



2 Color Simplicity

A step-by-step painting guide by Richard Robinson

Watch the full lesson at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/173-2-Color-Simplicity>

MY PAINTING CLUB

Introduction

Learn how to capture the essence of any subject with simple light and shadow shapes. Your job as a painter is to simplify what you see and give it your own style. Your style grows of it's own accord, so the question is, how MUCH should you simplify what you're seeing? Follow along step by step or use the resource photo to create something more your own. Enjoy!



"2 Color Simplicity" 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

Here's everything I use for this painting. Don't worry if you don't have the exact same supplies — use what you have and substitute freely.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- [Click to Download Course Notes \(29mb PDF\)](#)
- M. Graham & Co. Oil Paints
- Alizarine Crimson
- Phthalo Blue
- Ultramarine Blue
- Burnt Sienna
- Cadmium Red
- Cadmium Orange
- Yellow Ochre
- Cadmium Yellow Light
- Titanium White
- Painting medium
- M. Graham & Co. Walnut Alkyd Medium or Walnut Oil
- Solvent
- Gamsol
- Canvas
- Fredrix ultrasmooth canvas.
- 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 Course Materials and Participation

What is included in the lesson notes document?

The lesson notes document includes all the material covered in the video, along with some extra tips and tools. It's a great resource to download and use as you go through the video. For more details, you can visit the sales page at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/173-2-Color-Simplicity>.

Why should I take photos of my playtime projects?

Taking photos of your playtime projects and uploading them to the website can be very encouraging. It allows you to share your progress with friends and receive feedback, which can be motivating. Plus, it gives the instructor a chance to see your work, which is awesome! For more encouragement and tips, check out the sales page at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/173-2-Color-Simplicity>.

How can sharing my work help me become a better painter?

Sharing your work can help you become a better painter by providing encouragement and feedback from others. It also allows you to track your progress and stay motivated. Engaging with the community can enhance your enjoyment of painting. For more insights, visit the sales page at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/173-2-Color-Simplicity>.

2 Two-Color Simplicity Concept

Why is simplifying what you see important in painting?

Simplifying what you see is important in painting because the real world is too complex to capture exactly as it is on canvas. Simplification allows you to express your unique style and avoid the tedious task of painting every detail, like every blade of grass or leaf on a tree. This approach helps create a more engaging and sophisticated artwork. For more insights, visit the lesson page at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/173-2-Color-Simplicity>.

What did Leonardo da Vinci say about simplicity?

Leonardo da Vinci famously said that simplicity is the ultimate sophistication. This idea underscores the importance of simplifying elements in painting to achieve a more refined and effective artistic expression. You can explore this concept further at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/173-2-Color-Simplicity>.

How does simplifying color help in painting?

Simplifying color helps in painting by reducing the complexity of the color range we see, allowing for a clearer expression of depth and light. By dividing objects into just two colors, shadow and light, you can create a sense of depth and convey the quality of light in your artwork. More on this technique can be found at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/173-2-Color-Simplicity>.

What is the basic technique for creating depth with two colors?

The basic technique for creating depth with two colors involves using one color for the shadow side and another for the light side of an object. By getting the relationship between these two colors correct, you can effectively depict the object and its interaction with light, adding depth to your painting. Learn more about this technique at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/173-2-Color-Simplicity>.

How can painting an apple with two colors demonstrate the concept of two-color simplicity?

Painting an apple with two colors demonstrates the concept of two-color simplicity by using one color for its shadow side and another for its light side. If the relationship between these two colors is correct, it convincingly represents the apple, even if it appears blocky. This method highlights the importance of color relationships in creating a sense of light and depth. Discover more about this approach at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/173-2-Color-Simplicity>.

What happens when you apply the two-color technique to multiple objects in a painting?

When you apply the two-color technique to multiple objects in a painting, each new item adds to the overall sense of light and depth in the artwork. This approach can create a magical effect, enhancing the realism and vibrancy of your painting. For further exploration of this technique, visit <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/173-2-Color-Simplicity>.

Why is getting color relationships right considered a core skill for painters?

