



Hanalei Bay

A step-by-step painting guide by Richard Robinson

Watch the full lesson at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/99-Hanalei-Bay>

MY PAINTING CLUB

Introduction

In this chapter, we'll explore the vibrant scene of Hanalei Bay, capturing its essence on an 11-inch square canvas board. I'm experimenting with Duo Aqua water mixable oil paints, which offer a versatile range of colors. While I might not use every hue on my palette, the variety allows for creative exploration. To achieve smooth, flowing backgrounds, I utilize linseed oil as my painting medium, particularly effective for thinning colors. As we delve into the finer details, especially the figures, a quality synthetic or sable brush becomes essential. This lesson draws inspiration from Eugene Bodin, a classical French painter renowned for his beach scenes populated with lively figures. Bodin's influence on Monet, encouraging him to embrace outdoor painting, highlights the importance of capturing life and movement in our work. By the end of this chapter, you'll learn how to add figures to your landscapes with a few expressive strokes, enhancing the scale and narrative of your painting. Join me as we bring Hanalei Bay to life, infusing it with energy and storytelling through the art of painting figures.

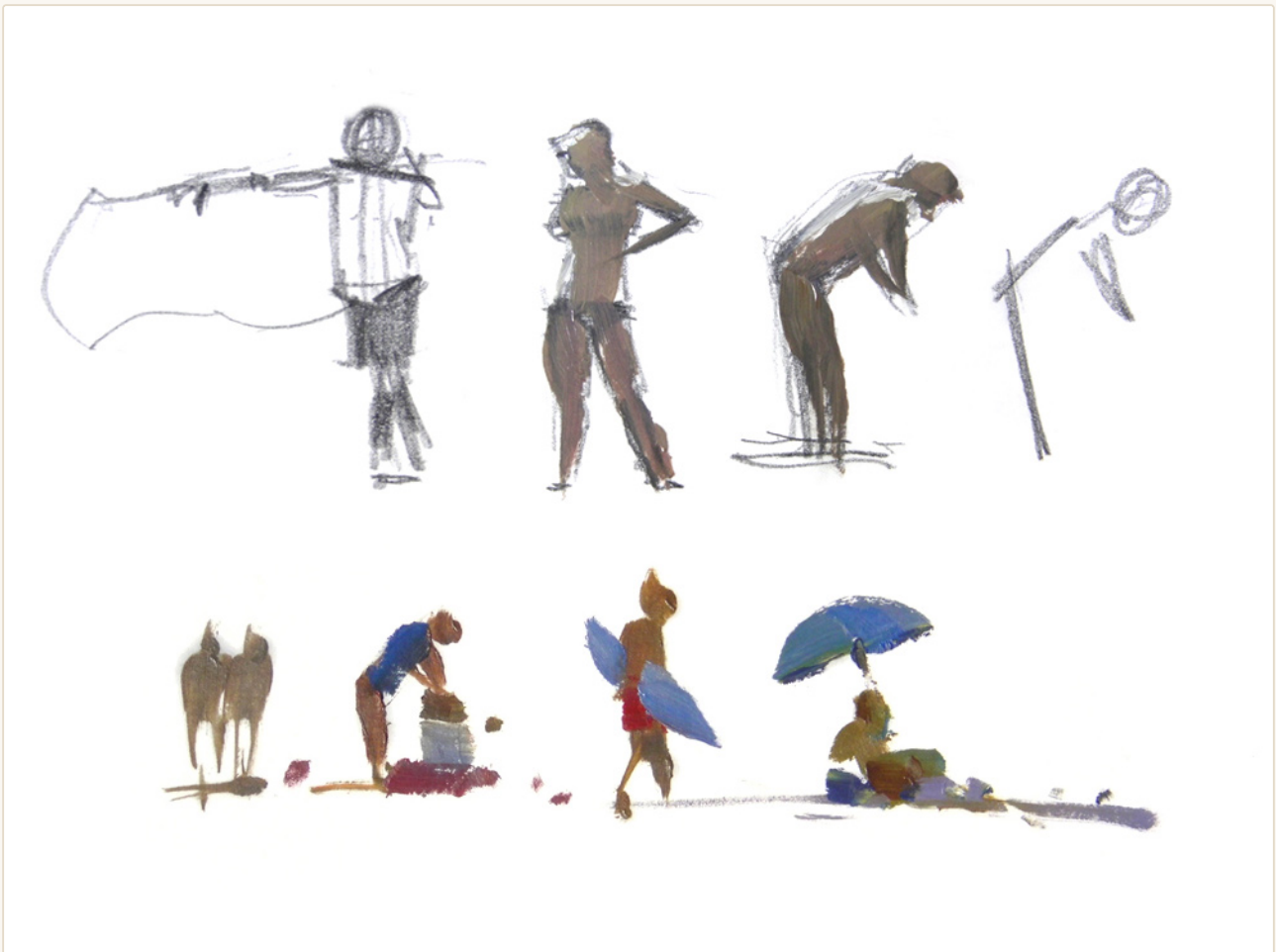


"Hanalei Bay" 11x11" Oil on Canvas by Richard Robinson



