



A Walk to the Lake 2

A step-by-step painting guide by Richard Robinson

Watch the full lesson at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/196-A-Walk-to-the-Lake-2>

MY PAINTING CLUB

Introduction

Join me as we embark on a creative journey to capture the enchanting beauty of a lakeside scene in New Zealand. With a 12 by 24 inch Frederick's Ultra Smooth Canvas as our starting point, we'll explore the vibrant world of impressionistic painting. Using M. Graham & Co oils, including ultramarine blue, cadmium red, yellow ochre, cadmium yellow light, and plenty of titanium white, we'll bring this light-filled landscape to life. Our tools will include a variety of brushes, primarily size 12 bristle flats, a rigger for fine details, and a synthetic flat for those finishing touches. To begin, we'll sketch out the scene with a touch of Gamsol. This chapter will guide you through designing an inviting composition and painting with freedom, employing a range of fun techniques. Whether you're stuck indoors or simply seeking a new artistic challenge, this lesson offers a rewarding opportunity to enhance your skills and enjoy the process of painting a colorful, impressionistic masterpiece. Let's dive in and create something beautiful together.



Kinloch



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.

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
- Ultramarine Blue
- Cadmium Red
- 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 Kinloch description and photo editing tips



Explore Kinloch

Visit Kinloch by boat, car, or bike. Enjoy the breathtaking scenery at every turn, especially during autumn when the colors are vibrant and captivating.

Enhance Photo Saturation

Open your photo on an iPad and click edit. Locate the saturation setting to adjust the colors. Decrease saturation for a grayscale effect or increase it to make the colors more vivid. Use this tool to enhance your painting references.

PRO TIP

Boosting saturation in a photo can make it easier to capture vibrant colors in your paintings.

2 Initial sketch and composition



Identify Big Shapes

Look for the big shapes in the scene, starting with the dock. Determine how far it extends into the painting both vertically and horizontally. Avoid placing it dead center to keep the composition interesting.

Sketch Foreground and Waterline

Focus on the foreground shadow and the shape of the waterline. These elements are crucial to get right. Break curves into straight angles first, then round them off if desired.

Highlight Light and Shadow

Notice the light flowing across the beach, touching the water, and highlighting the dock. Darken the background to make the sunlit areas pop.

Add Trees and Landscape

Sketch in trees and landscape elements in the background, keeping them obscure. This will enhance the contrast with the sunlit areas.

Define Structures and Shadows

Emphasize the contrast between the curves of the trees and beach with the boxy shapes of the shack and dock. Ensure the poles on the water align at the same level, and add cast shadows to create interesting shapes.

PRO TIP

Break curves into straight angles first to simplify sketching, then round them off for a natural look.

3 Blocking in the background



Mix the Background Color

Combine blue, a little red, and white to raise the value. Add walnut oil and a touch of yellow ochre to soften the color. This mixture will serve as the base shadow color for the hill.

Block in the Background

Use a large brush to apply the mixed color to the canvas, focusing on blocking in big shapes. Don't worry about precision; the goal is to establish the foundational background.

Adjust and Refine

Add more white to lighten areas as needed and ensure you have enough paint to cover the desired space. Increase the blue for a cooler tone if necessary.

Smooth and Texturize

Use a palette knife to smooth out textures, keeping the application loose and playful. This technique is ideal for background areas that need to look good from a distance without much detail.

