



Golden Valley

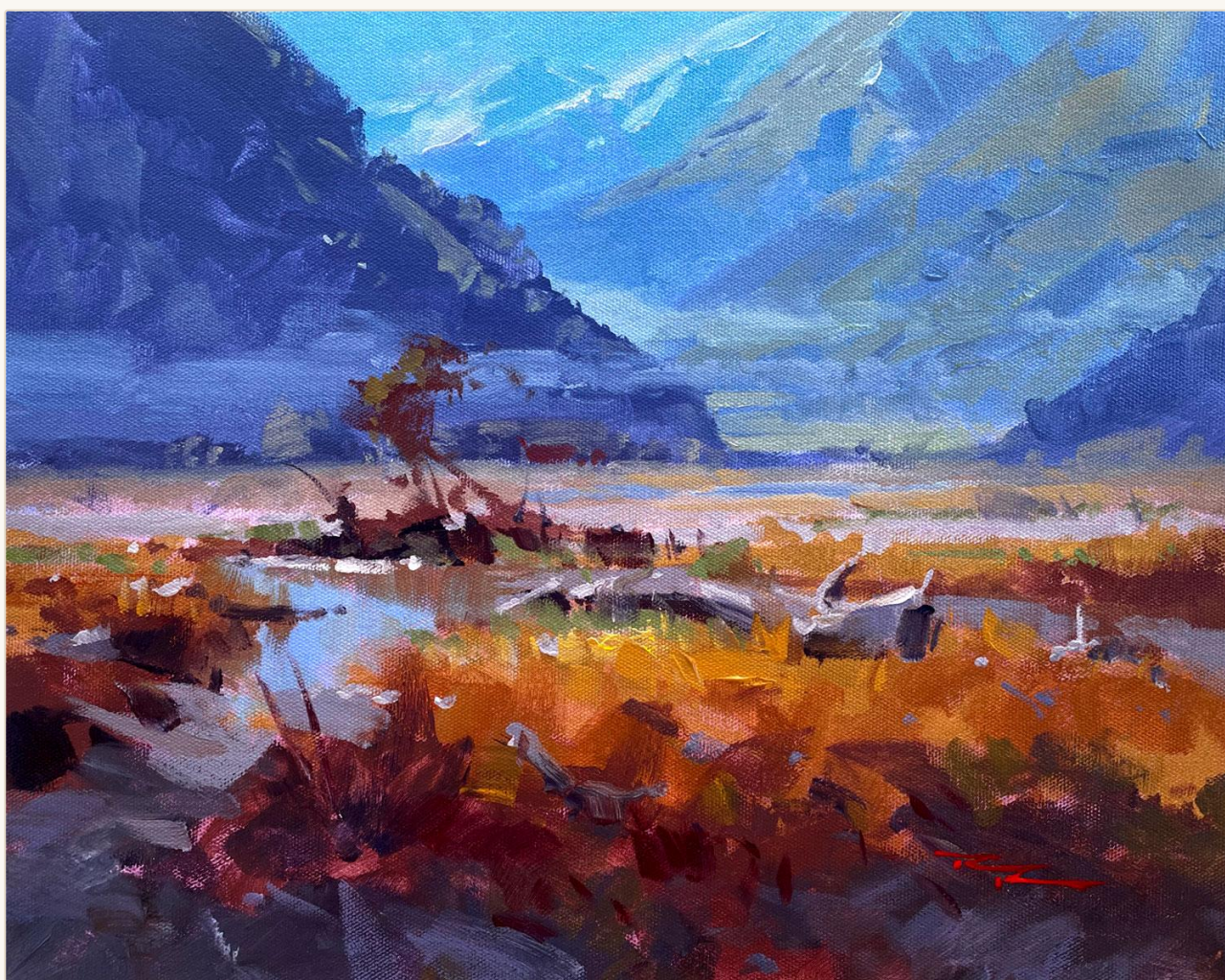
A step-by-step painting guide by Richard Robinson

Watch the full lesson at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/218-Golden-Valley>

MY PAINTING CLUB

Introduction

In this chapter, we'll embark on an artistic journey through the breathtaking Golden Valley of New Zealand. Together, we'll explore the nuances of acrylic painting, capturing the essence of an oil painting with every brushstroke. I will guide you meticulously through the process, ensuring you witness every detail, from color mixing to the final touches that bring the scene to life. One of the key elements we'll delve into is the concept of lighting—an often overlooked aspect that can transform your work dramatically. By understanding how to light the entire scene, you'll learn to direct the viewer's eye and evoke the mood you desire. This powerful technique can significantly elevate your painting skills. We'll also cover essential aspects like brushwork, design, texture, and those crisp finishing details that make your painting pop. As we paint this stunning scene, you'll discover the striking contrast between the blues of the mountains and the warm yellowy oranges of the foreground, a central theme that adds vibrancy and depth. So, grab your brushes and join me in bringing this beautiful landscape to life, one stroke at a time.



Golden Valley 13x15" Acrylic on Canvas



REFERENCE PHOTO 1

The scene as Richard found it.



REFERENCE PHOTO 2

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

- Chroma Atelier Interactive Acrylics
- Phthalo Blue
- Ultramarine Blue
- Alizarine Crimson
- Yellow Ochre
- Lemon Yellow
- Titanium White
- Canvas
- Fredrix ultrasmooth canvas.
- You could use a canvas panel or anything you prefer.
- Brushes
- [Rosemary & Co. Richard Robinson Brush Set](#)
- Palette knife
- Paper towels
- Bucket of water

1 Color contrast concept



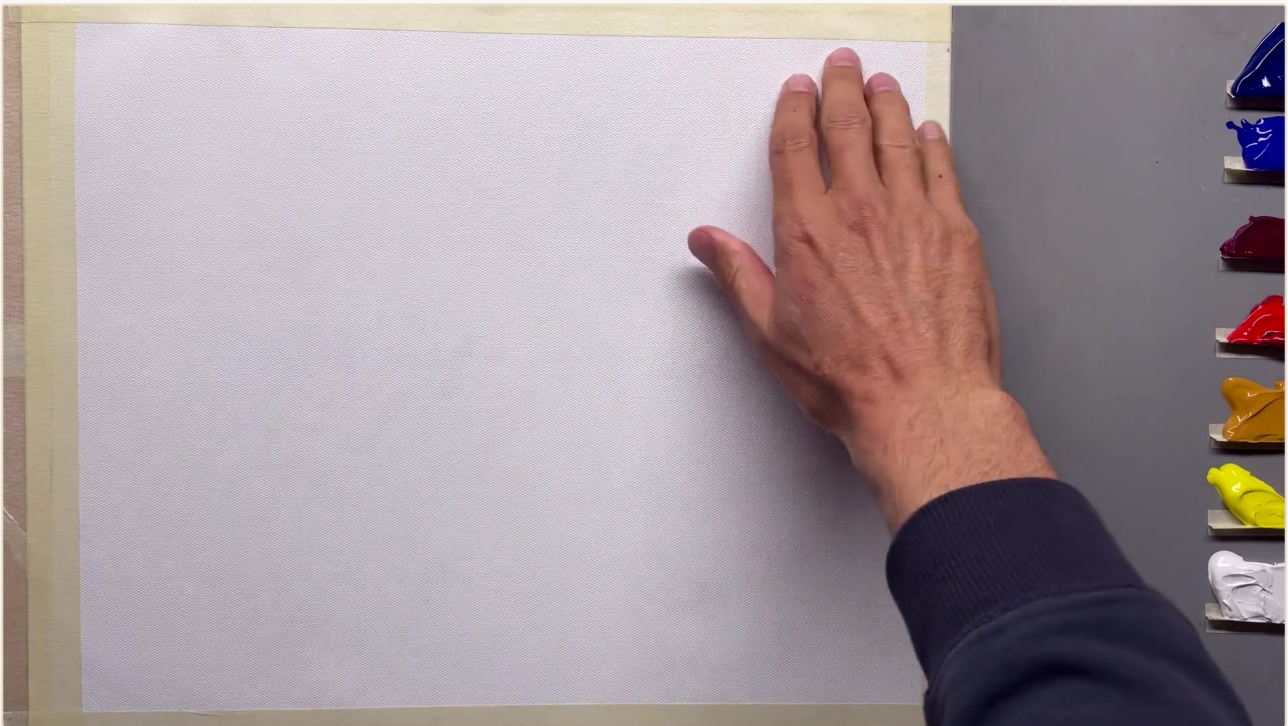
Identify Color Contrast

Observe the striking color contrast between the blues in the mountains and the yellowy oranges in the foreground. This contrast is the central theme of the painting and should be emphasized.

PRO TIP

Focus on the first element you love about a scene to guide your painting's theme.

2 Materials and tools



Prepare Your Canvas

Use a 12 by 15 inch Fredericks ultra smooth canvas. Tape it onto a board to keep it secure while painting.

Select Your Palette

Choose a plastic palette with a mid-grey tone. This helps in accurately judging the values of your colors.

Gather Your Paints

Use Italier Interactive Acrylics for this painting. Include Phthalo Blue, Ultramarine Blue, Alizarin Crimson, Cadmium Red Light, Yellow Ochre, Arilamide Yellow Light (or Cadmium Yellow Light or Cadmium Lemon), and Titanium White.

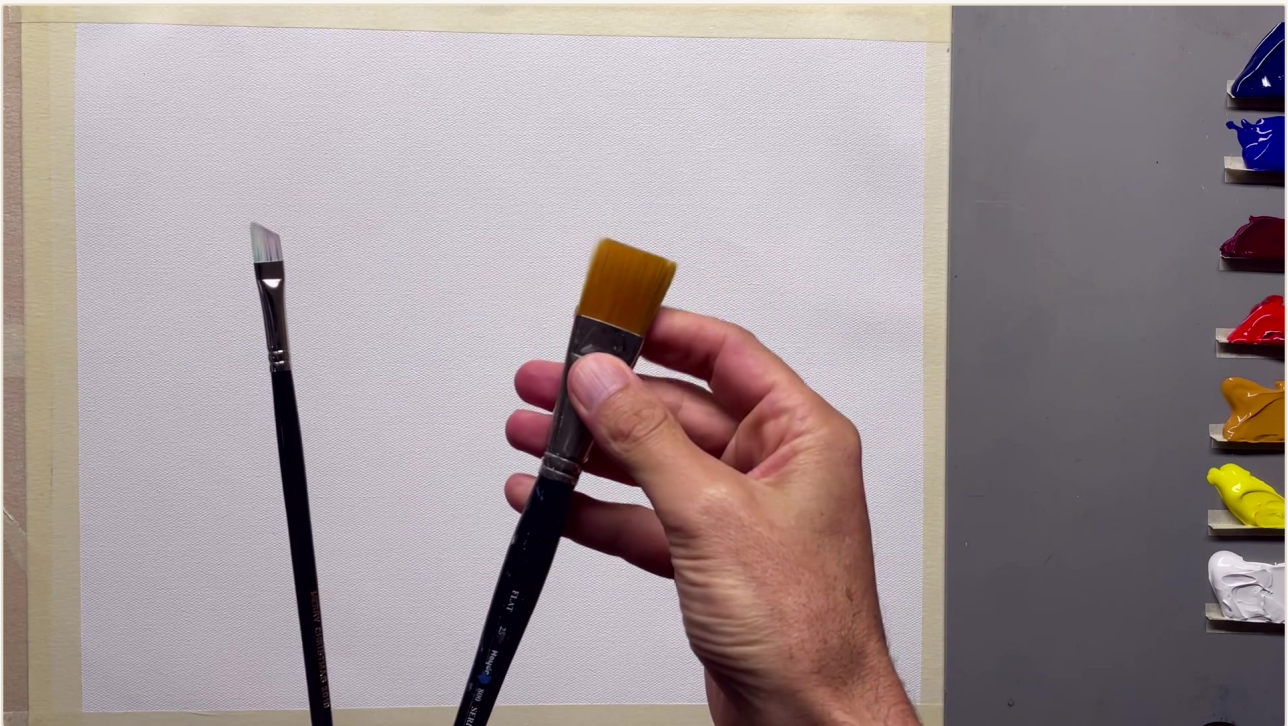
Choose Your Brushes

Select two brushes that you will use for the entire painting. This simplifies your toolset and helps maintain consistency in your brushwork.

PRO TIP

Use a mid-grey palette to better judge the values of your colors.

3 Brush maintenance



Select Your Brushes

Choose synthetic brushes for this painting. A one-inch brush is versatile for most of the work, while a dagger brush is useful for adding fine details at the end.

