

Rustic Farm Shed

A step-by-step painting guide by Richard Robinson

Watch the full lesson at https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/210-Rustic-Farm-Shed

MY PAINTING CLUB

Introduction

As we embark on this painting journey together, we'll dive into capturing the charm of a rustic farm shed. This scene is a delightful subject, offering a wonderful blend of textures and colors that make it both challenging and rewarding to paint. In this chapter, I'll guide you step by step through the process, sharing the keys to achieving a fresh, painterly look without sacrificing realism. We'll explore the use of flat, long-bristle brushes, which are perfect for covering large areas and creating gestural marks. These brushes hold more paint, allowing for smooth application, while smaller brushes like a small dagger will help us tackle the intricate details. I love how these tools enable us to express the character of the scene with fluidity and precision. This lesson is a pre-recorded livestream, complete with student questions and answers, making it an engaging and interactive experience. So, grab your favorite beverage and a cookie, and let's enjoy the experience of a live workshop together!



Rustic Farm Shed 10x12" Oil on Canvas



REFERENCE PHOTO

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
- Ultramarine Blue
- Alizarine Crimson
- Cadmium Red
- 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
- Atelier Interactive Acrylics
- Phthalo Blue
- Ultramarine Blue
- Bordeaux / Alizarine Crimson
- Napthol Red Light / Cadmium Red Light
- Yellow Ochre
- Arylamide Yellow Light / Cadmium Yellow Light

- Titanium White
- 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
- Stay-wet palette
- Water spray bottle

1 Brushes and Materials



Select Your Brushes

Choose a range of flat, long-bristle brushes for your painting. The longer bristles hold more paint, allowing you to cover larger areas without frequent trips to the palette. They also enable more gestural and calligraphic marks.

Use Small Brushes for Detail

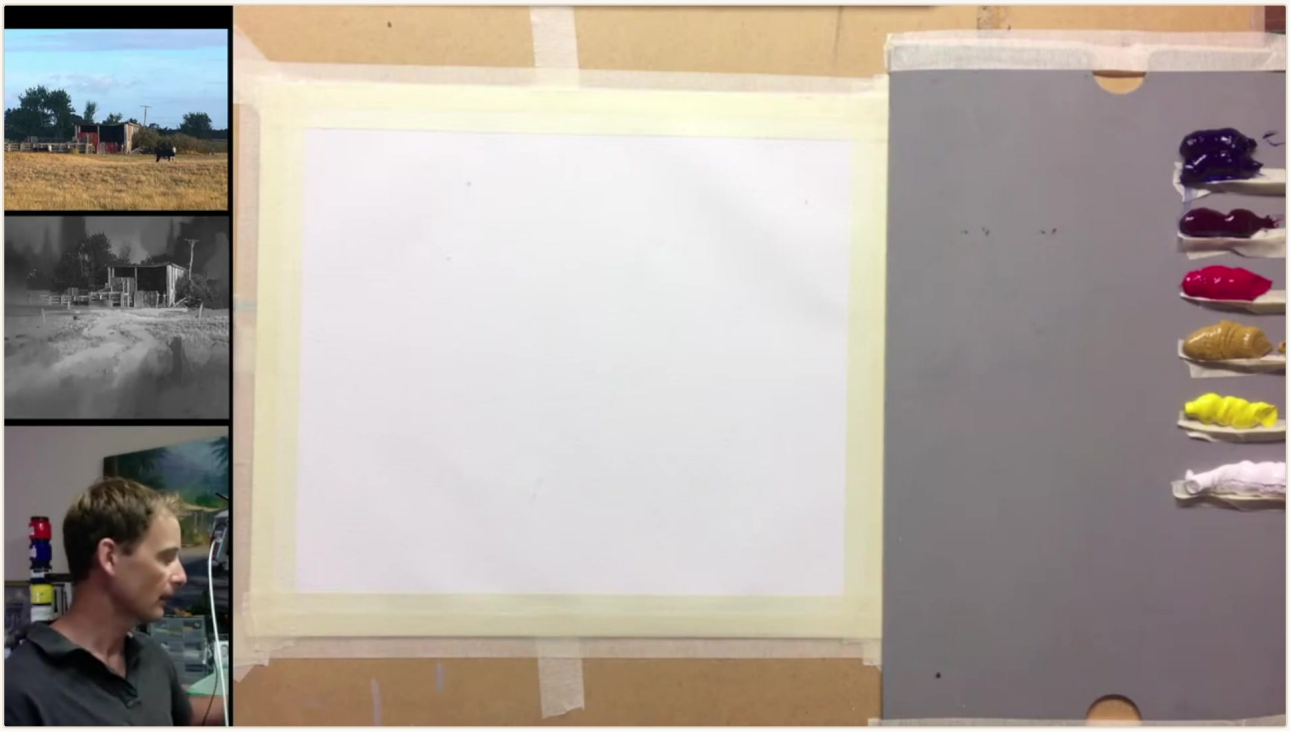
For detailed work, use smaller brushes such as a small dagger. These are ideal for intricate areas in your painting, especially when working on a smaller canvas.

Consider Brush Flexibility

Opt for long-bristle brushes as they bend better and lay paint smoothly on the canvas. Short-bristle brushes can act like a rake, which is less effective for smooth paint application.

> **PRO TIP**
>
> *Long-bristle brushes are excellent for creating gestural and calligraphic marks.*

2 Canvas and Composition



Prepare Your Brushes and Paints

Use Rosemary and Co brushes for this painting. Set up your palette with ultramarine blue, alizarin crimson, cadmium red, yellow ochre, cadmium yellow, and titanium white. Add some walnut oil to help the paint flow smoothly.

