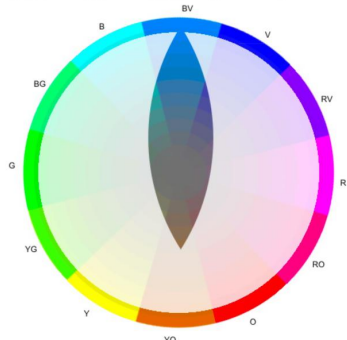
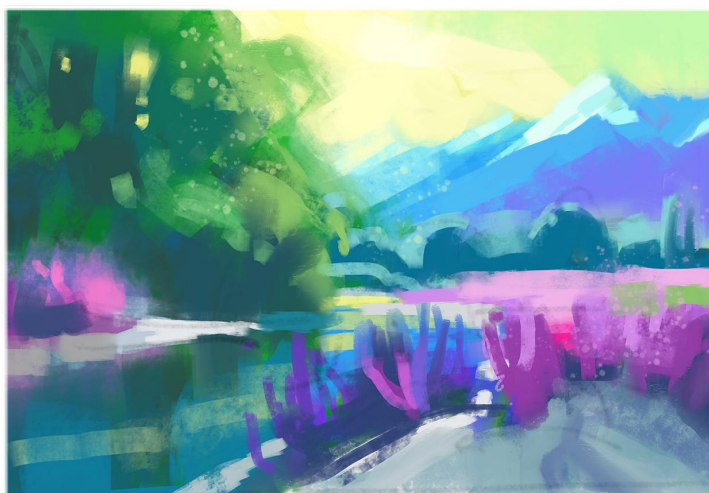
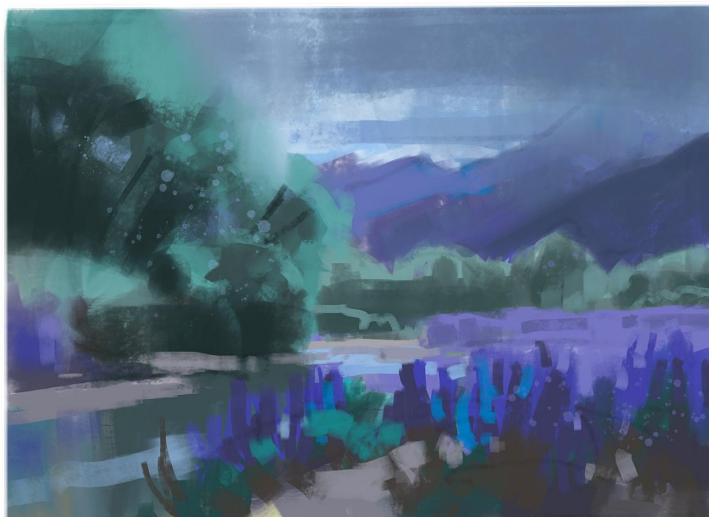
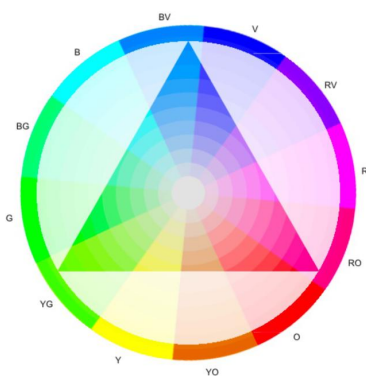




SOMBER, QUIET



FUN, PLAYFULL



Color Moods

A step-by-step painting guide by Richard Robinson

Watch the full lesson at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/174-Color-Moods>