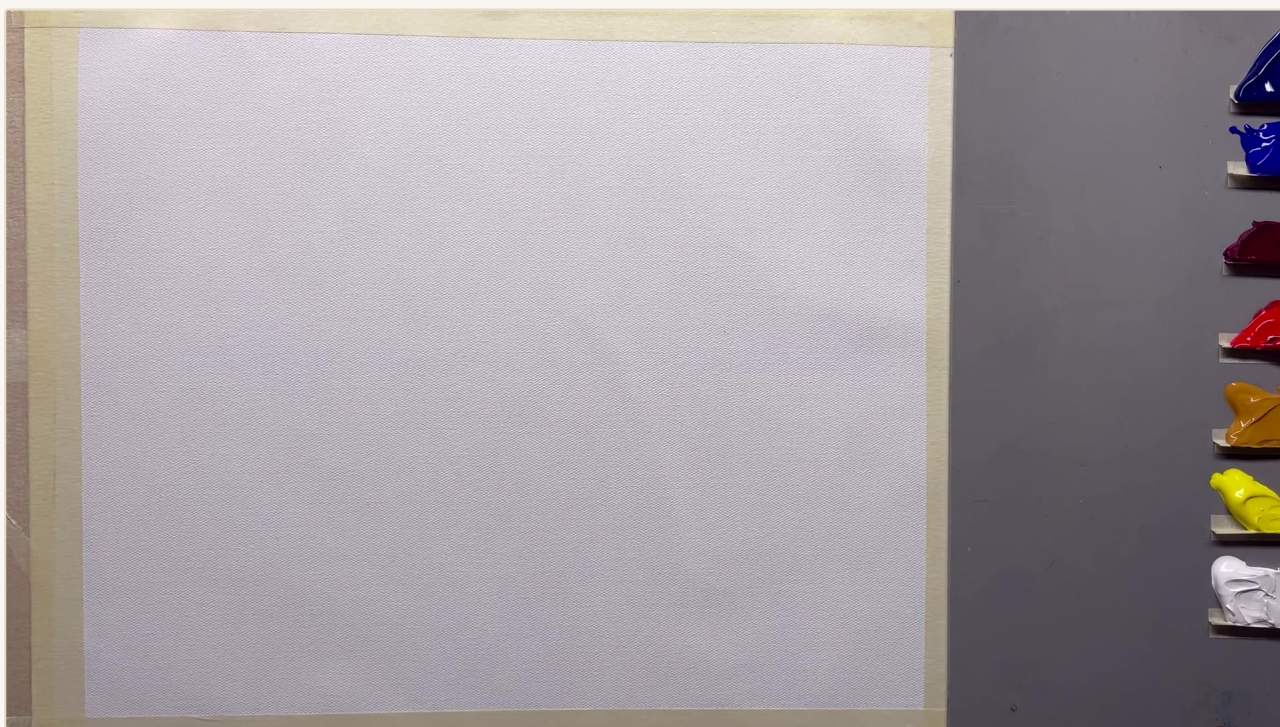
Maintain Brush Cleanliness

Keep your brush clean and washed out throughout the painting process. This prevents muddy colors and ensures vibrant results.

PRO TIP

Use the same type of brush for consistency and ease during the painting process.

4 Painting the couch



Prepare Your Materials

Ensure you have a square palette knife, a jar of water, and a rag for wiping off excess paint. Wet your brush to prevent the acrylic from drying in the ferrule during painting.

Apply the Couch Layer

Mix ultramarine blue and white to create a base color. Use a larger brush for a faster application and apply the mixture evenly across the canvas. Add a bit more blue as you move across to create variation.

Work the Paint into the Canvas

Thoroughly scrub the paint into the weave of the canvas. This helps the acrylics flow smoothly and creates a wet-on-wet effect similar to oil paints.

Add a Wash for Color Interest

As you move down the canvas, apply a light wash of the same mixture. This will add color interest to the foreground and will show through subsequent layers, enhancing the overall depth.

PRO TIP

Wet your brush before starting to prevent acrylic paint from drying in the ferrule.

5 Scrubbing technique



Use the Scrubbing Technique

Use an older brush to scrub the paint into the canvas. This technique is effective for blending but can wear out your brush. Apply pressure and work the paint into the surface for a thorough blend.

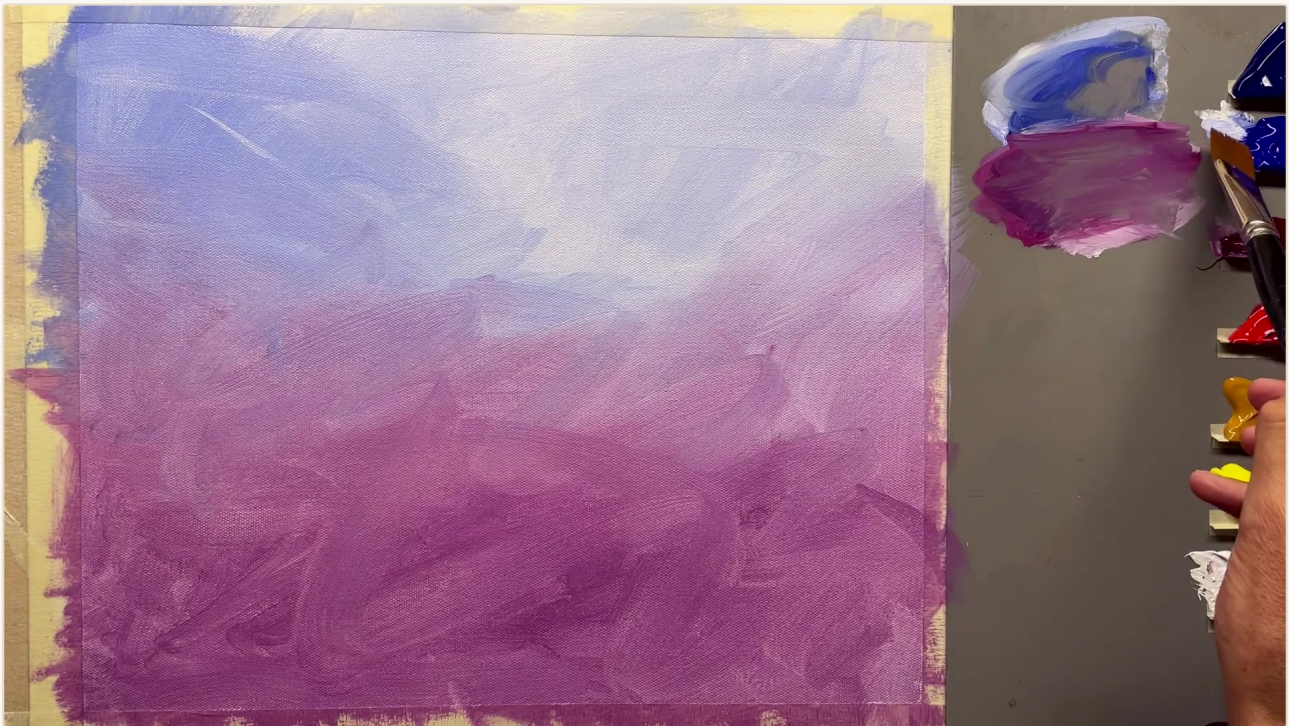
Clean Your Brush

After scrubbing, clean your brush thoroughly. This ensures that your brush is ready for the next step and prevents unwanted color mixing.

PRO TIP

Use an older brush for scrubbing to avoid damaging your good brushes.

6 Sketching the composition



Establish Big Masses

Draw a few lines to indicate where the big masses will go in your composition. Focus on creating interesting space divisions by avoiding placing major lines on the halfway mark. Use thirds or other fractions to create a more dynamic layout.

Position the Baseline

Identify the baseline of the mountains, which is slightly below the horizon line. Avoid placing lines directly in the corners to prevent equal space division. Adjust the line to create a small gap for the bright green field, which is a focal point.

Vary Angles and Sizes

Position a smaller hill at a different angle to the main bluff. Ensure the angles are not identical to maintain variety. Adjust the angles of shadows to be slightly different, avoiding repetition.

PRO TIP

Avoid placing major lines on the halfway mark to create more interesting space divisions.

7 Acrylics painting order



Start with the Background

Begin your painting by focusing on the background elements. This approach works well with acrylics, as it allows you to layer and build up the scene effectively.

Work Forward to the Foreground

Gradually move from the background to the foreground. This sequence helps in maintaining the depth and perspective in your painting.

PRO TIP

When using acrylics, start from the back and work your way forward for the best layering results.

8 Painting the sky and distant mountains



Paint the Sky

Mix phthalo blue with a lot of white to create the sky color. Apply this mixture to the canvas, painting slightly past where you want the sky to end. This allows you to blend the next layer smoothly.

Add Distant Mountains

Introduce a touch of ultramarine to the existing sky mix to slightly darken it. Paint the distant mountains with this color, ensuring the value remains close to the sky to maintain depth and recession. Extend the paint slightly beyond the intended boundary for easier blending with subsequent layers.

PRO TIP

Keep the mountain color value close to the sky's value to maintain a sense of depth.

9 Adding color to distant trees



Warm Up the Distant Trees

Add a little bit of alizarin crimson to your mix to warm up the color as it comes forward. This will help create depth by contrasting with the cooler colors in the background.

Adjust the Color Mix

Incorporate more ultramarine and a speck of bright yellow to your mix. If the color becomes too green, lighten it up slightly. Use more paint to achieve a painterly effect.

Apply the Base Layer

Brush the color past where you want it to finish, covering the entire section. This ensures a seamless transition between areas.

Add Highlights to the Trees

While the base layer is still wet, add a little yellow ochre and bright yellow to represent the light on the tops of the trees. These highlights should be lighter than the shadow color to reflect how light affects objects in the background.

Balance the Contrast

Remember that as objects recede into the background, the contrast between light and shadow decreases. Adjust your colors accordingly to maintain a realistic sense of depth.

PRO TIP

Brush the color past where you want it to finish for a seamless transition.

10 Adjusting tree colors



Adjust Tree Color

If the tree color is too green, add a touch of blue to tone it down. Aim to bring the color closer to a blue hue, which will help balance the brightness of the yellow.

Test and Adjust Value

Check the value by comparing it to the surrounding colors. If it's too dark, lighten it slightly. If it becomes too light, adjust back to find the fine balance between light and dark.

Use Squinting Technique

Squint at the painting to compare the light and dark areas. The difference should be subtle, similar to what you see in the reference photograph.

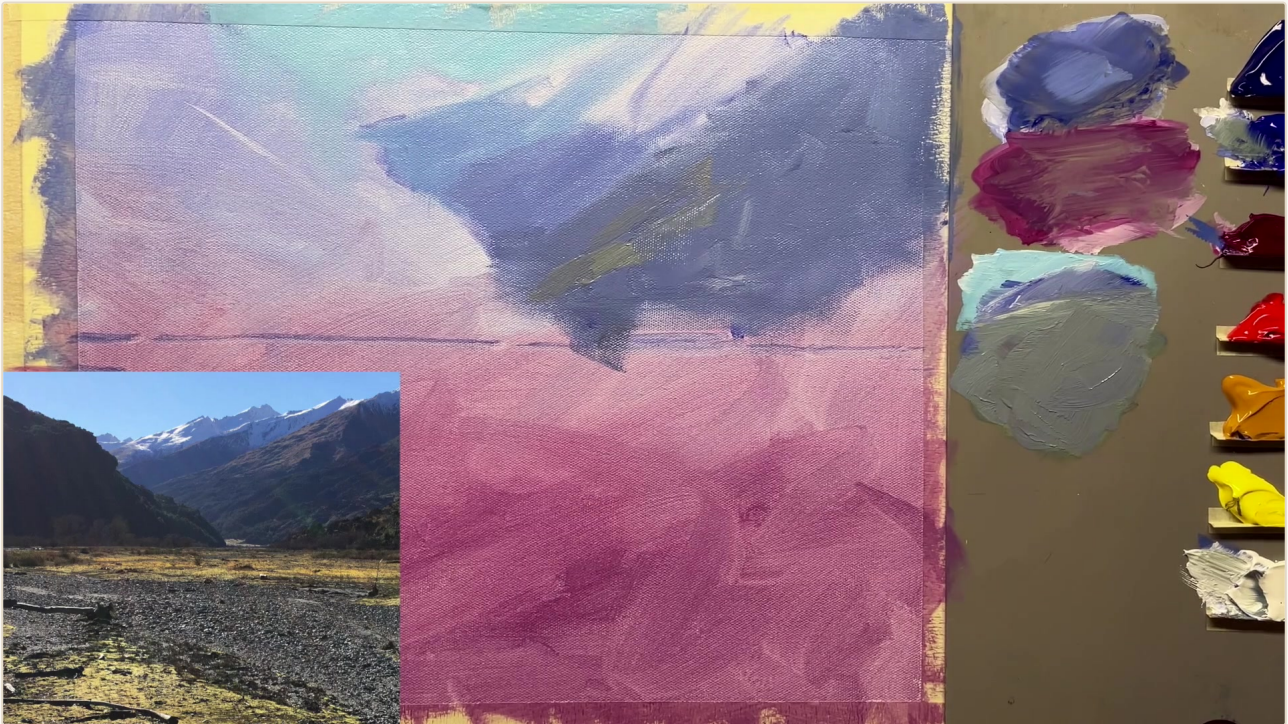
Check Palette Color

Observe the color on your palette. It should appear close to neutral grey, indicating a balanced relationship between the colors.

