



Glenorchy

A step-by-step painting guide by Richard Robinson

Watch the full lesson at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/104-Glenorchy>

MY PAINTING CLUB

Introduction

In this chapter, we're diving into the serene beauty of Glenorchy with a focus on simplicity and color mastery. I've chosen a very simple palette for this lesson, using just three primary colors—red, blue, and yellow—along with white. This limited palette is a fantastic way to deepen your understanding of color mixing and to see how most hues can be achieved with these basics. We'll be painting a charming lakeside scene, capturing the tranquil essence of the boat shed nestled in nature. I've selected a couple of bristle brushes and finer ones for detail work, and I'm using M. Graham's walnut oil as my medium, steering clear of any thinners this time. As we begin, you'll learn to create a thin wash using a mix of blue and red, which will serve as the foundation for your sketch. By placing the boat shed at the intersection of a vertical and horizontal third on your canvas, we'll adhere to the rule of thirds, enhancing the composition's balance and visual interest. This scene is not only a joy to paint but also a rewarding subject that will enrich your painting skills and appreciation for color harmony.



"Glenorchy" 11 x 11" Oil on Canvas 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.

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
- Alizarine Crimson
- 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 (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 Initial Sketch and Composition



Create the Initial Sketch

Use a mixture of blue and red to create a thin wash for your sketch. The exact color isn't crucial, so focus on achieving a light, transparent line.

Apply the Rule of Thirds

Position the boat shed at the intersection of a vertical third and a horizontal third on your canvas. This placement follows the guideline of thirds, enhancing the composition's balance and interest.

PRO TIP

Use a thin wash for your sketch to keep the lines light and easy to adjust.

2 Blocking in Dark and Light Values



Mix Darkest Dark

Combine blue and red with a touch of yellow and a little bit of white to create your darkest dark. Ensure it is not as dark as black to account for the distance to the boat shed.

Block in Lightest Color

Apply your lightest color to the side of the shed. Opt for a warmer tone than reality to enhance the color scheme's vibrancy.

Adjust for Reflections

Mix a slightly warmer and darker version of the lightest color for the reflection in the water. Remember, reflections tend to show lights a bit darker and darks a bit lighter, while mid values remain consistent.

PRO TIP

Reflections in water show lights slightly darker and darks slightly lighter.

3 Adding High Chroma Color



Add High Chroma Color

Mix a vibrant orange by combining a strong orange with a little bit of blue and a touch of white. This will create a high chroma color that is not too garish, but still vibrant and saturated. Apply this color to the areas where you want the most intense color impact.

PRO TIP

Temper vibrant colors with a touch of blue and white to avoid them becoming too garish.

4 Perspective and Drawing Details



Establish the Horizon Line

Identify the horizontal bank line in your scene. Determine your eye level, which should be slightly above this line, and mark the invisible horizon accordingly.

Draw the Boat Shed Edges

Sketch the edges of the boat shed, ensuring that the lines slope slightly down towards the horizon. This subtle slope is crucial for maintaining perspective.

Adjust Roof Angles

Position the center of the boat shed's end and draw the roof angles. Ensure the roof slopes down towards the horizon, aligning with the perspective lines.

PRO TIP

Ensure all lines slope slightly down towards the horizon to maintain correct perspective.

5 Mid Value and Reflection



Mix Warm Mid Value

Mix a warm mid value color for the area behind the boat shed and the trees on the foreshore. This will serve as your next darkest dark.

Block In Broadly

Apply this color broadly to the designated areas, ensuring you cover the space effectively. Be careful not to overextend before modifying the color to maintain variation.

Add Reflection

Use the same mid value color to paint the reflection. Keep the value consistent in the reflection for a cohesive look.

PRO TIP

Maintain color variation to create a more interesting painting.

6 Background and Atmosphere



Apply Blue-Grey Background

Mix a blue-grey color for the background, focusing on a light value. As you move towards the snow line and further into the distance, make the color slightly lighter and bluer. Use a thin layer with a fair amount of painting medium, such as walnut oil, to ensure it flows smoothly and sits flat on the canvas.

