



Mastering Paint

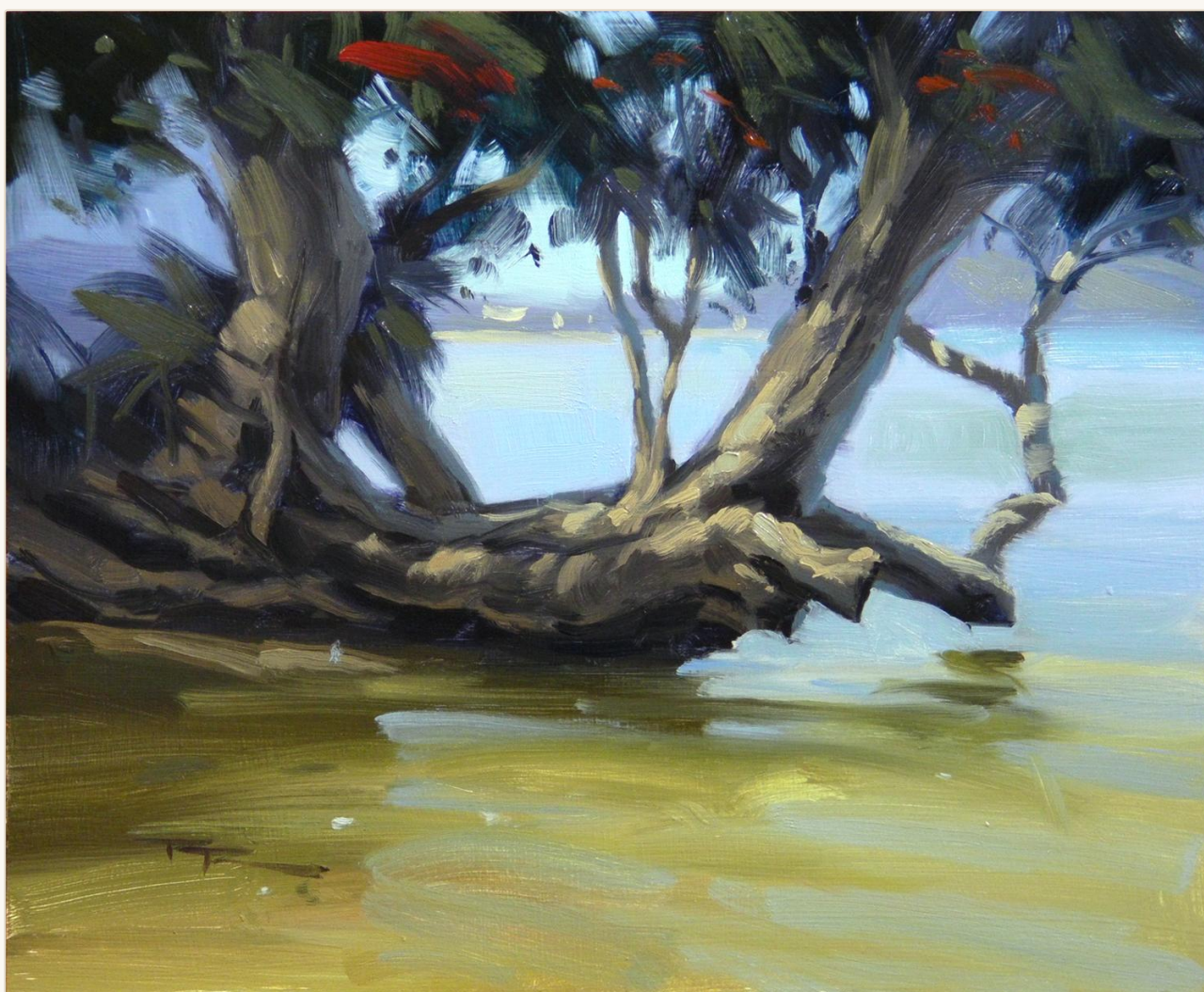
A step-by-step painting guide by Richard Robinson

Watch the full lesson at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/64-Mastering-Paint>

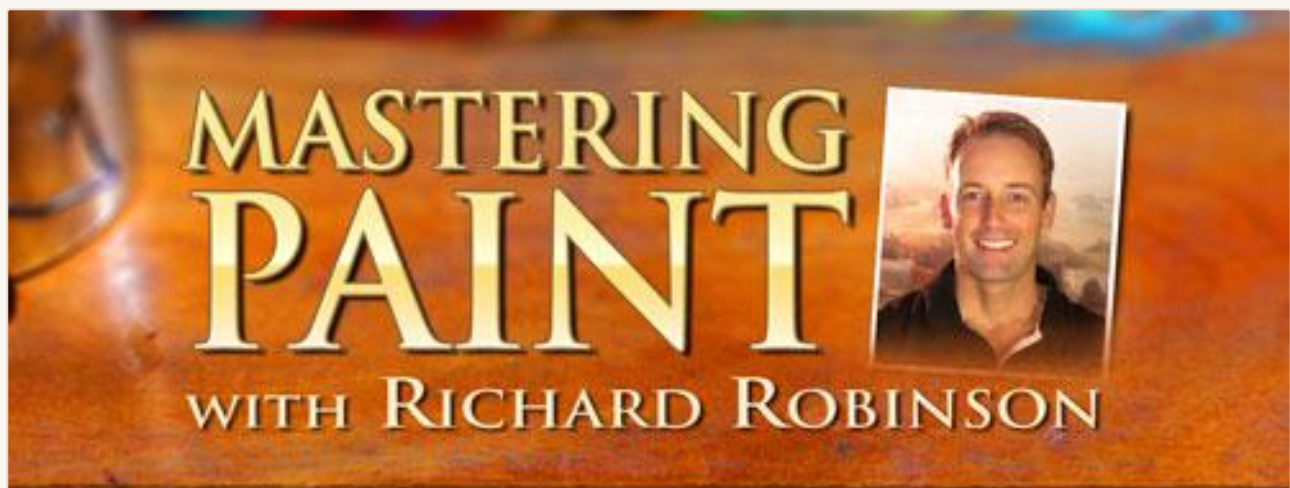
MY PAINTING CLUB

Introduction

In this chapter, I invite you to join me in capturing the breathtaking beauty of Pataua, a place that epitomizes the natural splendor of New Zealand. During a summer camping trip, I was struck by the tranquil charm of this spot, where the interplay of light and shadow creates a dynamic yet harmonious scene. The dramatic contrast between the richly organic shapes and the expansive, simple areas of color in the water and sky offers a perfect balance that is both visually stimulating and soothing. This lesson will guide you through the process of painting this captivating scene on a 10 by 8 inch wood panel, prepared with acrylic primer to ensure durability. We'll explore a warm cool primary palette, with a twist—using orange instead of a warm yellow to create intriguing greys with ultramarine blue. As you engage with the video and the Virtual Art Academy course, you'll gain practical insights and structured assignments to deepen your understanding of these principles. Together, we'll uncover the variety and balance that are the hallmarks of great painting, enriching your artistic journey with the vibrant essence of this New Zealand jewel.