PRO TIP

Squint at your painting to ensure the lights and darks are close together, matching the subtle differences in the reference.

11 Detailing distant landscape



Scrape Off Excess Paint

Gently scrape off a little paint to make it easier to paint over. This will help you adjust the details without interference from the previous layer.

Observe and Vary Lines

Examine the photograph and note the angle of the bridge lines. Ensure these lines are varied to create interest and avoid uniformity.

Mix and Apply Distant Landscape Colors

For the land at the top, mix yellow ochre with a touch of red and white to achieve a lighter, brownish tone. Apply these colors in small changes, testing and adjusting as needed.

Tone Down Green

To desaturate a green area, add a bit of red, which is opposite green on the color wheel. This will help tone down the vibrancy.

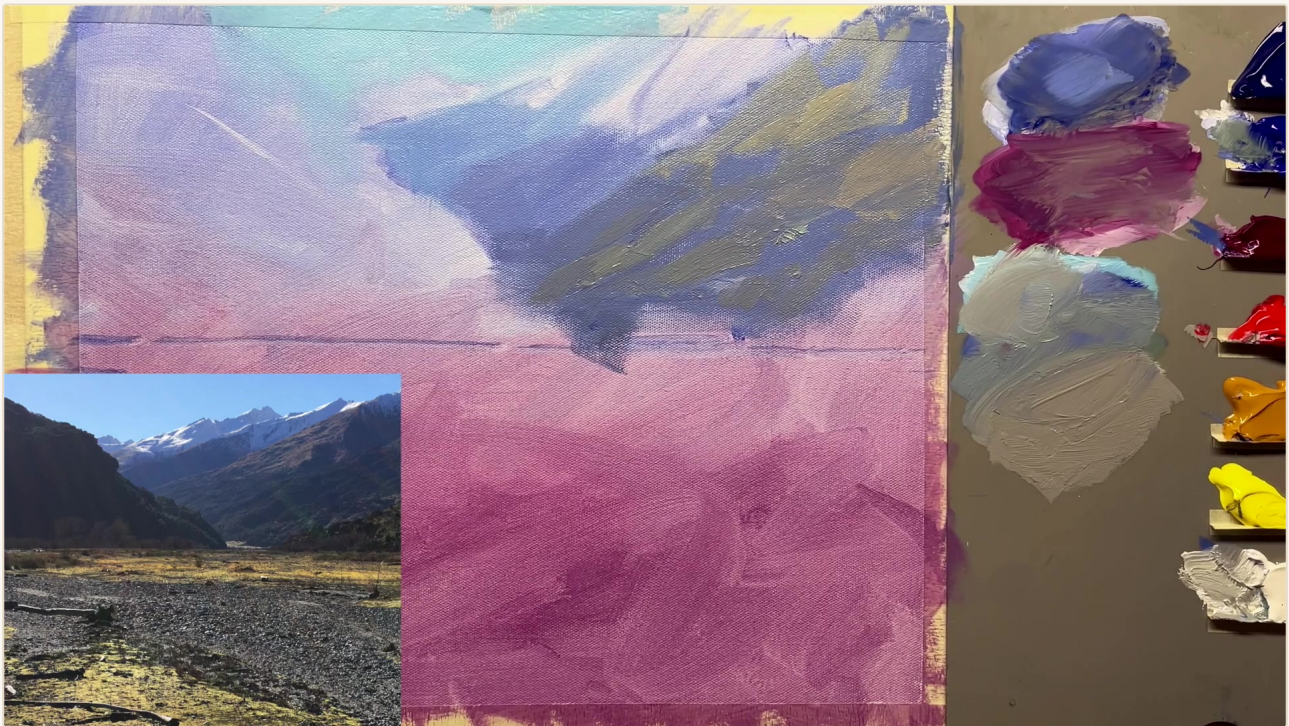
Add Blue for Distance

As the landscape recedes, incorporate more blue into the mix to convey distance and atmospheric perspective.

PRO TIP

To tone down a vibrant green, add a touch of red to desaturate it effectively.

12 Painting technique tips



Add Details with a Smaller Brush

Use a smaller brush to add little details while the paint is still wet. This is a good time to add elements like small trees. If the paint has dried, mix some more to continue adding details.

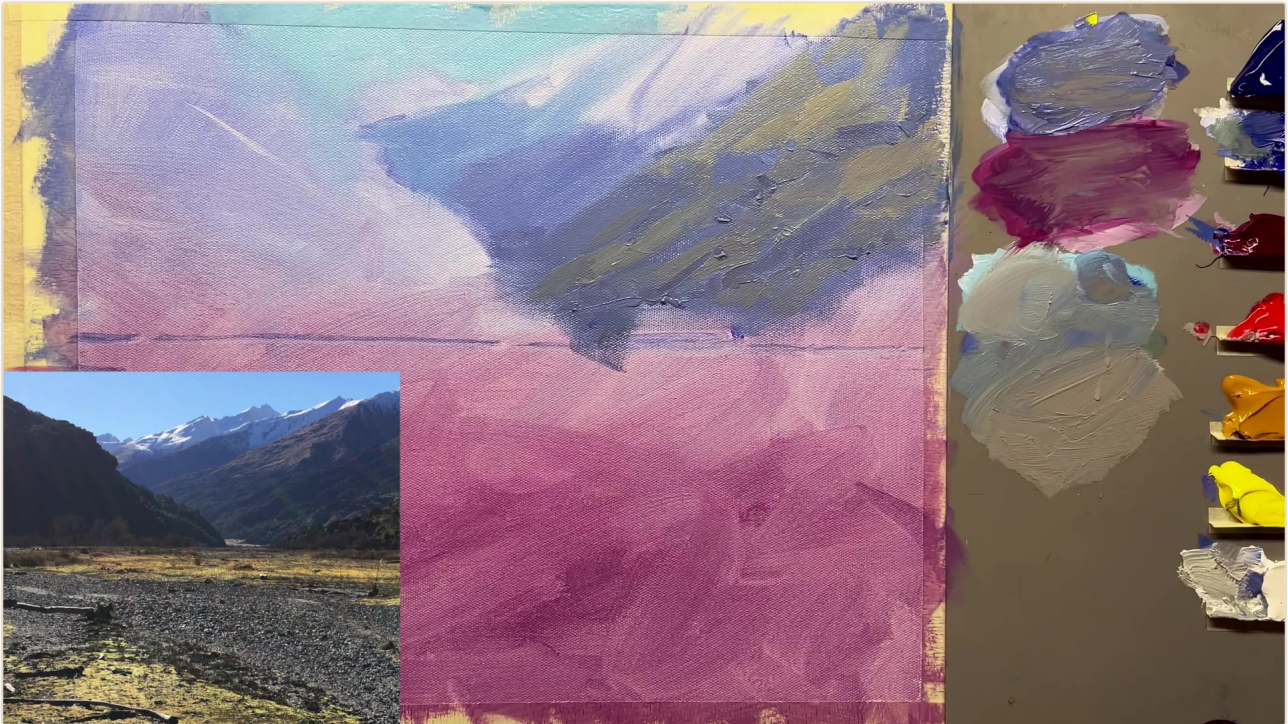
Adjust Colors Using Reference

Compare your painting to a reference photo to adjust the colors accurately. With oils, you have more time to get the color right, but with acrylics, work quickly to prevent the paint from drying before adjustments are complete.

PRO TIP

Feel free to take your time to get the colors as accurate as possible, especially when using oils.

13 Creating atmospheric effects



Reevaluate Your Work

Step back from the canvas to view your painting from a distance. This helps you assess the overall composition and balance.

Prepare the Brush

Wash your large brush thoroughly to ensure it's clean for the next application of paint.

Enhance the Color

Add a touch more phthalo to your existing color mix. This will help intensify the hue and bring out the desired effect.

Create Atmospheric Distance

Add a little white to the area where two mountain portions overlap. Work the white from the ridge upwards to soften the transition and enhance the sense of distance between the planes.

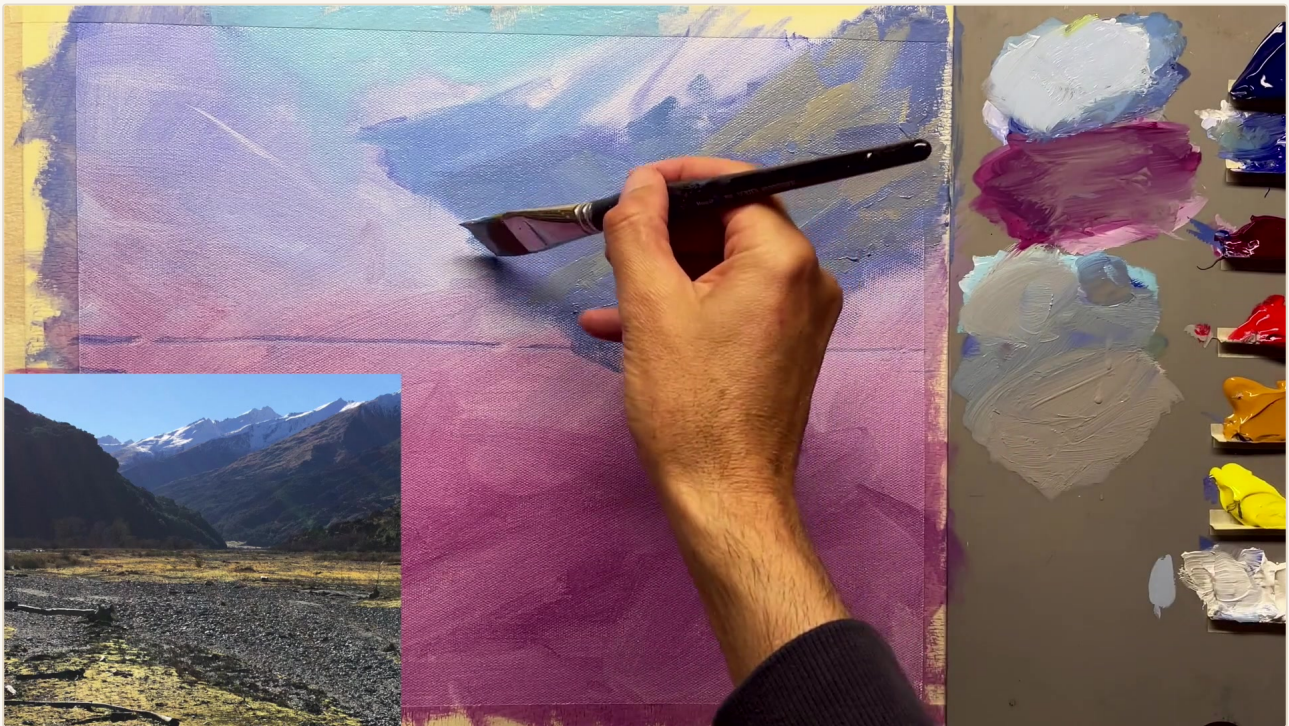
Add Mist Bands

Introduce bands of mist to further enhance the atmospheric effect. This adds depth and interest to your mountain scene.

PRO TIP

Use white to soften transitions between overlapping mountain planes, creating a sense of distance.

14 Adding mist effects



Create Mist Effect

Mix a soft white with a touch of yellow to add a gentle mist effect. Apply this mixture lightly to create low bands of mist in the valley. Use a very gentle touch with the brush to maintain a soft edge, as pressing harder will create sharper lines.

Enhance with Additional Mist

Consider adding more mist in other areas to increase color interest. Keep the effect understated for a subtle yet impactful addition to the landscape.

PRO TIP

Use a gentle touch with the brush to maintain soft edges when creating mist.

15 Detailing mountain shadows



Add Light Foliage to the Mountain

Apply a light color to suggest foliage on the back mountain. This represents tundra or tussocks, which are hardy plants at that elevation.

Shape the Mountain Shadow

Create a soft arch to define the shadow shape on the mountain. Use the natural shadow as a suggestion, but feel free to interpret it in your own way.

PRO TIP

Use natural shadow shapes as a guide, but don't be afraid to interpret them creatively.