Choose Your Canvas Size

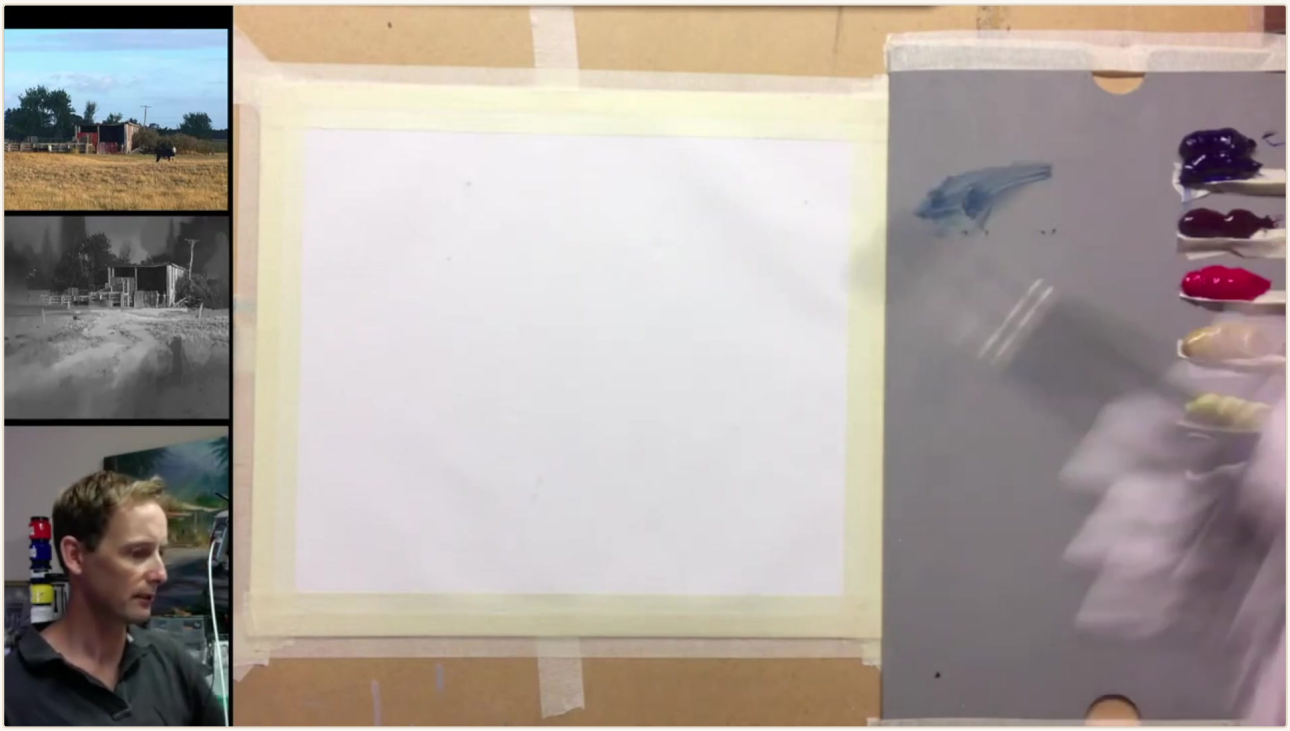
A 12 by 16 canvas is recommended, but you can adjust to a more square format if preferred. Tape off or avoid painting the edges to achieve this effect. The painting's design suits a slightly square format, but extending to the sides is also an option.

Plan Your Composition

Position the shed using the rule of thirds for a balanced composition. Ensure it's not too close to the canvas edge. Consider using the golden mean or other compositional guides to enhance the layout.

> PRO TIP
>
> *Use the rule of thirds to place key elements like the shed for a balanced composition.*

3 Sketching the Shed



Sketch the Shed with a Brush

Begin by sketching the shed directly onto the canvas using a brush. Focus on establishing the baseline where the shed will sit. This subject is simple, so feel confident in sketching directly with the brush.

Block in Major Shapes

Block in the major shapes of the shed and surrounding elements. Adjust the proportions as needed, ensuring that the shed's shape is more oblong than square.

Create Contrast with Dark Background

Paint a dark background to make the lighter parts of the shed stand out. This contrast will draw the viewer's eye to the shed, rather than the edges of the canvas.

> PRO TIP
>
> *Use a dark background to enhance the contrast and focus on the main subject.*

4 Path and Composition



Create a Path

Add a path to your painting to guide the viewer's eye. Position it on either side of the composition to lead towards the center of interest. This element helps create a visual journey through the painting.

> PRO TIP
>
> *Use paths in your painting to direct the viewer's attention towards the center of interest.*

5 Sketching Colors and Brush Size



Choose Your Sketching Color

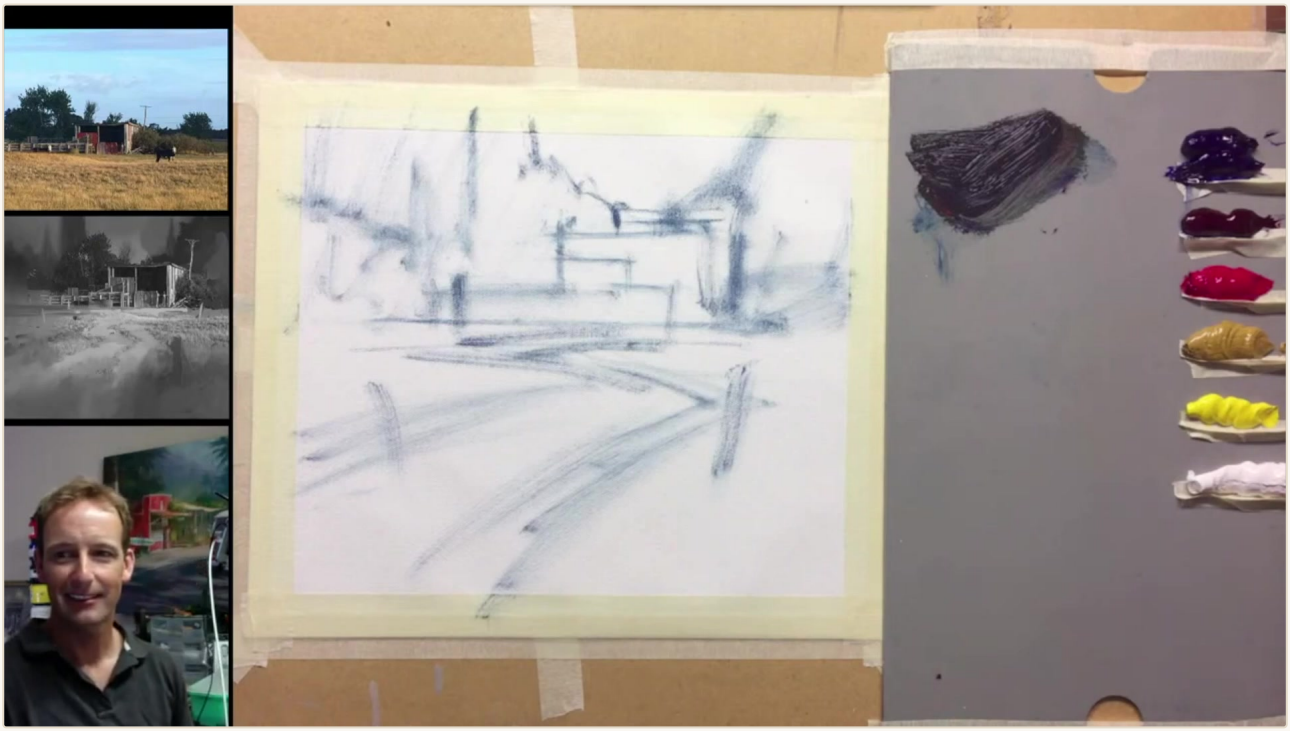
Dip your brush into walnut oil and use ultramarine blue for sketching. Consider mixing in alizarin or red to create a purple tone. Aim for a weak color that won't interfere with your later layers.