Northland Summer



REFERENCE PHOTO

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

- Oil Paints
- Pthalo Blue
- Ultramarine Blue
- Alizarine Crimson
- Cadmium Red
- Cadmium Orange
- Cadmium Yellow
- Titanium White
- Classic Painting Medium
- Odourless Solvent
- Brushes
- Robert Simmons Signet Filbert Size 8
- Robert Simmons Signet Filbert Size 6
- Bristlon Synthetic Round Size 2
- Surface
- Acrylic Primed Wood Panel 10x8"

1 Video Collaboration and Learning Approach



Explore Dual Learning Avenues

Engage with the video to gain practical knowledge and working methods. Follow directions within the video to explore specific building blocks in the Virtual Art Academy course.

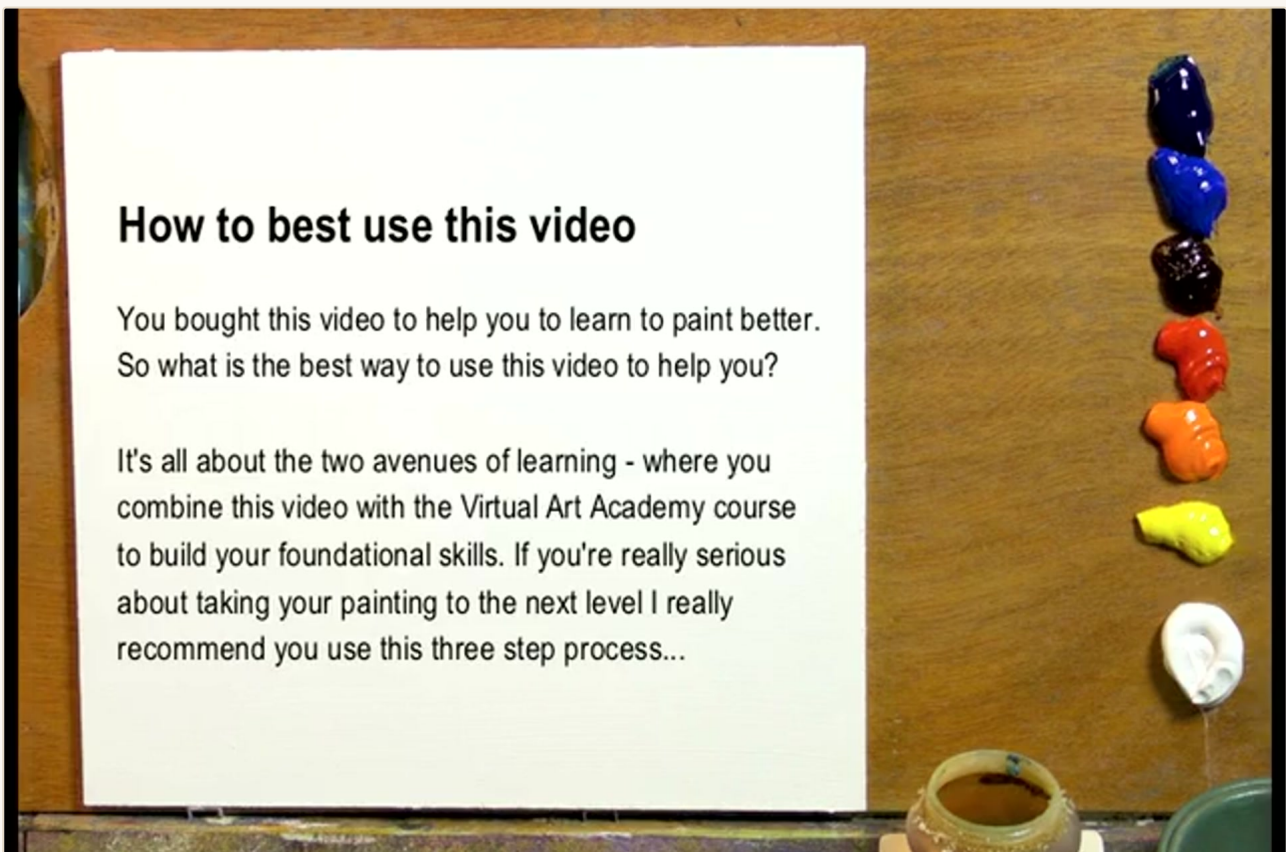
Deepen Understanding

Use the Virtual Art Academy to gain a deeper understanding of the principles discussed in the video. Complete structured practical assignments to enhance your painting skills.

PRO TIP

Visit the Virtual Art Academy course for additional structured learning and skill-building assignments.

2 Three-Step Learning Process



Read Course Material

Begin by reading the course material in Barry's Virtual Art Academy course. This will help you learn the foundational principles essential for improving your painting skills.

Watch Instructional Videos

Watch this video and other related videos to see how the foundational principles are applied in live painting. Observing these techniques in action will reinforce your understanding.