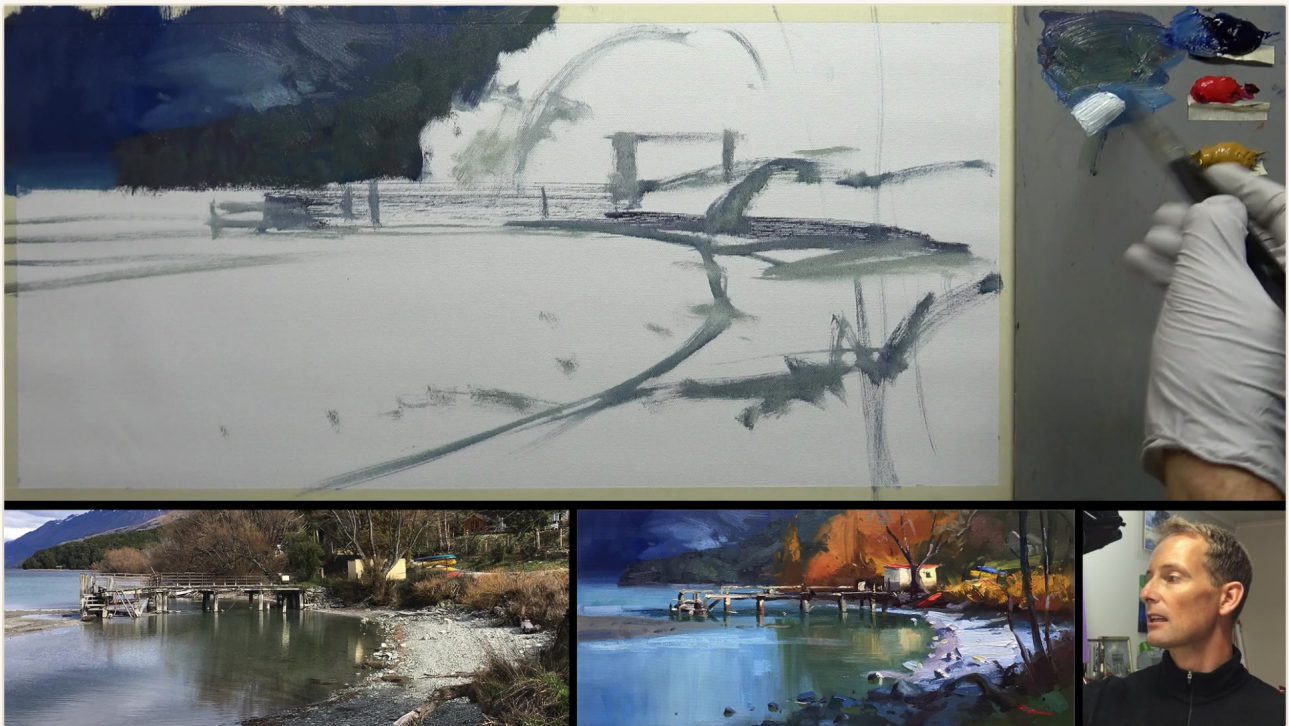
Create Interest and Contrast

Introduce a little more contrast to break up shapes and add interest. This encourages viewers to engage with the painting and interpret the background creatively.

PRO TIP

Avoid glare on your canvas by painting in the shade and wearing a black top to minimize reflections.

4 Painting the water and reflections



Prepare the Water Base

Use the same colors as before, but make them slightly lighter with a touch of light yellow. Keep the contrasts minimal to create a harmonious background for the dock.

Create Soft Edges

Ensure the edges are soft so the background sits back and allows the dock to stand out. This sets the stage for the elements that will be added on top.

Add Shadows Under the Dock

Paint the shadows cast by the dock onto the water using a dark greenish-blue. The shadows should be darker and sharper where the dock is closer to the water.

Paint Dark Reflections

Use vertical down strokes to add dark reflections in the water. These strokes help to define the water's surface and the dock's presence.

Introduce Warm Tones

Switch to a new brush and block in a large area of warm colors. Embrace the vibrant colors of autumn, even if the leaves have fallen, to bring life to the painting.

PRO TIP

Use vertical down strokes to create realistic reflections in the water.

5 Adding warm colors and shadows



Create Color Variation

Use two slightly different browns to add variation to your painting. This will create a more interesting color transition and bring attention to specific shapes.

Add Dark Shadows

Darken the area at the base of the trees with real dark shadows. This will allow you to paint the dock on top without worrying about painting around it.

Mix Dark Green

Add a little more blue to create a dark green. Ease off the value slightly to achieve a bit more recession, resulting in a subtle transition across the area.

Introduce Thin Darks

Add thin darks in the foreground to start defining areas with sunlit shapes. Keep these darks thin to avoid a muddy mess when adding cleaner colors later.