Soften the Sky and Mountain Edge

Add more white to your mixture to lighten the sky area. Soften the edge where the mountain meets the sky, allowing the mountain to gently disappear into the sky. This technique helps to create an atmospheric and misty background.

PRO TIP

Use a thin layer of paint with medium to ensure smooth flow and a flat finish, enhancing the contrast with future light layers.

7 Mixing Warm Light Values



Mix Warm Light Values

Use a clean brush to mix the oranges together in the foreground. Start with orange, but if it's too intense, modify it with blue and white to achieve a warm light value. This approach simplifies your color choices using a primary palette of blue, red, yellow, and white.

Balance Your Grays

When mixing grays, adjust the balance by adding complementary colors. If the gray is too red, add blue and yellow to neutralize it. If it's too yellow, add blue and red to correct the tone.

PRO TIP

Use a simple primary palette to simplify color choices and make it easier to mix consistent colors.

8 Reflections and Detail Work



Manage Reflection Edges

Be careful with the quality of your edges in reflections. Avoid too many sharp edges, especially in the foreground where they should be blurred and soft.

Add Roof Details

Include a hint of the red roof in the reflection. Add a cast shadow from the tree onto the roof, focusing on the area closer to the tree.

Enhance Building Features

Incorporate small details like a window and a door to add interest. Darken the shadow side of the building to increase contrast and extend some dark tones to the right.

Develop Tree Depth

Add a slightly darker version of the tree color into the body of the tree. This will create more depth and interest in the foliage.

Create Natural Branches

Paint branches and trunks with loose, calligraphic strokes. Avoid tightly drawn lines to maintain the joy and spontaneity of the painting.

PRO TIP

Use loose, calligraphic strokes for branches to keep the painting lively and expressive.

9 Mountain Shadows and Light



Add Building Shadow

Add a little shadow onto the end of the building to connect it with the shadow on the roof. Use a very soft watercolor sable brush to soften some of the edges for a more cohesive look.

Mix Mountain Shadow Color

Switch to a normal bristle brush and mix the shadow color for the mountains. Add white, yellow, and a touch of red to warm up the mixture. This will be used for the light on the vegetation on the mountains.

PRO TIP

Use a soft watercolor sable brush to gently soften edges for a more cohesive look.

10 Spotlight and Edge Softening



Create a Spotlight Effect

Start in the center of the area you want to spotlight. Gradually move outwards, reducing the intensity to create a spotlight effect. Modify the color as it recedes into space by adding more white and blue, ensuring it blends naturally.

Paint Light on Snow

Use a very cool light grey to depict the light on the snow. Begin at the center of the spotlighted area and work outwards to maintain the effect.

Warm the Greenery

Add a touch of warmth to the greenery color. Lighten and warm the center of the spotlighted area slightly to help it relate to the foreground colors.

Strengthen Shadow Areas

Use a blue-grey to strengthen a few shadow areas, giving the mountains more form. Ensure variation in the lines to avoid parallel and evenly spaced patterns.

Soften Edges

Use a sable brush to soften some edges, enhancing the natural appearance of the landscape.

PRO TIP

Avoid painting parallel lines at equal distances to maintain natural variation in mountain landscapes.

11 Accents and Texture



Add Light Accents

Mix a very light warm color for accents that are slightly lighter than the lightest areas already in the painting. These accents will catch the eye and add significant interest to your work.

Paint the Handrail

Use a similar color to the light accents, but make it a bit darker and warmer for the handrail on the jetty. Avoid painting the handrail too precisely, as it should blend with the loose style of the rest of the painting.

Enhance Tree Texture

Mix a slightly lighter grey-orange to add texture to the trees. Apply this to certain areas to give the trees more life and prevent them from looking bland.

PRO TIP

Avoid painting details too precisely to maintain the loose style of the painting.