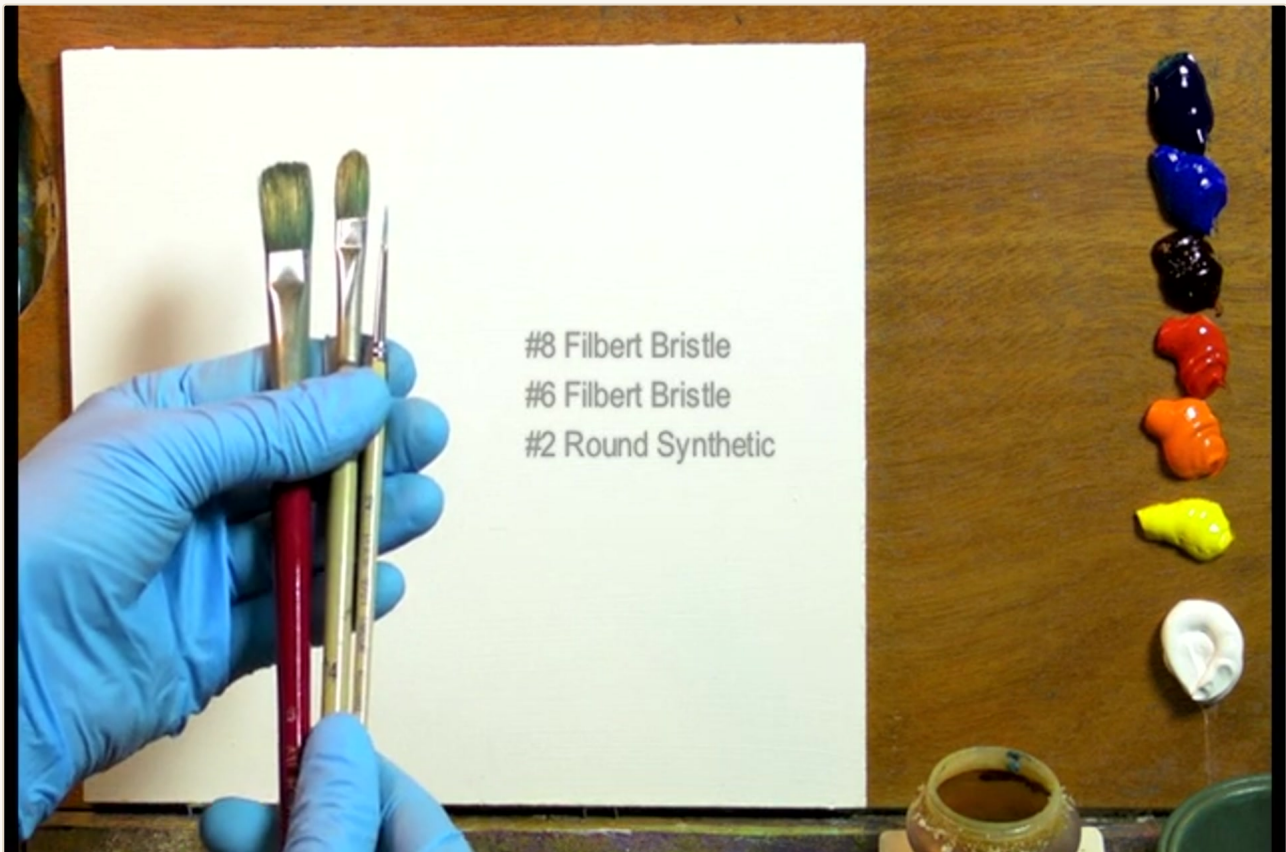
Complete Learning Assignments

Join Barry's Virtual Art Academy online campus and complete the structured series of learning assignments. These assignments are designed to help you internalize the lessons and rapidly improve your painting skills.

PRO TIP

Combine video learning with structured assignments to effectively build your foundational painting skills.

3 Brushes and Mediums



Select Brushes

Use a bristle filbert size eight and six for most of the painting. Reserve a round number two synthetic brush for adding small details at the end.

Prepare Mediums

Use odorless thinners for cleaning your brushes. Have a moderately oily painting medium ready to help the paint flow smoothly.

Begin with a No Tan Sketch

Start with a no tan sketch to capture the basic dark and light design of your painting.

PRO TIP

Use a moderately oily painting medium to improve paint flow.

4 No Tan Sketch and Design



Create the No Tan Sketch

Use a very thin wash of ultramarine blue and alizarin mixed with plenty of thinners. Focus on laying down the major dark and light shapes to form the abstract design of your painting.

Start with Large Shapes

Begin with the biggest and easiest shapes in your composition. This approach simplifies the process and ensures a strong foundational design.

Compare with No Tan Sketch

Check your work against the no tan sketch. Ensure that your design aligns well with the abstract layout of dark and light shapes.

PRO TIP

Begin with large, simple shapes to establish a strong foundational design.

5 Dark Accents



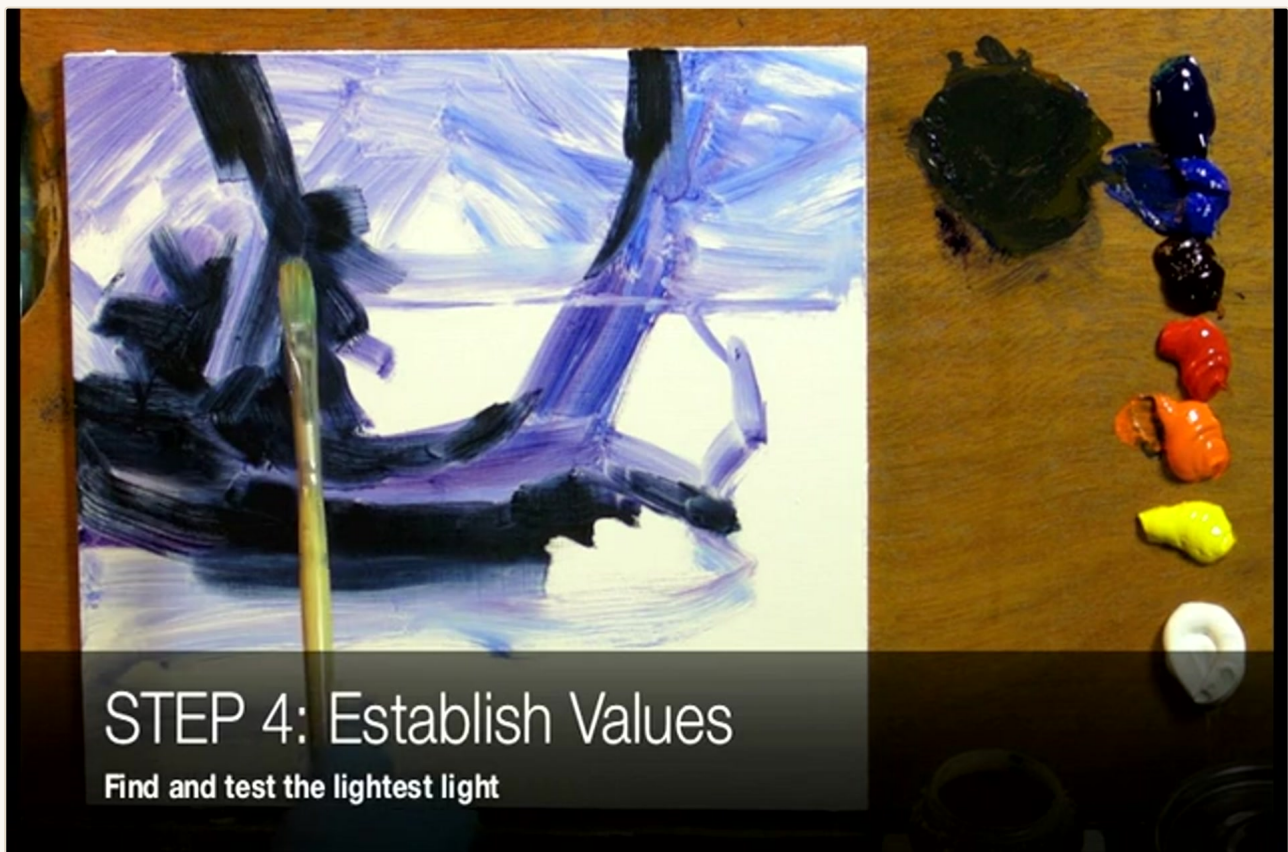
Lay in Dark Accents

Use a thin, cool mixture of ultramarine blue and orange to lay in the darkest darks or dark accents. These represent the nooks and crannies where no light reaches. Ensure the mixture is cooler by using more blue than orange, complementing the warm light in the scene. Paint these darks slightly beyond their intended boundaries to allow for adjustments later.

PRO TIP

Use painting medium instead of thinners to thin your paint for dark accents.

6 Value Range and Lightest Light



Identify Lightest Light

Determine the lightest light in the sky to establish your value range. This ensures no part of the painting will be lighter than this point.

Mix Sky Color

Add a touch of yellow to your mixture to achieve the greenish cast of the sky color near the horizon.

Test Value Relationship

Place a small daub of the lightest light next to the darkest dark. Squint at your scene and painting with one eye to check if the value relationship is correct.

PRO TIP

Squint at your painting to better assess the value relationships.

7 Blocking in Darks



Block in the Tree Trunk

Mix a slightly cool dark grey using a blue and orange mixture, adding a little white to raise the value. Paint the tree trunk in the shade, extending the paint slightly beyond where it needs to be. This allows later layers to cut back into it.

Simplify the Scene

Squint or defocus your eyes to simplify the scene and focus on the big shapes. Use angles, thicknesses, bumps, and contours to capture the unique characteristics of the tree trunk.