Getting color relationships right is considered a core skill for painters because it is crucial for accurately depicting light and depth in a painting. Correct color relationships help convey the interaction of light with objects, making the artwork more realistic and engaging. You can learn more about mastering this skill at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/173-2-Color-Simplicity>.

3 Identifying Shadow and Light Shapes

How can I improve my ability to match colors in my paintings?

Improving your color matching skills is essential for creating a convincing sense of light in your paintings. One effective exercise is to practice turning any image into a two-color statement, using one color for the shade and another for the light. This will help you develop a keen eye for distinguishing between shadow and light areas, enhancing your overall color matching ability. For more detailed guidance, you can explore the lesson on the sales page at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/173-2-Color-Simplicity>.

What is a simple method to identify shadow and light shapes in an image?

A straightforward method to identify shadow and light shapes is to use a digital drawing program on your tablet or print out the image and use a black marker pen to block in all the shadow areas. This exercise is not only fun but also helps you start seeing like a painter by clearly dividing the image into shade and light. For a deeper dive into this technique, check out the lesson on the sales page at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/173-2-Color-Simplicity>.

What is the benefit of practicing with old magazines for identifying shadow and light?

Practicing with old magazines is a great way to enhance your ability to see shadow and light shapes. By marking images into shade and light, you train your eye to recognize these elements in various scenes, which is crucial for painting. This exercise is both enjoyable and educational, helping you develop the skills needed to see like a painter. For more tips and exercises, visit the lesson on the sales page at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/173-2-Color-Simplicity>.

4 Preparing the Canvas and Drawing

What size is the canvas used in this lesson segment?

The canvas used in this lesson segment is a 14 inch square. You can find more details about the materials and setup for this lesson on the sales page at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/173-2-Color-Simplicity>.

How can I prevent paint from dribbling down my palette?

To prevent paint from dribbling down your palette, you can use some tape on your plastic palette. This is a handy tip to keep your workspace tidy. For more tips on preparing your painting setup, visit the sales page at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/173-2-Color-Simplicity>.

What is the easiest method to transfer a drawing onto the canvas?

The easiest method to transfer a drawing onto the canvas is to print the drawing to the size you need, cover the back with graphite using a 6B pencil, and then trace over the drawing while it's held in place on the canvas. This transfers the image onto the canvas. For more detailed instructions, check out the sales page at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/173-2-Color-Simplicity>.

What alternative methods can be used to transfer a drawing onto a canvas?

Besides using graphite transfer, you can use a projector or a servant to transfer a drawing onto a canvas. However, in this lesson, the grid method is demonstrated as an effective alternative. Learn more about these techniques on the sales page at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/173-2-Color-Simplicity>.

How do you use the grid method to transfer a drawing onto a canvas?

To use the grid method, first put a grid over your image using an app on a tablet, then replicate that grid on your canvas. Next, transfer the lines from the image into the corresponding sections of the grid on your canvas. This method is straightforward and helps maintain proportions. For further guidance, visit the sales page at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/173-2-Color-Simplicity>.

5 Mixing and Applying Shadow and Light Colors

What colors are included in the basic palette for this painting exercise?

The basic palette for this painting exercise includes phthalo blue, cad red light, yellow ochre, cad yellow light, and titanium white. These colors provide a range of options for mixing and applying shadow and light colors. For more insights on color mixing, you can visit the lesson's sales page at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/173-2-Color-Simplicity>.

How can I keep my paints wet while working on the painting?

To keep your paints wet while working, you can use a spray bottle with water. This helps maintain the moisture of the paints, making them easier to work with. For additional tips on managing paint consistency, check out the lesson's sales page at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/173-2-Color-Simplicity>.

What types of brushes are recommended for this painting exercise?

For this painting exercise, synthetic brushes are recommended. The selection includes a large brush for big areas, two filberts of the same size, a smaller brush, and a rig brush for final details. These brushes help achieve the blocky, simplistic style of the painting. More details on brush selection can be found on the sales page at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/173-2-Color-Simplicity>.

How should I approach choosing colors for shadows and lights in the painting?