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
- Phthalo Blue
- Ultramarine Blue
- Burnt Sienna
- Cadmium Red
- Cadmium Orange
- Yellow Ochre
- Cadmium Yellow Light
- Titanium White
- Painting medium
- M. Graham & Co. Walnut Alkyd Medium or Walnut Oil
- Solvent
- Gamsol
- Canvas
- Fredrix ultrasmooth canvas (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 Eugene Bodin and Monet



Learn About Eugene Bodin

Eugene Bodin was a classical French painter known for his beach scenes with little figures. He played a significant role in the development of outdoor painting.

Understand Bodin's Influence on Monet

Bodin was a mentor to Monet, meeting him when Monet was about 15. He encouraged Monet to explore outdoor painting, which became a hallmark of Monet's style.

PRO TIP

Recognize the impact of mentors like Bodin in shaping the techniques and styles of famous artists such as Monet.

2 Importance of Figure Shape and Placement



Understand Figure Shape and Placement

Recognize that figures in a painting can often resemble simple shapes, like carrots. Ensure that these figures are the right shape, size, and color to read well from a distance.

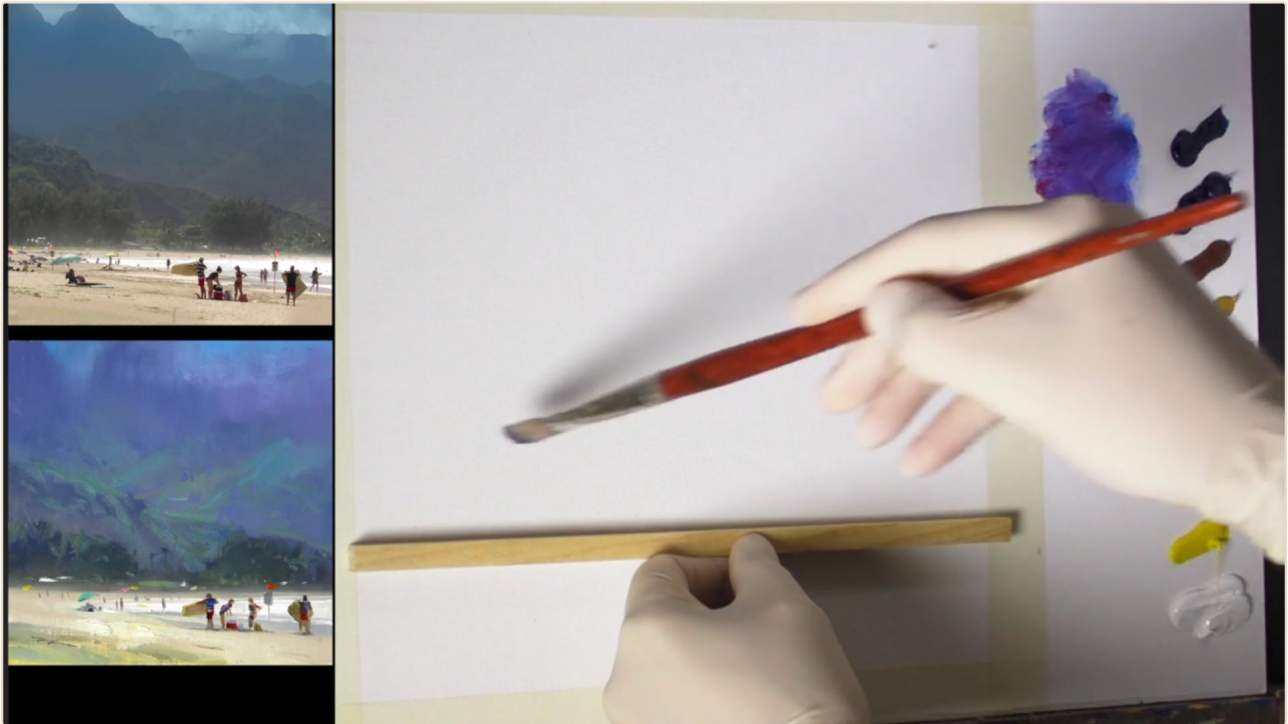
Prepare the Scene

Begin by painting the entire scene before adding figures. This provides a context for the figures and helps determine their placement and scale.