Block in Water Shadows

Mix a shadow color for the water using the same value as the shady trunk, but add a bit of yellow and orange to make it greener. Keep the paint thin to allow for lighter reflections later.

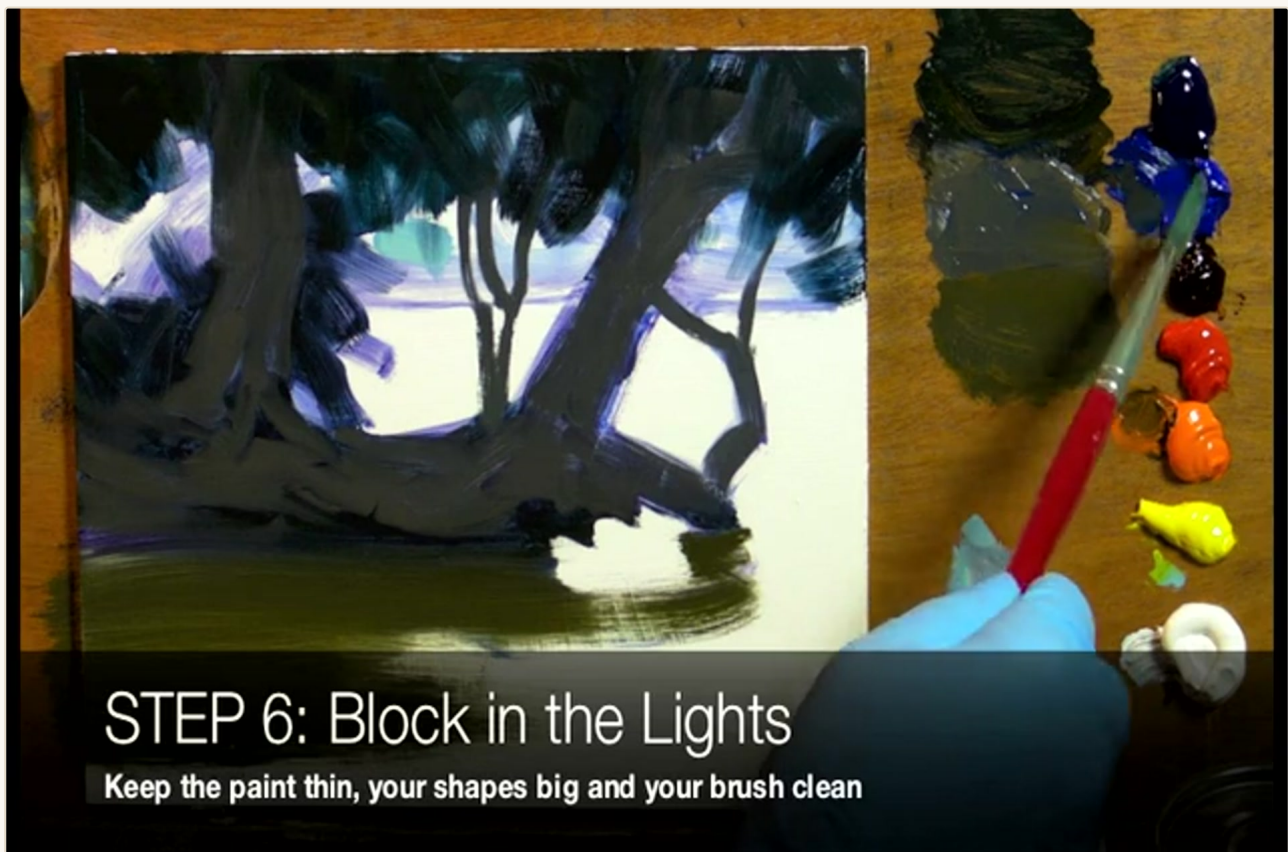
Block in Foliage

Mix a very dark, slightly blue-grey using the blue and orange mixture. Identify major clumps of foliage, leaving some sky apertures. Feather the strokes downwards to blend with the light sky, preventing thick paint buildup.

PRO TIP

Squinting or defocusing helps simplify the scene, allowing you to focus on big shapes and essential details.

8 Blocking in Lights



Block in the Water

Mix Phthalo blue with a little ultramarine yellow and a touch of alizarin crimson to create a slightly greyed-down color. Use this mixture to paint the water in the distance, ensuring it is a bit darker than the sky. Focus on creating big, simple shapes like a jigsaw puzzle.

Paint the Sky Holes

Mix a darker blue than the original sky color for the sky holes. Remember, the smaller the sky hole, the darker or thinner the application should be. This helps to create depth and dimension in the sky.

Create a Spotlight Effect

Darken the sky as it moves away from the center of the painting. This creates a spotlight effect, guiding the viewer's eye to the middle of the painting. Use a slightly darker, greyer mixture to block in the distant strip of land, keeping it lighter than seen to separate foreground and background planes.

Blend the Sky

Mix the same color used previously for the sky and work it into the darker areas. Pay attention to edges, making them hard against branches and soft against foliage or distant hills. This dynamic between hard and soft edges enhances the painting's beauty.

PRO TIP

Use a slightly darker, greyer mixture for distant land to help separate foreground and background planes.

9 Planning and Painting Water



Plan Your Water Painting

Before starting, plan how you will tackle painting the water. Consider the color transitions and where shadows and reflections will be placed to avoid confusion and muddiness.

Mix Foreground Water Colors

Mix a brownish green for the left side of the foreground water. Gradually transition to a bluish green on the right, where it merges with the sky reflections.

Paint Shadows First

Begin by painting the shadows in the water. This establishes depth and helps guide the blending of other colors.

Blend Foreground and Sky Colors

Blend the foreground water color into the sky reflection color. This creates a seamless transition and enhances the natural look of the water.