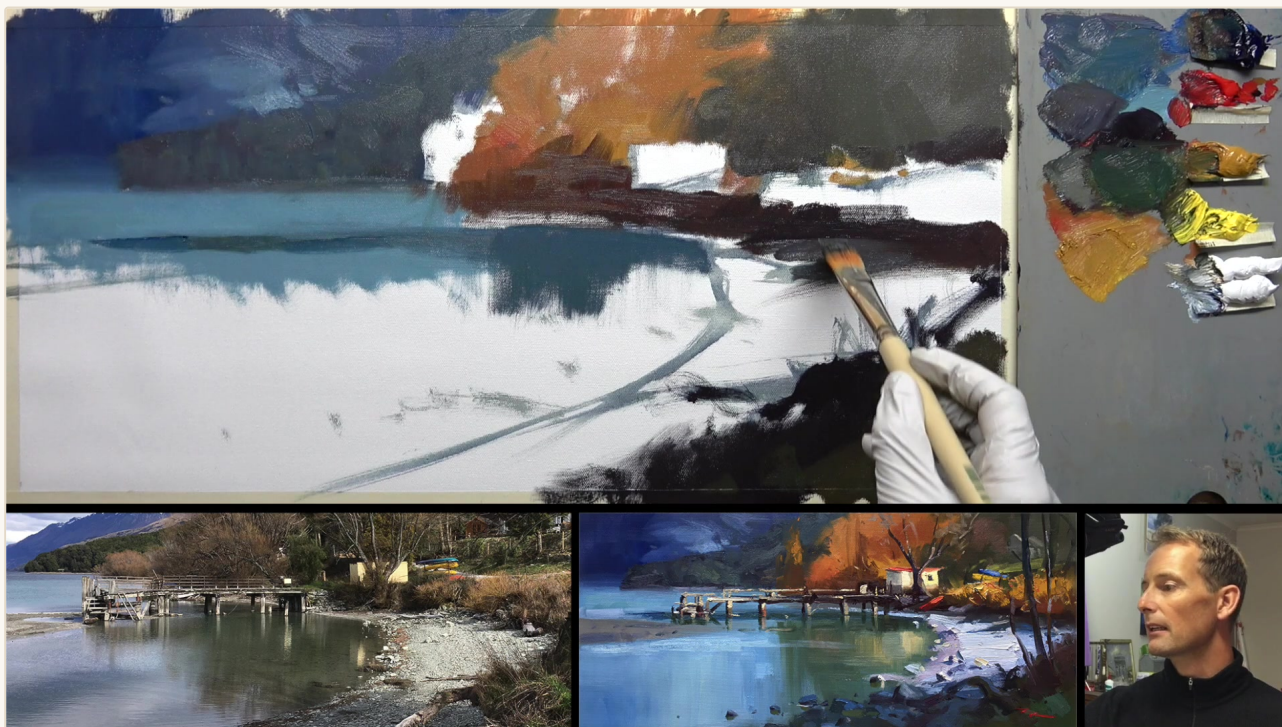
Mix Blue Grey for Shadows

Change the blue to a blue-grey to paint shadows on the beach. This will enhance the depth and dimension of the scene.

PRO TIP

Keep darks thin to prevent muddiness when layering cleaner colors on top.

6 Soft edges and shadow transitions



Create Soft Edges

Blend the shadow colors where they meet to create a soft edge. This allows the dark areas to merge together and remain mysterious, avoiding drawing the eye. Reserve sharp edges for areas where light meets dark to emphasize contrast.

Apply Dark Colors First

Lay down the dark color first before lightening it. This prevents the area from becoming muddy, as darkening a lighter color can lead to muddiness.

Reflect Sky Colors

Introduce a touch of blue into the shadow areas to reflect the sky. This adds interest without significantly altering the value, and can be applied to foliage as well.

Extend Shadow Areas

Continue adding darks into the bases of bushes and clumps, brushing down to create a grassy texture. Adjust the color slightly while maintaining soft edges to keep the darks cohesive.