PRO TIP

Ensure figures are the right shape and size to be recognizable from a distance.

3 Sketching the Horizon



Sketch the Horizon

Draw the horizon line, making it slope very slightly downhill. Refer to the photo to guide the angle of the slope, ensuring it matches the landscape's natural incline.

PRO TIP

Ensure the horizon line is slightly sloped to capture the landscape's natural angle.

4 Water and Tree Placement



Angle of the Water

Ensure the angle of the water is accurate. From this low perspective, the water appears as a narrow sliver, almost like a knife point on the left side. Avoid the temptation to curve it around to the end of the beach.

Distant Trees

Identify the clumps of trees in the distance. These should be placed carefully to maintain the perspective and depth of the scene.

PRO TIP

From a low angle, the water should appear as a narrow sliver rather than curving around.

5 Mixing Dark Colors for Trees



Mix the Darkest Color for Trees

Start by mixing ultramarine blue with a little orange and a touch of yellow ochre. Aim for a blue-gray with a hint of green. This will be the darkest color in the landscape, apart from the foreground figures.

Adjust the Hue with White

Add a small amount of white to the mix to reveal the hue more clearly. If the color appears too blue, gradually add more orange and yellow ochre to gray it down.

Determine the Value

Aim for a value that is about three-quarters of the way towards black, roughly a 7 on a 10 value scale. This will ensure that every subsequent color in the mountains is slightly lighter and bluer.

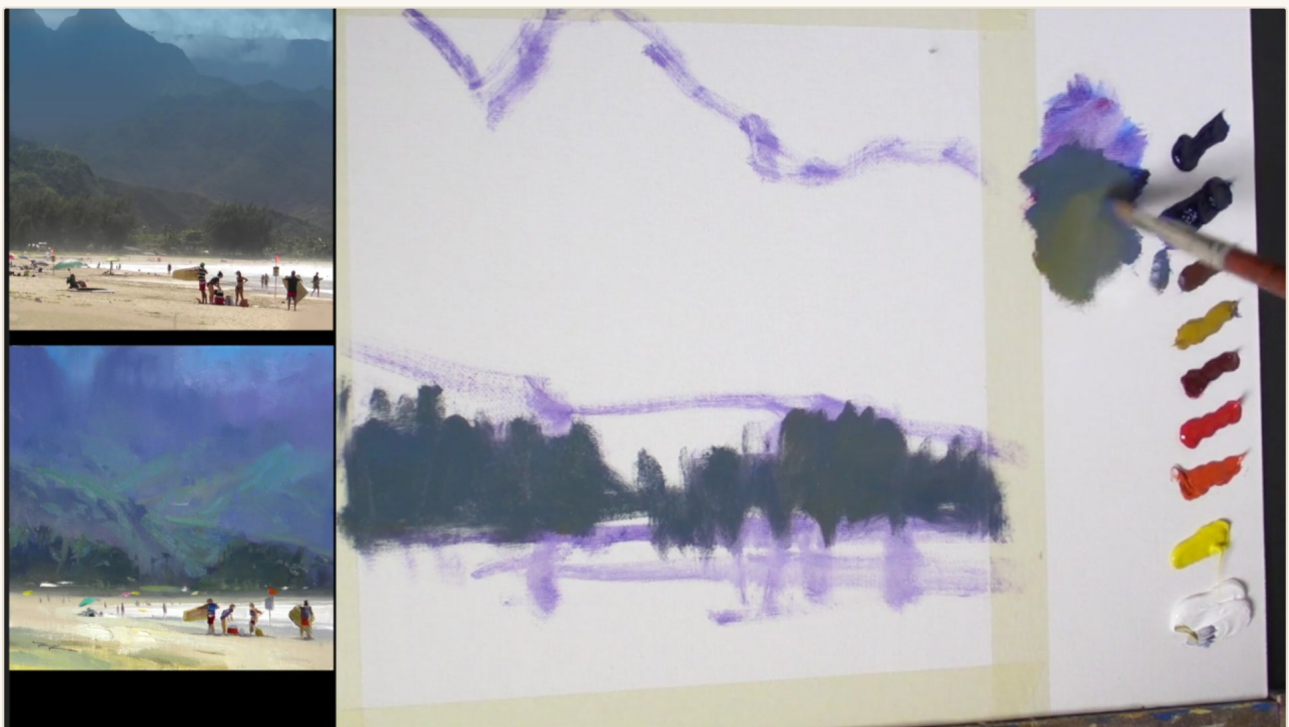
Fine-Tune the Color

Add some yellow ochre and a little bit of white to adjust the color at the bottom of the trees. This adjustment accounts for the sea and integrates the trees into the landscape.