16 Detailing with small brush



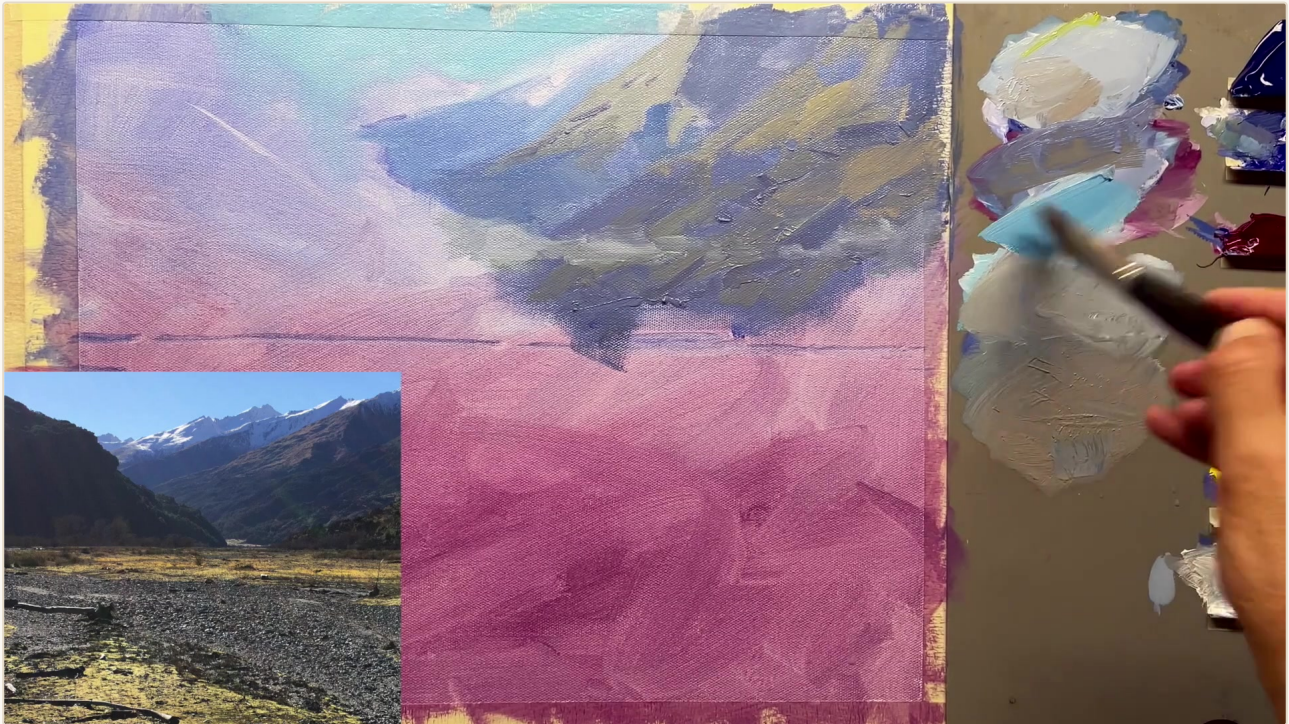
Add Small Details

Use a small brush to work some fine details into your painting. Focus on adding just a few touches here and there to enhance the overall composition. Take inspiration from your photograph resource to guide these details.

PRO TIP

Be as detailed as you like; it's up to you how much you want to refine your painting.

17 Snow highlights and shadows



Mix Shadow Color

Combine Phthalo blue with white and a tiny bit of magenta. Adjust the mixture to ensure it is slightly lighter, but not lighter than the sky, as it represents the shadow of the snow.

Apply Snow Shadows

Apply the shadow color to the snow areas, ensuring it remains darker than the sky. Add small variations to make the shadowed areas more interesting.

Mix Highlight Color

Mix white with a tiny touch of blue to create a lighter, thicker paint for the snow highlights. This will help the highlights stand out against the shadows.

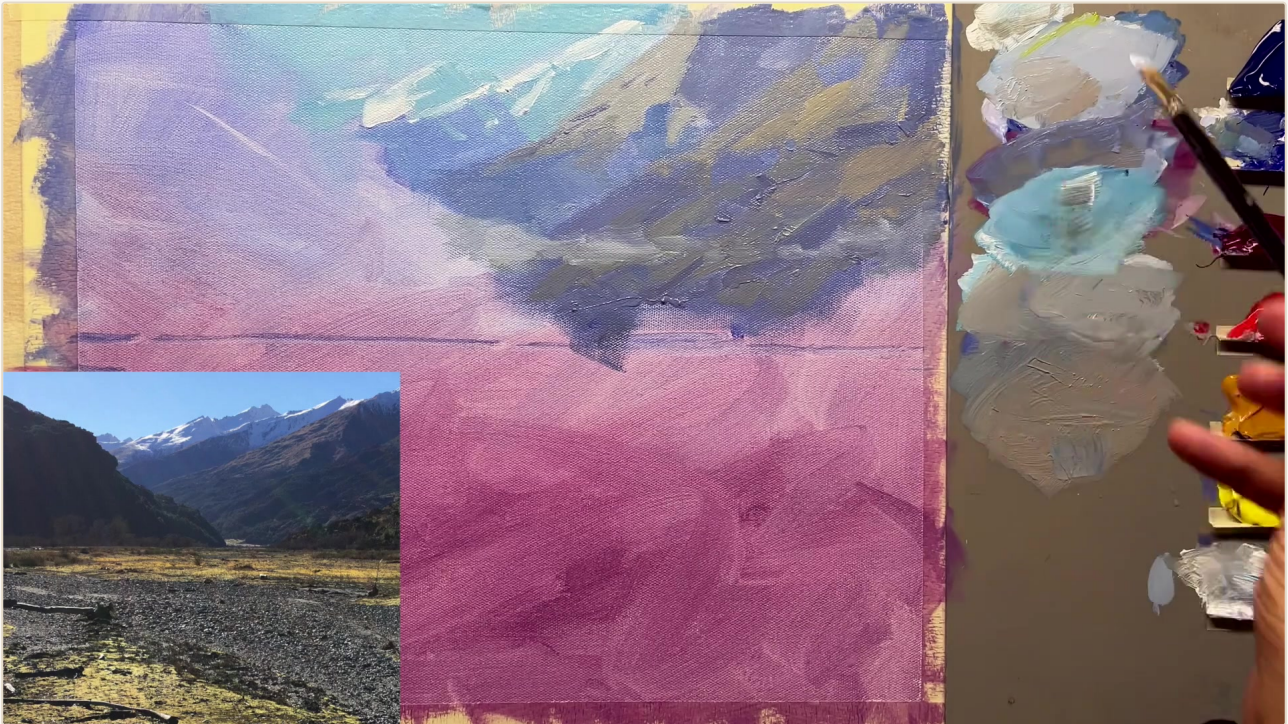
Apply Snow Highlights

Use the thick highlight mixture to add snow highlights, taking inspiration from the mountain shapes but not copying them exactly. Adjust the lines to create a natural and interesting snow valley.

PRO TIP

Ensure snow shadows are darker than the sky to maintain depth and contrast.

18 Adding snow details



Add Snow Shadows

Introduce snow shadows in the background to create depth. Use a gentle flicking motion to suggest the texture and form of the snow.

Highlight Snow in Light

Bring a flick of snow into the light areas for added detail. This contrast will enhance the realism and interest of the scene.

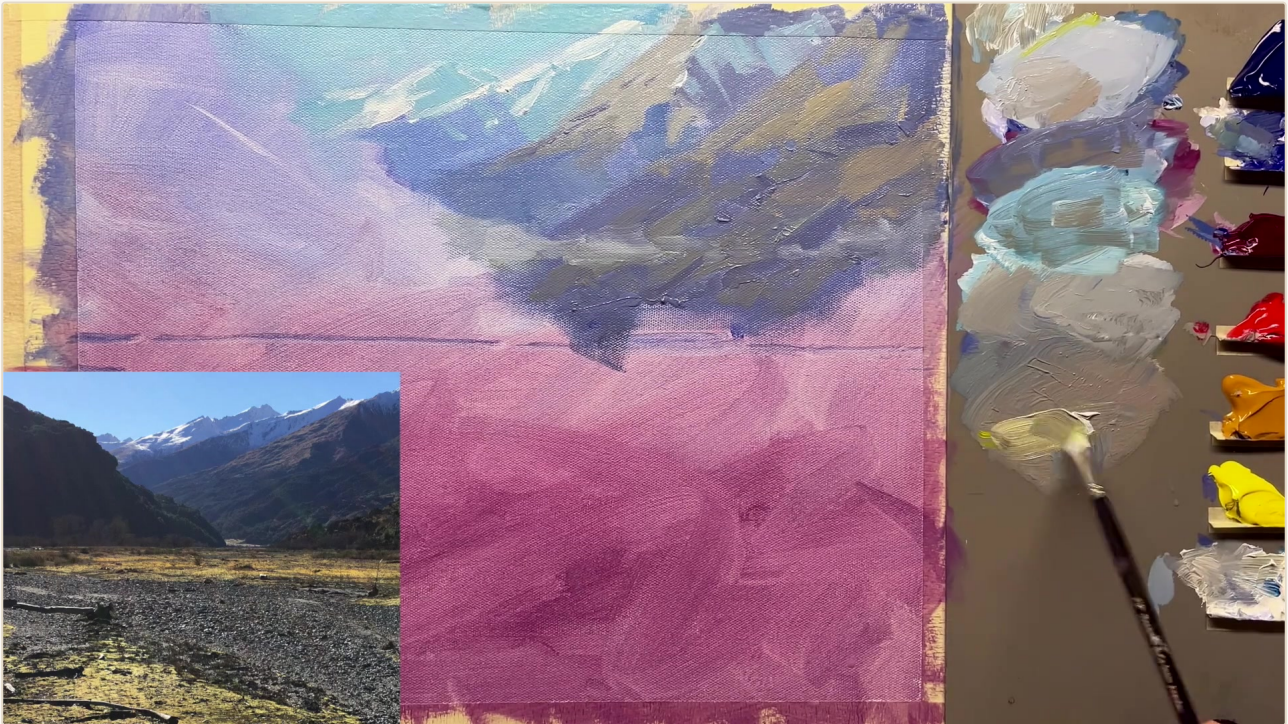
Enhance with Additional Flicks

Add a couple more flicks of snow in various spots to increase the complexity and richness of the painting. Focus on areas where light naturally hits the snow.

PRO TIP

Use a flicking motion to suggest snow texture and form, adding realism to your painting.

19 Painting the green field



Assess the Green Field

Observe the small patch of green in the field. Notice how it adds interest without dominating the scene. Aim to replicate this subtlety in your painting.

Choose the Right Green

Select a subdued green for the field. Avoid using a bright green, as it would stand out too much and disrupt the depth of the painting.

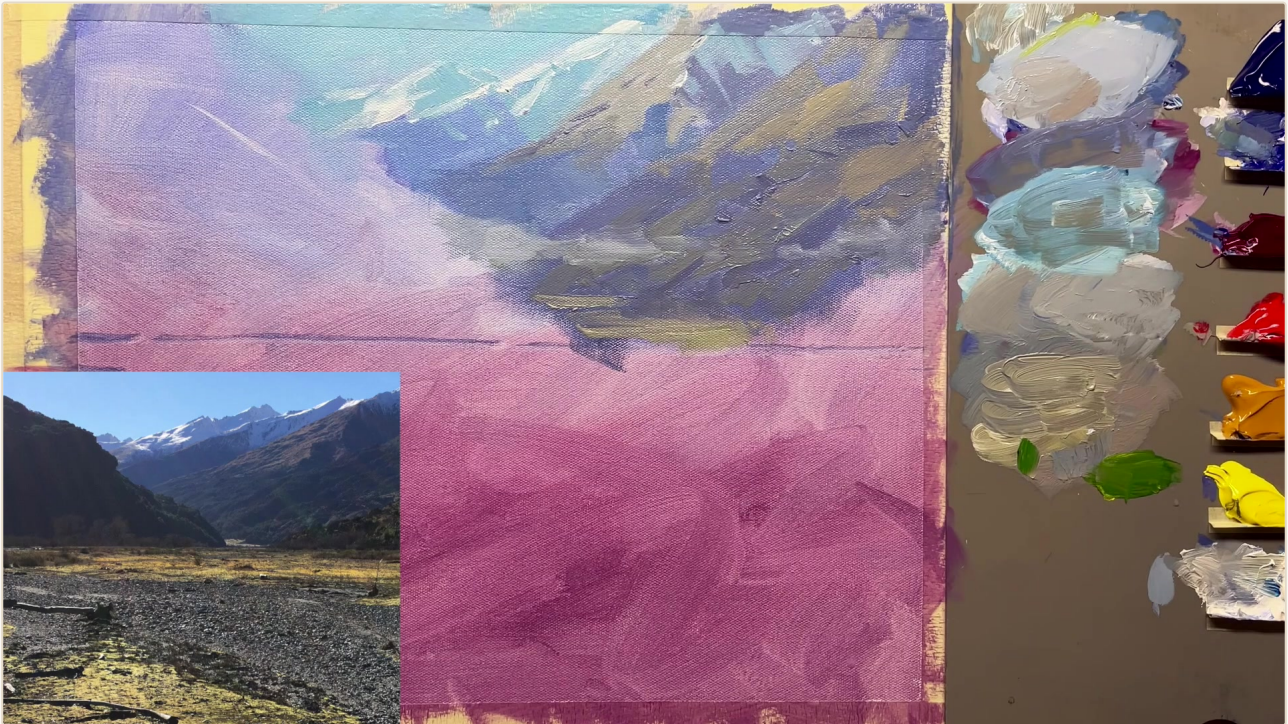
Maintain Depth with Color

Ensure all colors in the background are subdued and similar. This will help maintain the sensation of depth in your painting.

PRO TIP

Use subdued greens to maintain depth and avoid bright colors that stand out too much.

20 Lighting concept



Simplify Sections into Dark Masses

Use a big brush to simplify sections into large dark masses. This creates a 'gateway' effect, transitioning from soft shadow into light, then dark, and finally light again. This sequence of shadow and light is crucial for adding drama and professionalism to your painting.