MY PAINTING CLUB

Introduction

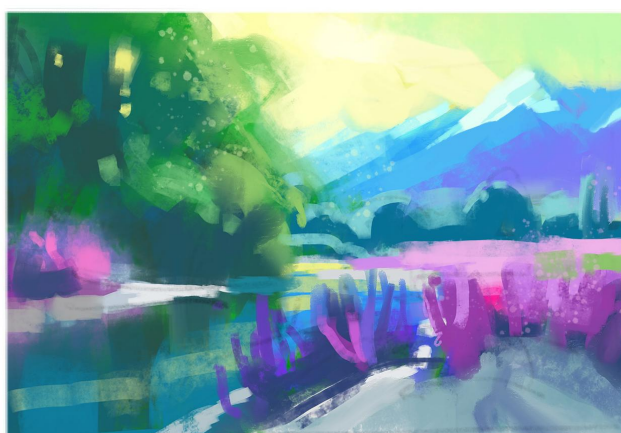
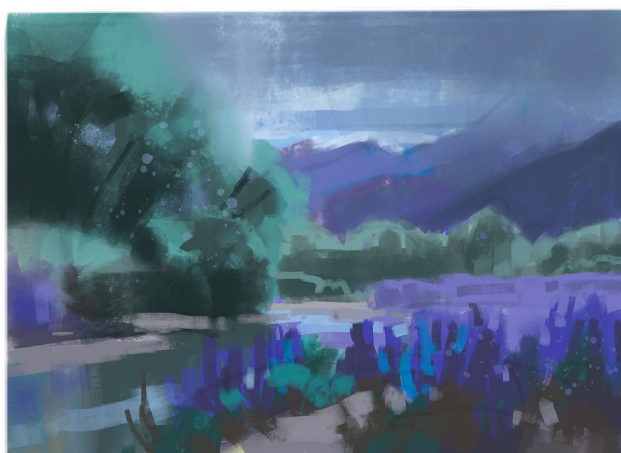
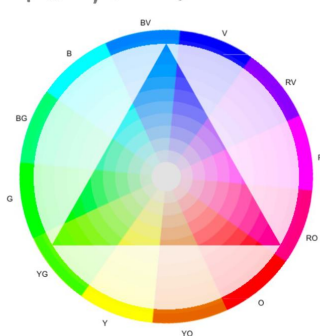
In this chapter, I invite you to explore the fascinating world of color moods in painting. Imagine the power of deciding the mood of your painting and then using color to convey that emotion to your audience. Just like Hollywood uses color grading to evoke emotions in films, you can do the same with your art. We'll start by choosing a mood for your scene and experimenting with digital tools to approximate that feeling. Using the gamut mask tool, we'll create a color scheme and mix color strings based on it. As you paint, you'll see how these colors transform your work, creating a somber or vibrant mood as desired. I discovered that by adjusting my color mixtures, I could deepen the emotional impact even further. This process opens up endless possibilities for expressing emotion through your paintings. You'll have all the tools you need to start this exciting journey. Remember, there's no single correct color scheme—experiment and let your subject guide you. Enjoy the creative freedom this brings to your art.



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"Color Moods" by Richard Robinson.

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

- Click to Download Course Notes (29mb PDF)
- The Gamut Mask Tool:
- <https://mypaintingclub.com/blog/post/39-The-Gamut-Mask-Tool>
- 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 Choosing Color Schemes



Identify Color Inspiration

Observe your subject closely to find a color idea that resonates. Let the subject suggest a color scheme naturally, such as a bright red boat inspiring a subdued green background.

Limit Your Palette for Warmth

To create a warmer painting, limit your palette to ultramarine blue, burnt sienna, yellow ochre, and white. This combination can help achieve a lighter, warmer effect.

Use High Saturation for Vibrancy

For scenes that evoke happiness, like a beach setting, opt for high saturation colors. This approach enhances the vibrancy and mood of the painting.