Consider Future Layers

Think about the colors you will apply on top of your sketch. Avoid using colors that will clash with your planned palette. For instance, avoid blue if you plan to paint a yellowy golden sunrise.

> PRO TIP
>
> *Use a weak color for sketching to prevent interference with subsequent layers.*

6 Acrylics vs Oils Discussion



Start with Watered Down Acrylics

For the initial sketch, use watered down acrylic paint. This helps in creating a light base to build upon.

Work from Back to Front

When painting with acrylics, begin with the background, then move to the mid-ground, and finally the foreground. This approach helps in layering and achieving depth.

Prepare for Wet-on-Wet Technique

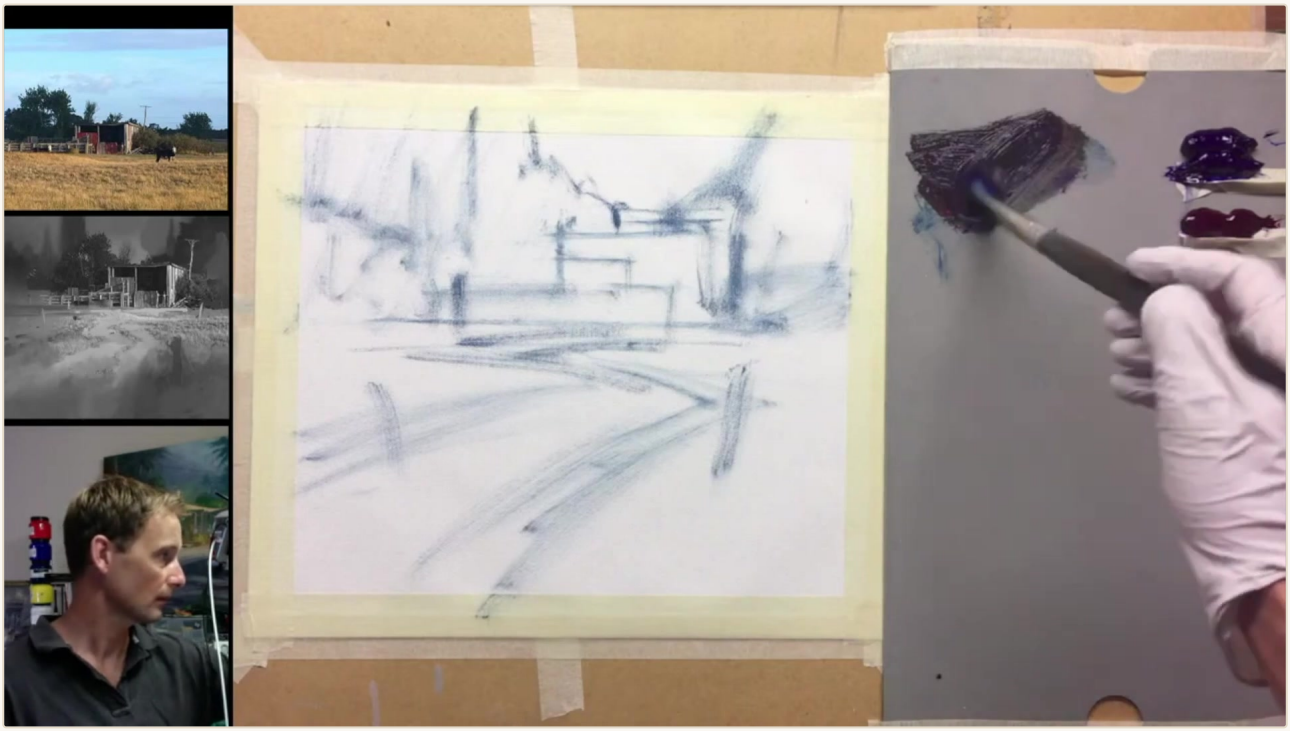
If you want to paint acrylics as if they were oils, ensure you have a stay-wet palette and a spray bottle. Spray your palette and painting every four or five minutes to keep the paint workable and allow for blending.

Paint Quickly

Acrylics dry fast, so work swiftly to create soft edges and blends. This is crucial if you're mimicking oil painting techniques.

> PRO TIP
>
> *Use a stay-wet palette and spray your acrylics regularly to maintain a wet-on-wet painting style.*

7 Acrylic Painting Tips



Use Impasto Acrylics

Apply impasto acrylics throughout your painting. This thicker paint slows the drying process, allowing more time for blending and creating smooth transitions.

> PRO TIP
>
> *Avoid watering down acrylics to maintain a slower drying time for better blending opportunities.*

8 Blocking in Dark Areas



Identify Dark Areas

Squint at the reference photo to identify the large dark areas in the building. This helps simplify the scene and focus on the main dark shapes.

Mix and Thin Paint

Mix your darkest dark color and thin it with walnut oil. Ensure the paint is thick enough to cover the canvas but not so fluid that it becomes transparent.

Apply Dark Paint

Apply the thinned dark paint to the canvas, covering the identified dark areas. Keep the paint layer thin to avoid affecting subsequent layers with dark undertones.

Work from Dark to Light

Continue painting by gradually moving from the darkest areas to slightly lighter darks. Maintain a thin paint consistency as you progress through these initial stages.

