



The Pear

A step-by-step painting guide by Richard Robinson

Watch the full lesson at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/112-The-Pear>

MY PAINTING CLUB

Introduction

In this workshop, I invite you to dive into the world of still life painting, a fundamental practice that serves as a great teacher for all painters. If you've ever found yourself struggling with landscapes or figure studies, returning to the basics with still life can be incredibly beneficial. It allows you to arrange shapes, colors, and lighting in a controlled environment, focusing on the seemingly simple task of translating these elements onto canvas. We're starting with a single pear in a simple setting, which is perfect for exploring key concepts like light and shade families, value planes, and color relationships. By selecting a single light source, such as a lamp or a window in a dimly lit room, you'll create strong contrasts between light and shadow. This approach not only enhances your understanding of these concepts but also provides a rewarding subject to paint. I hope you enjoy this step-by-step journey into still life painting, where all great painting begins.

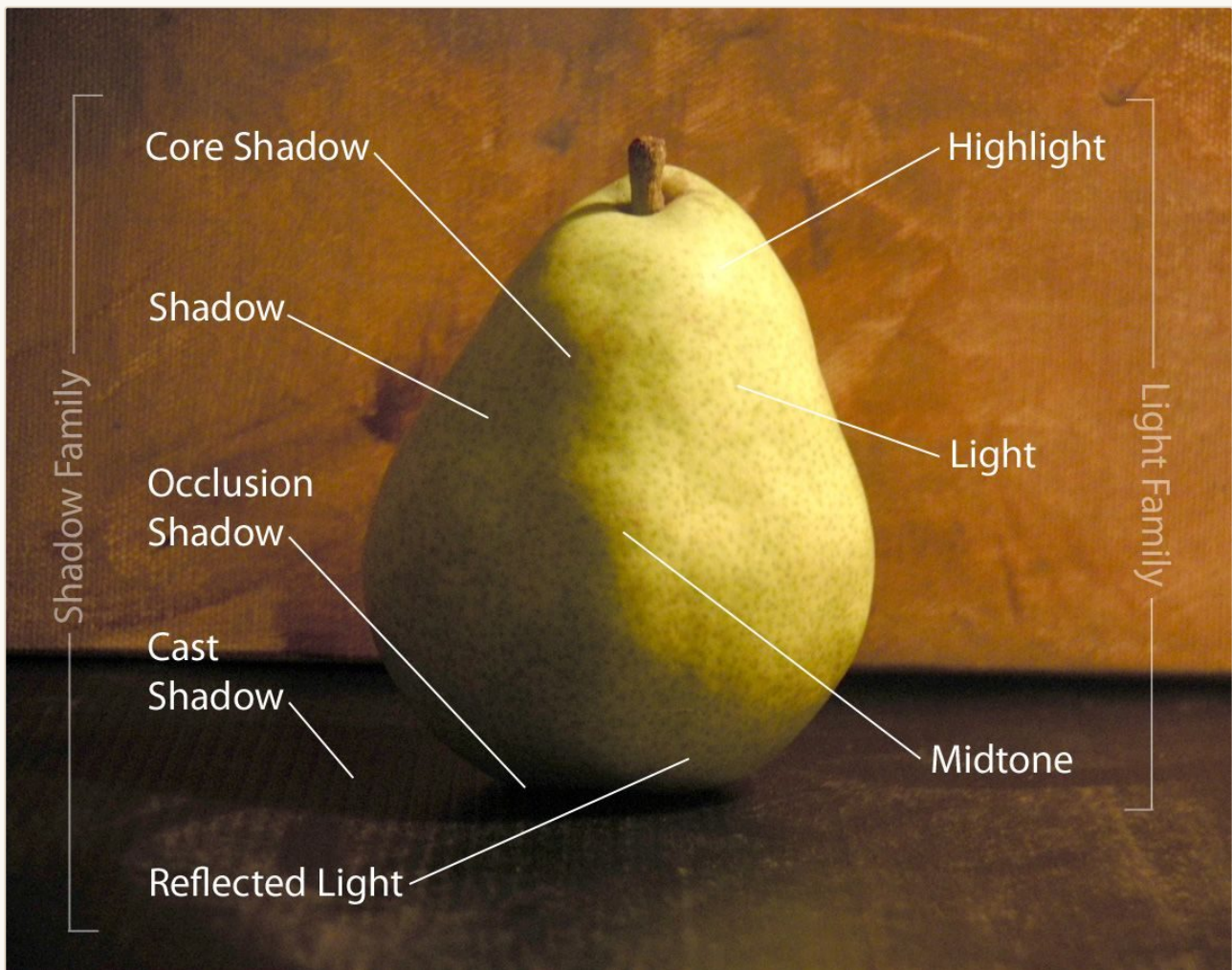


"The Pear" by Richard Robinson.



REFERENCE PHOTO 1

The scene as Richard found it.



REFERENCE PHOTO 2

The scene as Richard found it.



REFERENCE PHOTO 3

The scene as Richard found it.