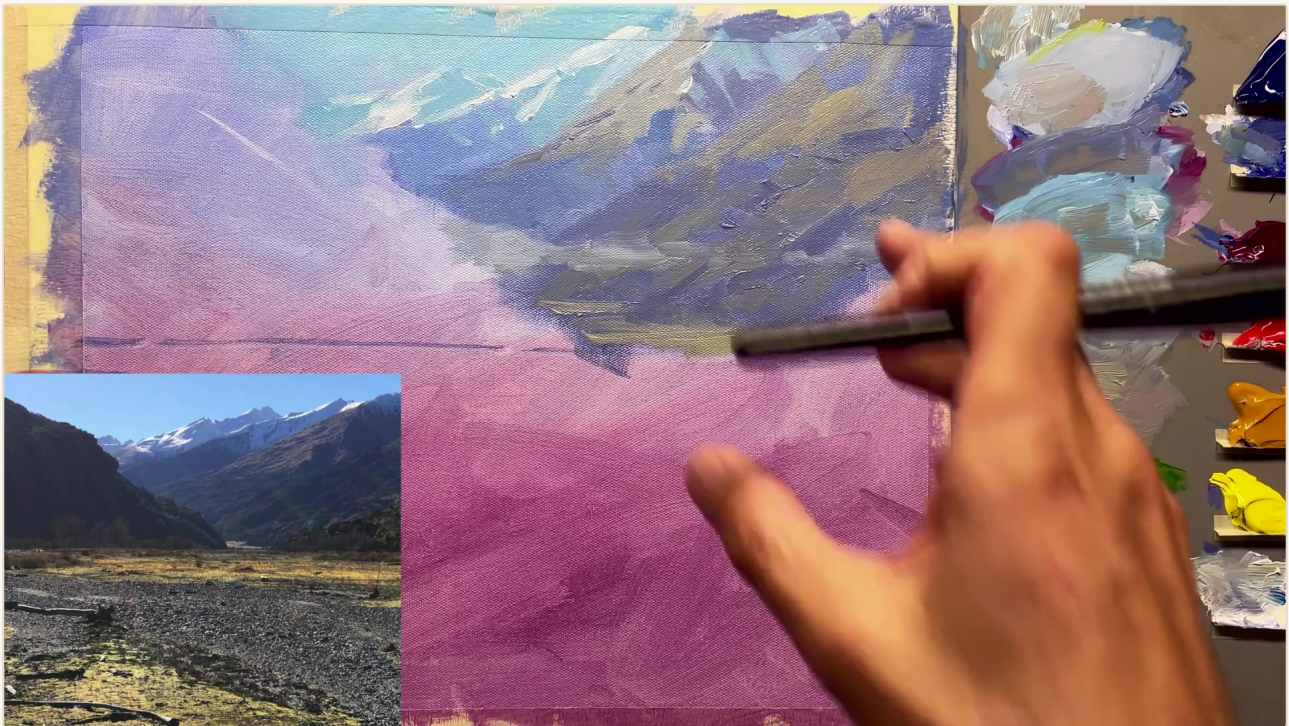
Understand the Lighting Concept

Focus on the lighting concept of alternating shadow and light. Avoid painting everything in the same light, which is a common mistake for beginners. Instead, think about how to use light and shadow to create a more dynamic and dramatic composition.

PRO TIP

Simplify sections into large dark masses to create a dramatic gateway effect.

21 Importance of lighting



Direct the Eye with Lighting

Use lighting to guide the viewer's eye around the canvas. Consider placing a spotlight on a specific area or creating a big soft shadow to emphasize certain elements. Intermittent lighting can also be effective in directing attention to key parts of the painting.

Emphasize the Importance of Light

Remember that light is crucial in painting, just as it is in cinematography. Use lighting strategically to highlight the areas you want viewers to focus on. This technique helps convey the mood and message of your artwork.

PRO TIP

Use lighting to guide the viewer's eye and emphasize key areas of your painting.

22 Painting the foreground mountains



Mix the Foreground Mountain Color

Load your brush with ultramarine, a little alizarin, and a touch of yellow ochre to create a purple hue. Add a dulled-down yellow to grey the mixture slightly, then lighten it with some white. Aim for a color closer to black than mid-grey, which will suit the desired mood for this section.

Paint the Mountain Outline

Recall your initial drawing and restate it on the canvas. Instead of a straight line, create an interesting outline by incorporating bumps and curves. This technique adds texture and suggests the presence of tiny trees along the ridgeline.

Add Details to the Mountain

Use a wriggling motion with your brush to simulate the appearance of tiny trees and natural features. Include a bluff to suggest elevation changes, enhancing the sense of scale and depth in your painting.

PRO TIP

Use a wriggling brush motion to create the appearance of tiny trees along the mountain ridgeline.

23 Scale and perspective



Add Shadows and Details

Add a little shadow to the area and include a few small details to enhance the depth and texture of the landscape. This will help create a more realistic and engaging scene.

Maintain Hill Angles

Ensure the angle of the hill remains distinct from other angles in the painting. This distinction helps maintain the natural flow and perspective of the landscape.

Consider Tree Size

Be cautious not to make tree shapes too large. Oversized trees can distort the scale, making the mountains appear smaller than intended.

PRO TIP

Keep tree shapes proportionate to maintain the correct scale of the landscape.

24 Adding mist and details



Add Mist to the Valley

Mix a little white with a touch of blue and work it up from the bottom of the valley. This will create a misty mountain feel with soft edges. Vary the thickness to add interest and suggest light catching different areas.

Highlight the Cliff

Mix a neutral gray and apply it to the side of the cliff to suggest a rock slide. This adds a light feature to the hill, enhancing the landscape's realism.

Add Subtle Green

Introduce a hint of green to the distant landscape, but keep it subtle. Avoid bright greens that would distract from the scene's depth and atmosphere.

PRO TIP

Vary the thickness of the mist to suggest light and add interest.

25 Edge variety



Assess Tree Shape

Examine the tree shape in your painting. If it appears too large or dominant, consider adjusting it for better composition.

Add Edge Variety

Introduce variety by softening some of the hard edges in your painting. This creates a more natural look, as shapes in nature often have a mix of soft and sharp edges.

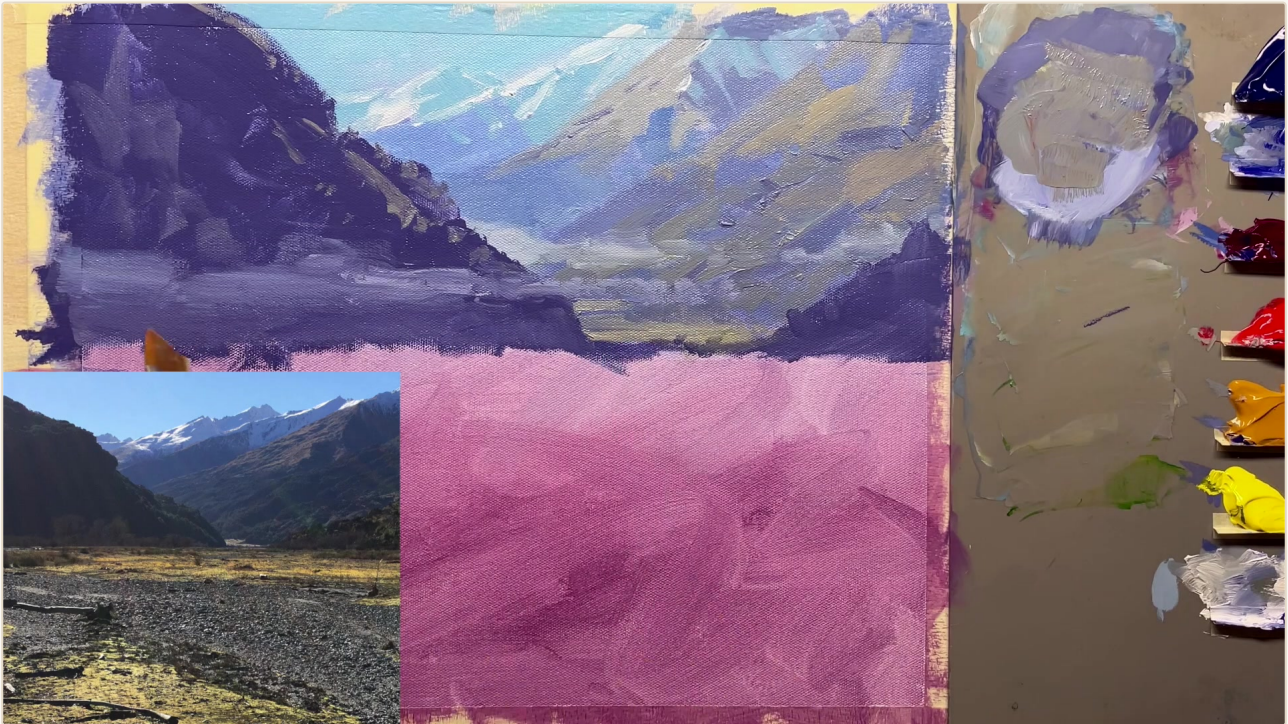
Enhance Light Effects

Add light skimming across surfaces to capture the effect of light pouring across the scene. This adds depth and highlights natural features.

PRO TIP

Soften hard edges to create a more natural and varied appearance in your painting.

26 Foreground trees and color choices



Paint Foreground Trees

Use a dark purpley gray to paint the small trees in the foreground. Ensure this color is slightly darker than the surrounding area to create contrast and highlight the light-catching effect.

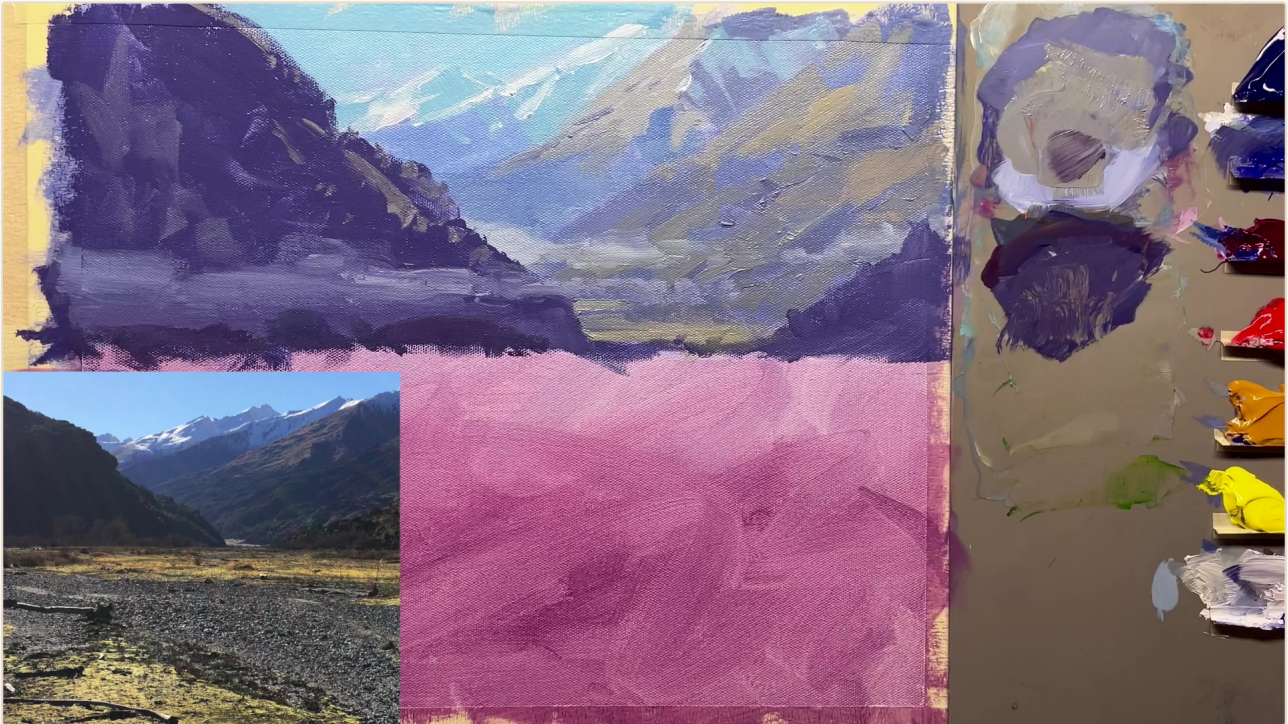
Consider Color Temperature

Avoid using phthalo blue in the foreground as it is a cool color that leans towards green. Instead, opt for warmer colors as they come forward in the painting to enhance depth and warmth.

PRO TIP

Feel free to adapt techniques and colors to suit your style and preferences.

27 Color depth and perspective



Lighten the Trees

Clean your brush thoroughly to prevent muddy colors. Lighten the trees by adding some yellow ochre. Remember, yellow ochre is a warm grey, so use it sparingly to maintain the subdued tones needed for depth.