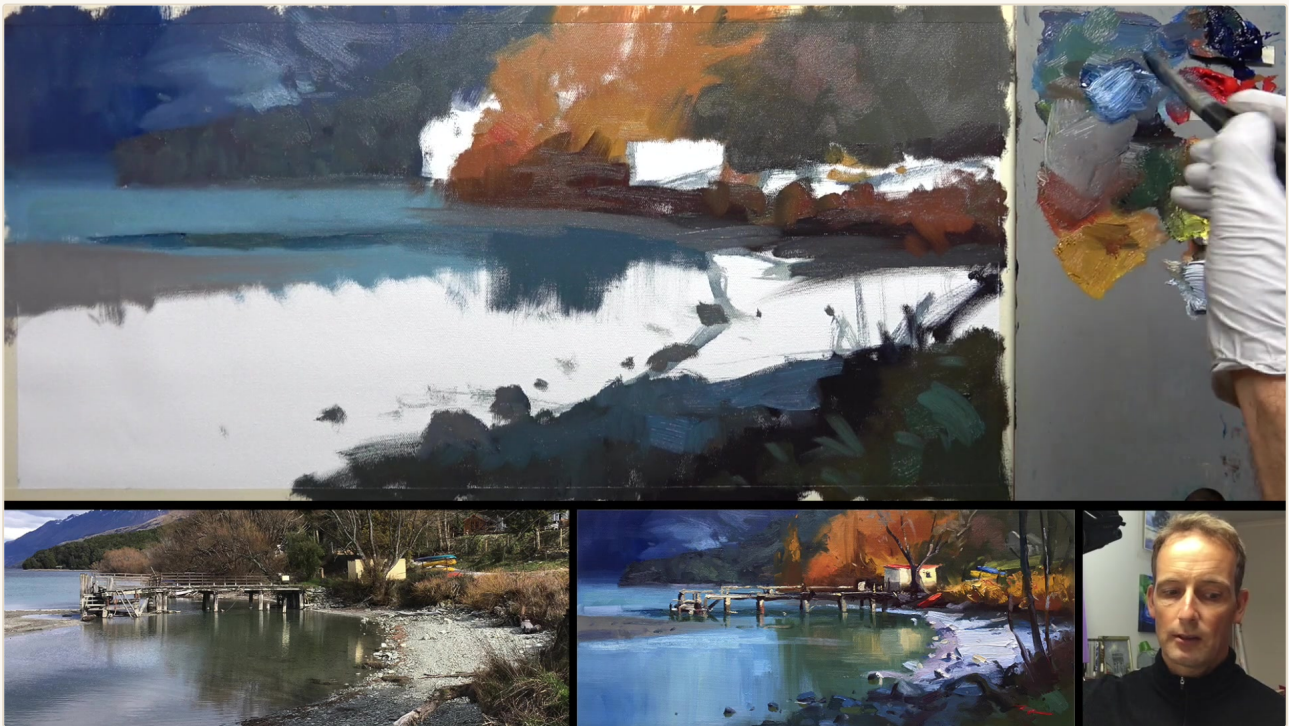
Shadow the Beach Line

Extend the beach line with a blue-gray tone to keep it in shadow. This prevents confusion between light areas and maintains the focus on the intended light-dark contrasts.

PRO TIP

Start with dark colors and lighten them to avoid muddiness in your painting.

7 Reflections and painting techniques



Add Darker Green Reflections

Incorporate darker green reflections into your painting, referencing the photo for guidance. Use a muted green by adding a little red to tone it down. Adjust the color until it feels right to you.

Embrace Loose and Gestural Brushstrokes

Apply loose and gestural brushstrokes to create a sense of movement and life in your painting. Focus on making your brushstrokes look like something meaningful, even if they are abstract.

Reflect on Personal Style

Consider the styles of artists you admire and incorporate elements of their techniques into your work. Over time, your personal style will emerge from this blend of influences.

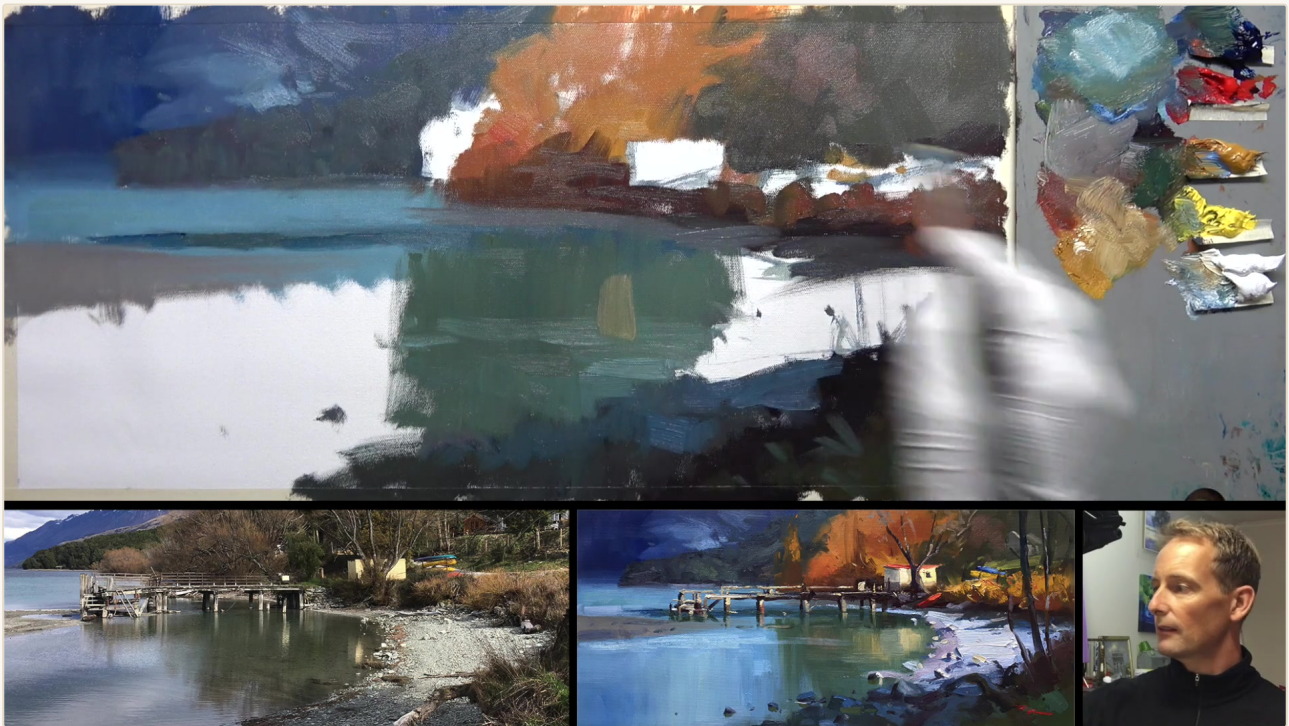
Highlight Light Touches

Add touches of light to the surface of your painting to enhance depth and interest. Ensure these highlights complement the reflections and overall composition.

