



Mastering Quick Studies

A step-by-step painting guide by Richard Robinson

Watch the full lesson at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/213-Mastering-Quick-Studies>

MY PAINTING CLUB

Introduction

In this chapter, I invite you to join me on a journey of rediscovery through the art of quick studies, a technique championed by the esteemed John Crump. Whether you're returning to painting after a hiatus or simply looking to infuse your work with fresh energy, quick studies offer a powerful way to reignite your creative fires. We'll explore three inspiring outdoor locations, each offering dynamic lighting and atmosphere to invigorate your senses and challenge your skills. By setting up with small canvases and imposing a strict time limit of 20 to 30 minutes per study, you'll learn to make swift decisions and embrace spontaneity. This approach encourages bold, expressive brushwork and sharpens your ability to capture the essence of a scene. As you progress through multiple sketches, you'll witness your growth, even if the first attempts aren't perfect. The key is to keep moving, allowing new ideas to flow and your artistic voice to strengthen. This chapter is about embracing the joy of painting and the satisfaction of seeing your skills evolve with each stroke.



Boats Sketch at Whangarei



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

- Winsor and Newton, artist's quality oil paints.
- Winsor blue (red shade)
- Venetian red
- Winsor green
- Titanium white
- Cadmium lemon
- Cadmium yellow pale
- Cadmium orange
- Gold ochre
- Permanent rose
- Cadmium red
- Magenta
- Brushes
- Size 12 chisel tip long bristle.
- Only one small brush, usually an ox /sable rigger type brush – size 1 or 2.
- Medium
- Liquin Original
- for painting medium.
- Canvas
- Fredrix Ultrasmooth Canvas
- , a polyflax, triple primed, fairly smooth surfaced canvas.

1 Overcoming Creative Blocks



Set Up Outdoors

Choose an inspiring outdoor location with dynamic lighting and atmosphere. Set up your painting area with a few small canvases. Being outside helps break the monotony of studio work and stimulates creativity.

Establish a Time Limit

Decide on a strict time limit for each sketch, typically 20 to 30 minutes. This urgency encourages quick decision-making and spontaneity in your work.

Focus on Key Elements

Concentrate on mixing colors, applying paint, and capturing light and shade. Aim to express your feelings with bold brush strokes, knowing that time is limited.

Evaluate and Move On

Once the time is up, stop working on the current sketch, regardless of its completion. Start a new one immediately to keep the momentum and allow fresh ideas to emerge.

Reflect on Progress

After completing several sketches, review them to assess your progress. Accept that initial attempts may not be your best, but recognize improvement in later pieces.

PRO TIP

Set a strict time limit for each sketch to encourage quick decision-making and spontaneity.

2 Palette and Color Choices



Choose Your Palette

Select colors that help you avoid creating muddy mixtures. Use colors like Windsor Blue, Venetian Red, Windsor Green, Titanium White, Cadmium Lemon, Cadmium Yellow Pale, Gold Ochre, Cadmium Orange, Permanent Rose, Cadmium Red, and Magenta.

Use High-Quality Paints

Opt for artist-quality paints, such as those from Windsor & Newton. These paints provide pure, consistent colors that enhance your work, whether you are an amateur or a professional.

Adapt Your Palette

While you can use just the primary colors plus white, adapting to a broader palette allows for versatility. This selection can handle various subjects like still lifes, flowers, and landscapes effectively.

PRO TIP

Use artist-quality paints for consistent, vibrant colors that enhance your work.

3 Initial Sketch and Composition



Prepare the Brush

Dip your brush into Liquin before picking up any paint. This lubricates the bristles, allowing the paint to flow more easily and preventing a dry brush from making application difficult.

Sketch the Composition

Begin by sketching the main elements of your scene. Place the rock slightly off-center, noting its reflection and shadow. Add a smaller rock nearby and indicate the surf and waves in the background.

Define the Horizon

Mark the horizon line, keeping it soft to allow for atmospheric perspective. Consider adding a bit of cloud to enhance the scene.

Adjust the Layout

Evaluate the initial sketch and adjust if necessary. Avoid having too much sky by raising the horizon and the main focal point, such as the rock, to create a balanced composition.

PRO TIP

Lubricate your brush with Liquin before picking up paint to ensure smooth application.

4 Painting the Scene



Sketch the Scene

Use a small brush to sketch out the subject. This approach is similar to using a drawing instrument and helps in defining the composition clearly. Focus on capturing the main elements with dark tones using a mix of blue, permanent rose, and a touch of cadmium orange.