PRO TIP

Add white to your dark mix to clearly see the hue and adjust as needed.

6 Adjusting Colors for Atmospheric Effects



Adjust Tree Base Colors

Lighten and warm the colors at the bottom of the trees to mimic the effect of sea spray and heat haze. This creates a beautiful, soft effect that enhances the atmospheric perspective.

Enhance Distant Beach Area

Lighten the colors further for the area of the beach to the right, which is even further away. This accentuates the atmospheric effect, making the distance more convincing.

Mix a Large Batch of Base Color

Prepare a large pile of the initial dark color. This will allow you to easily adjust it by adding white and blue as you move back into the distance, saving time on remixing.

Apply Colors Mindfully

Apply the colors quickly but be mindful of the shapes and edges of the trees in the foreground. Use softer edges for background elements to maintain depth.

Add Highlights to Tree Tops

Lighten the previous color slightly and cool it with blue. Add a bit of yellow and a touch of white to highlight the tops of the trees on the hill. Test the color with a small stroke before applying.

PRO TIP

Mix a large batch of your base color to easily adjust it for atmospheric effects, saving time and effort.

7 Painting Mountain Layers



Test Your Paint Mix

Always start by testing your paint mix with a small stroke. Ensure it is slightly lighter and greener than the background color to maintain depth and contrast.

Consider Land Shapes

Focus on the shape of the land as you paint. Identify where valleys cast shadows and where ridges catch the light to create a realistic landscape.

Adjust Color for Mountain Layers

As you move further up the mountain, make the color cooler and lighter. Add a touch of rose madder, similar to alizarin crimson, to your mix to push it slightly towards purple, making the mountains warmer and more inviting.

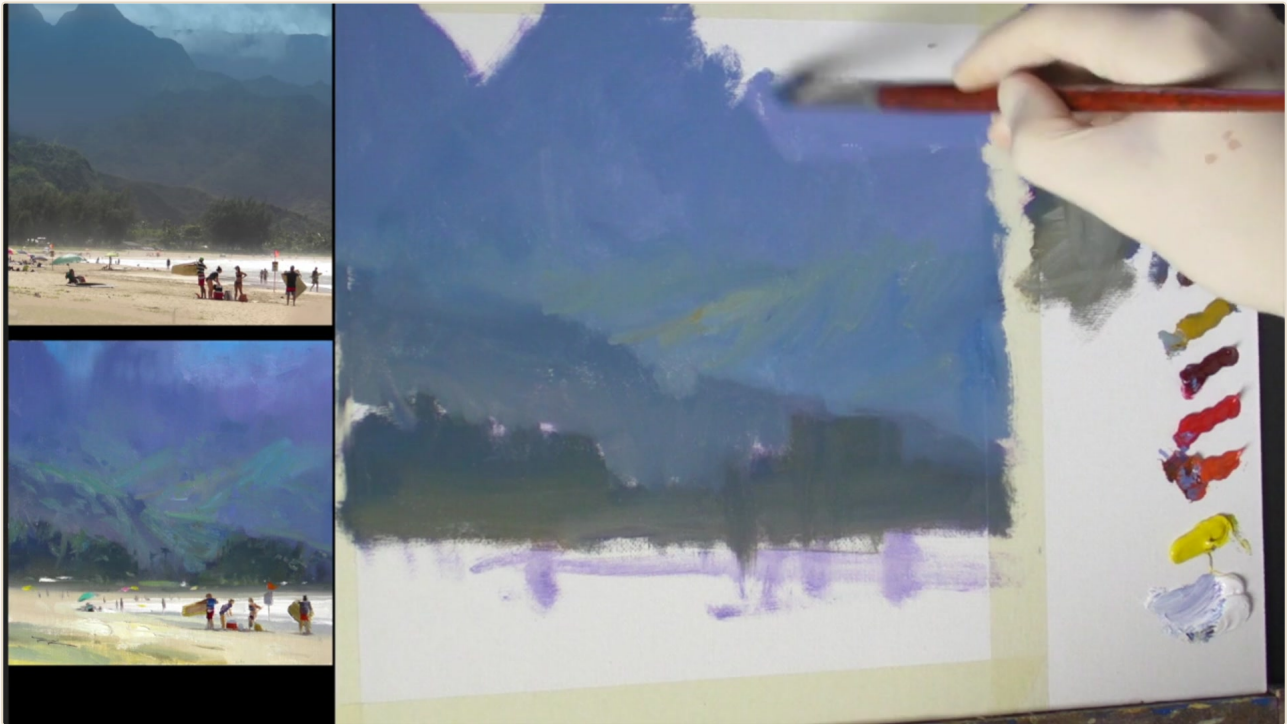
Lighten for Distant Mountains

Lighten the color further for the mountains in the distance. This creates a sense of depth by distinguishing between the foreground and background layers.

