



Pounders

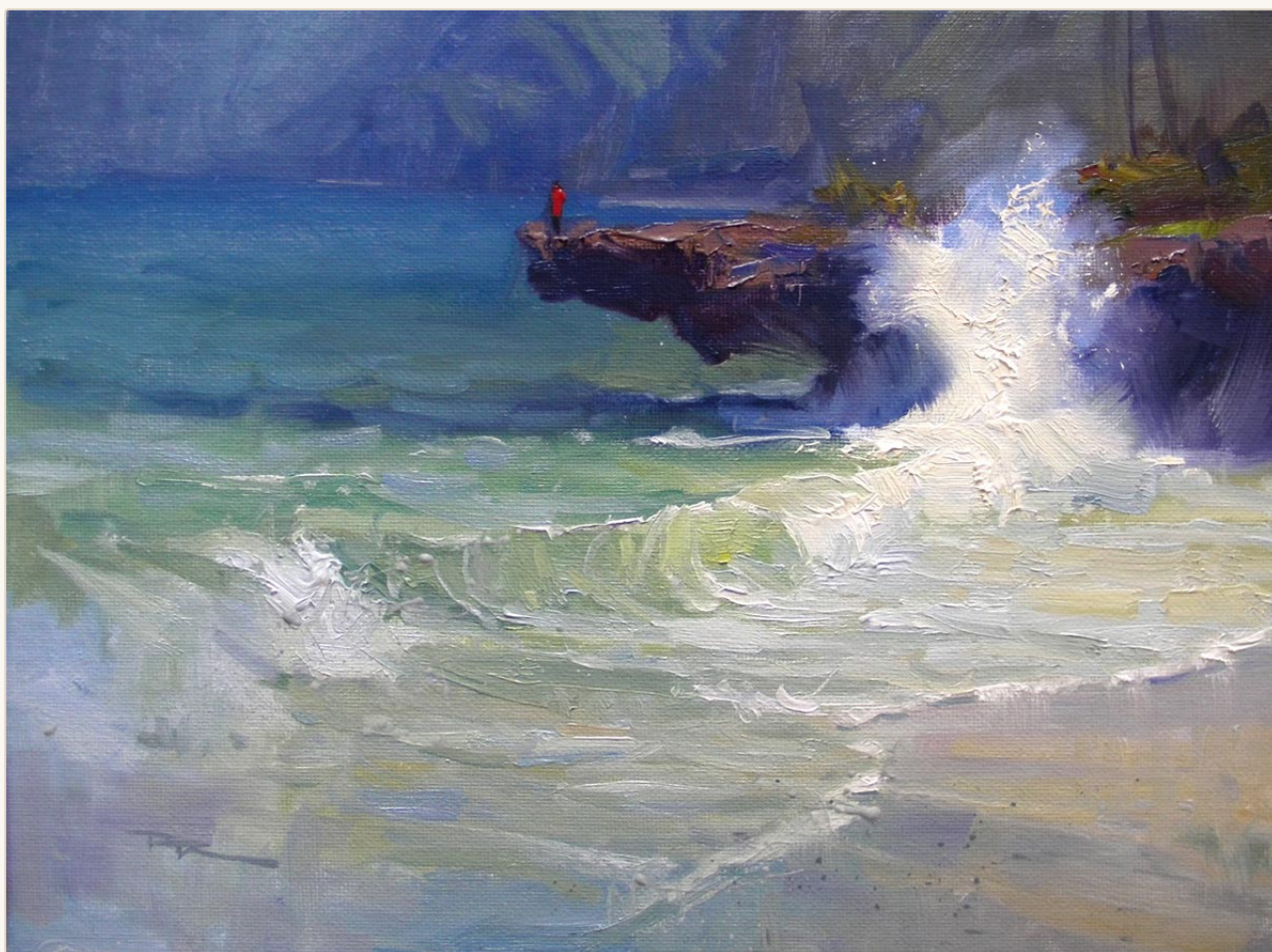
A step-by-step painting guide by Richard Robinson

Watch the full lesson at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/102-Pounders>