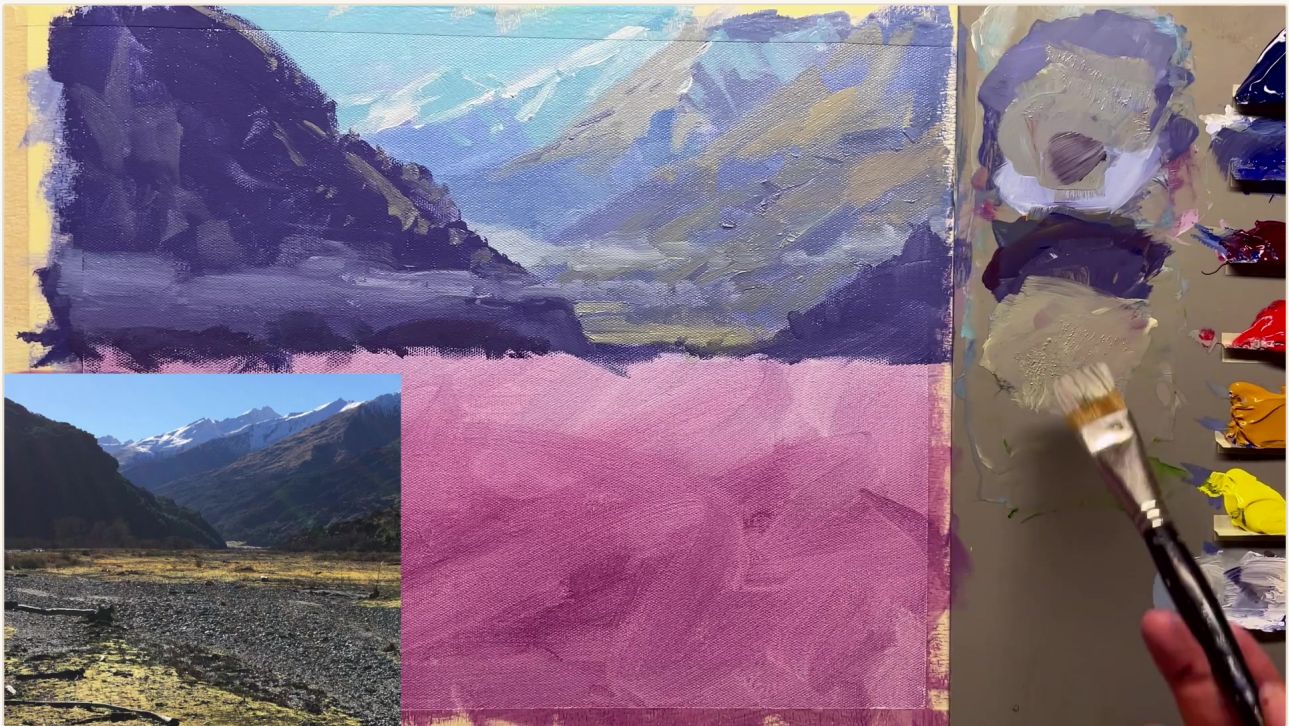
Maintain Depth with Subdued Colors

Ensure all colors in the background remain very gray and subdued. Avoid using highly saturated colors, as they will disrupt the depth effect and make the painting look flat.

PRO TIP

Use subdued colors in the background to enhance the sense of depth and perspective.

28 Creating texture with brush



Compare and Adjust Color

Compare the color on your palette to ensure it is a little warmer and lighter than a neutral grey. This will help achieve the desired effect for the trees.

Use the Edge of the Brush

Use the edge of your brush and gently wipe it off on the canvas. This technique allows the grain of the canvas to catch the tops of the trees, creating a rough texture.

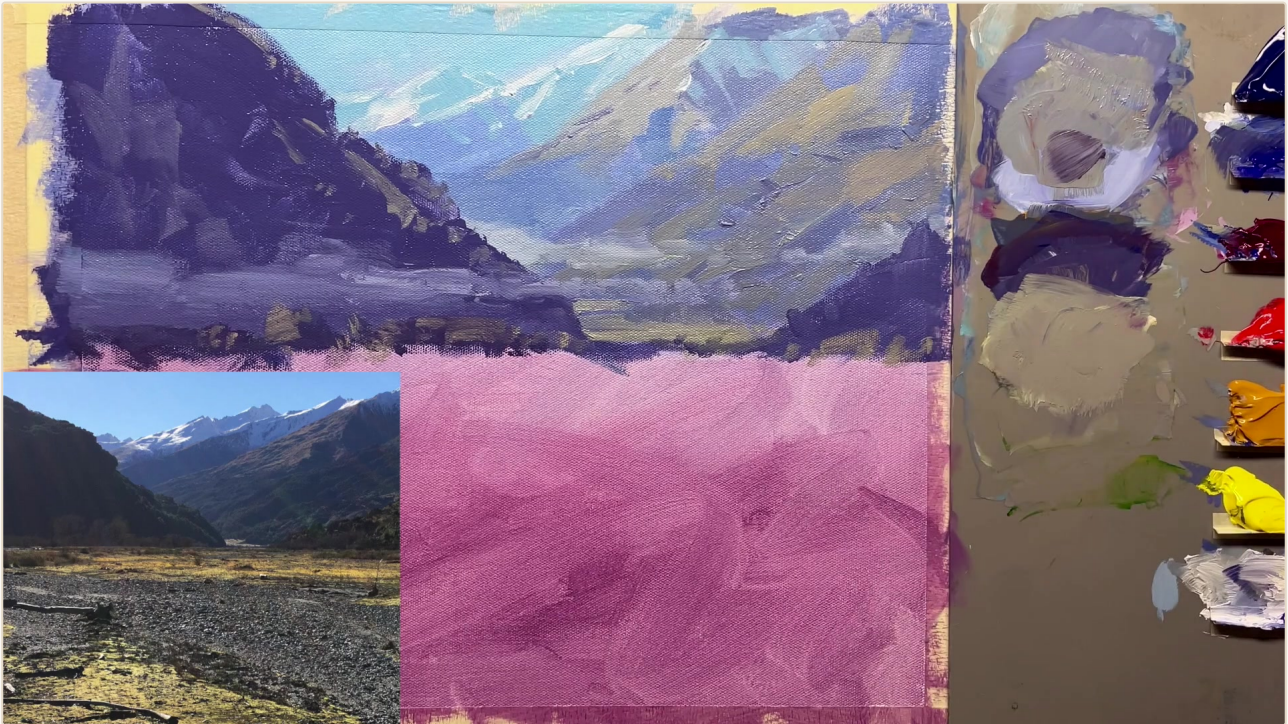
Create Diaphanous Trees

Aim to give the impression of diaphanous trees, which are semi-transparent like lace. This adds depth and texture to your painting.

PRO TIP

Use the edge of the brush to let the canvas grain catch the paint, creating a textured effect.

29 Light and shadow on trees



Define Tree Edges

Add a few strokes to define the edges of the trees. Ensure that the edges are tidy to create a clear separation from the background.

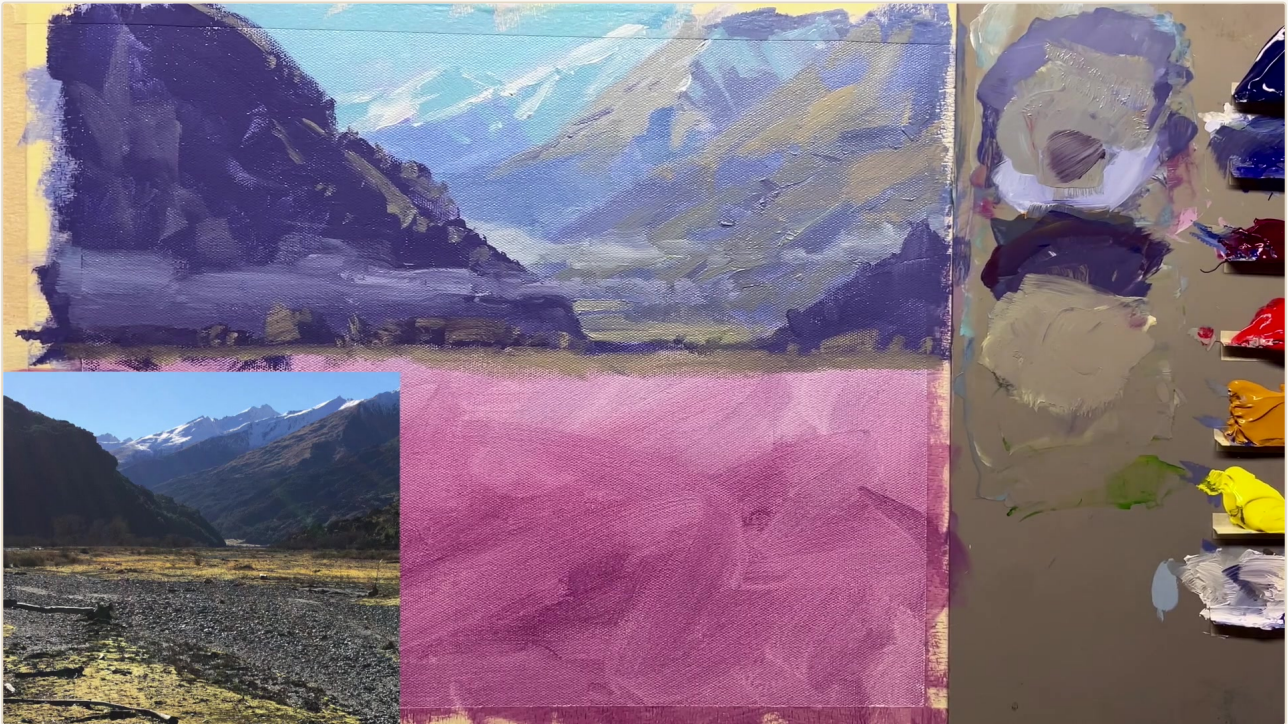
Incorporate Shadows

Leave areas of shadow within the trees to indicate the direction of the light. Avoid painting the trees as uniform blobs of green to maintain a sense of depth and light source.

PRO TIP

Always consider the direction and character of the light when painting trees to enhance realism.

30 Light character



Determine Light Character

Decide if the light in your painting is warm or cool. Consider if it's a warm light from direct sun, typically seen in the evening or morning, or a cool light from an overcast sun. This choice will influence the overall mood and color palette of your painting.

PRO TIP

Choosing the light character sets the tone and mood for your entire painting.

31 Foreground color contrast



Create a Subdued Yellow

Mix a yellow with a touch of purple to create a subdued yellow tone. This will help maintain the subtlety needed for the background areas of the painting.

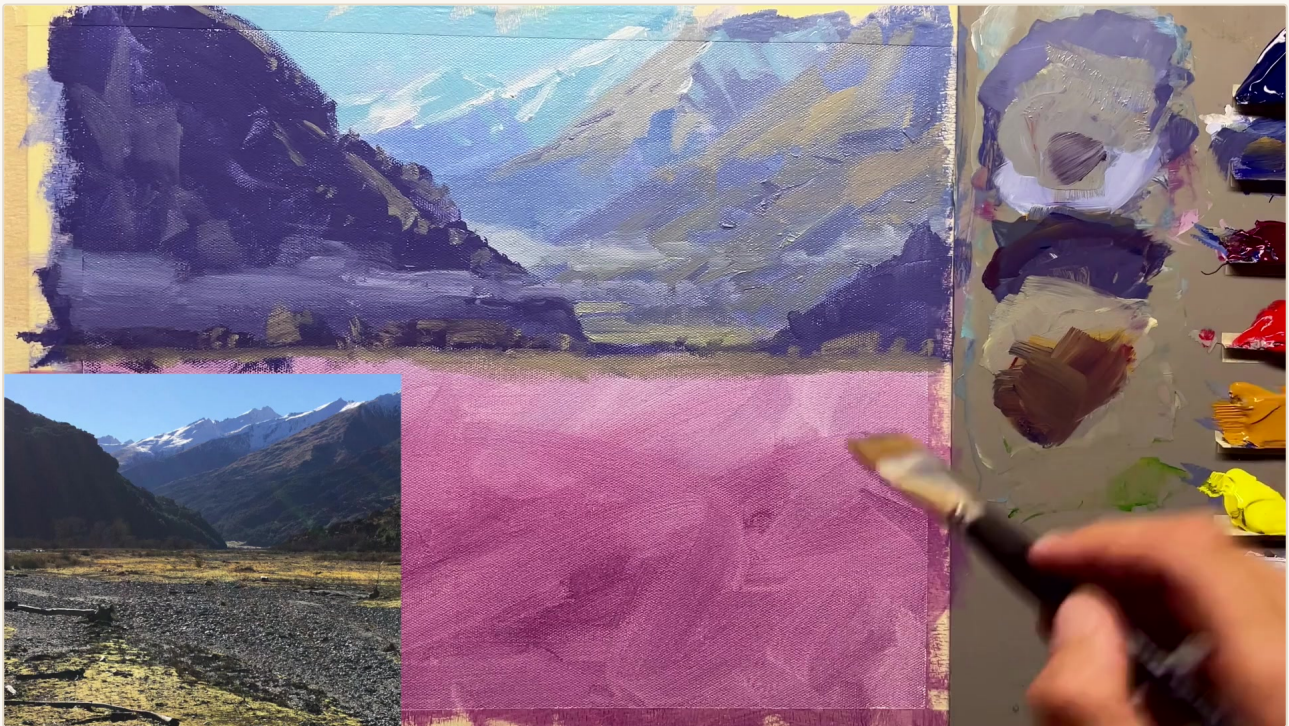
Enhance Foreground Contrast

As you move forward in the painting, gradually increase the intensity of the yellow. This will enhance the contrast with the blues and draw attention to the beautiful yellow grasses.