PRO TIP

Test your paint mix with a small stroke to ensure the right color balance before applying it to the canvas.

8 Color Relationships and Atmospheric Perspective



Add Cool Blue to the Sky

Add a tiny bit of phthalo blue to the sky. This cool blue will create a vibrant atmosphere, but remember that a little phthalo goes a long way.

Create Cloud Color

Mix a slightly grayer version of the sky color by adding a little orange and some white. This will help the clouds stand out against the cool blue sky.

Soften Cloud Edges

Use a big soft bristled brush to gently soften the edges of the clouds, especially over the mountain. This will create a nice, soft transition in the sky.

Add Texture to Clouds

Use a rubber spatula or a palette knife to add texture to the clouds. Lay it on the top of the clouds, using the side to avoid digging into the paint.

Enhance Tree Tops and Hills

Add light to the tops of trees and the second hill back. Avoid over-mixing colors so they blend on the canvas, adding textural interest.

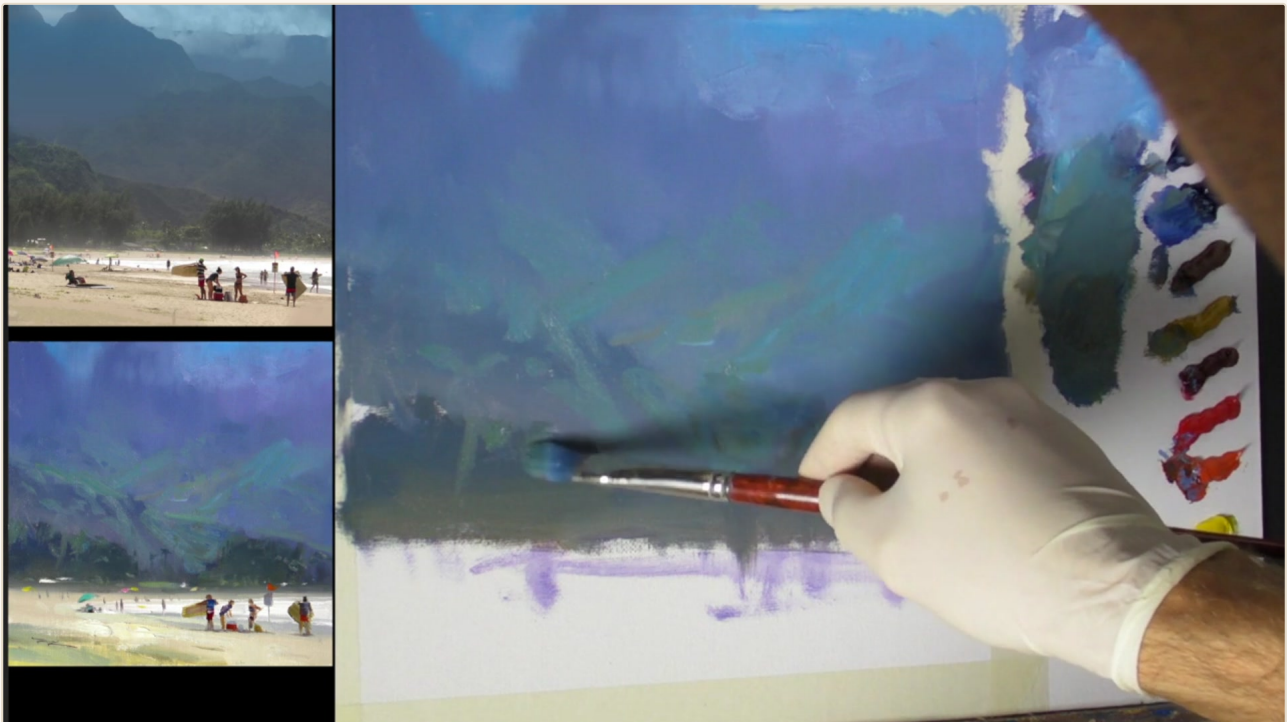
Adjust Color for Atmospheric Perspective

Ensure the colors are slightly lighter and greener as they move back into space. The contrast between the green and the base color should decrease, making them more alike due to atmospheric perspective.

PRO TIP

Use the side of a rubber spatula or palette knife to add texture without digging into the paint.

9 Detailing Trees and Background



Observe Background Subtleties

Squint at your reference photo or scene to see how the shapes in the background merge together. This helps you understand the subtle differences between light and dark areas.