PRO TIP

Use a muted green by adding a little red to tone it down for realistic reflections.

8 Reflections and texture contrasts



Paint Tree Reflections

Use vertical strokes to paint the reflections of the trees in the water. Ensure the strokes are vertical to avoid tilting the surface of the water.

Add Shed Reflection

Paint the reflection of the shed lighter than the trees, aligning the edge of the shed with its reflection. Use vertical and horizontal strokes to create the water effect.

Incorporate Sky Reflection

Mix blue and white with a touch of yellow for the sky reflection in the water. Use careful vertical strokes to merge the colors smoothly.

Adjust Lightness

If the reflection is too dark, add more white and use walnut oil to smooth out brush strokes with vertical and horizontal movements.

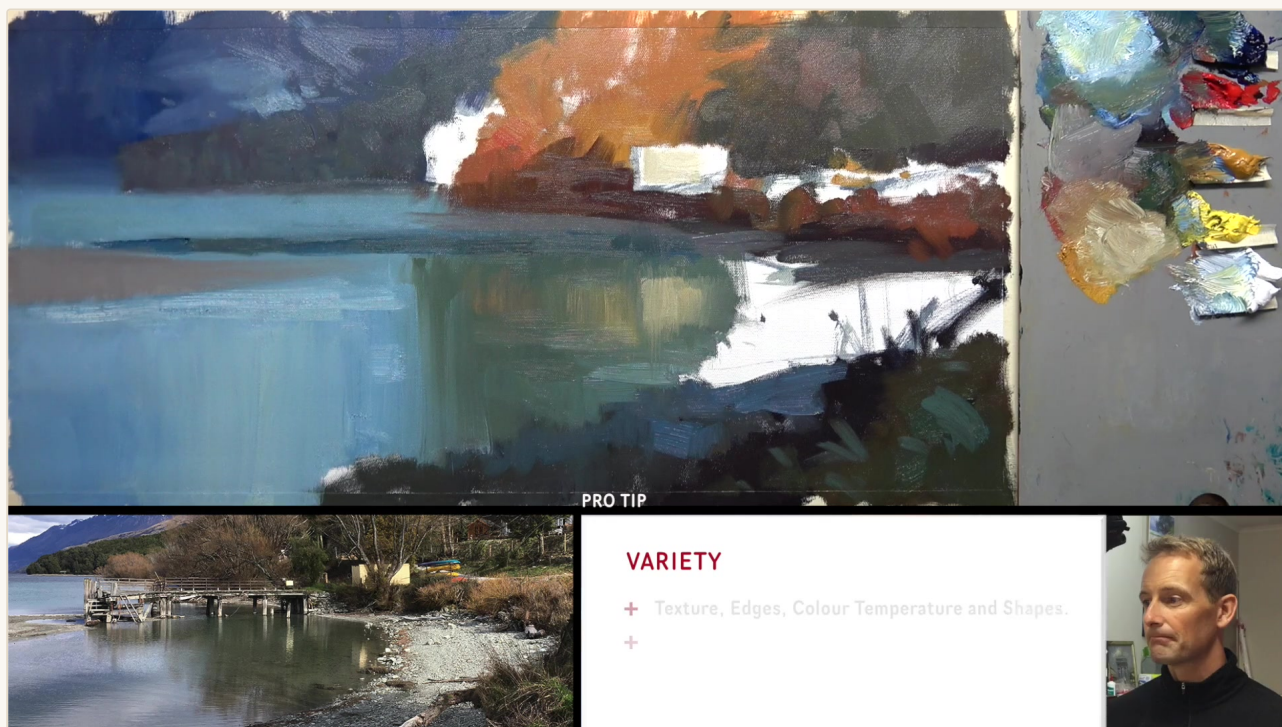
Create Texture Contrast

Lightly brush across the surface to let the canvas create a texture like rippled water. This adds contrast between smooth and textured paint.

PRO TIP

Ensure vertical strokes for reflections to maintain the water's horizontal surface.

9 Variety and brush cleaning tips



Break Up Large Shapes

Introduce variety by breaking up large shapes into smaller ones. This adds interest and complexity to your painting.

Simplify Your View

Squint your eyes to blur your vision slightly. This helps you focus on the big picture and simplifies the scene, similar to stepping back from your work.

Adjust Shadow Colors

Ensure shadows in the background are darker than those in the foreground. This maintains depth and perspective in your painting.

Clean Brushes Regularly

Clean your brushes often to maintain clean colors. Use separate brushes for warm and cool darks to avoid creating muddy colors.

PRO TIP

Regularly clean your brushes to keep your colors vibrant and distinct.

10 Tree area and light preparation



Enhance Tree Area

Separate the two trees to create more shape interest and variety. Adjust the shapes to make them distinctly different from each other.