> PRO TIP
>
> *Keep the initial dark paint layers thin to prevent them from affecting the colors applied later.*

9 Perspective and Background



Mix Tree Colors

Add yellow ochre to your greenish tree mixture. This will lighten the color slightly and push it towards green, as the original mix had a blue lean. Aim for a greyed-down color suitable for shadows, as shadows lack light and therefore color.

Adjust Color with Blue and White

Add more blue and a little bit of white to your mixture. This adjustment helps refine the color balance for the shadow areas.

Use Walnut Oil

Dip your brush into walnut oil to thin the paint slightly. This helps with smoother application and blending.

Observe Roof Angles

Note the roof angles of the shed, which follow the laws of perspective. The angles slope back towards the horizon and in opposite directions, essential for creating realistic depth.

> PRO TIP
>
> *Use walnut oil to thin your paint for smoother application and blending.*

10 Soft Edges and Background



Paint Soft Background Areas

Paint the large background areas with a soft touch, extending beyond where you want the final edges. Use thin paint to allow for easy adjustments later.

Create Soft Edges

Work the sky back into the painted areas to create soft edges. This technique helps the sharper foreground elements stand out more prominently.

Replicate Visual Focus

Soften the background edges to replicate how the human eye focuses on a single point, leaving other areas less defined. This approach enhances the center of interest in your painting.

> PRO TIP
>
> *Paint background areas slightly larger and thinner to allow for easy adjustments and soft edges.*

11 Brush Strokes and Natural Look



Thinning the Paint

Use walnut oil to thin the paint, allowing for easier movement across the canvas. This technique helps in achieving a smooth application without worrying about the fat over lean principle in a la prima painting.

Cover the Canvas

Focus on covering the canvas with your brush strokes. At this stage, the precision of brush strokes is less important than ensuring the canvas is evenly covered.

Create Distance with Color

Add a little more blue and white to your mix to create a sense of distance in the background. This will help push elements like trees further back in the scene.

Vary Tree Sizes and Spacing

Be mindful of varying the sizes and spacing of trees in your painting. Avoid making them the same size and distance apart, as this can look unnatural. Aim for a more natural, varied appearance.

> PRO TIP
>
> *Use walnut oil to thin the paint for smoother application without worrying about the fat over lean principle.*

12 Painting Outdoors vs Photos



Understanding Color Freedom

Embrace the freedom that grayscale sketches offer for color usage. Without the influence of color in the sketch, you can choose any color for your sky, such as a dull dark green, without being constrained by the original photo.

Avoiding Photo Traps

Remember that a photograph is not nature itself but a representation of it. Resist the urge to replicate the photo exactly, as it may not capture the true essence of the scene.

Benefits of Painting Outdoors

Painting outdoors provides invaluable insights into color and light that photos cannot offer. Outdoor painting allows you to see warmth and light in dark areas that photos often miss.

> PRO TIP
>
> *Use grayscale sketches to liberate your color choices, avoiding the constraints of photo references.*

13 Trusting the Painting Process



Enhance the Sky

Add a little white and yellow to the lower portion of the sky. This will create a subtle glow and enhance the overall atmosphere of your painting.

Trust the Process

Remember that the initial stages of a painting often look rough. This is normal and part of the process. With experience, you'll learn to trust that the painting will improve as you continue to work on it.

> PRO TIP
>
> *Don't be discouraged by the initial appearance of your painting; it's just the first layer and will improve with time.*

14 Foreground Shadows and Light



Add Shadows to the Bush

Mix a soft yellow and apply it to the bush area to indicate shadows. Use very soft edges to keep the shadows subtle and natural-looking. Leave gaps for lighter areas to ensure the highlights remain bright and clear.

Preserve Light Areas

Avoid placing dark paint where you want the lightest highlights in your painting. Apply light paint on a light canvas to achieve the brightest effect. Placing light paint over dark areas can result in muddied colors.

> **PRO TIP**
>
> *Use soft edges for shadows to maintain a natural look and preserve gaps for highlights.*

15 Avoiding Muddy Colors



Understand How Muddy Colors Form

Mixing a cool color with a warm color or a light color with a dark color can create muddy colors. Combining both a cool light with a warm dark results in instant mud or grey. Use this knowledge to avoid unwanted muddy colors.

Use Palette Space Wisely

When mixing paints, use a larger palette if possible to keep colors distinct. If working with a smaller palette, mix similar colors in the same area to save space. Move to a different area of the palette when mixing contrasting colors to prevent muddiness.

> **PRO TIP**
>
> *Mix similar colors in the same area of the palette to save space and prevent muddiness.*

16 Paint Brands and Foreground Colors



Prepare Your Palette and Brushes

Move to a different area of your palette to keep your colors pure and vibrant. Use a clean brush, preferably a number 12, and dip it in walnut oil to start. Wipe your brushes on paper towels to remove excess paint.

Start with the Foreground

Begin painting the foreground by focusing on the dark to light process. Notice the soft shadow across the foreground in your sketch. Think of the color as the golden brown of dried grasses, which adds warmth and depth.

> **PRO TIP**
>
> *Dip your brush in walnut oil and wipe it on paper towels to keep it clean and ready for vibrant colors.*

17 Foreground Color Transition



Create a Dark Base

Mix a dark yellowy brown using walnut oil to thin the paint. This will serve as the base layer for your foreground. Keep the value fairly dark as you will be working over this with different grays.

Mix a Grayed Gold

Combine yellow ochre, a little white, a touch of red, and some blue to create a grayed-down gold. This mix uses the three primaries to achieve a subtle gray or brown tone.

Transition to Lighter Colors

As you move into the light areas, lighten the color by reducing the amount of other primaries in the mix. Brush softly to achieve a smooth transition between the dark and light areas.

Lighten with Care

Add more white to the mix for lighter areas, but be cautious not to go too light too soon. This ensures you have room to add more drama and highlights later in the painting.

> PRO TIP
>
> *Start with a more gray and slightly darker base to allow for more vibrant highlights later.*

18 Creating Light Effects



Create a Spotlight Effect

Transition through three colors to create a nice lighting effect. Ensure the light shines on the shed without affecting the background.

Add Bright Yellow

Mix in a little bright yellow to lighten the area under the spotlight. Be cautious not to blend too much with the dark edges to avoid creating a muddy color.

Maintain Soft Edges

Keep a soft edge where the light meets the grasses. Avoid pressing down into the golden paint to preserve its vibrancy.