Add Color to Tree Base

Use a fine chiseled synthetic brush to introduce a bit of color at the base of the trees. Focus on where the grass shows through the gaps in the tree trunks.

Detail the Tree Darks

With a sharp, flat synthetic brush, work back into the dark areas of the trees. Add a little bit of detail to enhance the depth and texture.

PRO TIP

Keep squinting at your reference to accurately capture subtle light and dark relationships.

10 Painting the Beach and Water



Create the Beach Base

Mix yellow ochre with white and tone it down slightly with blue. Add a lot of linseed oil to create a very thin mixture. Apply a wash of this mixture across the bottom of the beach.

Add Beach Texture

Mix in more white and a little burnt sienna to grey the mixture. Apply this thicker layer over the initial wash. As you move further down the beach, gradually add more white for a lighter effect.

Incorporate Foreground Greenery

Add a dash of greenery in the foreground. Use quick strokes to create texture as the paint is dragged off the brush.

Enhance Water and Foam

With a clean brush, apply pure white to the foam and water to make the area glow. Use a slightly lighter version of the background color for the shallow reflective water in the foreground.

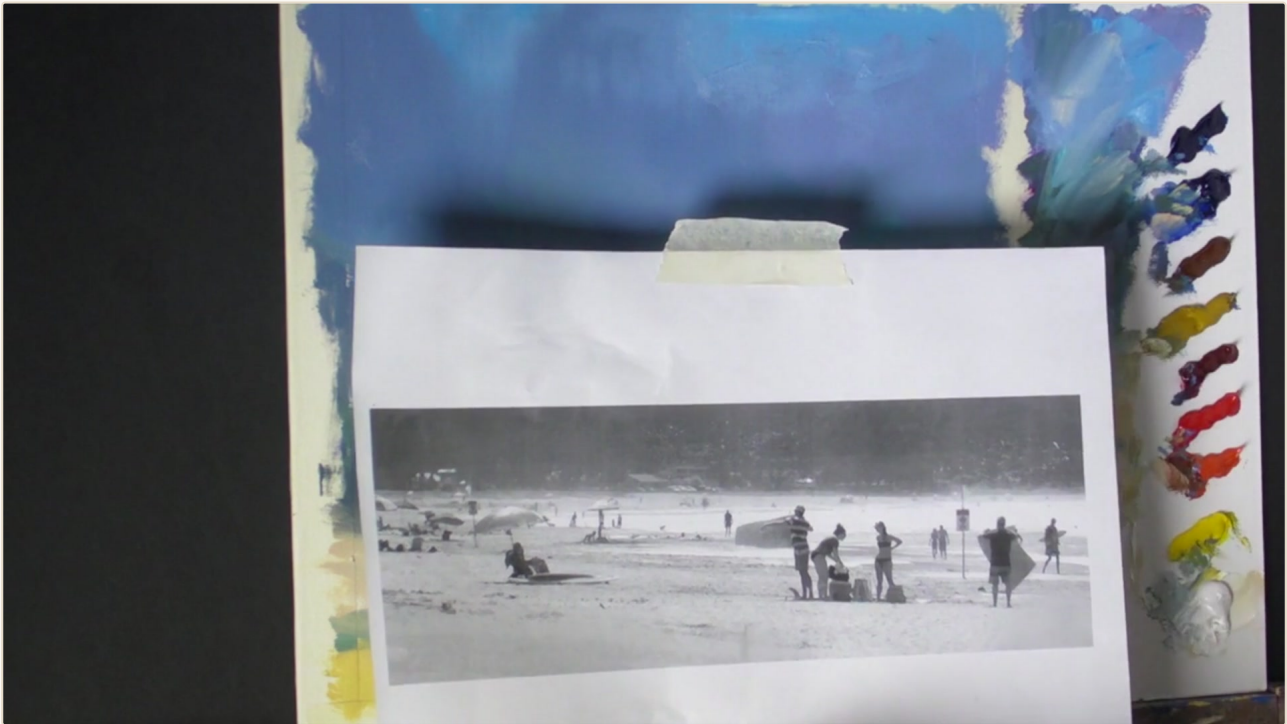
Add Foam Details

Use the edge of a palette knife with white paint to lay in a thin strip of foam in the foreground.

PRO TIP

Use quick strokes to add texture by dragging the paint off the brush.

11 Preparing to Paint Figures



Prepare to Paint Figures

Print out the figures at the size needed for your painting. This will make it easier to translate them into paint.

Practice Drawing Skills

Do several sketches of the figures you plan to include in your scene. Focus on capturing the big shapes and angles to avoid spoiling your painting with incorrect figures.