When choosing colors for shadows and lights, aim for an average of the variations you see in the reference photo. For shadows, avoid the darkest occlusion shadow and choose a color in between the extremes. For lights, similarly, find an average color. This approach simplifies the painting process. For more guidance, visit the lesson's sales page at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/173-2-Color-Simplicity>.

How can I adjust the color if it looks too warm or too cool?

If a color looks too warm, you can cool it down by adding a little of the bright yellow and a touch of phthalo blue. Be cautious with phthalo blue as it can quickly make the color green. If needed, add a little warmth back in to balance it. This iterative process helps achieve the desired color. For more color mixing tips, see the sales page at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/173-2-Color-Simplicity>.

Why does the color on the canvas appear darker than expected?

The color on the canvas may appear darker than expected because it is surrounded by white, which can affect your perception. As you add more colors and cover more of the canvas, the true value of the color will become clearer. This is a common occurrence in painting, and more insights can be found on the sales page at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/173-2-Color-Simplicity>.

What should I do if I apply too much paint while mixing colors?

If you apply too much paint while mixing colors, you can simply wipe it off. This exercise is about experimenting and learning, so there's no need to worry about making mistakes. Just do your best

and enjoy the process. For more advice on handling paint, visit the lesson's sales page at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/173-2-Color-Simplicity>.

How can I save time when mixing colors for different areas of the painting?

To save time, mix a large amount of paint initially so you don't have to remix the same color repeatedly. Also, look for other areas in the painting where a similar color can be used, and adjust slightly as needed. This efficient approach helps streamline the painting process. For further efficiency tips, check the sales page at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/173-2-Color-Simplicity>.

How do I determine the correct relationship between shadow and light colors?

To determine the correct relationship between shadow and light colors, place them next to each other on the canvas and adjust until they look right together. This might involve tweaking the hue or value slightly to achieve the desired contrast. For more on achieving color harmony, visit the lesson's sales page at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/173-2-Color-Simplicity>.

6 Adjusting Color Relationships

How can I adjust a color towards orange on the color wheel?

To adjust a color towards orange on the color wheel, you can use either red or yellow ochre. Adding a touch of white can help keep the value light, which is often desirable in certain areas of your painting. For more detailed guidance on color adjustments, you can explore the lesson at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/173-2-Color-Simplicity>.

What is a good approach to mixing grey for shadow areas?

When mixing grey for shadow areas, it's helpful to start with a neutral grey at the correct value. Once it's placed within the painting, you can determine if it needs to be adjusted to be cooler or warmer based on its surrounding colors. This technique allows you to make more informed decisions about color relationships. For further insights, check out the full lesson at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/173-2-Color-Simplicity>.

7 Mixing Grays and Skin Tones

How do you mix a neutral grey?

To mix a neutral grey, you need to use white and balance it with all the other colors on your palette. This involves a three-way balancing act between the colors to achieve a neutral tone. It's helpful to have a neutral-colored palette to better judge when you've reached the desired grey. For more detailed guidance, you can explore the lesson at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/173-2-Color-Simplicity>.

Why is it important to have a neutral-colored palette when mixing greys?

A neutral-colored palette helps you accurately judge the neutrality of the grey you're mixing. It allows you to see when the grey is balanced and close to the desired neutral tone. For more insights on this technique, visit the lesson at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/173-2-Color-Simplicity>.

What should you do if phthalo blue is too overpowering in your mixture?

If phthalo blue becomes too overpowering in your mixture, you can remove it from your palette and use ultramarine blue instead. Ultramarine blue is much more forgiving and easier to control. For additional tips on color mixing, check out the lesson at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/173-2-Color-Simplicity>.

How can you achieve a cream color when mixing paints?

To achieve a cream color, you need to make the mixture lighter and warmer. This involves adjusting the balance of colors to create a soft, light tone. For more detailed instructions on mixing colors, you can visit the lesson at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/173-2-Color-Simplicity>.

What differences should you look for when comparing shadow colors?

When comparing shadow colors, look for differences in hue and value. For example, one shadow might appear bluer and slightly lighter, while another might be warmer. Observing these subtle differences helps in achieving a more accurate representation. For further exploration of this concept, visit the lesson at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/173-2-Color-Simplicity>.