REFERENCE PHOTO 4

The scene as Richard found it.

Materials

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

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- Golden Open Acrylics
- Phthalo Green
- Alizarine Crimson
- Ultramarine Blue
- Burnt Sienna
- Pyrrole Red
- Cadmium Red
- Cadmium Orange
- Yellow Ochre
- Cadmium Yellow Light
- Titanium White
- Canvas Panels
- 12×16" Acrylic primed.
- Brushes
- [Rosemary & Co. Richard Robinson Brush Set](#)
- Paper Towels

1 Setting up a simple still life



Choose a Light Source

Select a single light source like a lamp or a window in a fairly dark room to illuminate your still life. This will help create strong contrasts between light and shadow.

Illuminate Your Canvas

Use another lamp to light your canvas. Ensure this light does not spill onto your still life by using flaps to direct the light solely onto your canvas.

Position the Still Life

Place your subject, such as a pear, just forward of the shadow cast by a card or similar object. This positioning ensures the pear is in full light, contrasting against a darker background.

PRO TIP

Use flaps on your canvas light to prevent it from affecting the lighting on your still life.

2 Challenge 1: Light and shade families



Prepare the Pear

Get one pear and carefully slice the roundness off with a sharp knife, creating straight edges instead of curves. This will help simplify the form for your study.

Draw Light and Shade

Use a black marker pen to draw the pear on paper, focusing on black and white areas to separate light from dark. Include the cast shadow in your drawing to complete the study.

Identify Mid Tones

Remember that the half tone or mid tone is the area between light and shadow that belongs to the light. Squint at the pear to help see these large masses clearly.

Understand Light and Shadow Families

Notice that the black base is part of the light family, except where the shadow is cast upon it. The brown background is in shadow and becomes part of the shadow family.

PRO TIP

Squint at the pear to help you see the large masses of light and shadow more clearly.

3 Challenge 2: Seeing value planes



Prepare Your Canvas and Paint

Use a 6x6 inch canvas or similar. Mix black paint using complementary colors like ultramarine blue and burnt sienna or phthalo green and cadmium red. Prepare a large amount of this black paint before starting.

Draw the Basic Shape

Lightly wash the canvas to mark the top and bottom of the pear. Draw a center line to help shape the pear accurately. Square off the edges of rounded objects first, then fill in the curves.

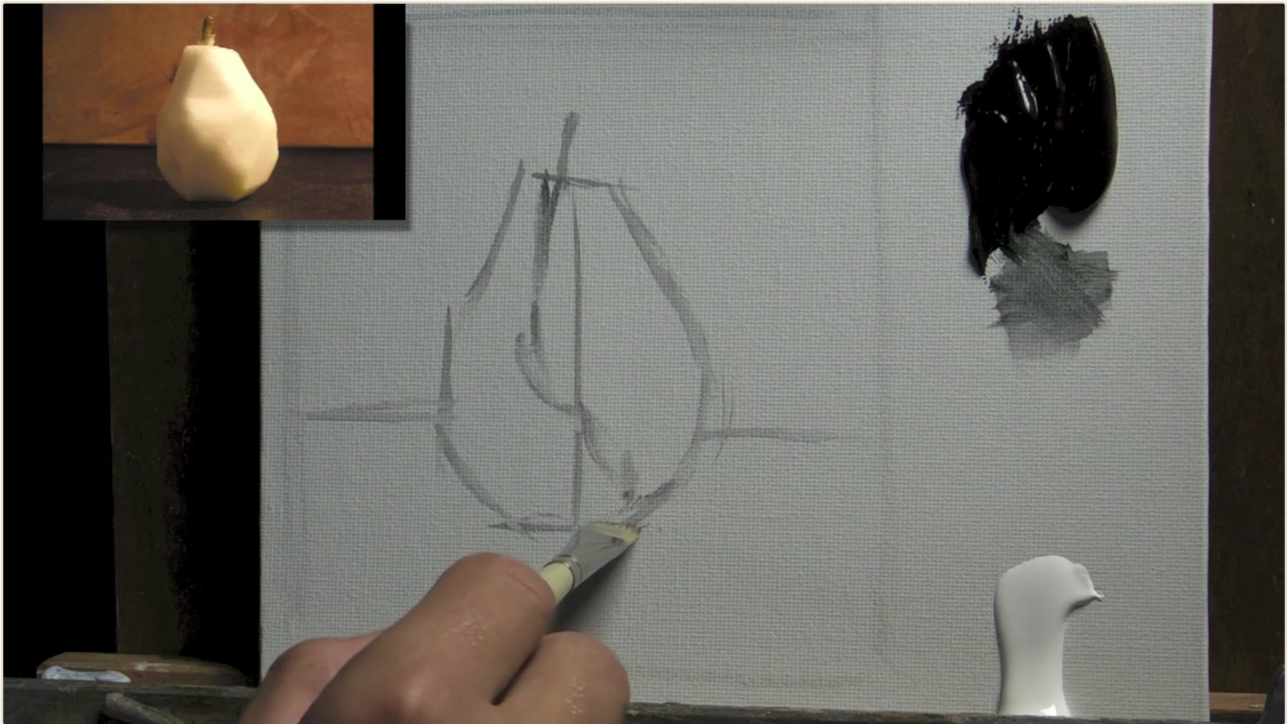
Establish Value Planes

Draw a line to separate the light from the dark areas of the pear. This helps establish the shadow and light families, making it easier to see value differences.