> PRO TIP
>
> *Use a soft edge to blend light into grassy areas without muddying the colors.*

19 Foreground Details and Shadows



Add Warmth to the Foreground

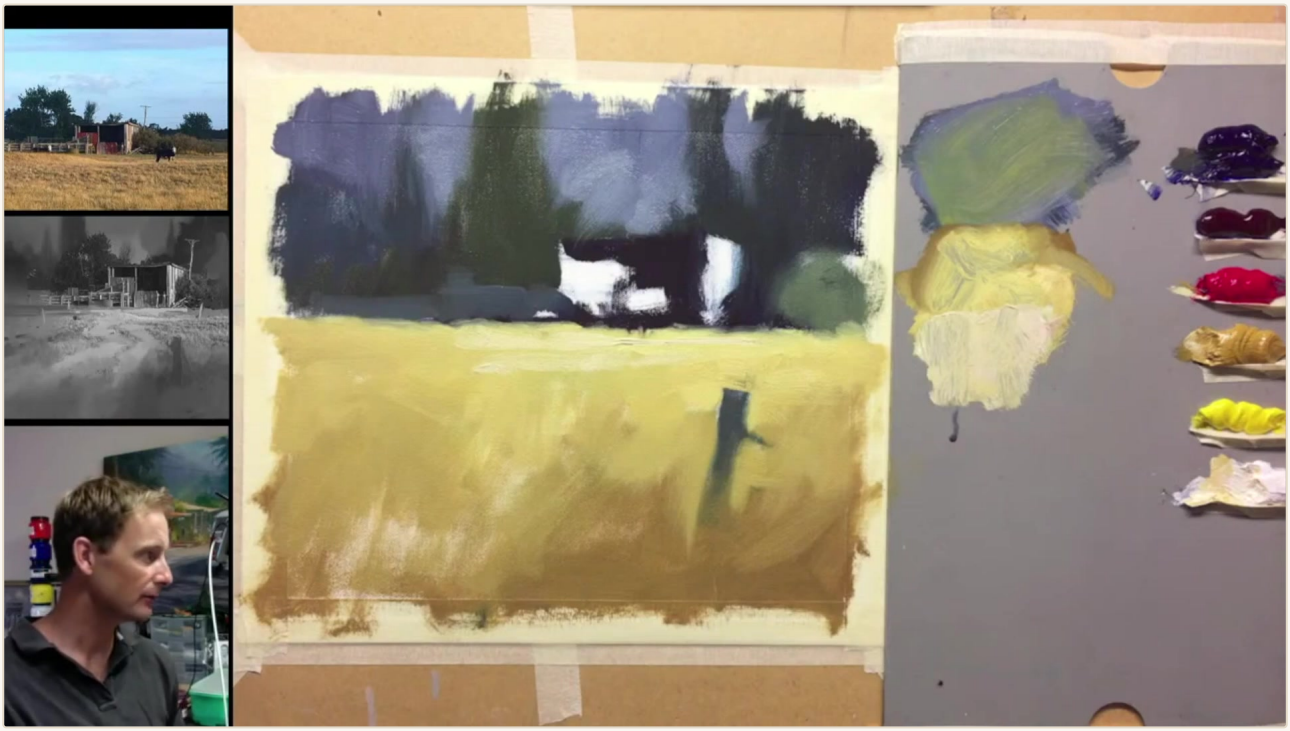
Mix a golden brown color to add a beautiful warmth to the foreground. Apply it close to the existing colors to enhance the overall warmth of the scene.

Create a Grayed Path

Use the same brush to mix a slightly lighter and slightly greyer color. Incorporate the three primaries with white to achieve the desired tone for the path. This will help define the path while maintaining harmony with the surrounding colors.

> PRO TIP
>
> *Use your darkest color, often blue, for dark mixes to add depth and contrast.*

20 Road and Path Details



Mix Colors for the Road

Use a combination of white and blue to create the base color for the road. This mix reflects the influence of the blue or blue-gray sky on the landscape.

Paint the Road

Apply the paint to form a road that blends naturally into the landscape. Avoid creating hard zigzag lines; instead, allow the sections to merge softly with the surrounding grasses and stones.

Add Cast Shadows

Include cast shadows from grasses and other elements across the road to add depth and realism. These shadows should be subtle and integrated into the road's texture.

> PRO TIP
>
> *Avoid painting the road with hard edges; let it blend naturally into the landscape with soft transitions.*

21 Shed Colors and Brush Technique



Mix the Shed Color

Create a rusty red by mixing a base red with a touch of alizarin. Add a small amount of blue, but be cautious not to overpower the red. If needed, adjust with a bit of yellow ochre to achieve the desired rusty tone.

Apply the Color

Using a clean brush, apply the rusty red to the shed area with one confident stroke. This helps maintain the vibrancy of the color without picking up too much of the underlying dark tones.

> **PRO TIP**
>
> *Always clean your brush before applying a new color to avoid creating muddy tones.*

22 Detailing the Shed



Understand Light and Color

Observe how the light affects the planes of the shed. The side facing the light will be brighter and warmer, reflecting the warm sunset. The opposite side will appear darker and cooler.

Avoid Early Detailing

Resist the urge to use a small brush too soon. Using a small brush early can make the painting feel tight and precious, making it difficult to change later.

Maintain a Painterly Style

Stick with larger brushes for as long as possible to keep the painting loose and painterly. This approach allows for more flexibility and expression in your work.

> **PRO TIP**
>
> *Use larger brushes to maintain a loose, painterly style before adding details.*

23 Brush Pressure and Technique



Apply Background Paint

Hold the brush firmly when applying the background paint. Use broad strokes to cover the canvas with thin paint. This allows for a solid base layer without worrying about texture.

Use Light Pressure for Impasto

Switch to a lighter grip when applying thicker paint for mid-values and highlights. Pick up large globs of paint and drag them lightly across the canvas. This technique preserves the texture and prevents the paint from being flattened.

> **PRO TIP**
>
> *Use a firm grip for background layers and a light touch for textured impasto effects.*

24 Foreground Light and Color



Enhance Foreground Light and Color

Observe how the dark background enhances the vibrancy of the colors in the foreground. This contrast helps the light effect stand out prominently. Focus on maintaining this balance as you continue to add details and broken color to the painting.