PRO TIP

Mix yellow with purple to create a subdued tone for background areas.

32 Mixing subdued yellows



Mix a Subdued Yellow

Combine alizarin and ultramarine to create a purple. Use this purple to gray down your yellow, as purple is the complementary color of yellow. This will result in a subtle, warm gray-yellow.

Adjust the Yellow

If the yellow appears too dark, warm it up slightly to achieve a nice, subtle yellow tone. Aim for a warm gray appearance.

Add Variation

Introduce some lighter bits of yellow to create variation. Focus these lighter areas centrally to maintain balance.

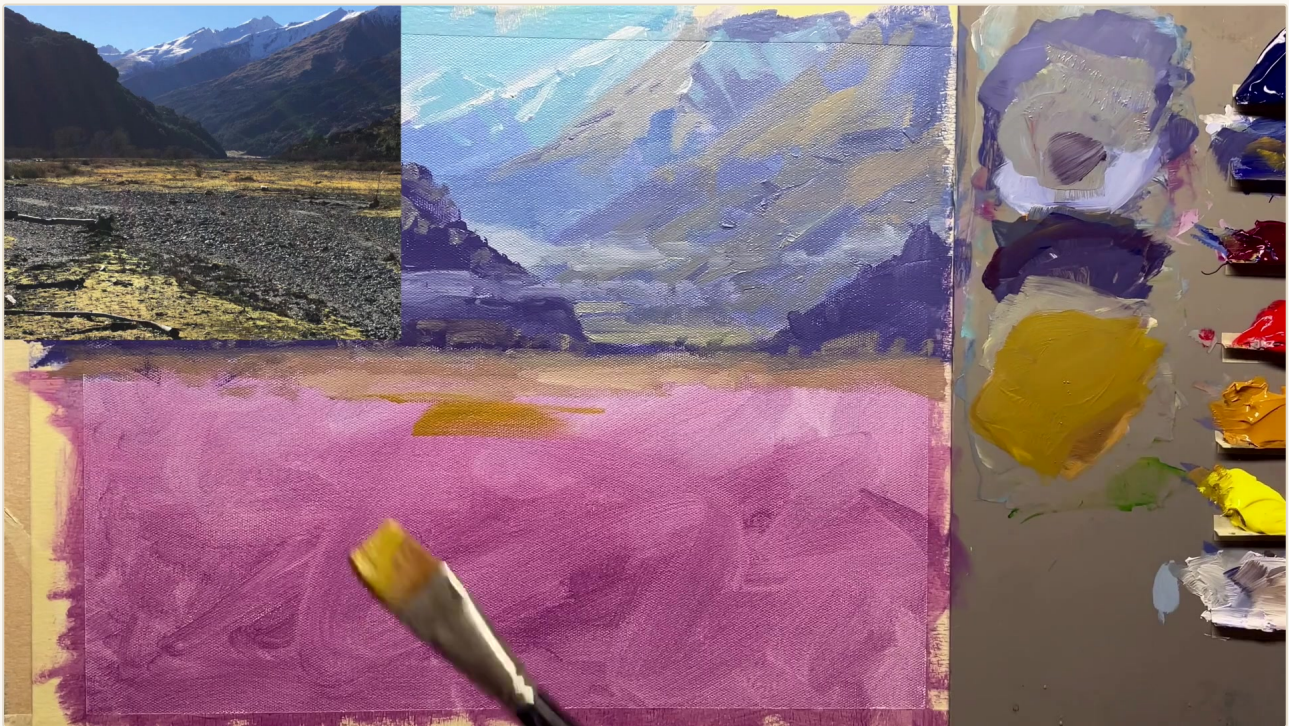
Enhance with Stronger Yellow

Begin adding stronger yellow tones, but keep them subdued by mixing in a bit of magenta and blue to form a purple. This will naturally gray down the yellow without overpowering the composition.

PRO TIP

Use purple, the complementary color of yellow, to naturally gray down your yellow tones.

33 Creating depth with perspective



Block in Shapes with Grayed Yellow

Use a grayed down yellow to block in large shapes. This color has a beautiful warmth that stands out and helps define the composition.

Apply Linear Perspective

Make the shapes larger in the foreground and gradually thinner as they recede into the background. This use of linear perspective is crucial for creating depth.

Round Foreground Shapes

Round the shapes more in the foreground. This contrast with the flatter, thinner shapes in the background enhances the sense of depth.

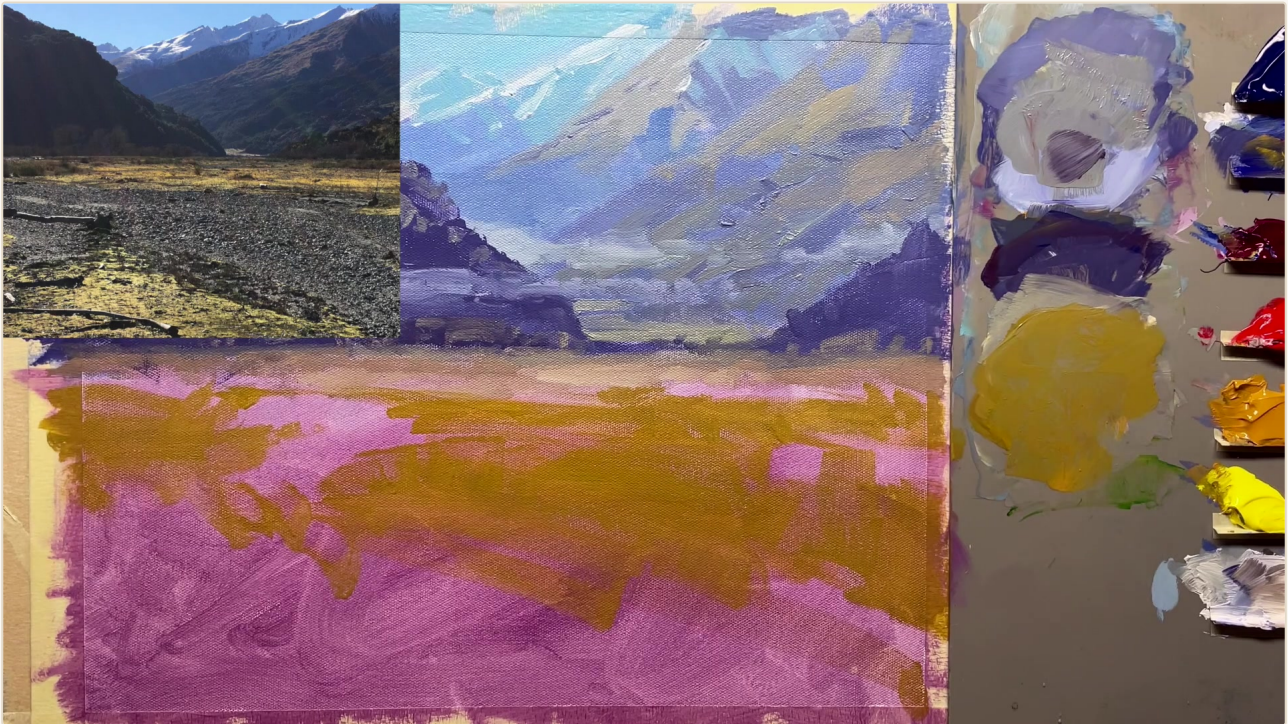
Create Pathways and Features

Add little pathways, a grey riverbed, and possibly some water. These elements add interest and guide the viewer's eye through the painting.

PRO TIP

Use linear perspective by making shapes larger in the foreground and thinner as they recede to create depth.

34 Adding water reflections



Plan Water Reflections

Decide on the placement of water reflections to create an S curve through the painting. This will guide the viewer's eye and add interest.

Mix Blue and White

Mix blue with a little white to achieve a mid-value color. This will contrast nicely with the grey stone of the riverbed.

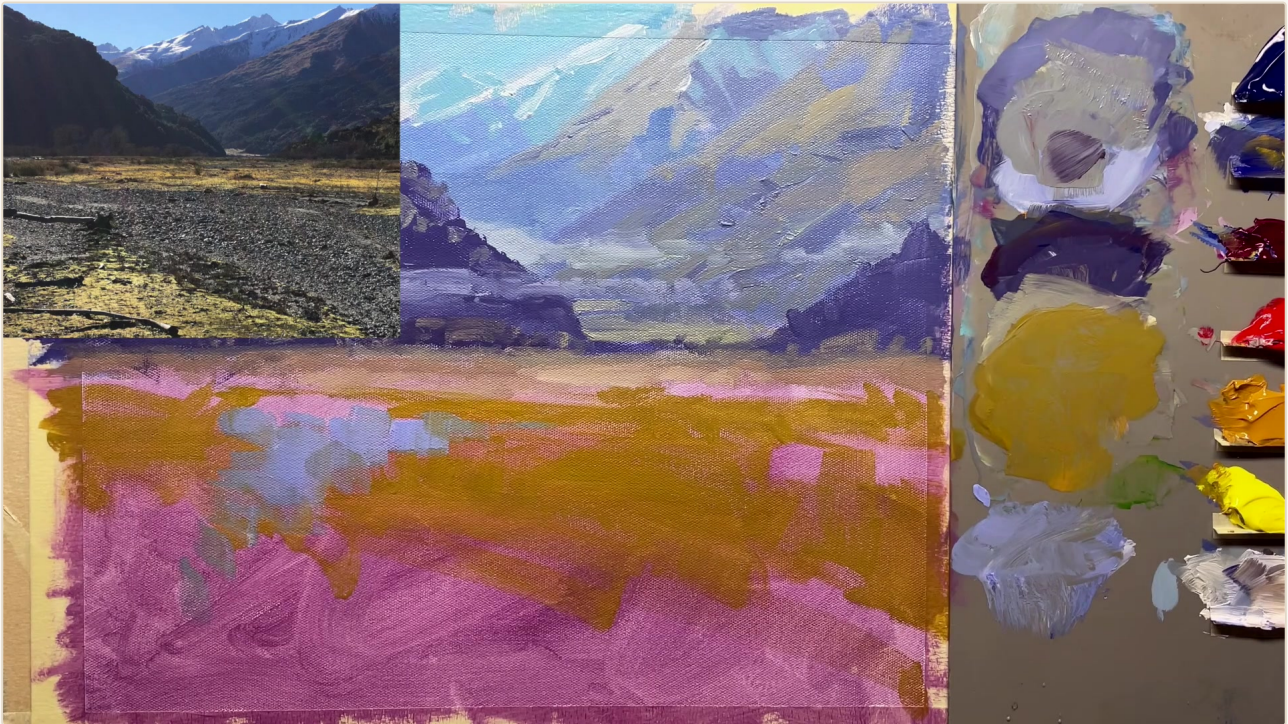
Apply Water Reflections

Use a large brush to apply the mixed color in downward strokes. Aim for a subtle effect that suggests water without overwhelming the scene.

PRO TIP

Use downward brush strokes to suggest the natural flow of water in the reflections.

35 Foreground grass and shadow



Darken the Oranges and Yellows

Mix a warm transitional color by darkening the oranges and yellows. Apply this color right on the edge of your spotlight effect to create a beautiful warm transition.

Create Tussock Shapes

Use a big brush to apply more paint with faster brushwork and increased pressure. Ease off the pressure at the top to create the soft tuft shapes of the grass, reminiscent of South Island Alpine tussocks.

Add Shadow with Purple

As you move further into the shadow, add more purple to your color mix. Use lots of paint and maintain loose brushwork to create the feeling of grass tufts in shadow.

PRO TIP

Use a big brush with loose, fast strokes to capture the texture and shape of grass tufts.

36 Adding tree details



Add Tree Details

Use a variety of brush strokes to create interest and texture in your painting. Aim for a warm tree effect by applying thin, crisp lines with the edge of your brush. Consider using a small brush for precision.