12 Enhancing Contrast



Darken the Bank

Darken the bank right underneath the light spot on the side of the building. This will enhance the contrast and draw the viewer's eye to the boat shed. The eye naturally seeks out areas of highest contrast and sharpest edges.

PRO TIP

Use contrast to guide the viewer's eye to focal points in your painting.

13 Final Adjustments and Adding Figures



Tone Down the Building

Soften the colors on the side of the building by applying a slightly muted tone. This will help the building look a bit older and less garish.

Reestablish the Shadow

Reapply the shadow on the wall to maintain depth and dimension. This will enhance the realism of the scene.

Add Figures on the Jetty

Include a small, dark carrot shape to represent a couple standing on the jetty. This simple addition adds life and interest to the composition.

PRO TIP

Use a muted tone to soften overly bright areas and create a more cohesive look.

Summary & Key Takeaways

Embark on your painting journey by establishing a strong foundation with a light sketch using a thin wash of blue and red. Position key elements like the boat shed using the rule of thirds to create a balanced composition. As you progress, focus on blocking in dark and light values, ensuring that reflections in water are slightly adjusted to maintain realism.

Introduce vibrant colors with care, tempering them with complementary tones to avoid overpowering the scene. Pay close attention to perspective and detail, ensuring lines slope towards the horizon to maintain depth. Use mid values and reflections to unify the painting, and create an atmospheric background with soft transitions between elements.

In the final stages, focus on enhancing contrast and adding texture to bring your painting to life. Use loose, expressive strokes for natural elements, and soften edges to create a cohesive look. Add final touches like figures to inject life into the scene, and use contrast strategically to guide the viewer's eye to focal points.

LESSON POINTS TO REMEMBER

- Use a thin wash for initial sketches to keep lines adjustable.
- Reflections in water show lights slightly darker and darks slightly lighter.
- Temper vibrant colors with a touch of blue and white.
- Ensure all lines slope slightly down towards the horizon for correct perspective.
- Use a simple primary palette to simplify color choices.
- Use loose, calligraphic strokes for branches to keep the painting lively.
- Avoid painting parallel lines at equal distances for natural variation.
- Use contrast to guide the viewer's eye to focal points in your painting.



"Glenorchy" 11 x 11" Oil on Canvas 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.

'Glenorchy Boat Shed' 12x12" Oil on Paper by Ross G.



'Glenorchy Boat Shed' 12x12" Oil on Paper by Ross G.

Design

Ross you've made this one your own and its bold design reminds me of the first workshop piece you did of 'First Snow' a year ago. I thought the other sketches you did were great too but I do always enjoy a painter making something from the lesson that is uniquely theirs and you've done that well. There are three elements of the design I find a bit irksome, the first being the uniformity of the lines of the mountains and the tree. Nature doesn't ever copy herself exactly - she's too original for that and you are too. You did the same with the boats. Always look for opportunities for variation. The door and window are too light and spoil the illusion of space, flattening the house as does the dark line that seems to be drawing itself around the house.

Colour

The colour in all your lights are great but the colourlessness of the grays in your darks is a bit concerning for me because I feel like it's missing out on the opportunity to add cool/warm variety with some blues and mauves and darker versions of local colours. It looks like you've used black for the grays which is fine, I mean, Zorn managed it beautifully but he very rarely used just pure black and white for grays. If it was me, more colour in those grays, up to you though.

Brushwork

Love your impasto brushwork Ross and all the textural variety you've explored with that - nice to see someone not worrying about the price of paint!

Realism

You seem to favour big shapes, strong lighting, a touch of mystery and heavy impasto painting. These are some of your strengths at the moment and it's great to see you sticking to your guns and applying the learning from the workshop into your own interpretation. Just a small note about the shadows on the house - you've got two different sorts of shadows. The tree is casting a hard and a soft shadow which is fine because trees can do that, but the roof is casting a soft shadow on the wall which indicates diffused lighting, in which case the tree should not be casting a hard shadow, but the easier way is to harden the shadow from the roof so that you have a consistent light source. A bold piece Ross, well done.