Paint the Light and Reflections

Apply a lighter tone to the rock and beach area using a clean brush with liquid medium. Remember that reflections in water are not perfect mirrors; a dark area will appear slightly lighter, and a light area will appear slightly darker. Adjust the tones accordingly to create a realistic reflection.

Add Sky and Clouds

Introduce the sky using a blue tone, but consider adding more character with variations in color or light and shade. Add light clouds by using a brush with a hint of yellow, but be cautious as yellow is a strong color. Soften the horizon to add depth and interest.

Enhance the Water and Sand

Use the mixed blue to start painting the sea, ensuring to keep the colors in a pattern. For the surf, use pure white from a clean part of the palette. Add a touch of blue to the sand to introduce a hint of gray and variation, avoiding a monotonous look.

Refine Details and Avoid Overworking

Introduce subtle variations in the rock's shaded side with permanent rose and cadmium orange. Be cautious not to overwork the painting; sometimes less is more. Soften edges and add small details like hints of light or darks to suggest rocks or glints, but avoid excessive fiddling.

PRO TIP

When painting reflections, remember that a dark area will appear slightly lighter and a light area slightly darker in water.

5 Choosing a New Scene



Select a Scene with Strong Design Features

Choose a scene that offers more than just photo representation. Look for elements that convey abstraction and a strong design sense, transforming the scene into a painting rather than an attempt at extreme realism.

Identify Key Elements

Observe the main features of the scene, such as a stream bed, rocks, coastline, and any islands. Note the surf and the white beach, as well as shadows cast by the landscape. These elements will guide the composition of your painting.

Adjust Composition for Balance

Consider moving elements slightly to create a balanced composition. For example, adjust the size of rocks or the position of an island to ensure the subject fits well within the canvas and doesn't feel constrained.

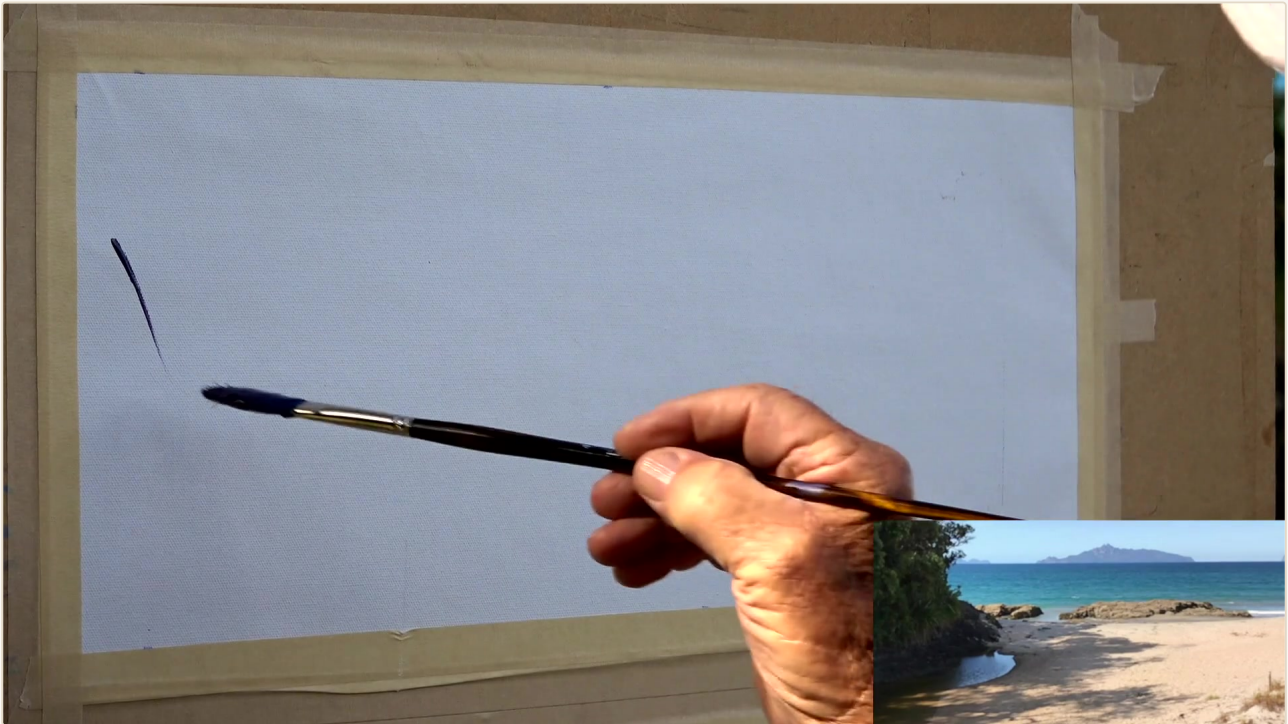
Focus on the Center of Interest

Determine the center of interest, such as the surf around a rock, and ensure the composition draws the viewer's attention to this area. Minimize distractions by adjusting the placement and size of surrounding elements.