Watch for Common Mistakes

Be mindful of common errors like drawing heads too large or legs too short. Compare shapes, sizes, and angles until they look correct.

Refine Your Sketches

If your initial drawing isn't accurate, keep refining it. Continue adjusting until you are satisfied with the proportions and ready to paint.

Consider Angles

When drawing a figure from the front, compare the angle of the shoulders to the angle of the hips for a more accurate representation.

PRO TIP

Focus on the big shapes and angles when sketching figures to ensure they are correctly proportioned before painting.

12 Practicing Brushstrokes for Figures



Consider Angles in Figure Drawing

When drawing a figure, think about the angle of the shoulders compared to the angle of the hips. These angles often oppose each other, helping to balance out the figure.

Practice Efficient Brushstrokes

Practice the brushstrokes you plan to use for painting figures. Aim to use as few brushstrokes as possible, especially when working on a wet background, to prevent the colors from becoming muddled.

Develop Your Own Figures

With enough practice, you can start creating your own figures without relying on a reference. This will help them appear more natural and less contrived.

PRO TIP

Use minimal brushstrokes on a wet background to avoid muddying colors.

13 Placing Figures in the Scene



Mix Skin Tone for Shadows

Prepare a dull brown color for the skin in shadow by mixing orange and blue. This combination will give you the right tone for figures in shadow on the beach.

Measure Figure Placement

Before applying paint, measure where the person's head and feet align with the horizon and beach line. This ensures the figure's size and position are accurate within the scene.

Adjust for Background Paint

If the background paint is thick, scrape some off where you plan to place a figure. This helps the new paint adhere better and keeps the figure from blending into the background.

Position Feet on Ground

Consider the slope of the ground when placing feet. On a downward slope, position the feet slightly higher than previous figures to indicate the incline to the viewer.

PRO TIP

Scrape off thick background paint before placing a figure to ensure better adhesion and clarity.

14 Painting Distant Figures



Mix Dark Colors for Swimwear

Mix a dark color for the swimwear and shirts of the figures. This will be darker than any dark in the background, helping the figures stand out.

Paint Distant Figures

Use a lighter gray color to paint the distant figures. This color choice reflects the atmospheric perspective, making them appear obscured by the atmosphere.

Consider Size and Position

Pay close attention to the size of the distant figures. Ensure their heads and feet are in correct relation to those in the foreground to maintain perspective.

PRO TIP

Use a lighter gray for distant figures to reflect atmospheric perspective.

15 Adding Foreground Texture



Create Foreground Texture

Use a palette knife to apply impasto texture in the foreground. This technique will help bring the foreground forward, creating a sense of depth. The textured foreground will contrast with the smooth background, enhancing the overall composition.

PRO TIP

Use impasto palette knife work to make the foreground stand out and create depth.

Summary & Key Takeaways

Embark on your painting journey by understanding the foundational influences of artists like Eugene Bodin and Monet, who pioneered outdoor painting. Begin your composition by sketching the horizon and establishing the overall scene before adding figures, ensuring they are proportional and well-placed. This initial groundwork sets the stage for a cohesive and balanced painting.

As you progress, pay close attention to the interplay of colors and atmospheric effects. Mix and adjust your colors to capture the natural light and depth of the landscape, using techniques like softening edges and adding texture to enhance realism. Remember to test your color mixes with small strokes to maintain the right balance and harmony throughout the painting.

In the final stages, focus on the details that bring your scene to life. Practice your brushstrokes for figures, ensuring they are minimal and precise to avoid muddying colors. Use impasto techniques to add texture and depth to the foreground, contrasting with the smoother background to create a dynamic and engaging composition. With patience and attention to detail, your painting of Hanalei Bay will capture the beauty and essence of the scene.

LESSON POINTS TO REMEMBER

- Recognize the impact of mentors like Bodin in shaping artistic techniques.
- Ensure figures are the right shape and size to be recognizable from a distance.
- Mix a large batch of your base color to easily adjust for atmospheric effects.
- Test your paint mix with a small stroke to ensure the right color balance.
- Use the side of a rubber spatula or palette knife to add texture without digging into the paint.
- Focus on the big shapes and angles when sketching figures to ensure correct proportions.
- Use minimal brushstrokes on a wet background to avoid muddying colors.
- Scrape off thick background paint before placing a figure to ensure better adhesion and clarity.



"Hanalei Bay" 11x11" 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.