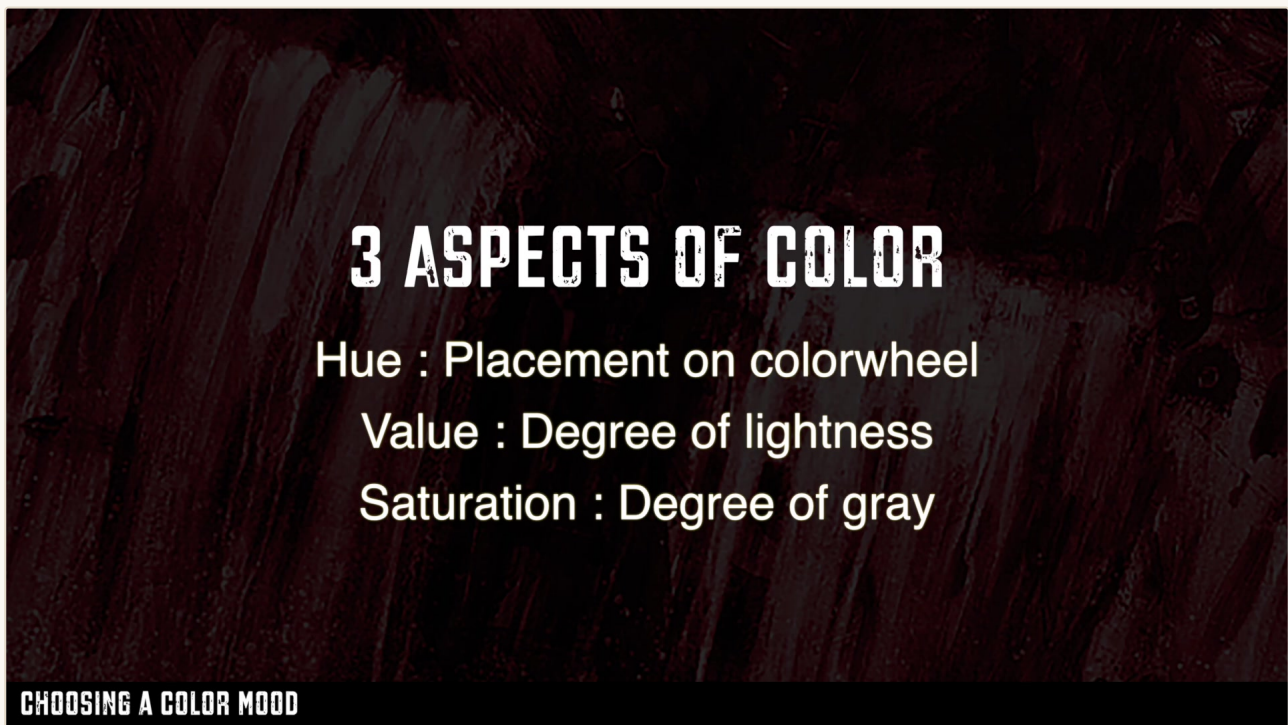
Experiment with Color Ideas

Remember, there is no single correct color scheme. Experiment with different ideas and choose what feels right for your subject and artistic vision.

PRO TIP

Limit your palette to create a specific mood, such as warmth or vibrancy.

2 Color Aspects and Emotions



Understand Color Aspects

Recognize the three aspects of color: hue, value, and saturation. These elements work together to inspire emotion in your paintings.

Explore Hue and Emotion

Consider how different hues affect emotions. For example, vibrant red can evoke heat, anger, or passion, while green might suggest calm or growth. Reflect on what each hue means to you personally.

Consider Saturation's Impact

Use highly saturated colors to convey energy and happiness, as they are often perceived as lively. In contrast, low saturation colors provide a subdued energy with more emotive depth.

Evaluate Value's Role

Understand that higher color values generally convey positivity, as light is associated with life. A low-key image with dark values may feel negative, while a high-key image with light values gives a positive vibe.

Combine Color Aspects

Combine saturated colors with high-key values for a positively emotive effect, similar to the Impressionists. This combination can enhance the mood of your painting.

PRO TIP

Combine saturated colors with high-key values to create a positively emotive painting.

3 Choosing a Subject and Color Scheme



Choose a Subject

Select a subject that inspires you. If you're struggling, remember that the subject isn't crucial when exploring color. Consider using abstract designs by cropping interesting shapes from photos on your phone.

Experiment with Color

Use the cropped image as a subject to experiment with colors. Paint small studies and try different color ideas to see what works.

Repaint with New Colors

Revisit one of your old paintings and experiment with a new color palette. This approach encourages creativity and exploration.