MY PAINTING CLUB

Introduction

Welcome to this chapter, where we'll dive into the art of painting waves with expressive brushwork. This lesson is set at a beach affectionately known as Pounders, named for the powerful waves that crash against its shore. The scene is perfect for capturing the dynamic energy of the ocean, with its dramatic lava rock outcroppings that send up spectacular bursts of white spray. As we explore this subject, you'll learn how to infuse your painting with beautiful, exciting brushwork. I believe that effective brushwork should have variety, unity, purpose, and vigor. Up close, it should present an intriguing abstract collection of marks, which then resolves into a coherent scene as you step back. In this chapter, I'll guide you step by step, or you can use the resource photo to create something uniquely your own. Keep your eyes open and watch the waves closely, focusing on the split second when they reach the perfect position. Together, we'll capture the colors and forms of the waves, making this a rewarding and enriching painting experience.



"Pounders II" 11x14" 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.



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

- 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 Challenges of painting waves outdoors



Observe the Waves

Keep your eyes open and watch the waves closely. Look for a wave in a specific position that suits your painting.

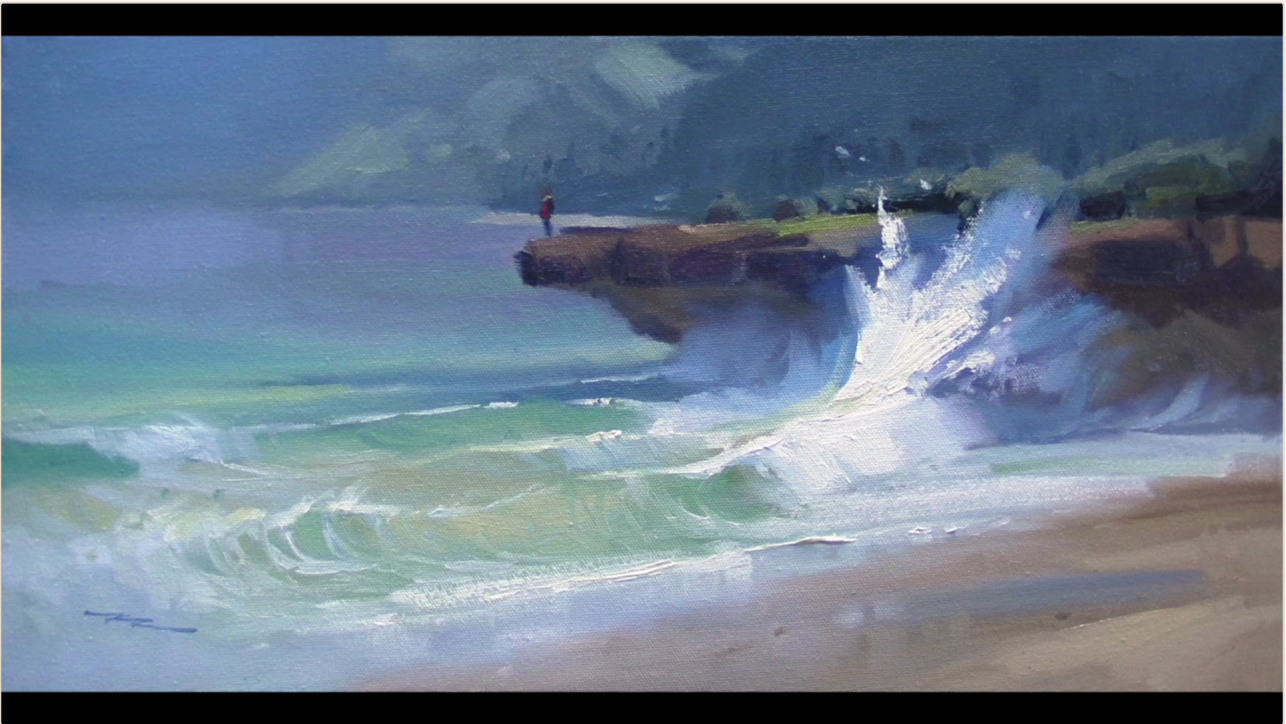
Capture the Moment

Focus on the split second when the wave reaches the desired position. Capture the colors and form of the wave at that moment.

PRO TIP

Observe the waves carefully to capture their colors and form at the right moment.

2 Using resources for painting



Utilize Online Resources

Access the online resource page to view the video and photos taken on site. These resources will help you understand the scene better and guide your painting process.