8 Painting the Sail and Brushwork Tips

What effect does ultramarine blue have when used in a painting?

Ultramarine blue tends to give you a slightly more grayish blue, which can add depth and subtlety to your painting. For more details on color mixing and effects, visit the lesson page at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/173-2-Color-Simplicity>.

How can I create a brown color for skin tones?

To create a brown color for skin tones, you can mix a little bit of blue with other colors to take it towards brown and darken it. This technique helps achieve a more natural and varied skin tone. Explore more about color mixing techniques on the sales page at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/173-2-Color-Simplicity>.

What color should I use for the shadow in hair?

For the shadow color in hair, a dark grey with a greeny brown tint can work well. Adjusting the mix to be a little bluer can also be effective depending on the desired look. For more tips on painting shadows, check out the lesson at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/173-2-Color-Simplicity>.

What brush should I use for painting the sail?

When painting the sail, it's recommended to use a big brush. This allows for broader strokes and helps create a more dynamic and painterly effect. For more brushwork tips, visit the lesson page at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/173-2-Color-Simplicity>.

How can I make my painting look more artistic and beautiful?

To make your painting look more artistic and beautiful, have fun with your brushwork and avoid making it flat and boring. Embrace a painterly style to add interest and beauty to your work. Discover more about enhancing your painting style at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/173-2-Color-Simplicity>.

9 Painting Water and Reflections

Why should I paint the dark reflections first when painting water?

Painting the dark reflections first helps establish the contrast and depth in the water. This approach allows you to build up the lighter reflections and water details on top, creating a more dynamic and realistic effect. For more insights on this technique, check out the full lesson at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/173-2-Color-Simplicity>.

What should I be aware of when comparing the reflection of a boat to the boat itself?

When comparing the reflection of a boat to the boat itself, notice that the reflection is often a little darker and may have a more orange hue. This subtle difference is important for creating a realistic depiction of reflections in water. You can explore this concept further in the lesson at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/173-2-Color-Simplicity>.

How can I simplify the colors in water reflections?

To simplify the colors in water reflections, try to reduce the various colors into one interesting shape that is all the same color. This simplification helps maintain the painting's overall harmony and focus. For more tips on this technique, visit <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/173-2-Color-Simplicity>.

Why is it recommended to use thick paint for water reflections?

Using thick paint for water reflections can make the painting appear more interesting and dynamic. Thick paint adds texture and depth, enhancing the visual impact of the reflections. Learn more about this approach at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/173-2-Color-Simplicity>.

How should I approach painting waves to avoid losing the painting's vitality?

When painting waves, it's important to stay loose and focus on big, fluid shapes rather than getting too fiddly with details. This approach helps preserve the painting's vitality and prevents it from becoming overworked. Discover more about this technique at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/173-2-Color-Simplicity>.

What is the benefit of twisting the brush while painting water?

Twisting the brush while painting water can create more interesting and fluid shapes, adding movement and life to the painting. This technique helps capture the dynamic nature of water. For further exploration of this method, visit <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/173-2-Color-Simplicity>.

Why is it important to learn about mixing colors yourself in this exercise?

Learning to mix colors yourself is crucial because it helps you understand the relationships between shades and light, which is essential for achieving the right balance in your painting. This exercise encourages personal growth in color mixing skills. For more guidance, check out <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/173-2-Color-Simplicity>.

What are the advantages of using oils over acrylics for painting water?

Oils offer the advantage of creating nice fluid blends between colors, which can be more challenging with quick-drying acrylics. This blending capability allows for smoother transitions and more natural-looking water effects. Explore the benefits of using oils in the full lesson at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/173-2-Color-Simplicity>.

10 Final Thoughts and Encouragement

What is the core of painting according to this lesson?

The core of painting, as mentioned in this lesson, involves getting the drawing right, establishing the big color shapes correctly, and ensuring the relationships between these color shapes are accurate. This foundational approach is crucial before moving on to more detailed work. For a deeper understanding, you can explore more on the sales page at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/173-2-Color-Simplicity>.

What should you do after covering the canvas with big shapes?