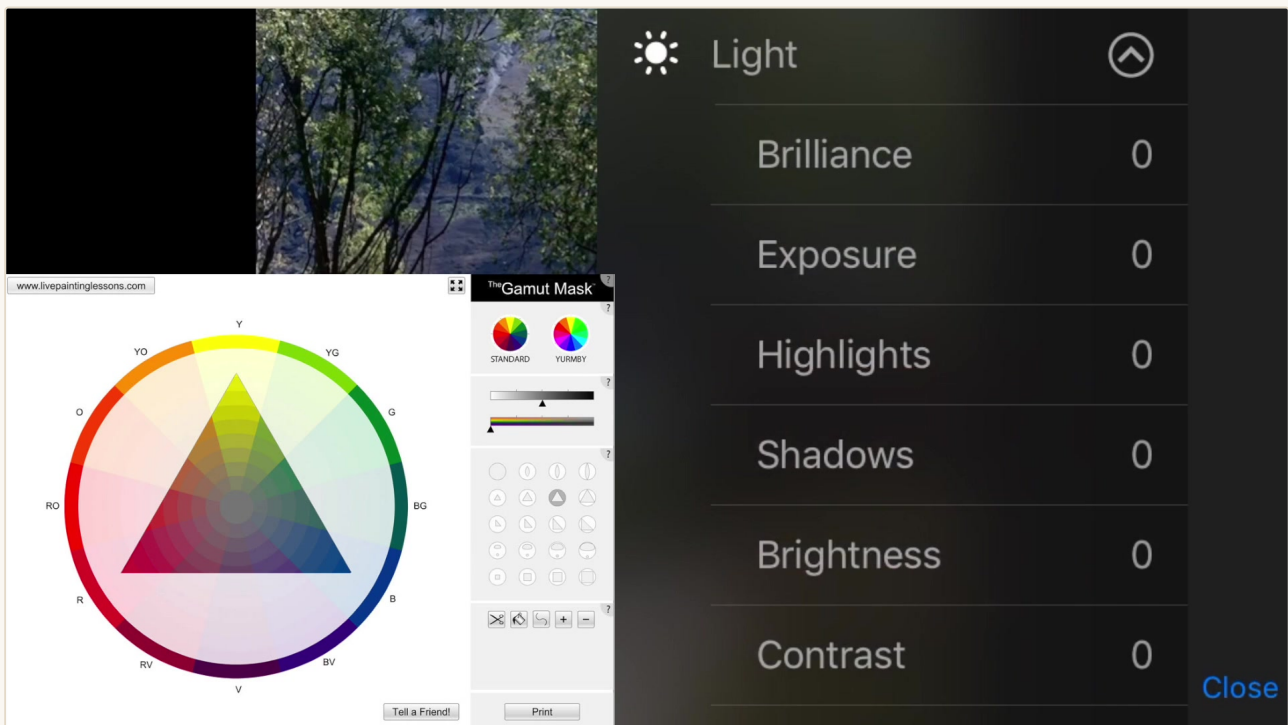
Choose a Color Scheme First

Select a color scheme before choosing a subject. Search for images by color online to find inspiration that suits your chosen palette.

PRO TIP

Use the Gamut Mask tool to create harmonious color schemes for your paintings.

4 Preparing to Paint Different Moods



Choose an Inspiring Scene

Select a scene that truly inspires you. This can be from your own images or the provided photos. The scene will be painted in two different moods, so choose something versatile.

Select Contrasting Moods

Decide on two contrasting moods to paint, such as somber versus fun, or angry versus peaceful. Ensure the moods are distinctly different to explore a wide range of emotions.

Plan Color Treatment for Each Mood

Consider the best color treatment for each mood. For a somber mood, use low key, low saturation blues and grays. For a fun mood, opt for a mid key, high saturation, primary triadic color scheme.