PRO TIP

Close one eye while drawing to help flatten the subject and improve accuracy.

4 Value study painting process



Identify the Lightest Light

Observe the lightest light in your subject. Note that it may appear darker than expected due to surrounding dark colors. This contrast emphasizes the light area.

Paint the Core Shadow

Block in the core shadow, which is the second darkest part of the shadow family. Pay attention to any reflected light, though it may be minimal on a black surface.

Use a Color Checker

Create or use a color checker to compare values between areas. Hold it up to your subject, close one eye, and assess whether an area is lighter or darker. Mix your palette to match these value differences.

Block in the Background

Quickly block in the background, noting any slight lightening towards the light source. This helps establish the overall value structure.

Move to the Lights Family

Shift focus to the lights family. Even a black base can appear in the light family if illuminated. Concentrate on value relationships, shapes, and edges.

Adjust Halftone Values

Identify halftone planes that are neither fully in light nor dark. Adjust these values, considering translucency and reflected light affecting them.

Finalize and Adjust

Make final adjustments to ensure value relationships are accurate. Soften edges where necessary using the background color.

PRO TIP

Use a color checker to accurately compare and mix values, ensuring correct value relationships in your painting.

5 Challenge 3: Seeing color differences



Prepare Your Palette

Set up your easel with the previous value study for comparison. Use an extended primary palette of phthalo green, phthalo blue, Cadmium Red Light, Cadmium Yellow Light, and Titanium White. Experiment with color mixtures on your palette before starting to paint.

Segment the Pear

Use a large brush to divide the pear into large planes of separate color. Ensure each plane is a distinct color. You may soften the edges between planes, but avoid large blends of color.

Establish Color Range

Cover the canvas with a base coat. Lay in your darkest dark and lightest light to establish the color and value range. Remember, reflected lights should belong to the dark family.

Add Reflections and Halftones

Mix a light green to reflect the pear on the black plastic surface with upward strokes. Consider the placement of soft and hard edges, especially in shadows.

Enhance Background and Finalize

Introduce more interest in the background by scumbling in orange to make the light area glow. Soften the back edge to complete the study.

PRO TIP

Defocus your eyes rather than squinting to better see color differences between planes.

6 Challenge 4: 10 minute painting challenge



Prepare Your Canvas

Divide a 10 by 10 inch canvas or similar into four equal quarters. This will allow you to paint four separate pears, each in its own section.

Set Up Your Timer

Use a timer and give yourself exactly 10 minutes to complete each painting. This will help you focus on capturing large color masses and simplifying brushwork.

Paint the First Pear

In the top left quarter, paint the pear using the same setup and colors as the previous challenge. Focus on large color masses and avoid getting caught up in details.

Change the Scene

Before painting the next pear, change something about the color arrangement in your scene. Alter the background, base, or add a colored card to reflect a strong color into the shadow side.

Continue Painting

Paint the next pear in the top right quarter with the new color arrangement. Repeat the process for the bottom left and bottom right quarters, each time altering the scene slightly.

PRO TIP

Use two brushes: one for darks and one for lights to save time during the challenge.

Summary & Key Takeaways

Embark on your painting journey by setting up a simple still life with a single light source to create strong contrasts between light and shadow. Position your pear in full light against a darker background to emphasize its form. As you begin, simplify the pear's shape by slicing it into straight edges and use a marker to delineate the light and shadow families. This will help you understand the interplay of light and shadow on your subject.

Move on to a value study by preparing a 6x6 inch canvas and mixing black paint from complementary colors. Establish the light and shadow areas by drawing lines to separate them, and use a color checker to ensure accuracy in your value relationships. Focus on blocking in the core shadow and adjusting halftone planes to capture the pear's true form. Remember to soften edges where necessary to create a harmonious composition.

Finally, explore color differences by setting up your easel with the previous value study for comparison. Use an extended primary palette to experiment with color mixtures, and divide the pear into large planes of distinct color. Engage in a 10-minute painting challenge to refine your skills, focusing on capturing large color masses and simplifying brushwork. Each new painting should introduce a slight change in the scene to keep your approach fresh and dynamic.

LESSON POINTS TO REMEMBER

- Use a single light source to create strong contrasts.
- Squint to see large masses of light and shadow.
- Mix black paint using complementary colors.
- Draw lines to separate light and dark areas.
- Use a color checker to compare and mix values accurately.
- Defocus your eyes to see color differences between planes.
- Divide your canvas for quick studies and focus on large color masses.
- Use two brushes: one for darks and one for lights.



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