PRO TIP

Use available photos and videos as references to capture complex scenes like waves in motion.

3 Analyzing wave structure



Analyze Wave Structure

Pause the video of the waves and observe each frame carefully. Move through the video half a second at a time to understand the structure of the wave. Note the distance between waves, their size, and how they recede into the distance.

PRO TIP

Observe wave spacing and size to capture realistic wave dynamics in your painting.

4 Expressive brushwork challenge



Embrace Expressive Brushwork

Focus on using a variety of expressive brushwork techniques in your painting. Aim to create a dynamic contrast between smooth and textured areas, especially in elements like waves and splashes.

Create Textured Splashes

Apply textured brushwork to the splash areas of your painting. This adds a visceral quality and brings life to the scene, enhancing the movement and energy of the waves.

PRO TIP

Experiment with different brushwork techniques to achieve a dynamic contrast between smooth and textured areas in your painting.

5 Initial drawing and composition



Establish the Horizon Line

Draw the horizon line as a foundational element for your composition. This helps to set the scene and organize the major shapes within your painting.

Block in Major Shapes

Sketch the major shapes of the surf and rocks. Focus on capturing the essence of the surf's movement and the placement of shadows.

Define the Surf's Interaction with Rocks

Ensure the surf breaks the line of the rock by wiping out part of the line. This interaction adds dynamic movement to your composition.

Draw the Wave's Center of Interest

Create a clean section of the wave in the middle to serve as a focal point. Add foam on either side, ensuring the wave is drawn in perspective, thinning as it moves down the beach.

Plan the Light and Shadow

Visualize the painting with a strong concept: dark across the top, light across the bottom. The splash should connect these areas, enhancing the composition's readability from a distance.

PRO TIP

Draw the wave in perspective to create depth and guide the viewer's eye through the painting.

6 Mixing and modifying colors



Mix the Darkest Darks

Start by mixing your darkest colors together. Modify this mixture with a little bit of yellow ochre to achieve a rich, deep tone. Add a touch of white to ensure the color isn't pure black.

Modify for Shadow Areas

Add more blue and a little more white to your dark mixture to create a color suitable for shadow areas in the water. Adjusting the color in this way helps to capture the subtle variations in shadows.

Efficient Color Modification

Use your initial color mixture throughout the painting wherever applicable. Look for areas requiring similar tones and modify the original color slightly to fit those areas. This approach speeds up the painting process and maintains color harmony.

PRO TIP

Continuously modify your base color to suit different areas of the painting, enhancing efficiency and cohesion.

7 Expressive brushwork techniques



Express Movement with Brushwork

Use quick flicks upward with your brush to capture the movement of shadowed waves beneath the rock. This technique helps convey the dynamic motion of the water.

Modify Background Colors

As you block in the background, avoid using a single color. Gradually add more yellow ochre and white as you move to the right. This variation adds interest and helps the background recede into the blues on the left.

Embrace Loose Brushwork

Aim for loose and free brushwork throughout the painting. In areas like the background, work quickly to allow your hand to create expressive and dynamic strokes.

PRO TIP

Use quick flicks with your brush to express movement and energy in your painting.

8 Detailing with brushwork



Consider Your Brush Strokes

Before applying detailed brush strokes, take time to thoughtfully consider each one. Although the brushwork may appear quick and expressive, careful planning ensures precision and impact.

Modify the Water's Color

Regularly adjust the color of the water as you paint. This technique, often referred to as 'bending the color,' adds depth and realism to your painting.

Prepare for Wave Details

Lay the groundwork for the wave by adjusting the background colors. This preparation allows the wave to seamlessly integrate into the scene.

PRO TIP

Regularly modify and adjust colors to add depth and realism to your painting.

9 Foreground color and vibrancy



Prepare the Background

Apply a cool blue-grey to the background area. Feather it out to blend smoothly with the existing background colors.

Lay Down Foreground Washes

Use a clean brush to apply very thin washes of color in the foreground. Choose colors that are slightly more vibrant than the final result to create a base for the water.

Balance Vibrancy

Select a gray-green color for the water area. This will help the water sit flat and allow the waves in front to stand out when more vibrant colors are added later.

PRO TIP

Use a gray-green color to ensure the water sits flat and enhances the vibrancy of the waves.