Prepare Dark Docks

Scrape the area clean and refill your palette with fresh paint to maintain a painterly quality. Mix a dark color using more blue than red to block in the darks for the dock.

Paint Poles with Character

Load your brush with enough paint to create a ridge and paint the poles with varied, wonky shapes. Avoid making them all the same to add character, and refrain from using a ruler to maintain the old, broken-down look.

Add Reflections

Lightly brush in reflections with a touch of yellow, ensuring they align with the poles' angles. Be mindful of the sandbank where no reflection should appear.

Prepare for Light

Leave spaces for the lights to go on by not covering the entire area with dark paint. This prevents the lights from becoming muddy and maintains their power.

PRO TIP

Avoid using a ruler for the poles to preserve the character of the old, broken-down wharf.

11 Chunky paint and grass details



Apply Chunky Paint

Use thick, chunky paint for the light areas. Mix a little red and yellow ochre to create vibrant highlights. Focus on the big shapes and apply the paint in varied strokes to avoid uniformity.

Experiment with Brush Strokes

Try different ways of using the brush to create texture. Mix paint directly on the canvas by grabbing little bits of paint and applying them with varied pressure and direction. This technique can create interesting grassy textures.

Use the Palette Knife

Carefully use the palette knife to add texture and interest. Gently smush the paint and drag it down to create dynamic effects. Be cautious not to overdo it, as the palette knife can easily overwhelm the painting.

Enhance Grass Details

For grass, use a combination of thick paint and varied brushstrokes. Add more powerful, light green tones to create a lively, textured lawn area. Change brushes to achieve different effects and maintain variety.

PRO TIP

Mix paint directly on the canvas to create dynamic textures and avoid uniformity.

12 Beach and rock details



Mix the Base Color

Combine a big bunch of white with a little bit of blue and some red to create the average light color. This will serve as the base for the beach and rocks, providing a flat appearance initially.

Apply Chunky Paint

Add more paint to make the application really chunky. Consider adding a little yellow to enhance warmth and texture. This chunky application will help define the major shapes on the beach.

Define Major Shapes

Focus on defining the major shapes first, especially the little triangular shadow shapes. Notice how the rocks get darker and wetter near the edge, which adds depth and realism.

Darken and Add Variation

Mix blue and red to darken the area as it approaches the beach. This variation prevents the eye from being drawn to the edge and keeps the focus on the central part of the painting.

Soften and Sharpen Edges

Soften the edge near the frame to avoid drawing attention away from the painting. Use sharper edges closer to the middle to maintain focus and create interest.

PRO TIP

Use chunky paint to define major shapes and add texture to your painting.

13 Adding buildings and rock reflections



Add the Roof

Use a palette knife to apply a thick layer of red-orange paint for the roof. This will create a standout feature with a chunky texture.

Prepare for the Tree

Scrape out some of the light paint where the tree will go. This makes it easier to apply the dark paint for the tree without mixing colors.

Paint Rocks in the Water

Mix a dark purple and soften it with a bit of yellow ochre to create a subtle rock color. Add a few rocks in the water, ensuring not to overdo the details to maintain focus on the main scene.

Add Rock Reflections

Include reflections for the rocks in the water. Vary the shapes and sizes of the rocks to avoid repetitive patterns and add interest.

Enhance with Sky Reflections

Mix a little white and blue to highlight some rocks, simulating sky reflections and adding depth to the water.

PRO TIP

Vary the shapes and sizes of rocks to create interest and avoid repetitive patterns.

14 Tree and light details



Add Light to Rocks

Switch to a small synthetic brush and apply a lighter, warmer version of the cool grey to the rocks. Lay the paint on thick to create contrast against the cool tones. This adds detail and makes the scene more believable.

Create Shadows

Add shadows under the rocks, focusing on occlusion shadows where no light reaches. Include core shadows, reflected light, and highlights to enhance realism.

Add Dark Accents

Introduce a few dark accents to the rocks to finish them off. Ensure these accents are quite dark to provide depth and contrast.

Paint a Tree

Begin with a dark color for the tree, wiping the brush between strokes to avoid picking up unwanted paint. Balance the tree by adding branches that lean in the opposite direction.

Add Light to the Tree

Use brown to knock down the darkness and add details. Lighten the tree with thick paint on the edge of the brush, allowing light to strike it effectively.

PRO TIP

Wipe the brush between strokes to maintain clean, precise lines when painting the tree.

15 Foreground trees and balance



Apply Thick White Light Paint

Use a thicker white light paint to cover the existing dark paint. This ensures the new layer stands out and effectively lightens the area.

Create a Glaze

Thin down the paint to create a glaze effect. This will lighten and warm the area without overpowering the underlying colors.

Add Catchlights and Accents

Introduce small catchlights and accents to add interest. This prevents the scene from appearing too artificial and adds a natural touch.