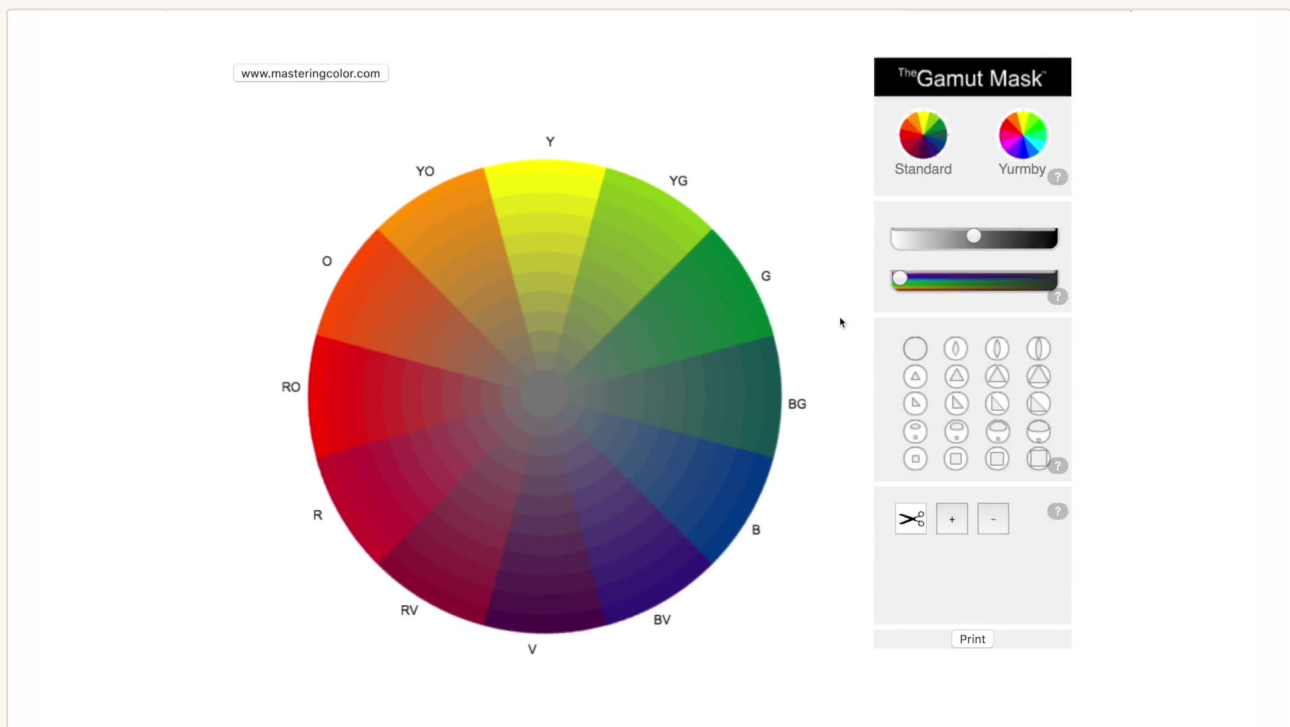
Digitally Experiment with Colors

Use digital tools to adjust your photo to match your color ideas. For somber, lower the exposure and saturation, and add blue tones. For fun, raise the saturation slightly to enhance vibrancy without overdoing it.

PRO TIP

Use digital adjustments to visualize the mood and color scheme before starting your painting.

5 Using the Gamut Mask Tool



Select the UMB Color Wheel

Click on the UMB color wheel option to use a true representation of how color is perceived. This will form the basis for your color selection.

Adjust Saturation

Lower the saturation to make the colors a little darker and grayer. This adjustment helps set the mood for your painting.

Choose a Dominant Color

Move the blue-violet to the top of the wheel to establish it as your dominant color. This will guide the overall tone of your painting.

Apply a Gamut Mask

Select a mask to exclude certain colors, focusing on including more blue-violet. Ensure the mask allows some cyan and violet to create a somber color scheme.