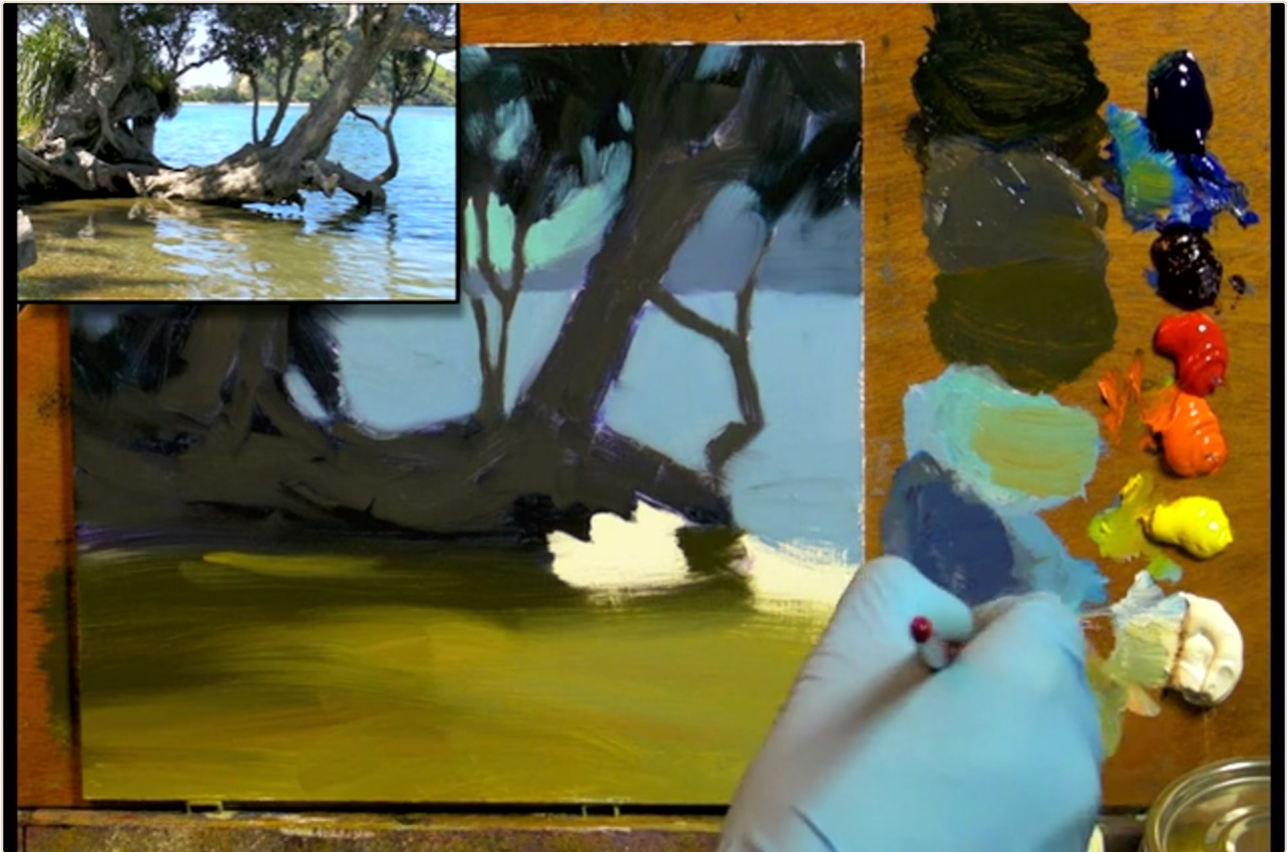
Add Lighter Reflections and Variations

Once the base colors are in place, add lighter reflections and variations of hue. This adds interest and realism to the water surface.

PRO TIP

Always plan your approach to painting water to prevent it from becoming muddy and confused.

10 Review and Adjustments



Switch Brushes for Detail Work

Use a number 6 brush to work on the small area of reflection under the tree. This requires precision, so ensure your brush is clean and loaded with fresh paint every one or two strokes.

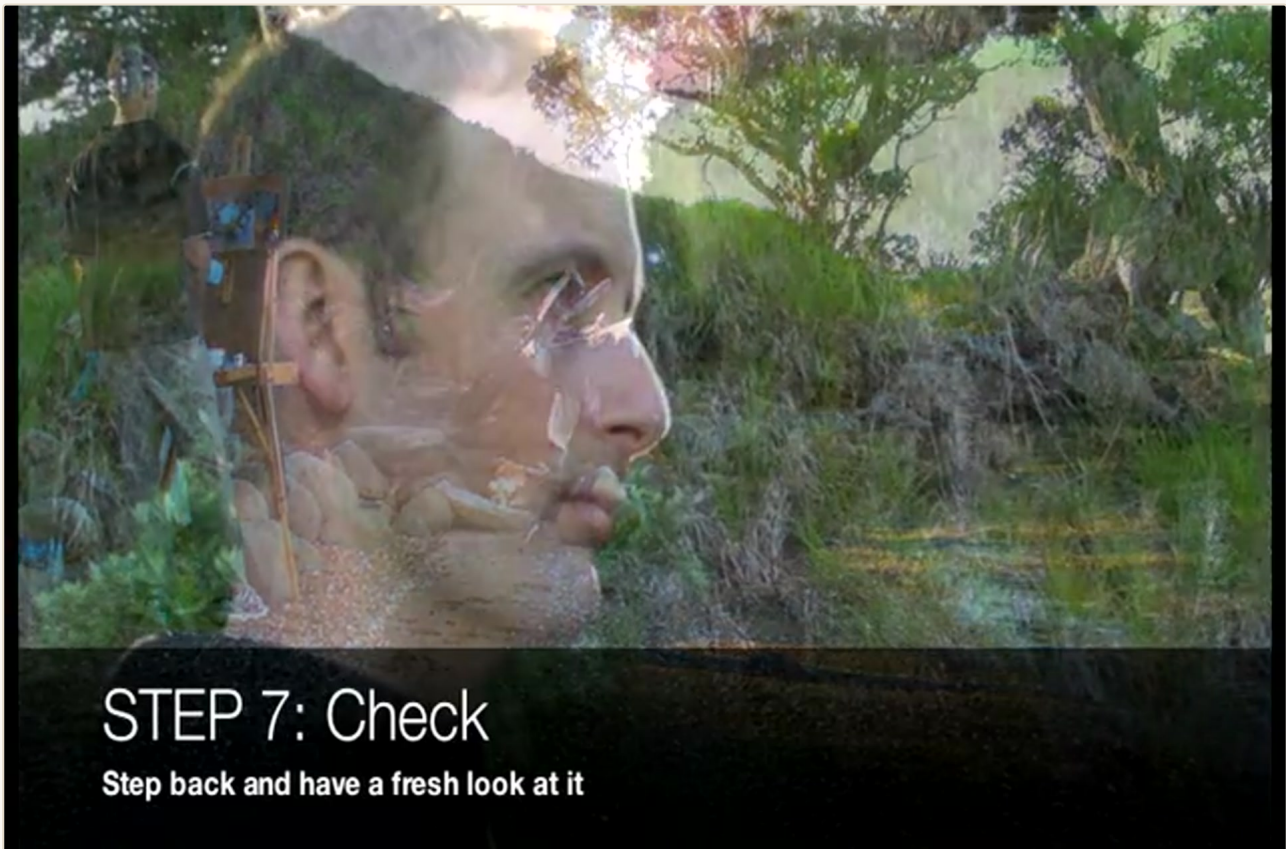
Review Your Progress

Step back and review your painting. You've completed the no tan design, sketched it onto the panel, added dark accents, defined the value range, and blocked in the darks and lights while managing the edges. Observe how these elements are coming together.

PRO TIP

Keep your brush clean and renew the paint frequently when working on detailed areas.

11 Center of Interest



Evaluate Your Painting

Examine your painting to ensure it aligns with your initial concept and your sketch. Check if it has a strong impact and matches your original vision.

Make Necessary Adjustments

If your painting does not align with your concept, pause and identify what needs to change. Implement any major adjustments to bring your painting back on track.

Focus on the Center of Interest

Prepare to paint the center of interest, which is the light hitting the tree trunk. This focal area will bring coherence to your painting.

PRO TIP

Ensure your painting aligns with your initial concept before proceeding to the focal area.

12 Geometric Simplification



Visualize Geometric Forms

Simplify the tree trunk and branches by visualizing them as a series of interconnected cylinders. This approach helps you confidently paint complex objects by breaking them down into basic geometric solids.

Understand Light on Forms

Recognize that each section of the tree trunk can be seen as a smaller cylinder attached to a larger one. Practice understanding how light interacts with these forms to make painting more intuitive and natural.