10 Creating focus with color contrast



Create Warm Foreground Colors

Mix a warmer and slightly lighter color for the foreground, incorporating the warm sand tones into the thin water. This will help establish depth and a natural transition from foreground to background.

Use Light Blue Gray for Foam

Apply a light blue gray to the foam in the foreground. This color choice suggests that the surf is in a soft light shadow, enhancing the contrast with the brighter wave splash.

Enhance Focus with Contrast

Ensure the wave splash on the right stands out by keeping the foam in the foreground subdued. This contrast prevents the eye from being distracted by competing bright areas, maintaining a clear focal point.

PRO TIP

Use color contrast to guide the viewer's eye to the intended focal point by keeping surrounding areas more subdued.

11 Shadow and light on waves



Create Shadow on the Wave

Use a very light cool gray to paint the shadow areas of the wave. This will help establish the three-dimensionality of the wave.

Add Light to the Wave

Apply a very thick light warm color, almost white, over the shadow areas. This contrast will enhance the wave's form and highlight the light source.

Paint the Rock with Texture

Mix a brown color without thoroughly blending it on the palette. Push the paintbrush into the pile and apply the paint thickly. The dry mixture, without any painting medium, will create a textured look, enhancing the impression of rocks.

PRO TIP

Use a dry, thick paint mixture to create texture and interest in rock surfaces.

12 Texturing rocks and foliage



Texture Rocks and Foliage

Apply thick paint to create the impression of rocks and foliage. Use the same technique for both elements to maintain consistency.

Soften Edges

Instead of using your finger, use a brush to soften one edge of the paint. This will help integrate the elements smoothly into the painting.

Vary Brush Strokes

Avoid simple brush strokes by breaking one end of the stroke. Twist the brush as you go or soften it with the brush to create more dynamic textures.

Use the Side of the Brush

Utilize the side of the brush to achieve a variety of brushwork effects. This technique adds interest and variation to your painting.

PRO TIP

Twist the brush as you paint to break up simple forms and add texture.

13 Simplifying and softening wave edges



Simplify the Wave

Paint the wave with a clear face, avoiding any foam. This allows you to create a transparent effect, letting the viewer see into the water.

Add a Second Swell

Introduce a subtle swell behind the main wave to suggest depth and movement in the scene.

Soften the Edges

In the corner, soften the wave edges to prevent them from drawing attention. This technique directs the viewer's eye towards the sharper, more defined areas of the painting.

PRO TIP

Soften edges in less important areas to guide the viewer's focus to the main subject.

14 Softening techniques



Soften Edges

Gently soften a few edges in your painting. Use this technique sparingly to avoid overdoing it.

Clean Your Brush

After each softening stroke, clean your brush thoroughly on paper towels. This prevents spreading unwanted colors and keeps your painting clean.

Choose the Right Brush

Use a large, bristly brush for effective softening. This type of brush helps achieve the desired softness without harsh lines.

PRO TIP

Clean your brush after each softening stroke to prevent spreading mud.

15 Highlighting waves with thick paint



Mix Highlight Color

Grab a lot of white paint and mix in a tiny touch of yellow and a little bit of yellow ochre. Blend these colors thoroughly to create a warm, light tone for the wave highlights.

Apply Paint with Brush

Use a big bristly brush and apply the mixed paint to the wave's light areas. Drag and pat the paint across the surface using the side of the brush, allowing the bristles to create texture.

Maintain Clean Brush

After every one or two brush strokes, wipe the brush clean to prevent muddying the colors. Refill the brush with fresh paint before continuing to apply highlights.

Create Splattered Effect

Press a palette knife into the paint and then press it straight down onto the canvas. This technique will create random blobs, adding a natural, splattered look to the wave highlights.

PRO TIP

Wipe the brush clean frequently to maintain bright, clean highlights.

16 Creating random patterns



Create Random Patterns

Mix a very liquid paint by adding a lot of medium to your chosen color. Use your brush to flick small splatters onto the canvas where you want them. This technique helps achieve a random effect, avoiding overly simplified or symbolic patterns.

PRO TIP

Use a liquid paint mixture to easily flick splatters for a random pattern effect.

17 Foreground details and reflections



Add Wet Sand

Introduce wet sand across the foreground to enhance the design of the painting. This addition will improve the overall composition and visual appeal.