After covering the canvas with big shapes, the next steps are to vary the colors within those big shapes and adjust the edges. This process helps refine the painting and bring it to completion. For more insights on this technique, visit the sales page at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/173-2-Color-Simplicity>.

Why is it suggested to take a photo of your painting at the simplistic stage?

Taking a photo of your painting at the simplistic stage is recommended so you can capture its initial state. This allows you to look back and see your progress, and learn from the changes you make. It's a way to document your journey and understand how your painting evolves. More tips like this can be found on the sales page at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/173-2-Color-Simplicity>.

What is the goal of the painting exercise in this lesson?

The goal of the painting exercise in this lesson is not to achieve perfection, but to improve and train your brain to see subtle differences and mix colors effectively. It's about enjoying the process and developing your skills over time. For further guidance, check out the sales page at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/173-2-Color-Simplicity>.

Summary & Key Takeaways

In this chapter, we embarked on a journey to simplify our approach to color by focusing on the concept of two-color simplicity. The idea is to reduce the complexity of what we see into manageable parts, using just two colors to represent light and shadow. This technique not only helps in capturing the essence of the subject but also allows for a more expressive and sophisticated painting style. By practicing this method, I hope you discover the magic of creating depth and light with minimal colors.

Throughout the lesson, we explored various techniques to identify and apply shadow and light shapes, which are crucial for achieving a convincing sense of light in your paintings. We also delved into practical tips for preparing your canvas, mixing colors, and adjusting color relationships to enhance your painting process. These skills are fundamental in developing your ability to see and paint like an artist, focusing on the core elements that make a painting come alive.

I encourage you to continue experimenting with these techniques, sharing your work with the community, and embracing the learning process. Remember, painting is not just about the final product but also about the joy and growth you experience along the way. Keep practicing, and let your unique style shine through!

LESSON POINTS TO REMEMBER

- Simplify complex scenes by focusing on two-color simplicity.
- Use one color for shadows and another for lights to create depth.
- Practice identifying shadow and light shapes to improve color matching.
- Prepare your canvas using the grid method for accurate proportions.
- Mix a large amount of paint initially to save time and maintain consistency.
- Adjust color relationships by placing shadow and light colors next to each other.
- Use a neutral-colored palette to better judge the neutrality of greys.
- Share your work with the community for feedback and encouragement.



"2 Color Simplicity" by Richard Robinson.

Student Critiques

Club members painted their own versions of this scene and I critiqued each one. Their paintings — and my feedback — are a wonderful way to see this lesson's ideas in action.

Sailing Away by Fay Thomson 12" x 12" Oils on Canvas



Sailing Away by Fay Thomson 12" x 12" Oils on Canvas

Nice painting Fay, colours and values are working well. Don't be afraid to be more bold with your brushwork, make every brush mark have purpose and intent. Great job.

Friends Boating by Barbara Haviland



Friends Boating by Barbara Haviland

Good work Barbara, love the clean colours which are creating harmony within the painting.

Keep in mind some of those values in your painting, you may wish to darken the colour of the stern of the boat, also I would add more yellow into the boat's reflection in the water and break it up a little with a ripple or two. The dark accent of the sail's 'pulley?' seems to draw all the attention so I'd be inclined to subdue that by lightening it. Other than that, great job.

Orange overtaking grey, 18x24 oil on panel by Silke Sauritz



Orange overtaking grey, 18x24 oil on panel by Silke Sauritz

Wow, great painting, I love the composition and you've nailed the colours and values. Love the complex detail in the water too. Fantastic!

"Gone Sailing" Acrylic on linen, 24x32 cm by Genevieve Reinke



"Gone Sailing" Acrylic on linen, 24x32 cm by Genevieve Reinke

Good work Genevieve, I like the subtle change to the composition by making the boat a little smaller within the painting which gives it a sense of space.

Your use of colour is good, but pay attention to your values (how light or dark your colours are), for example the shadows at the back of the boat could be darker in value as well as the shadows of the people within the boat. If you are unsure of how light or dark your values are within the subject you are painting you can either switch the reference photo to black and white, or squint your eyes when you look at the photo. The figures heads need enlarging. Other than that you are doing well, great job!