistic vision.

LESSON POINTS TO REMEMBER

- Use a sketchbook to experiment with different compositions before starting your painting.
- Use a 4H pencil for light marks and a 4B pencil for dark shadows to effectively plan your composition.
- Create a small color study to test your painting's colors and values before committing to a larger piece.
- Avoid placing the focal point in the center to maintain a dynamic composition.
- Use Phthalo Green sparingly to prevent it from overpowering your color mixtures.
- Begin with larger brushes to establish the painting's foundation, then use smaller brushes for detail work.
- To desaturate a color, mix it with its complementary opposite on the color wheel.
- Convert your reference photo to black and white to easily identify and match dark values.



Mount Talbot Design

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.

“Block in for New Zealand Valley” by Nancy Newton



Block in for New Zealand Valley

I really like the loose painterly brush work in this painting, the tonal dynamic is working and the composition is good.

I can see this painting has a strong foundation which is the most important thing to establish when blocking in a painting. You have plenty of room for adding lighter tone to the painting as you begin the modelling stage. Keep going with this one, it would be great to see this painting when it is finished. Be sure to post it to this blog when it is complete :)

“Mountain Valley - Pamela Wissinger” by Pamela Wissinger



Mountain Valley - Pamela Wissinger

I like your interpretation of this painting workshop. I really like the greens in the foreground and you have very nicely adapted the composition for a different size canvas, I think it's work really well.

Some suggestions for improvements would be to address the values in this painting. In the photo reference there are some very dark tones in the foreground especially along the river bank and in the shadows of the trees and mountain faces. Adding some darker shadows will help to give the painting more of a sense of light. You can then also add some lighter colours to the grass and trees. You could also add some more shadows to the background mountains which again will emphasise their overall forms and give the painting a sense of space. This is an easy fix and I think this is well on its way to being a great painting :)

Mount Talbot by Genevieve Reinke



Mount Talbot by Genevieve Reinke

2nd study version

29.5x20.5cm

Oil on Paper.

Nice work Genevieve, I like the loose painterly brushwork and I like how you have adapted the composition to fit the small canvas. The composition is good and it works. The colours are cohesive and harmonious.

A suggestion for improvement would be to address the colours and values mainly in the foreground. There should be more emphasis on the darker shadows and these should be more prominent. This will help to give your painting a sense of light and add a little drama to it. You could also make some of the hues in the mountain rock faces on the left a little more saturated. You could definitely add more saturated greens to the grass in the foreground and remember that grass is one of the lighter values you'll find in the landscape. The snow on the mountains could also be much lighter as well, again an easy fix. Mix titanium white with a little burnt sienna to make it sit back and recede in the painting. Other than that, this is a really nice art work :)

“Mountain valley, oil, canvas, 40 cm x 80 cm” by **Elena Sokolova**



Mountain valley, oil, canvas, 40 cm x 80 cm

Really nice work, I love the loose gestural brush work which has really brought an aliveness to this painting. You have nailed the composition also. The colours are looking good however you might want to make the shadows in Mount Talbot in the distance lighter in value, this will help it to recede more in the painting. It's an easy fix but other than that, great job :)