Paint Occlusion Shadows

Add tiny occlusion shadows underneath the wave forms. These shadows will provide depth and a three-dimensional effect to the scene.

Create Light Reflections

Incorporate lighter reflections into the water beneath the waves. This represents the very light foam being reflected in the flattening water, adding realism.

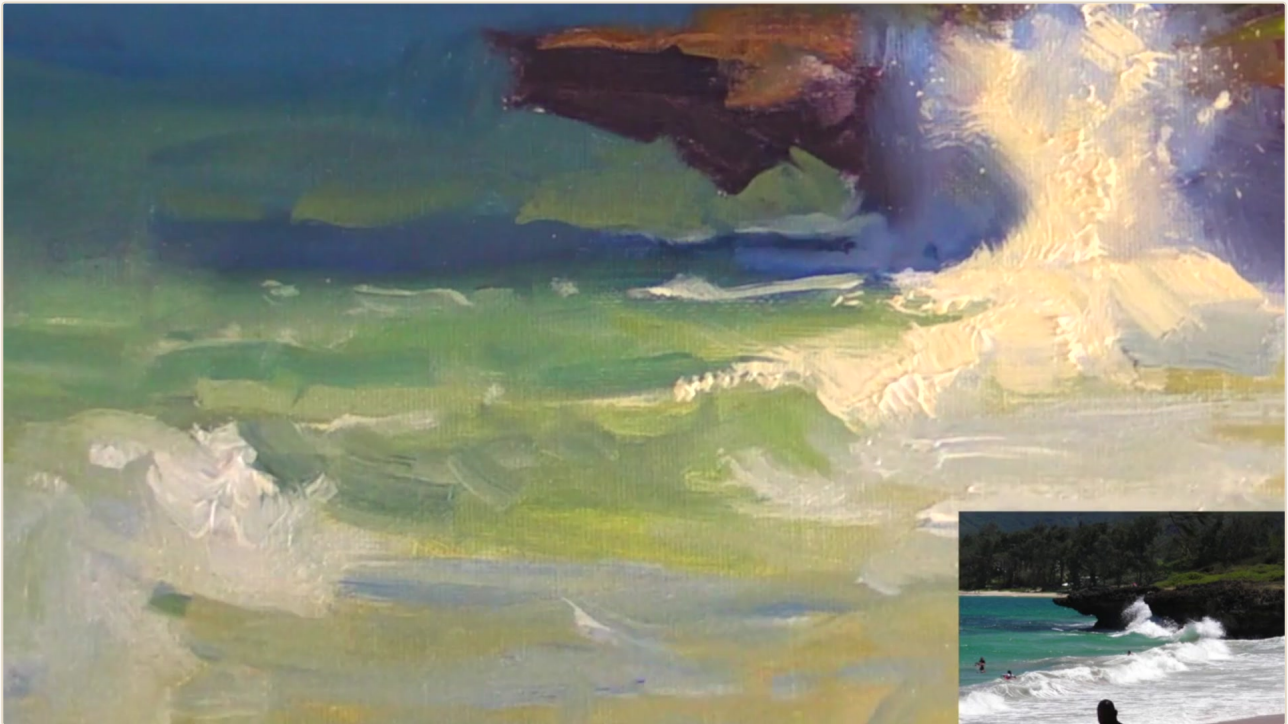
Depict Foam Dragging

Paint foam being dragged back along the water surface into the wave. Lighten and texture this foam to ensure it is noticeable but not overly dominant.

PRO TIP

Use occlusion shadows to add depth and a three-dimensional effect to your wave forms.

18 Detailing foam and wave form



Use a Script Liner Brush

Switch to a very long script liner or rigger brush. This will allow you to paint beautiful, long lines of foam on the surface. Experiment with the thickness and see what the brush can achieve.

Add Fine Details with a Sable Brush

Change to a smaller, finer sable brush for detailed work. Focus on the foam near the center of interest, making it very light to capture sunlight. Adjust the tone to slightly greyer and cooler as it moves away from the light.