PRO TIP

Adjust elements like the horizon and rock sizes to fit the composition without losing the scene's recognizable features.

6 Painting the New Scene



Prepare Your Canvas

Mix a very thin color with lots of liquid. This ensures the paint dries quickly and doesn't interfere with later layers. Brush it out thinly to establish the main areas of color and shadow.

Establish Dark Tones

Apply darks first to give your eye a reference point for the lightness and darkness of tones throughout the painting. Use a mix of Winsor Blue and Permanent Rose, adding a little yellow to reduce purpleness and achieve a pure black.

Add Shadows and Watercolor

Add shadows cast by cliffs and trees, varying the color with a bit of Permanent Rose. Lighten if necessary. Introduce watercolor in the background to enhance the scene.

Maintain Clean Whites

Leave certain areas of the canvas white to represent foam and clean whites. This ensures these areas remain bright and distinct.

Enhance the Sky

Add variety to a flat sky by warming or cooling it slightly and varying the tone. This subtle change adds life to the color without being overpowering.

Shape Islands with Sky Color

Paint the island quickly and adjust its shape using sky color. This method is easier than painting the sky first and then adding the island.

Use Large Brushes for Detail

Work with large brushes like number 12s, which allow for fine lines and detail due to their sharp corners. Reserve smaller brushes for specific details like twigs or signatures.

Create Water Reflections

Leave vertical strokes in water areas to suggest reflections. Avoid mirror-like reflections to prevent them from competing with the main image.

Use Small Brushes Sparingly

Use a small brush like a rig-a-brush for fine details like twigs and branches. Be cautious not to overuse it, as too many details can distract from the overall composition.

PRO TIP

Apply dark tones first to establish a reference point for the painting's tonal range.

7 Final Thoughts and Encouragement



Embrace the Sketch

Focus on the flow of your painting rather than perfection. Allow some elements, like a bit of sky showing through, to remain sketchy. This approach helps keep the process enjoyable and less stressful.

Capture the Scene

Visualize the landscape with its elements like the big rock, hills, and sand patterns. Adjust the composition to avoid repetitive patterns, as nature is often haphazard. This will make your painting feel more natural and dynamic.

Work with Light and Color

As the light changes, adapt your painting to reflect the warm and cool tones. Use warmer darks in the foreground and cooler tones as they recede. This helps create depth and realism in your work.

Avoid Chasing the Light

Resist the urge to constantly adjust your painting to match changing light conditions. Instead, focus on capturing the essence of the scene as you initially perceived it. This prevents overworking and maintains the painting's integrity.

Embrace Imperfection

Remember that the goal is not to create a perfect painting but to get your creative juices flowing. Allow yourself to experiment and be expressive, knowing that the process is more important than the outcome.

PRO TIP

Limit your painting time to encourage spontaneity and prevent overthinking. This helps you stay loose and expressive in your work.

Summary & Key Takeaways

Embark on your painting journey by stepping outside and immersing yourself in the dynamic play of light and atmosphere. Set up with a few small canvases and embrace the challenge of quick studies. By imposing a strict time limit, you encourage spontaneity and quick decision-making, allowing your creativity to flow freely. As you complete each sketch, take a moment to reflect on your progress and appreciate the improvement in your technique.

Select a vibrant palette that avoids muddiness and enhances your work. Begin with a well-lubricated brush to ensure smooth application and sketch the main elements of your scene with confidence. Focus on capturing the essence of your subject with bold strokes and thoughtful color choices. Remember, reflections in water require careful tonal adjustments to achieve a realistic effect.

As you choose new scenes, look for elements that inspire abstraction and strong design. Adjust your composition to highlight the center of interest and maintain balance. Apply dark tones first to establish a tonal reference, and use large brushes to create dynamic strokes. Embrace the natural flow of your painting, allowing for sketchy elements and adapting to changing light. Remember, the goal is to enjoy the process and let your creativity shine.

LESSON POINTS TO REMEMBER

- Set a strict time limit for each sketch to encourage quick decision-making.
- Use artist-quality paints for consistent, vibrant colors.
- Lubricate your brush with Liquin before picking up paint for smooth application.
- Remember that a dark area will appear slightly lighter and a light area slightly darker in water reflections.
- Adjust elements like the horizon and rock sizes to fit the composition.
- Apply dark tones first to establish a reference point for the painting's tonal range.
- Limit your painting time to encourage spontaneity and prevent overthinking.



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