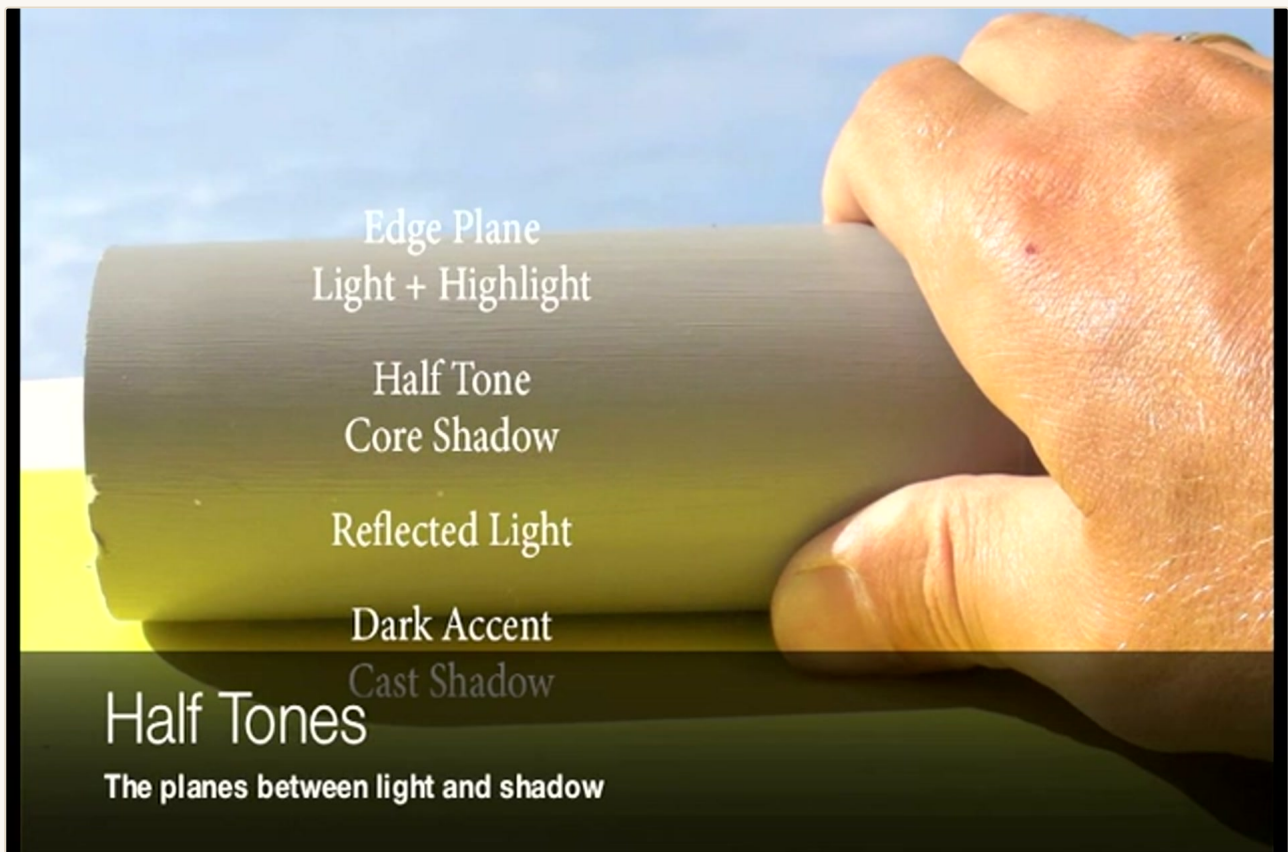
Focus on Halftones

Before adding highlights, focus on painting the halftones. This step is part of the refining process and helps establish a realistic transition from dark to light on the tree trunk.

PRO TIP

Visualize complex objects as basic geometric shapes to simplify the painting process.

13 Painting Halftones



Understand Halftones

Recognize that halftones are the planes between light and shadow. They often have more vibrant color than the lights because they aren't washed out by direct light.

Mix Halftone Colors

Use a blue-orange mix, leaning towards orange, with a value slightly lighter than the shadow. This will capture the slightly warmer halftones observed in the scene.

Adjust Halftone Darkness

On the left side, make the halftone a little darker to guide the viewer's eye back to the center of the painting, where the strongest contrast is.

Incorporate Subtle Color Changes

Add a touch of green to the halftone in the upper branches where sunlight filters through the leaves, maintaining the same value to reflect the subtle color change.

Paint Reflected Lights

Mix a color slightly lighter and warmer than the shadow color for reflected lights. Apply this to areas where the trunk is close to the beach, ensuring the reflected lights stay within the dark values to maintain the illusion of depth.

PRO TIP

Keep the value of reflected lights within the darks to maintain the illusion of depth and contrast.

14 Reflected Lights and Edge Planes



Mix a Bluer Color for Reflected Light

Mix a color that is the same value as the reflected light color you previously created, but with a bluer hue. This will represent the planes of the tree that reflect more of the sky and water.

Refine Edge Planes

Identify the edge planes of the tree that are tilted away from you at nearly a 90-degree angle. Mix a color that is between the background color and the tree color. This will help to visually turn the form of the tree away from the viewer.

PRO TIP

Use a bluer hue to capture the reflection of sky and water on certain tree planes.

15 Highlights and Focal Point



Re-establish Dark Accents

Apply the darkest darks to the tree to bring back strength and contrast. Exaggerate these dark areas slightly so that the final highlights will stand out more effectively.

Strengthen Core Shadow

Enhance the core shadow on the trunk to give it more roundness and depth. This will help in creating a more three-dimensional appearance.

Apply Highlights

Mix a warm light grey for the highlights on the trunk. Be cautious not to make it too warm or too light, as strong color differences can be exaggerated. Aim for a warmer and darker tone than what might appear in a photograph.