Paint a Red Boat

Add a red boat to the scene for an eye-catching element. Ensure the color is vibrant and consider adding a blue boat nearby for balance.

Add Details to Boats

Darken one side of the boats for depth and add small details underneath. This enhances realism and gives the boats a more three-dimensional appearance.

Incorporate Leaning Objects

Paint objects leaning against the boats to create a more dynamic composition. This adds interest and complexity to the scene.

Add a Small House

Include a small house or structure in the background. This provides context and a focal point for the viewer.

Highlight the Boat

Apply a light touch to the boat to emphasize its presence. This draws the viewer's eye and adds a finishing touch.

Paint Tree Trunks

Use a neutral dark color to paint tree trunks, adding variety and interest to the foreground. This enhances the depth and complexity of the scene.

Paint Darker Trees

Use a larger brush to paint darker trees in the foreground. Ensure the brush is clean to maintain the integrity of the colors.

PRO TIP

Use a thicker white light paint to effectively cover dark areas and make them stand out.

16 Dock lights and reflections



Add Light to the Dock

Mix a neutral gray and use a large brush to build up the lights on the dock. Avoid going straight for the strongest lights to maintain variety and depth. Ensure the base of the light poles is slightly lower than the dark ones behind them for accuracy.

Enhance with Lighter Tones

Add some white and a little yellow ochre to your mix for lighter tones. Apply these lighter tones with the edge of a big brush to create chunky, painterly strokes that stand out against the dark background.

Maintain a Painterly Style

Avoid creating a uniform picket fence look by varying your brush strokes. Aim for a variety of textures and avoid repetitive dabbing to keep the painting dynamic and interesting.

PRO TIP

Use the edge of a big brush to achieve chunky, painterly strokes for added texture and interest.

17 Final touches and highlights



Add Lighter Reflections

Incorporate lighter reflections into the water. Remember, reflections aren't as bright as the objects themselves, so mix in a little blue to tone them down. Use soft vertical swishes to create these reflections.

Enhance Orange Reflections

Increase the orange reflections in the water where needed. Add a subtle, very light reflection of the rail for added detail and depth.

Solidify Water Connections

Darken the areas where objects touch the water to create a solid connection. This enhances the realism and grounding of the reflections.

Create Water Shimmer

Drag a very light color across the water surface to create a shimmering effect. Apply this lightly to achieve a natural look.

Add Sky Reflection and Shadows

Paint a sky reflection on top of the trunk. Add a soft cast shadow over the rocks to suggest an occlusion shadow, enhancing the depth of the scene.

Highlight Details

Introduce light, chunky highlights in areas leading the viewer's eye. These highlights should be subtle yet effective in guiding attention.

PRO TIP

Use soft vertical swishes to create natural-looking reflections in the water.

18 Adding figures and final adjustments



Enhance the Background Hill

Add a touch more light to the background hill to enhance its presence. Use autumnal colors to give it a seasonal feel.

Sign Your Painting

Use a rigger brush to sign your painting. This adds a personal touch and completes your work.

Add a Tree for Reflection

Paint a tree to justify the reflection in the water. Use a darkish brown for the shadowed parts and a lighter mix of yellow ochre and a little red for the areas catching light.

Include a Figure on the Dock

Add a small figure sitting on the dock steps, perhaps with a hat. Use tiny blobs of paint to suggest the figure's form, allowing the natural fall of the paint to create details like dangling legs. Ensure the figure's scale is appropriate to the surrounding elements.

PRO TIP

When adding small figures, use tiny blobs of paint and let their natural shapes suggest details.

Summary & Key Takeaways

Embark on your painting journey by immersing yourself in the vibrant scenery of Kinloch, capturing its essence through photo editing to enhance your references. Begin with an initial sketch, focusing on the big shapes and ensuring an interesting composition by avoiding central placements. Pay attention to the light and shadow play across the scene, setting the stage for a dynamic painting.

As you block in the background, use a playful approach with your brush and palette knife to establish foundational colors and textures. Gradually build up the scene by adding reflections and shadows, using vertical strokes to create realistic water effects. Introduce warm autumn colors and subtle contrasts to bring life and depth to your painting.

In the final stages, focus on adding texture and detail with chunky paint and varied brushstrokes. Use a palette knife for dynamic effects, and ensure your colors remain vibrant by cleaning your brushes regularly. Add final touches to the trees, rocks, and reflections, maintaining interest and variety throughout your composition. Let your personal style shine through as you incorporate techniques from artists you admire.

LESSON POINTS TO REMEMBER

- Boost saturation in photos to capture vibrant colors.
- Break curves into straight angles first for easier sketching.
- Avoid glare by painting in the shade and wearing a black top.
- Use vertical down strokes for realistic water reflections.
- Keep darks thin to prevent muddiness when layering colors.
- Start with dark colors and lighten them to avoid muddiness.
- Ensure vertical strokes for reflections to maintain water's surface.
- Mix paint directly on the canvas for dynamic textures.