> **PRO TIP**
>
> *Use a dark background to make the colors in the foreground and light areas pop.*

25 Foreground Shadows and Light Source



Prepare to Add Shadows

Switch to a smaller brush to add shadows in the grasses. Use yellow ochre as the base color and mix in a little red and blue to create a slightly darker tone.

Understand Light Source Effect

Recognize that when light strikes an object, it becomes a light source, emitting its color. In this case, the object emits a golden yellow light, similar to a light bulb.

Apply Shadows Strategically

Use the darker shadow color only in areas where the light source effect is not strong. Avoid using it in the glowing light area to maintain the light source effect, keeping shadows lighter there.

> PRO TIP
>
> *Use darker shadows only in areas where the light source effect is not prominent to maintain the glowing light effect.*

26 Lighting Effects and Background



Create a Dramatic Lighting Effect

Imagine a scene where a storm has just passed, leaving a dark sky. This creates a striking contrast with the brightly lit foreground. Use this effect to make the foreground elements, such as grass, appear vibrant and sparkling with light.

Emphasize Stark Shadows

Paint the shadows in the foreground with a darker tone to reflect the stormy sky in the background. This contrast enhances the drama of the scene, making the lit areas appear even more luminous.

> **PRO TIP**
>
> *Use a dark background to make the foreground elements appear more vibrant and striking.*

27 Brush Technique and Grass Details



Load the Brush

Scoop up the paint onto the brush tip by moving the brush upward into the paint. Adjust the amount of paint on the brush as needed to achieve the desired effect.

Consider Grass Shape and Shadows

Visualize the shape and shadow of each clump of grass. Determine if the grass is tall enough to cast a shadow across the road and plan your brushstrokes accordingly.

Create Smaller Shapes

Break down the grassy area into smaller shapes and clumps. Focus on where the light hits and how it defines each shape to avoid making random marks.

> PRO TIP
>
> *Scoop paint onto the brush tip by moving upward into the paint, especially when using a vertical palette.*

28 Avoiding Patterns in Painting



Consider Light and Shadow

Identify the light source and determine where shadows will fall on your subject. For example, if the light is coming from the right, place the shadow on the left side of objects like a clump of grass.

Avoid Repetitive Patterns

Be cautious not to repeat the same brushstroke or pattern. Repeating identical marks can make your painting look artificial and man-made. Strive for variety in each brushstroke to maintain a natural appearance.

> **PRO TIP**
>
> *Fight the tendency to create patterns by varying each brushstroke.*

29 Bristle vs Synthetic Brushes



Choosing the Right Brush

Use synthetic brushes for detailed work, as they have a finer edge due to their thinner bristles. Opt for these when working on smaller areas where precision is key.

Using Bristle Brushes

Select bristle brushes for larger paintings. Their thicker bristles are ideal for covering large areas, even when adding detail to a big canvas. For large acrylic paintings, bristle brushes are also preferable.

> **PRO TIP**
>
> *Use synthetic brushes for fine details and bristle brushes for larger areas.*

30 Foreground Depth and Brush Strokes



Use Bristle Brushes

Select bristle brushes for this painting to achieve the desired texture and effect in your brushwork.

Add Shadows

Apply a little bit of shadow in the foreground to enhance depth and contrast. This will help ground the elements and create a more realistic scene.

Mind Your Shapes

Ensure that the shapes you paint are larger in the foreground. This will maintain the sense of depth in your painting.

Adjust Brush Strokes for Depth

Make your brush strokes smaller, thinner, and more horizontal as you move towards the background. This technique helps to convey depth and distance in your painting.

> PRO TIP
>
> *Keep brush strokes smaller and more horizontal as they recede into the background to enhance depth.*

31 Foreground Shadows and Light



Mix Shadow Color

Create a neutral dark purplish grey by mixing mainly grey with a hint of purple. This color should lean towards purple due to the warm light casting purplish shadows on the light-colored track.

Adjust Shadow Intensity

Ensure the shadow on the road is lighter than the shadow on the grasses, as the road is lighter. If the shadow appears too strong, lighten it by wiping or adjusting the mix.

> PRO TIP
>
> *Shadows on lighter surfaces should be lighter than those on darker surfaces to maintain realistic lighting.*

32 Understanding Light and Form



Understand Light and Form

Recognize that when starting out, you may focus on replicating what you see without understanding the underlying principles. This is a natural part of the learning process. However, developing an understanding of why things appear as they do allows you to manipulate and alter elements creatively. This knowledge empowers you to direct your painting rather than merely copying reality.

> PRO TIP
>
> *Understanding the reasons behind light and form allows you to creatively alter and direct your painting.*

33 Foreground Shadows and Recession



Lighten and Warm Shadows

Lighten and warm the shadows as they move into the area of light. This creates a sense of depth and recession in your painting.

Use a Big Brush for Fine Marks

Use a large brush to smooth out the paint, then push it to create a ridge at the end. This technique allows you to make very fine marks even with a big brush.

Create Soft Edges

Ensure the edges of the shadows are very soft to maintain an interesting and realistic look in the foreground.

> PRO TIP
>
> *Use a large brush to create fine marks by pushing the paint to form a ridge.*

34 Revisiting Old Photos



Embrace Unique Creations

Understand that each painting is unique, even if you attempt to replicate it. Accept that the original painting is a blend of mistakes and solutions that create its unique texture.

Revisit Old Photos

Explore your old photos or search online for inspiration to create new paintings. Use these references to inspire fresh creations rather than trying to replicate past works.

> PRO TIP
>
> *Revisiting old photos can spark new inspiration and lead to unique creations.*

35 Warm vs Cool Colors



Identify Warm and Cool Colors

Think of warm colors as those resembling fire, such as red, orange, and yellow. Cool colors are reminiscent of water and trees, like blue and green. Use these associations to help remember which colors are warm and which are cool.

Understand Color Temperature

Recognize that color temperature is relative. A color like alizarin crimson is a cool red because it leans towards blue, while other reds can be warmer. Similarly, some blues are warmer, like ultramarine, which leans towards red, while phthalo blue is cooler as it leans towards green.

Mixing Vibrant and Gray Colors

To mix vibrant colors, choose colors that are close together on the color wheel. For gray or muted colors, mix colors that are further apart on the color wheel, such as complementary colors.