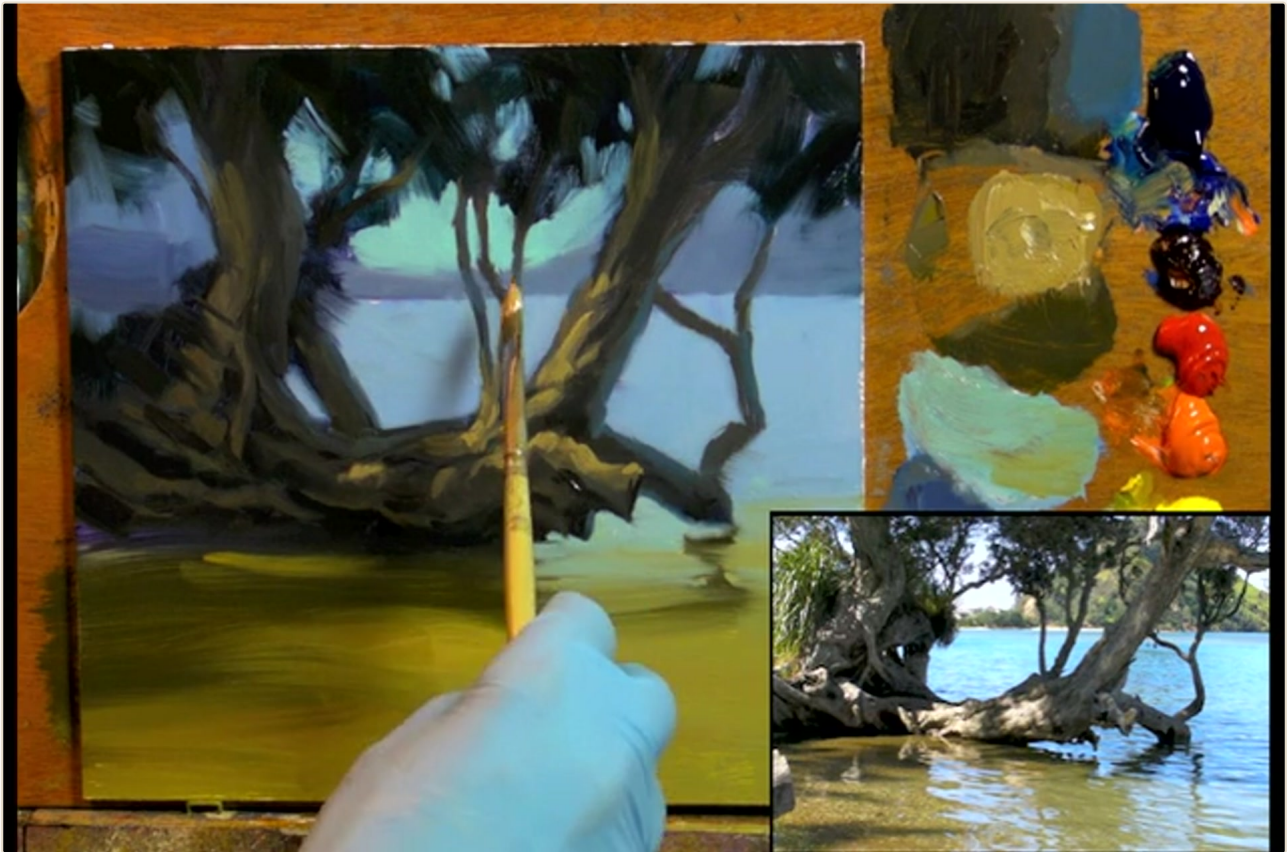
Create Focal Point

Use the thickest paint for the highlights at the focal point to add texture and sparkle. Push a clump of paint onto the brush and drag it onto the painting to achieve this effect.

PRO TIP

Apply the thickest paint at the focal point to enhance texture and draw attention.

16 Detailing Foliage



Select Highlight Areas

Choose specific areas for highlights to ensure they serve as the center of interest without overwhelming the painting. Aim for a natural look in the patterns.

Adjust Highlight Colors

Add a touch of sky color to the highlight on the trailing branch to help it recede into the painting. This prevents the highlight from standing out too much.

Darken Distant Highlights

Make highlights darker as they move away from the center of focus. This creates depth and maintains the painting's balance.

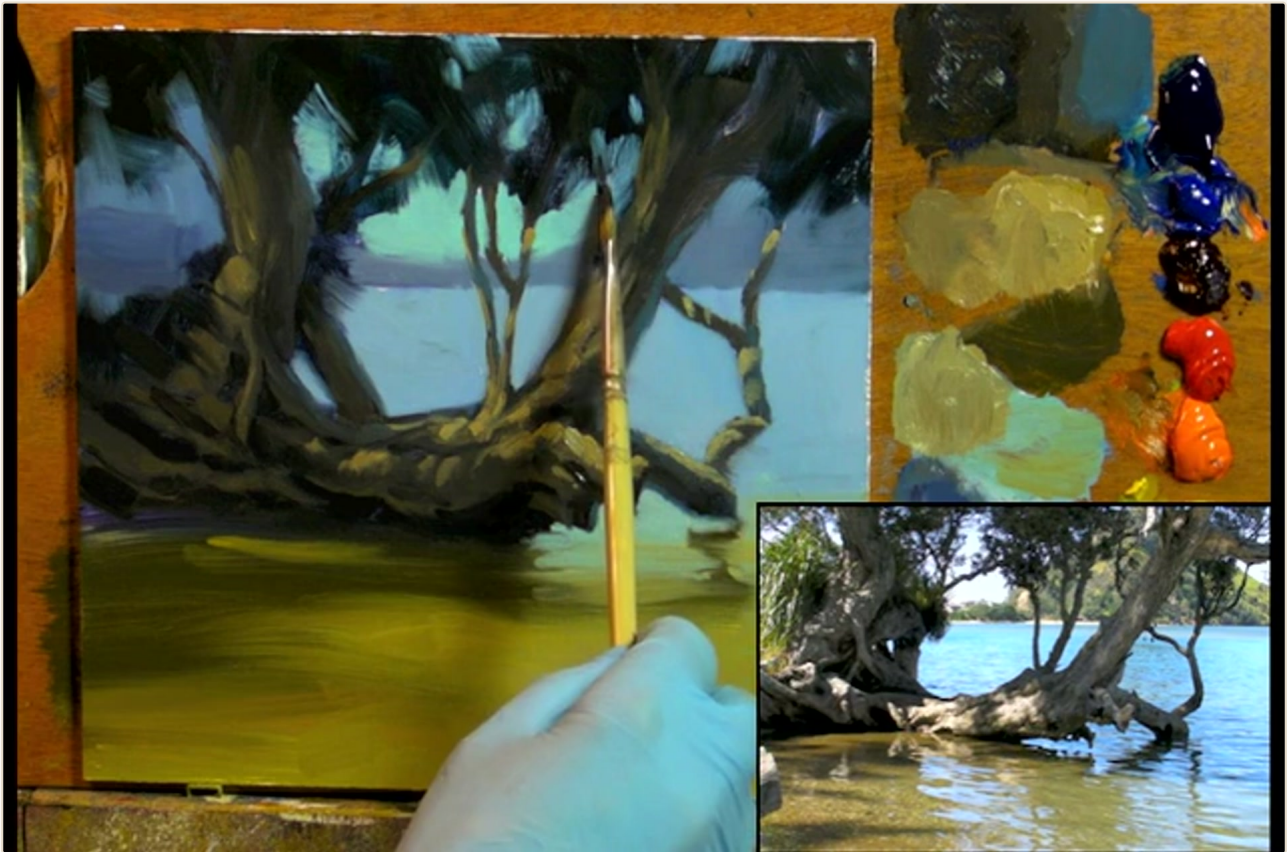
Detail Foliage

Re-establish the dark areas slightly and add subtle suggestions of leaves and thin branches to enhance the foliage detail.

PRO TIP

Add sky color to highlights to help them blend into the painting.

17 Background and Atmospheric Perspective



Introduce Green to the Background

Add some green to the background, making it slightly lighter than the dark areas. Modify the green with a touch of orange to depict plants growing on the tree.

Suggest the Beach

Use a warm grey to suggest the shadow of the beach on the left. For the light areas, apply a lighter warm grey to create contrast.

Add Detail to the Distant Hill

Mix a cool grey for the distant hill, then add yellow and a little white to suggest more detail. This helps create depth without overwhelming the scene.

Create Atmospheric Perspective

Understand that as objects recede into the distance, their colors become more similar due to atmospheric perspective. This technique helps in creating a sense of depth.