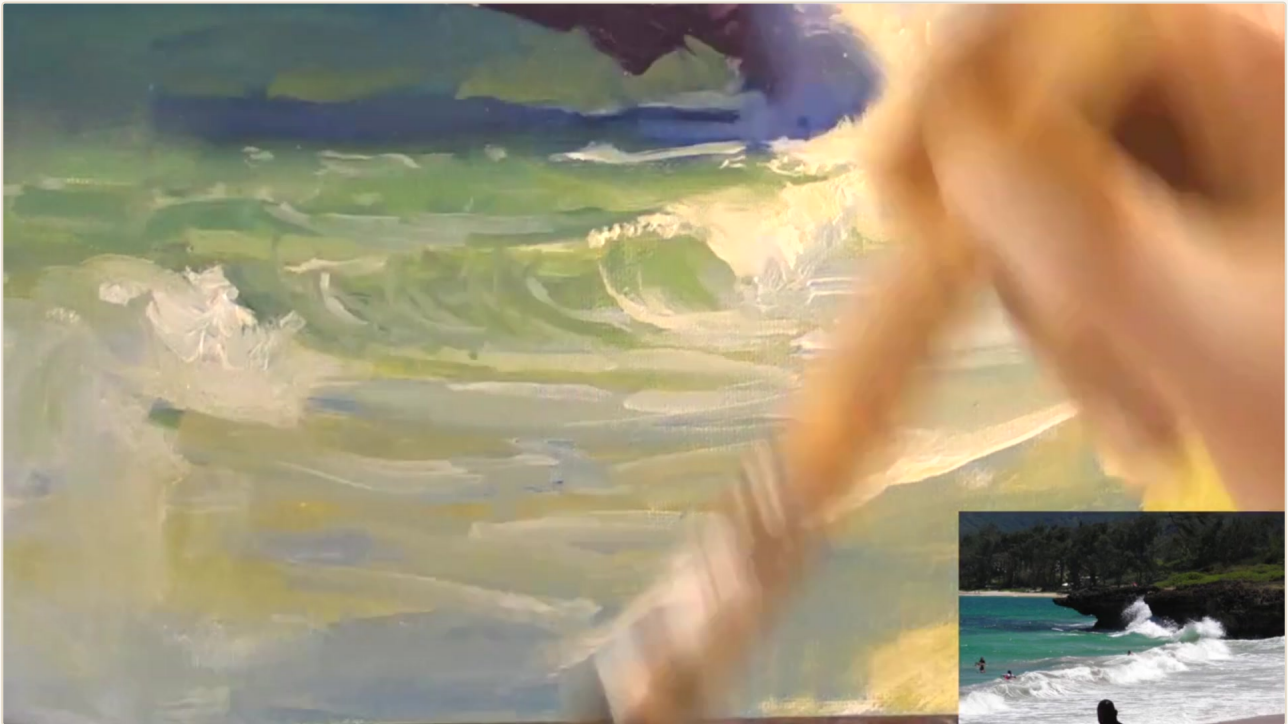
Follow the Wave Form

Ensure that the foam follows the form of the wave. This will help to give shape to the curl and enhance the realism of your painting.

PRO TIP

Use a script liner brush for long, flowing lines of foam to capture the movement of the water.

19 Adjusting colors and textures



Shape the Wave Curl

Follow the form of the wave to give shape to the curl. Use a large brush to lay in a line of foam at the front very thickly. The brush size allows for a fine line, depending on how you use it.

Warm the Base

Brush down the base with a slightly warmer grey than what's already there. This adds depth and warmth to the area.

Highlight the Wet Sand

Apply a lighter and warmer grey over the base to simulate sunlight on the wet sand. This creates a natural glow and enhances the realism.

Adjust Rock Color

Cool down the brown on the rocks if it appears too brown. Mix a cooler tone and apply it with a palette knife to achieve a chunky rock texture.

PRO TIP

Use a large brush to create fine lines by adjusting your technique.

20 Refining wave colors



Create Reflections in Wet Sand

Drag some of the light paint downwards to create the appearance of reflections in the wet sand. This will add depth and realism to your painting.

Strengthen Wave Colors

Block out any unwanted areas and strengthen the color in the wave. Focus on making the base of the wave slightly darker, as the water is thicker there, enhancing the wave's form.

PRO TIP

Darken the base of the wave to show the thickness of the water.

21 Adjusting foam lines



Enhance Foam Line Curvature

Observe the foam lines at the front of your wave painting. If they appear too straight or uniform, adjust them to be more curvy. This simple change adds variation and interest to the foreground, making the scene more dynamic.