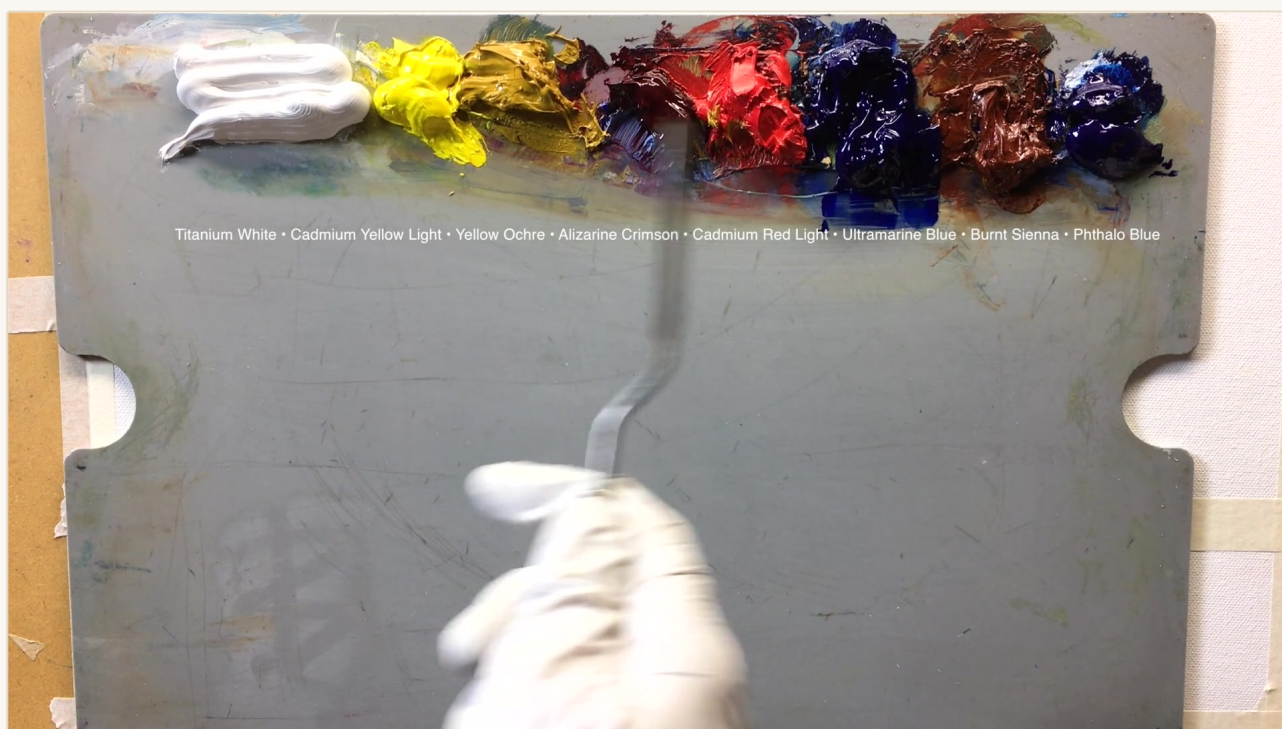
Create a Mid-Key Scheme

For a mid-key scheme with fully saturated colors, adjust the saturation to the highest level. Use a triadic color scheme by selecting the triangle and adjust it to include more green for a fun, vibrant palette.

PRO TIP

Use the gamut mask to focus on specific colors, ensuring your palette remains within the desired mood and tone.

6 Mixing Colors for Somber Mood



Mix a Somber Cool Blue

Start with a big chunk of phthalo blue. Grey it down slightly with some red and yellow ochre. Add white to a portion of this mix to reveal the color, creating four distinct values. Adjust the number of values as needed, typically between four and nine.

Create a Turquoise Gray

Begin with a generous amount of cool blue. Add yellow ochre and a little red to push the mix towards green while maintaining a gray tone. Use yellow ochre instead of bright yellow to keep the color subdued. Add white to achieve the desired lightness.

Mix a Violet Blue

Use ultramarine blue, which leans towards red. Add burnt sienna to gray it down slightly. Lighten the mix with white, noting that ultramarine requires less white than phthalo blue due to its weaker pigment strength.