Kinloch

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.

“Walk to the Lake - Oil 12 x 24. Difficult but rewarding lesson!” by Louise Villegas



Walk to the Lake - Oil 12 x 24. Difficult but rewarding lesson!

Hi Louise, nice work! Very punchy colour and lively brushwork. One drawing issue - be very sure about where the poles for the jetty touch the water. These should be lined up on a straight horizontal line. That's easy to fix here by glazing over some of the pole bottoms with a blue/green, to make them look like reflections.

“Laura's Lake” by Agnese Iskrova



Laura's Lake

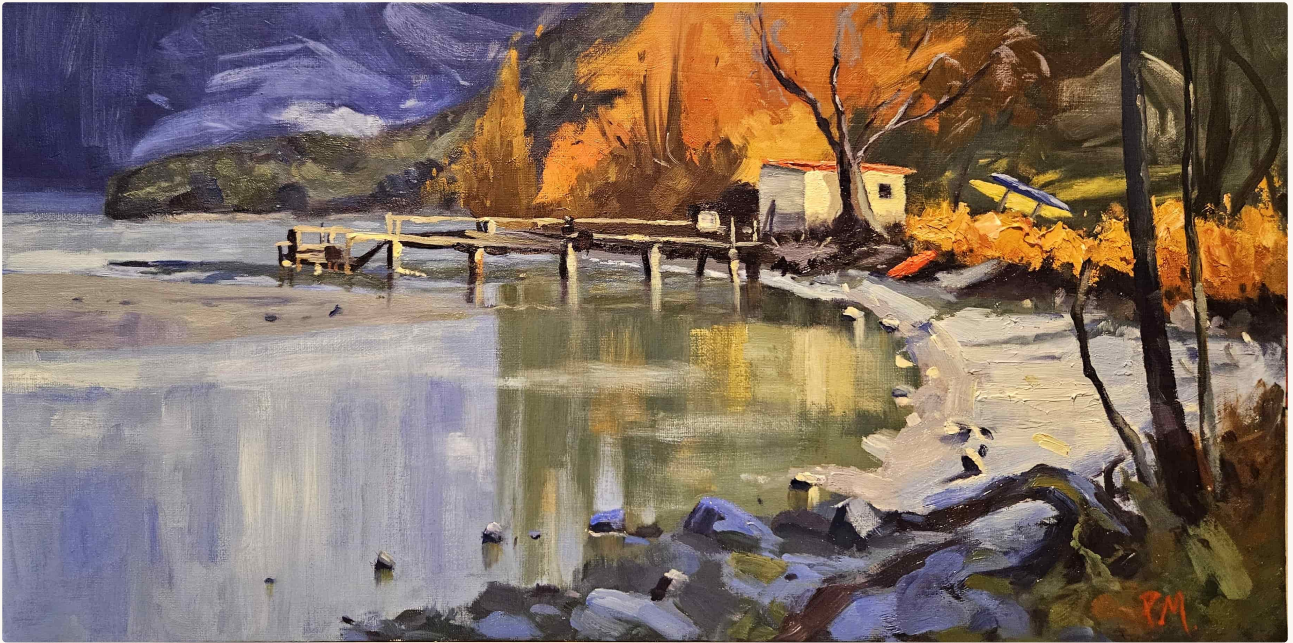
Hi Agnese, thanks for uploading your painting. It's tricky squeezing this long scene into a shorter canvas, but you've made that work in the design.

Let me draw your attention to a few things I think will help you with your next painting.

1. Horizons should be straight and level.
2. Shadows on light objects (like the beach here) are darker than you think. (Squint and compare darks to darks in your scene).
3. Use contrast to direct the eye. The jetty is the star of the show in this painting, so highlighting it more against the dark background makes sense to make it stand out.

Keep painting!

“A walk to the lake 2 12'x24'” by Pierre Manzi



A walk to the lake 2 12'x24'

Wow, that's an exciting painting style you've got there, Pierre. There's so much variety, the canvas is really singing with life! Nicely done. I can't see anything to improve on.

“First attempt at this one” by **Estelle Gerrett**



First attempt at this one

Solid work here, Estelle. Good drawing, vibrant colour and exciting brushwork. The one big thing I'd like you to look at is just how much colour can be put into the darks. My painting has fairly subdued colour in the darks to start with, but you've gone darker with yours, to the point that it looks a little foreboding.

Now take that photo of your painting and digitally alter it so that the darks are lighter, and increase the vibrancy, so it magnifies the colour in the darks. See how that feels.

The lights will likely be lightened too much as you do that, but just focus on the darks for now. You'll notice if you paint with more colour in your darks, that the whole painting will seem livelier. Enjoy!