Paint the Coastal Strip

Use a light warm grey to paint a strip of sand along the coast. Suggest a few buildings with a mixture that is lighter than the sand to add interest.

PRO TIP

Modify colors slightly as they recede into the distance to create atmospheric perspective.

18 Painting Water Details



Understand Water's Complexity

Recognize that water is challenging to paint due to its constant movement and reflective nature. Consider the six factors affecting water's appearance: reflections (like the sky), water depth, surface texture, shadows, particles, and viewing angle.

Enhance Distant Water

Increase the saturation of the distant water to reflect the intense sky color. Add a thin strip of darker color along the top edge to create depth and make the flat area appear more natural.

Add Tree Shadows

Observe the shadow cast by the tree on the water, which darkens the water slightly. Keep your brush clean to avoid muddying the water as you add these darker tones.

Paint Ripples with Care

Lay down ripples with minimal strokes, considering each one to maintain the crispness of the layers. Ensure ripples follow linear perspective, becoming larger and more spaced as they approach the viewer.

Adjust Foreground Ripples

Notice that foreground ripples take on the sand's color beneath them, becoming darker and greener. This prevents them from drawing attention away from the focal point, the tree.

Enhance Tree Reflection

Strengthen the dark reflection of the tree without disturbing the light ripples. This adds contrast and depth to the water.

Add Foreground Details

Exaggerate brush strokes in the foreground to add depth. Include a few sparkles and red flowers for extra color, enhancing the scene's vibrancy.

PRO TIP

Keep your brush clean when working with dark paint to prevent muddying the water.

19 Simplifying the Painting



Evaluate the Painting

Close one eye and use your fingers to cover different areas of the painting. Ask yourself if there are any elements that can be removed or simplified to strengthen the overall composition.

Assess the Centre of Interest

Ensure the centre of interest is prominent and engaging. Check that it holds its own while maintaining harmony with the rest of the painting.

PRO TIP

Use your fingers to cover parts of the painting to help decide what can be simplified or removed.

Summary & Key Takeaways

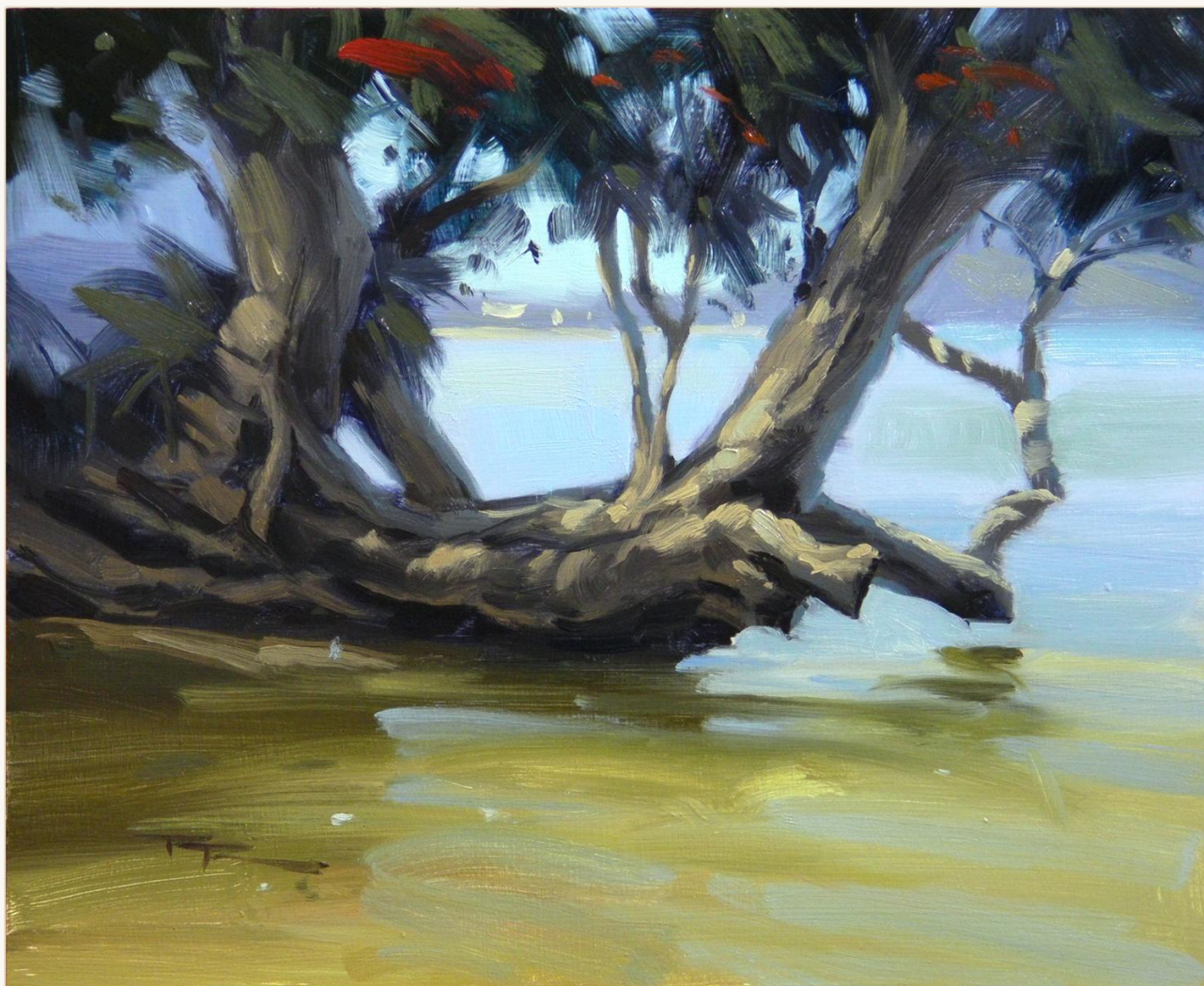
Embark on your painting journey by immersing yourself in the rich resources of the Virtual Art Academy. Begin with foundational principles through structured assignments and video demonstrations, which will guide you in mastering the essential techniques. As you progress, focus on understanding the interplay of light and shadow, and how these elements define the structure and mood of your painting.

As you move from initial sketches to more detailed work, pay attention to the tools and mediums you use. Start with broad strokes to establish your composition, using a no tan sketch to map out the major dark and light shapes. Gradually build up your painting by blocking in darks and lights, ensuring that your value relationships are accurate. This will set a strong foundation for your work.

In the final stages, refine your painting by focusing on the center of interest and adding intricate details. Use geometric simplification to tackle complex forms, and carefully plan your highlights and focal points to enhance depth and texture. Remember to incorporate atmospheric perspective to create a sense of distance and realism. With these techniques, your painting will come to life with vibrancy and balance.

LESSON POINTS TO REMEMBER

- Engage with video and structured assignments for foundational learning.
- Use a no tan sketch to establish your painting's design.
- Begin with large, simple shapes to form a strong foundation.
- Squint at your painting to assess value relationships.
- Plan your approach to painting water to avoid muddiness.
- Visualize complex objects as basic geometric shapes.
- Keep the value of reflected lights within the darks for depth.
- Apply the thickest paint at the focal point for texture and emphasis.



Northland Summer