'Glenorchy Landscape' 15.7 x 11.8' Oil on Canvas by Idan Solomon



'Glenorchy Landscape' 15.7 x 11.8' Oil on Canvas by Idan Solomon

Design

Interesting to see the wider view of this scene painted Idan because a lot of people went for the closer shot so good on you for tackling all that detail. I think the overall design of this is good and well balanced but the muddy looking foreground seems quite plain and mostly empty which is detracting from the whole rather than adding to it. The colour banding you did there is a step forward and If it were mine I'd be tempted to add more interest and structure with a large cast shadow across the foreground that would drive the eye deeper into the painting.

Colour

It's a very subtle and soft colour scheme you've put together here Idan which is commendable because it is hard to make a painting where no one colour jumps out and says 'hey look at me!'. It takes a lot of control to do this while keeping your values in check as well as you have done it. Your next challenge is to add more variety into your large colour areas and a touch more vibrant colour in your centre of interest.

Brushwork

It's good to see the contrast you've made between the smooth sky, water and the textured landscape but I'd like to challenge you to make more contrast in brushwork within each area, along with variety in colour as I've mentioned. Notice how all your brushwork is very similar in the landscape. Using a larger brush to begin with can help you steer away from textural monotony.

Realism

Because of the hard work you've put into this painting it rates quite highly in terms of realism, so, well done there. I would encourage you to challenge yourself to try for more drama in your next painting - something I was challenged with early on and continue to aspire to. Happy painting!

'Glenorchy 3 Color 2' 11x15" Watercolor by Jane Scott



'Glenorchy 3 Color 2' 11x15" Watercolor by Jane Scott

Design

Jane this is a lovely piece of work halfway between abstraction and realism. It doesn't dictate its terms to the viewer but gently suggests they enter the scene you've created - it's got spoonfuls of mystery which is something I aspire to in my own work but have never managed it as well as you have here. The design is nicely done with organic groupings and spacings rather than equally measured shapes and gaps which so often stymie a painting at the offset.

Colour

A fairly quiet colour scheme with nothing out of place and just enough punch to make it exciting. More colour difference between foreground and background may have helped define the space better, for instance using more blue in the foreground.

Brushwork

Nice to see you letting the watercolour do its own thing with plenty of wet in wet and the occasional crisp edge. You're really onto something here Jane. Personally I would make the drawing a little more exact where it is evident and make the big washes even looser, just to push the idea further.

Realism

I can't stop smiling about this one! It just makes me want to look and look and look, to visit this place and see the image resolve slowly into reality. Beautifully done.

'Glenorchy' Oil on Canvas 30x60cm by Susan Skuse



'Glenorchy' Oil on Canvas 30x60cm by Susan Skuse

Design

Great vertical design Susan - lovely to see you making a statement out of the rhythm of the mountains and how that contrasts with the more staccato tree forms. I can just about hear the song this would make if you slipped it into the orchestra's sheet music.

Colour

Gotta love orange and blue - my favorite complementary colour scheme. You've got some really intense colour in there which is great to see but you've tempered it with some grays so overall it's not garish, but that's a very subjective term anyway. I like your idea of introducing the orange into the mountains but parts of it are a little over-saturated for that area which makes them seem out of place. Looks like you struggled too with achieving the wispy look of the foliage - very difficult to achieve that feathering, so the tree on the left seems to be made of orange cotton balls which is a shame. Have you tried dry brush with a bigger brush? Maybe worth a go.

Brushwork

As usual for you it's a nice variety of brushwork but the drawing of some of the finer lines could have been better - looking a bit clumsy there in the trees and the water's wind lines and the dark reflections of the tree branches seem to be standing out to me too, probably because they're relatively too dark.

Realism

I 'm not sure what's happening with the river bank under the right hand tree. If it's long grasses or bushes in shadow I would add a few darker accents to add structure there or just throw a bit of light on it. The subtlety you employed at the top of the mountain is very graceful. There are a few things marring the illusion of realism like the tree and some of the drawing as mentioned but overall it's a very appealing piece to be proud of.