> **PRO TIP**
>
> *Use the color wheel to guide your mixing: vibrant colors come from neighbors, grays from opposites.*

36 Mixing Warm Grays



Select the Right Brush

Choose a small synthetic brush with long bristles. This type of brush provides a sharp tip for fine details, perfect for painting the poles and details of the shed.

Mix a Warm Gray

Look at the original colors to guide your mixing. Aim for a warm gray by balancing your colors to capture the rustic tones of the shed.

> PRO TIP
>
> *Use a small synthetic brush with long bristles for fine details.*

37 Detailing the Shed



Mix a Warm Grey

Mix a warm grey by starting with a yellowy color. If it's too warm and lacks grey, add the complement of yellow, which is a combination of purple, blue, and orange. This will help neutralize the warmth and create a balanced grey.

Add Selective Details

Focus on adding just a few key details to the shed. This approach maintains the expressive, painterly style while ensuring the painting looks realistic from a distance. Avoid over-detailing to keep the artwork dynamic and gestural.

> **PRO TIP**
>
> *Use complementary colors to neutralize and adjust the warmth of your grey mix.*

38 Brush Technique and Unique Strokes



Vary Brush Techniques

Experiment with different ways to use your brush to create unique shapes and textures. Consider the pressure of your strokes—lighter or harder—and use the edge of the brush for varied effects. This will help avoid repetitive patterns and add interest to your painting.

> **PRO TIP**
>
> *Use different brush techniques to create unique textures and avoid repetitive patterns.*

39 Shed Lighting and Color



Add Sunlit Red

Mix red with a touch of yellow to create a sunlit effect. Apply this mixture carefully to the side of the shed, aiming for a single stroke to avoid picking up the dark paint underneath.

Highlight with Light Grey

Clean your brush thoroughly before moving on. Mix a very light grey, avoiding pure white, and add a hint of yellow to capture the warm evening light. Use this to highlight areas catching more light.

> PRO TIP
>
> *When painting light details over dark areas, aim for a single stroke to prevent blending with the dark paint.*

40 Painting Sessions and Techniques



Plan Your Painting Sessions

For larger paintings, consider breaking your work into two sessions. Start with an initial block-in using acrylics, which dry quickly, allowing you to work over them with oils the next day.

Avoid Cracking Issues

Use acrylics for the initial layer to prevent cracking problems that can occur if you layer oils over wet oils. This technique ensures a stable base for your oil painting.

> **PRO TIP**
>
> *Begin large paintings with an acrylic block-in to create a stable base for oil layers.*

41 Paint Usage and Medium



Apply Thick Paint for Highlights

Use thick paint for the highlights to make them stand out from the canvas. Apply a very light touch to create a ridge of paint that sits prominently on the surface.

Prepare Ample Paint

Lay out a generous amount of paint to avoid interruptions during your painting session. Having more paint available encourages a thicker application, which can enhance the texture and depth of your work.

> PRO TIP
>
> *Use thick paint for highlights to create a striking contrast and texture on the canvas.*

42 Shed Interior and Reflected Light



Add Warmth to the Shed Interior

Mix a dark warm neutral color to add warmth to the inside of the shed. This will create a sense of reflected light while maintaining the overall darkness. Apply this color to the interior to prevent it from appearing as a black hole and allow some visibility.

> **PRO TIP**
>
> *Use a dark warm neutral to add depth and warmth to shadowed areas.*

43 Paint Storage Tips



Preserve Oil Paints with Wrap

Cover your oil paints with Saran Wrap or Glad Wrap to prevent them from oxidizing. This method helps keep the paint fresh by stopping air contact.

Use Clove Oil

Add a small amount of clove oil to your oil paints. This can help extend the freshness of the paint.

Store Paints in a Freezer

Place your palette with wrapped paints in the freezer. This slows down the drying process, keeping the paints usable for a longer period.

Store Paints in Water

For oil paints, place them in a small dish and cover them with water. This method also helps prevent oxidation.

> PRO TIP
>
> *Cover your oil paints with Saran Wrap to prevent them from oxidizing and keep them fresh.*

44 Brush Storage and Maintenance



Store Brushes Properly

Use a long tub filled with safflower oil to store your brushes. Place a piece of wood inside the tub to support the handles, keeping the bristles submerged in the oil. This prevents the bristles from drying out and eliminates the need for frequent washing.

Clean Brushes After Painting

After finishing your painting session, give your brushes a quick clean. Then, place them in the safflower oil tub. This simple routine helps maintain the brushes' quality and saves time on cleaning.

> **PRO TIP**
>
> *Store brushes in safflower oil to keep bristles from drying out and reduce cleaning time.*

45 Background Details



Enhance Background Depth

Mix some dark tones for the background. Apply these darks to the far side to add interest and depth. This will create a more dynamic and engaging backdrop for your painting.

> PRO TIP
>
> *Use dark tones to add depth and interest to the background.*

46 Shed Pole and Detail



Add the Middle Pole

Use a dagger brush, long rigger, or the edge of a palette knife to paint the middle pole. Mix a neutral warm gray for the pole color. Apply the paint with a thicker consistency to ensure it stands out.

Maintain a Loose Style

Avoid drawing the pole too carefully to maintain the joyful abandon of the painting. Let the pole blend naturally into the scene without focusing on fine detail.

> **PRO TIP**
>
> *Use a thicker paint consistency for the pole to make it stand out.*

47 Acrylic Painting Order



Prepare Your Palette

Use plenty of paint on your palette and keep it wet by spraying with a spray bottle. This helps mimic the oil painting process with acrylics.

Use Retarder Medium

Mix retarder medium into your acrylics to extend drying time, allowing for more blending and manipulation similar to oils.

Paint from Back to Front

If not using techniques to mimic oils, paint from the back of the scene forward. Start with the sky, then move to the trees, and continue forward.

Consider Golden Open Acrylics

Use Golden Open acrylics for their extended open time, which allows for more fluid blending. Note that they are not suitable for impasto techniques.

> **PRO TIP**
>
> *Spray your palette and painting with a spray bottle to keep acrylics workable longer.*

48 Golden Open Acrylics



Understanding Golden Open Acrylics

Golden Open Acrylics are fluid and not suitable for impasto effects. They are ideal for creating smooth, wet-on-wet layers similar to oils.

Layering Techniques

Use Golden Open Acrylics as a base coat to establish the initial layers of your painting. Once the base is dry, apply a thicker impasto acrylic on top to achieve textured effects where desired.