PRO TIP

Curvier foam lines add more interest and variation to the foreground of a wave painting.

22 Final details with palette knife



Create Impasto Lines

Use the very fine edge of the palette knife to add an impasto line. This technique creates a texture that is difficult to achieve with other tools.

Add Shadows for Dimension

Switch to a teeny tiny brush to paint small shadows under the lines of foam. This will enhance the dimensionality of the painting.

PRO TIP

Use the fine edge of the palette knife for unique impasto textures.

23 Final touches and signing



Enhance the Foreground

Add a few palm trees to the scene to create depth and interest. Include a hint of a beach in the distance to suggest a more expansive landscape. Use a slightly blue-gray splatter in the foreground to add texture and visual intrigue.

Soften the Details

Use a soft brush to gently soften some of the splattered areas. This will create a more cohesive and natural look, blending the elements smoothly.

Add Water Splash

Include a splash effect where two sheets of water meet. This adds dynamic movement and realism to the water elements in your painting.

Sign Your Painting

Finish your artwork by signing it. This personal touch marks the completion of your painting and adds authenticity.

PRO TIP

Use a soft brush to gently soften splattered areas for a more cohesive look.

Summary & Key Takeaways

Embark on your painting journey by observing the dynamic beauty of waves. Capture the fleeting moment when a wave reaches its peak, using online resources to guide your understanding of the scene. Analyze the structure and spacing of the waves to create a realistic depiction, and employ expressive brushwork to convey the energy and movement of the ocean.

Begin your composition by sketching the horizon and major shapes, ensuring the surf interacts dynamically with the rocks. Mix and modify your colors to maintain harmony and efficiency throughout the painting. Use a variety of brushwork techniques to add texture and interest, especially in areas like the splash and the rocks.

As you refine your painting, focus on creating depth and contrast through careful color choices and softening techniques. Highlight the waves with thick, textured paint, and add random patterns for a natural effect. Pay attention to the details in the foreground, such as reflections and foam, to enhance the realism and visual appeal of your scene. Remember to adjust colors and textures to capture the essence of light and shadow on the waves.

LESSON POINTS TO REMEMBER

- Observe the waves closely to capture their colors and form at the right moment.
- Use photos and videos as references to capture complex scenes like waves in motion.
- Experiment with different brushwork techniques to achieve dynamic contrast.
- Draw the wave in perspective to create depth and guide the viewer's eye.
- Continuously modify your base color to enhance efficiency and cohesion.
- Use quick flicks with your brush to express movement and energy.
- Soften edges in less important areas to guide focus to the main subject.
- Wipe the brush clean frequently to maintain bright, clean highlights.



"Pounders II" 11x14" 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.

'Another Day in Paradise' 15x30" Acrylic on Canvas by Jess Paskel



'Another Day in Paradise' 15x30" Acrylic on Canvas by Jess Paskel

Design

Wow this is very dramatic Jess - nice job. The design is very simplified which just puts more emphasis on the beautiful splash which is great. If you cut off 4 or 5 inches on the left I don't know that you would be missing much, so perhaps that's something to consider. Other than that I think the design is pretty solid - even in the background which could have been a weak spot of plain grayness you've introduced plenty of textural interest there and varied your colours - nice.

Colour

You've really played a lot with your warms and cool which is a big part of the appeal of this painting, exemplified by the warm orange on the rocks surrounded by the cool greens of the ocean and mountains. There's also a lot of subtle colour work in the big splash and the shadowed foam in that area which to me is the highlight of this piece - very keenly observed although unfortunately the same can't be said for the straight stripes of foam on the far left which looks clumsy by comparison. The overall colour effect is very effective.

Brushwork

At first I thought the brushwork was a bit finicky but then I saw the actual size of the painting and realised that like Monet's paintings this one would be much more impressive in the flesh. You're showing a good variety of large and small marks and a range of texture but I challenge you to try and include some even larger juicier brushstrokes in your next painting.

Realism

For the most part the realism in this one is really good but I keep wandering what's going on with the overall shape of the wave, that is, why does it slope away from the horizon instead of towards it as linear perspective would suggest? Other than that, all good.