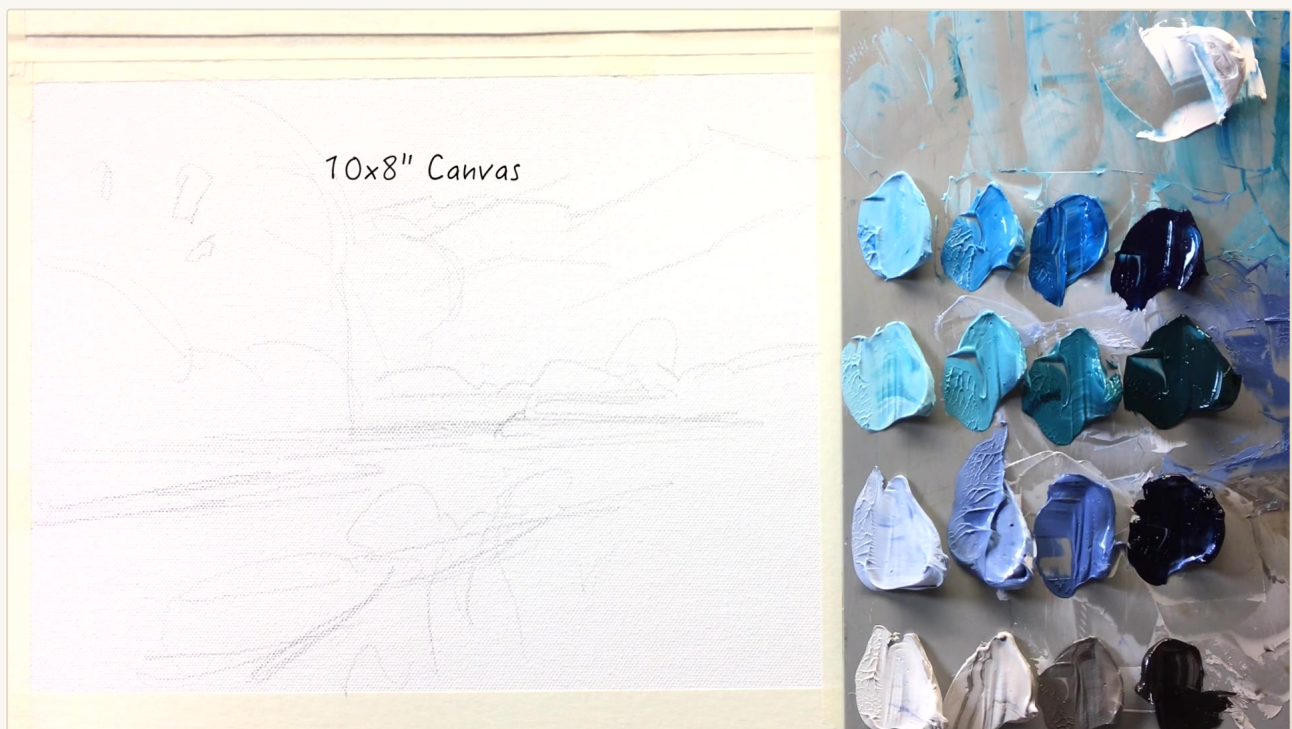
Prepare a Gray Orange

Start with a brown, as it is essentially a dark orange. Add some blue to gray it down further. Lighten the mixture with white to achieve the desired value.

PRO TIP

When mixing colors, start with a larger amount to ensure you have enough for creating multiple values.

7 Painting with Mixed Colors



Start with Dark Foliage

Use a fair amount of painting medium to apply dark colors in the foliage. Begin with the darkest darks and gradually move to the next lightest darks. This will create depth and dimension in your painting.

Mix Colors Intuitively

Feel free to mix any colors on your palette to use in the painting. Use the digitally dabbled resource photo as inspiration, but don't feel restricted by it. Trust your intuition to create a unique color mood.

Build a Color Mood

Remember, the main goal is to build a color mood that resonates with you. Experiment with placing colors like sky green or trees purple if it suits your vision. Enjoy the process and have fun with your color choices.

PRO TIP

Use thicker paint as you move to lighter colors to add texture and interest.

Summary & Key Takeaways

Embark on your painting journey by thoughtfully selecting a color scheme that resonates with your subject. Let the natural hues of your subject guide you, whether it's a vibrant red boat against a serene green backdrop or a lively beach scene bursting with high saturation colors. Remember, the palette you choose sets the mood, so experiment with different combinations until you find the one that aligns with your artistic vision.