> **PRO TIP**
>
> *Use Golden Open Acrylics for smooth base layers, then switch to impasto acrylics for texture.*

49 Foreground Details and Color Vibration



Add Foreground Details

Introduce a few small and thin shadowy elements in the foreground to add depth and interest. These details should be subtle but help anchor the scene.

Create Color Vibration

Apply a slightly blue-grey tone through and around the foreground elements. This color complements the existing orange tones, creating a visual shimmer and enhancing the vibrancy of the scene.

> PRO TIP
>
> *Use complementary colors like blue and orange to create a visual vibration that adds energy to your painting.*

50 Color Saturation and Editing



Experiment with Color Saturation

Take a photo of your subject and use photo editing software to adjust the saturation. Increase the saturation to see how more vibrant colors would look, or decrease it for a more muted palette. This exercise helps you visualize different color options for your painting.

Choose Your Color Approach

Decide whether you want your painting to be more colorful or more subdued based on the edited photo. Use this as a guide to inform your color choices in your painting, allowing you to break free from the constraints of replicating the photo exactly.

> **PRO TIP**
>
> *Use photo editing to explore different color saturations and guide your painting choices.*

51 Signing and Taping Off



Sign Your Painting

Add your signature to the painting as the final touch. This personal mark completes your artwork and gives it a unique identity.

Remove the Tape

Carefully peel off the tape from the edges of your painting. This reveals a clean white border, giving your artwork a framed appearance.

Check for Visual Balance

Examine your painting for any oddities or imbalances. Use a mirror or flip the image in a camera to see it reversed, which can help identify drawing or compositional issues.

> PRO TIP
>
> *Use a mirror or camera flip to view your painting in reverse and spot any compositional imbalances.*

52 Canvas Priming and Preparation



Check Canvas Priming

Ensure your canvas is adequately primed before starting. Most canvases are double or triple primed when purchased, but if yours is not, apply an additional coat of gesso.

Apply a Wash

Consider applying a light wash of acrylic over the entire canvas. Use a warm color like yellow ochre to add depth and interest to your painting by allowing small gaps to show through.

> PRO TIP
>
> *Use a warm acrylic wash to enhance color interest in your painting.*

53 Fiber Board and Outdoor Painting



Choose the Right Fiberboard Size

Cut a fiberboard to about 24 by 36 inches. This size is ideal for outdoor painting as it provides a large background to protect your eyes from the sun.

Protect Your Eyes While Painting

Use the large fiberboard to shield your eyes from sunlight coming from behind the easel. This helps you see the colors accurately and prevents the scene's light from making everything appear too dark.

> PRO TIP
>
> *A large background board helps your pupils stay open, allowing you to see your painting clearly.*

Summary & Key Takeaways

Embark on your painting journey by selecting the right tools and materials. Choose long-bristle brushes for their ability to hold more paint and create expressive marks, and use smaller brushes for intricate details. Set up your palette with a range of colors and add walnut oil for smooth application. Begin by sketching the rustic farm shed directly onto the canvas, using a dark background to make the lighter parts stand out.

Compose your painting thoughtfully, using the rule of thirds to position key elements like the shed. Introduce a path to guide the viewer's eye and create a visual journey. As you block in the major shapes, maintain a balance between dark and light areas, keeping initial layers thin to avoid interference with subsequent colors. Embrace the freedom of color choice, especially when working from grayscale sketches, to capture the essence of the scene.

As you progress, focus on creating soft edges and natural transitions between colors. Use walnut oil to thin your paint for smoother application and to maintain a wet-on-wet style, especially with acrylics. Trust the process, knowing that the initial rough stages will evolve into a cohesive and vibrant painting. Pay attention to foreground details and shadows, ensuring that colors remain vibrant and harmonious. Avoid muddy colors by mixing similar hues together and keeping your palette organized.

LESSON POINTS TO REMEMBER

- Use long-bristle brushes for gestural marks and smooth paint application.
- Position key elements using the rule of thirds for a balanced composition.
- Use a dark background to enhance contrast and focus on the main subject.
- Apply paths to guide the viewer's eye towards the center of interest.
- Use a weak color for sketching to prevent interference with subsequent layers.
- Keep initial dark paint layers thin to prevent them from affecting later colors.
- Use walnut oil to thin paint for smoother application and blending.
- Start with a more gray and slightly darker base to allow for vibrant highlights later.



Rustic Farm Shed 10x12" Oil on Canvas

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.

Rustic Farm Shed 12x12 Oil on Canvas



Rustic Farm Shed 12x12 Oil on Canvas

Great job, Nancy. Your colours are spot on, and there's some good expressive brushwork in there, especially in the foreground. The old shed is looking suitably ramshackle and there's a nice variety of colour and brushwork in the ground plane, which has the potential to be dull if not treated this way.

Couple of things that would lift the centre of interest even more would be to add more variety in colour and value to the wooden fencing and the red doors.

Ruakaka barn, 12x10” oil on panel



Ruakaka barn, 12x10” oil on panel

Nicely done, Mark! Lots of interest in here with punchy colour and big textured areas contrasting the finer details. One word of advice: keep working on making a mark (Mark) and leaving it, rather than overworking it and obscuring it.

Rustic Shed 8 x 10 Oil on Canvas. My personal challenge was to complete this in one hour!



Rustic Shed 8 x 10 Oil on Canvas. My personal challenge was to complete this in one hour!

Great idea, Louise, giving yourself an hour to complete this painting. That shows in the expressive brushwork and bold colour. I like the effect you've achieved in the foreground by softening the brushwork there - that pushes your eye to the other areas that are more in focus with sharper edges.

I've got three tips for you: 1. Add some colour variety into the ground plane with grey browns. 2. Avoid using purple for shadows (like inside the barn). Add yellow or orange to purple to grey it down. 3. Sharpen up the top edges of the barn, because it's your center of interest so should be in sharp focus.

Rustic Farm Shed Oil on oil paper



Rustic Farm Shed Oil on oil paper

Beautifully done, Geoffrey! I think I prefer it to my one. Lots of interesting lyrical brushwork is laid down confidently and left to speak. Intensifying the darks in the foreground has added more gravity to that section, and there's more to look at; more interest. You've made beautiful organic shapes in there too, and throughout - clearly defined like interlocking puzzle pieces. Great work!