'Pounders 2' 30x40cm Oil on Canvas by Elena Sokolova



'Pounders 2' 30x40cm Oil on Canvas by Elena Sokolova

Design

The fun you've had with this one! It looks great Helena. You've kept the design very similar to mine so I can't suggest anything different there except for leveling out the horizon a bit, but then the whole painting seems tilted slightly to the right so that may just be the photography?

Colour

It's very striking colour with that strong green and intense blues and for the most part those relationships are working okay but in the background the should could have been grayed more (add a touch of orange) to help push that back rather than jumping forward as it is.

Brushwork

I love how much you've pushed your brushwork in this one and there are some parts of it that are just singing now because of that. I particularly love the bottom half of the painting where all the action is happening, the effect of the splattering and the subtle little shadows under the foamlets along the wet sand. Plenty of action and it's all about the waves so that's great work.

Realism

Step back from this one and it looks great but there are a few subtleties you missed which detract from the realism up close. The large sharp brushstrokes in the distant water are spoiling the sense of depth there

and so is the similar treatment of the background. Overall though, very enjoyable to look at - sign it and frame it!

'Pounder, North Shore, Oahu' 11x14" Oil on Canvas by Ish



'Pounder, North Shore, Oahu' 11x14" Oil on Canvas by Ish

Design

Ish, right of the bat I'm enjoying looking at this - it's clear you've been painting for some time and you have a good handle on it. I love the foliage you've added to the top and interesting shadows in the sand and I don't know if you intended this or not but the slanted horizon is adding to the powerful feeling of movement this piece conveys, along with the nicely curved beach, which if a little unrealistic is still very lyrical.

Colour

A beautifully light and airy colour scheme (Monet would approve) but you've also managed to throw in a few intense darks which makes it that little bit punchier. You are interweaving colour throughout the painting which is lovely to see - a visual feast and I can even see some greens in the beach which to most is counter intuitive but works very well here (I've been noticing subtle greens in the white sands here lately too). Nicely done. Those darker dashes of ochre in the waves seem a touch too dark, but that's being pretty picky.

Brushwork

Again a nice collection of brushwork with especially nice use of drybrush in the foam. Some beautifully crisp edges on the rocks there and lovely fluid work in the overhanging foliage. The tree atop the rock could perhaps do with a little more textural variation as it's looking a bit cotton-ballish to me.

Realism

Your drawing, colour, values are all good. Beautiful work - good job.

'Beach Scene' 9x12" Oil on Canvas by Bobbi



'Beach Scene' 9x12" Oil on Canvas by Bobbi

Design

Bobbi this is a commendable painting with a lot going for it. I like how you've divided the space in your design, all except for the beach which is a large plain space that needs breaking up. You've tentatively placed a soft shadow across the foreground but this could be a lot more interesting. Adding the serpentine strip of wet reflective sand between sea and sand could also help with adding interest to this space. I found the way the distant beach lined up with the rocks, although accurate, was troublesome as it stopped the space reading easily so I opted to raise it slightly higher than the rocks in every painting I did there. Beware of objects lining up with things behind them - in nature we have the option to move our viewpoint to see what's going on, but in a painting it remains confusing forever more. You could also have varied the shape of the large mass of your distant trees to add more interest there.

Colour

Your colours in the water are all very good, especially the foamy sandy water on the beach which is always a tricky spot and also been pretty subtle with your greens atop the rock which is nice to see - although you could have blued and lightened the distant trees somewhat to help separate the midground and background space. The brown in the mist is an interesting choice which I think would look better in a sunset scene but doesn't quite fit in this one and begins to look more like smog to me.

Brushwork

It looks like you've had a little bit of fun with the brushwork, but I bet you could have more fun with it. It's always a reach to paint outside our safe zone but I always find it exciting and even if I don't like my finished painting there's always something to take away from it that filters through into future work. I encourage you to push yourself further in this area.

Realism

You've certainly got a good eye for drawing which is the backbone of realism and as I've already mentioned adding more variation in the foreground, variation is also a key to convincing realism but nature has an unlimited budget for variation and we tend to want to simplify things so when you feel that happening it's time to look again and ask yourself what other elements in the scene could be used to add richness to a particular section of the painting. Overall it's a good painting Bobbi and I can see you doing even better on your next one. Good luck!