As you delve deeper into your painting, consider the emotional impact of hue, value, and saturation. These elements are powerful tools in conveying the mood you wish to express. Use vibrant, high saturation colors for energy and positivity, or opt for subdued, low saturation tones for depth and introspection. Adjust your values to enhance the mood, with high-key values bringing light and positivity, and low-key values adding a somber touch.

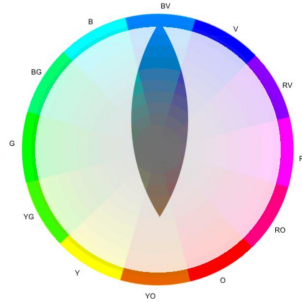
Finally, embrace the creative process by experimenting with different subjects and color schemes. Use tools like the Gamut Mask to refine your palette and digital adjustments to visualize your desired mood. Mix your colors with intention, starting with generous amounts to ensure consistency across values. As you apply your colors, let your intuition guide you, and don't shy away from bold choices that reflect your unique artistic expression.

LESSON POINTS TO REMEMBER

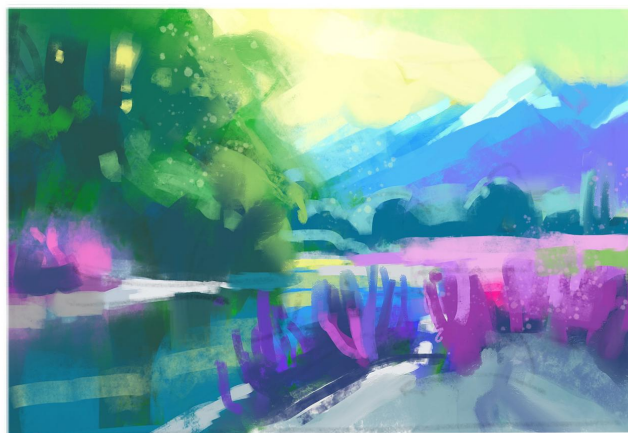
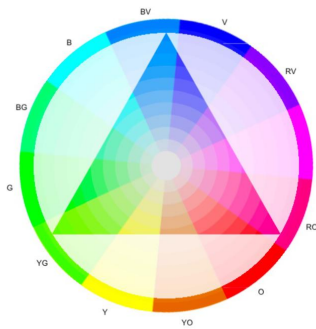
- Let your subject suggest a natural color scheme.
- Limit your palette to create specific moods.
- Combine saturated colors with high-key values for positivity.
- Experiment with abstract designs to explore color.
- Use digital tools to visualize mood and color schemes.
- Employ the Gamut Mask to focus on desired colors.
- Start with generous amounts when mixing colors.
- Use thicker paint for lighter colors to add texture.



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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.

Quiet in the Gray by Nancy Sands



Quiet in the Gray by Nancy Sands

Hi Nancy, great use of a calming blue-green colour scheme to enhance the mood of an already calming scene. Beware making trees the same size and shape, even if they are in the photo. Building tree groups as family groups helps avoid that - a large father, smaller mother and several different sized kids.

Bright Summer Day on the Salmon River by Nancy Sands



Bright Summer Day on the Salmon River by Nancy Sands

Great spotlight effect on the hills and colour gradation through the tree, Nancy. Simplifying the detail on the water in the background and reducing the size of any details there will help create more distance there. In broken water the reflections of the hills wouldn't appear so strongly. I'd either subdue the reflections with more sky reflections or remove the waves.

Color Mood Cheerful by Sharon Repple



Color Mood Cheerful by Sharon Repple

Hi Sharon, great work on this and your other colour study. Looks like you've got the technique down pat. Interesting now to see how you might use this technique in the future.

Highway_1_Morning_Beach_RP_BV_BG_YO by Silke Sauritz



Highway_1_Morning_Beach_RP_BV_BG_YO by Silke Sauritz

Really interesting to see the difference that a change of colour scheme makes in your two paintings Silke. Great to see that you took the opportunity to alter the design in the sky as well and wonder if the colours might have prompted that decision in some way - grey clouds in a turbulent sky versus placid blocky clouds in a warm sky. As a painting I think this one works better with the sky echoing the motion in the foreground. Beautiful!