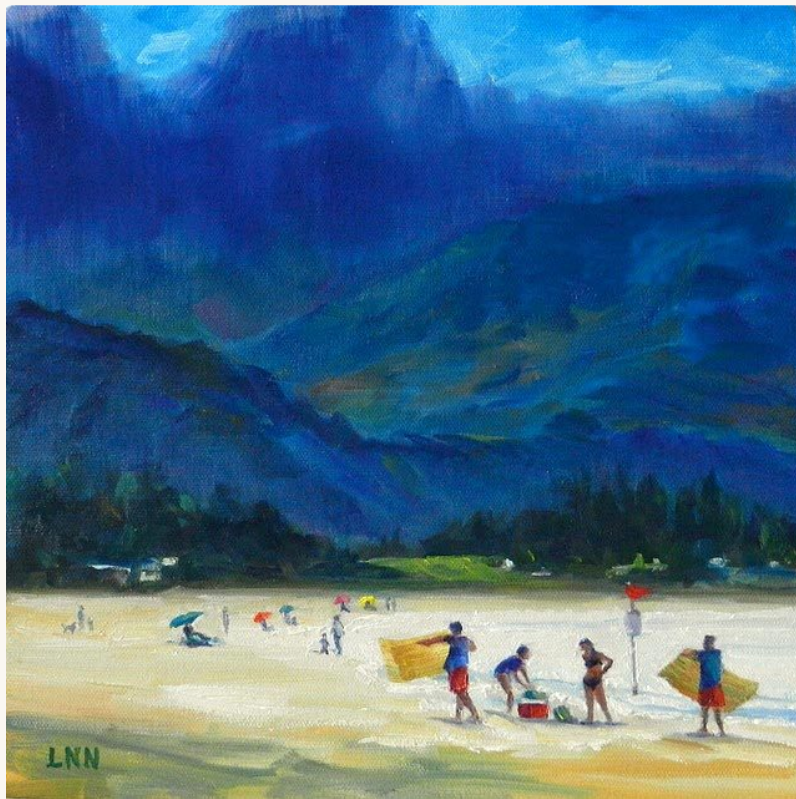
"Workshop16" by Sheila Littlehorn



"Workshop16" 8x10" Oil on Canvas by Sheila Littlehorn

You've got a good grasp of values Sheila and your colour is good too so you've created some good distance in this painting. I would have liked to see you try getting more of that sea spray along the top of the beach to add even more distance. Your figures are great. I especially like the guy with the surfboard under the umbrella - nicely done. The intense green in the foreground is a bit of an attention grabber which pulls the eye to the edge - would have been better grayed down some. A good job overall.

"Hanalei Bay" by Li Ningning



"Hanalei Bay" 30x30cm Oil on Canvas by Li Ningning

Wow very strong colour in this one Li - perhaps too strong with the background blue? It seems to jump out rather than be a backdrop. On the other hand the darker value you've got there does make for more of an imposing mountain and enhances the overall dark/light design. Your figures are good too - lots of movement and nice and dark against the whitewater. A couple of those umbrellas down the beach are a bit too small - they should be slightly larger than the furthest ones. Nice fluid brushwork again - good to see. Overall a really pleasing painting.

"Summer at the Beach" by Denis King



"Summer at the Beach" 12x16" Oil on Canvas by Denis King

Nice to see you've made this one your own Denis by changing a few things around. You've made the layered hills much more of a feature which works well. Just a few things to watch out for there however: by painting the tree silhouettes all much the same size you've negated some of the depth you might have gained there. Your mountain shapes are echoing each other a lot which creates a kind of cookie-cutter effect - all too easy to do. Great to see you introduced the sea spray into the base of the background although a few errant dark strokes there have spoiled it a bit.

Your figures are wonderfully gestural and have the appearance of being not too laboured. The sitter in the foreground should be a fair bit larger or the scene can do without him entirely. You've used a strong blue for the figures in the mid ground and they would be more believable done in a mid value gray. Overall a pretty solid job.

"Beach Scene" by Walda Juhl



"Beach Scene" 12x12" Acrylic on Canvas by Walda Juhl

Great looking figures Walda. The shapes are all good. Interesting how the medium you choose influences the style of painting. The figures do seem very still to me, without movement, and I believe that is simply due to their very crisp edges which is a product of fast drying acrylics. Very hard to avoid that with acrylics and it tends to give them a cut-out feel. Some softer edges can be achieved by first of all becoming aware that it's something you might want to explore and then using more paint (big juicy gobs of it) and a water spray bottle (add a little retarder medium to the water) and a stay-wet palette. Also have some of that sandy background colour mixed up ready to work back into the edges of wet figures, just in case they dry too fast.

The same can be said for your background too which is in need of some lost edges too. If you did this painting again you would be that much faster and that would help with conquering the fast drying acrylics too. Golden Open and Chroma Interactive Acrylics are both good choices for acrylic painters wanting a longer drying time.