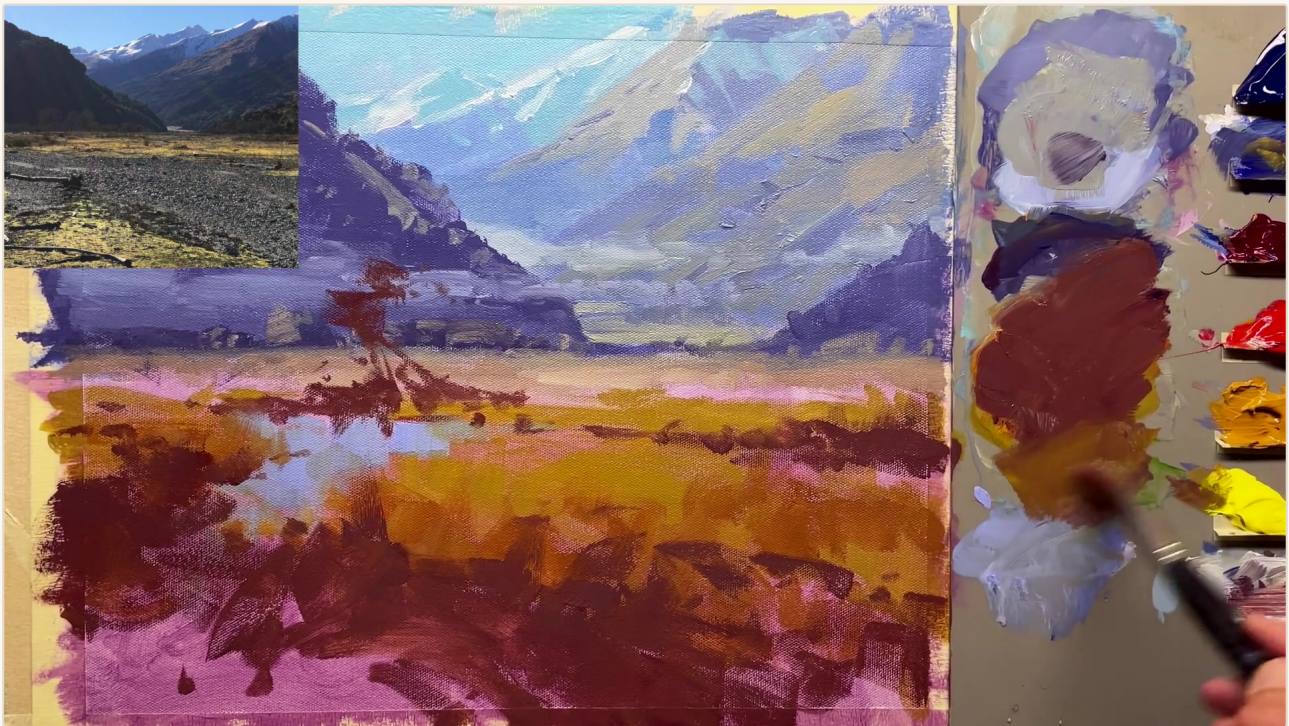
Enhance with Dark Accents

Introduce darker darks to add depth and contrast to your tree details. These dark accents will help to define the structure and form of the tree.

PRO TIP

Use a variety of brush strokes to keep your painting dynamic and interesting.

37 Reflection details



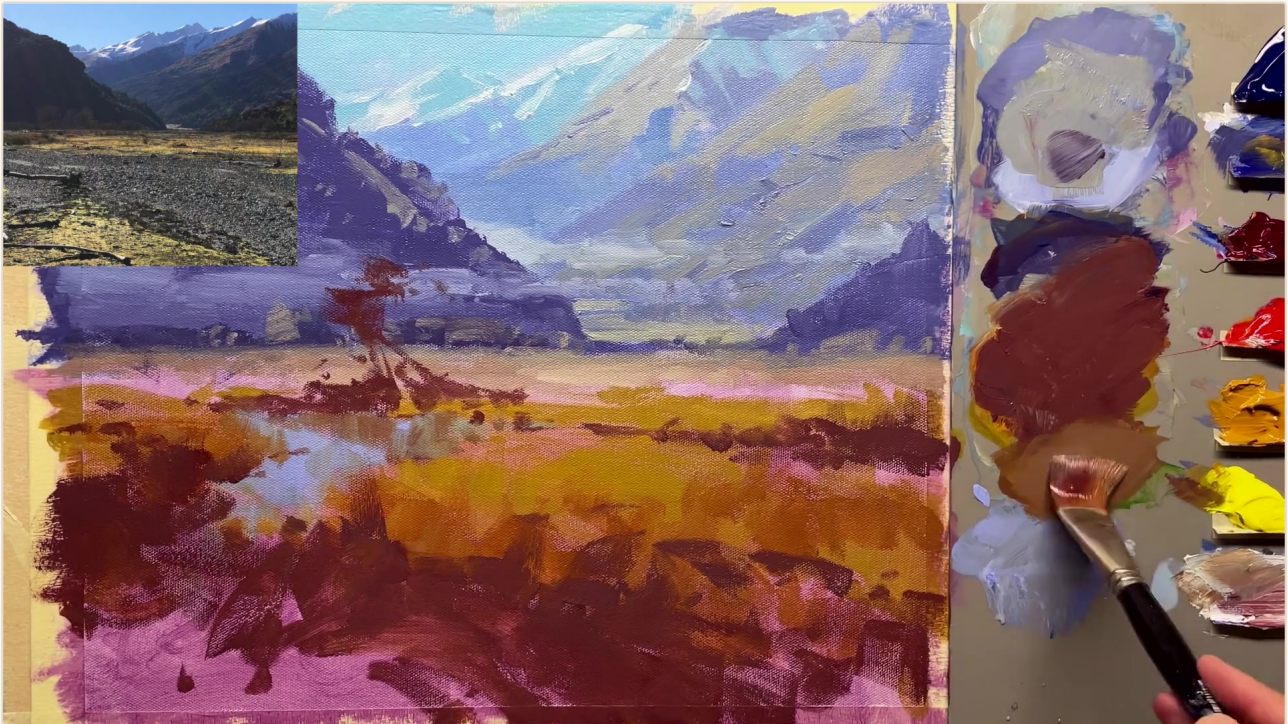
Create Reflection Color

Mix a lighter shade with a touch of yellow ochre to create a reflection color. This will help mimic the grasses reflecting on the water's edge.

PRO TIP

Use yellow ochre to add warmth and realism to reflections in water.

38 Painting with joy and freedom



Add Dark Accents

Apply dark accents using a mix of greys. Start by laying down some darks with ultramarine to create depth and contrast. Each brushstroke should be calligraphic, adding life and energy to the painting.

Celebrate Life and Energy

Focus on making your painting a celebration of life and energy. Let each stroke reflect joy and freedom, as if the artist had a wonderful time creating it. This is your moment to enjoy the creative process.

PRO TIP

Embrace the joy of painting by focusing on the movement of your brush and the relationships on the canvas.

39 Color vibrancy



Enhance Color Vibrancy

Notice the value of the initial pinky purple layer. It shows through in places, adding a vibrant shimmer to your painting. This underlying color creates depth and interest.

Incorporate Shape Variety

Focus on adding a variety of shapes to your painting. This diversity in shapes enhances the overall composition and keeps the viewer engaged.

PRO TIP

Use an initial layer of pinky purple to add vibrancy and depth to your painting.

40 Shape variety



Create Shape Variety

Focus on adding a variety of shapes to your painting. Avoid placing similar shapes next to each other. Aim for a 'family' of shapes, including a large 'granddaddy' shape, a medium 'mum' shape, a small 'kid' shape, and a few tiny 'grandkid' shapes.

PRO TIP

Ensure each shape in your painting differs in size to create visual interest and balance.

41 Using lots of paint



Prepare a Neutral Gray Blue

Mix a generous amount of ultramarine blue with a neutral gray to create a balanced gray-blue tone. Use large quantities of paint to ensure you have enough for vibrant, painterly strokes. Having ample paint available allows for more expressive and enjoyable painting.

PRO TIP

Use large pots of paint to avoid running out and to encourage bold, painterly techniques.

42 Mixing neutral grays



Mix Neutral Grays

Experiment with blending different colors together to achieve a neutral tone. Add a small amount of white to the mix to reveal the true neutrality of the color. Adjust the mixture as needed until you achieve a balanced, neutral gray.

PRO TIP

Use white to help identify the neutrality of your mixed color.

43 Alluvial dust colors



Lighten Alluvial Dust Color

Add a little white to your existing alluvial dust color. This will create the appearance of the dust in the light. Aim for a neutral gray that is lighter than the shaded version.

PRO TIP

Use white to lighten colors and achieve the effect of light hitting a surface.

44 Highlighting and texture



Create Shadows and Light

Visualize a bush casting shadows across the path. Use soft edges to depict clumps of grass pushing into the shape of the shadow. This adds realism and depth to the scene.

Add Textural Elements

Incorporate elements like logs or stones by using a bit of crayon to suggest their presence. This adds texture and interest to the painting.

Enhance with Highlights

Mix in more white to create a spotlight effect on certain areas. This will help highlight odd shapes of plants and other elements poking through, adding contrast and focus.

PRO TIP

Use soft edges to depict clumps of grass for a more natural look.

45 Detailing with highlights



Apply Highlight Color

Lay on the highlight color thickly, allowing it to brush off lightly onto the surface. Avoid pressing the brush flat; instead, drag it gently to create texture.

Add Subtle Details

Introduce small branches and other subtle details with light strokes. These elements should suggest detail without being too defined.

Maintain Shadow Integrity

Be cautious with the highlights in shadowed areas. Avoid using too light a color, as it can disrupt the shadow effect.

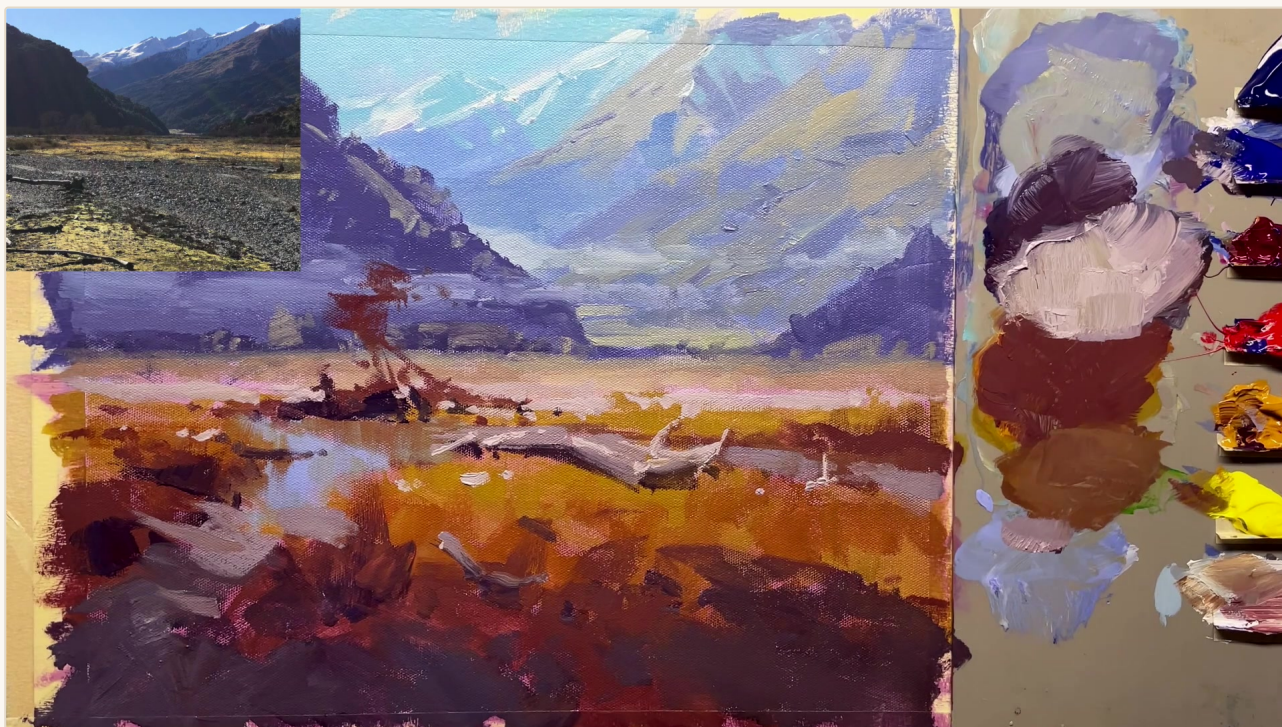
Enhance with Flicks

Use a few light flicks to suggest rocks and other fine details. These should enhance the scene without being overly specific.

PRO TIP

Avoid pressing the brush flat; drag it gently to create texture.

46 Adding green accents



Add Green Accents

Introduce small amounts of green into the painting to interact with the warm tones. This creates a pleasing color shimmer that adds interest to the scene.

Darken in Shadows

Ensure that as the green moves into shadowed areas, it becomes darker. This maintains the depth and realism of the painting.

PRO TIP

Use green accents to enhance the warmth and create visual interest.

47 Enhancing shadows and reflections



Add Green to the Bush

Introduce a little green to the area behind the log to suggest a bush growing there. This green should harmonize with the greens in the background, creating a visual connection that guides the viewer's eye through the painting.

Enhance with Intense Green

Add a pop of more intense green to the bush area, but ensure it's not too intense. This adds color interest and ties the foreground to the background.

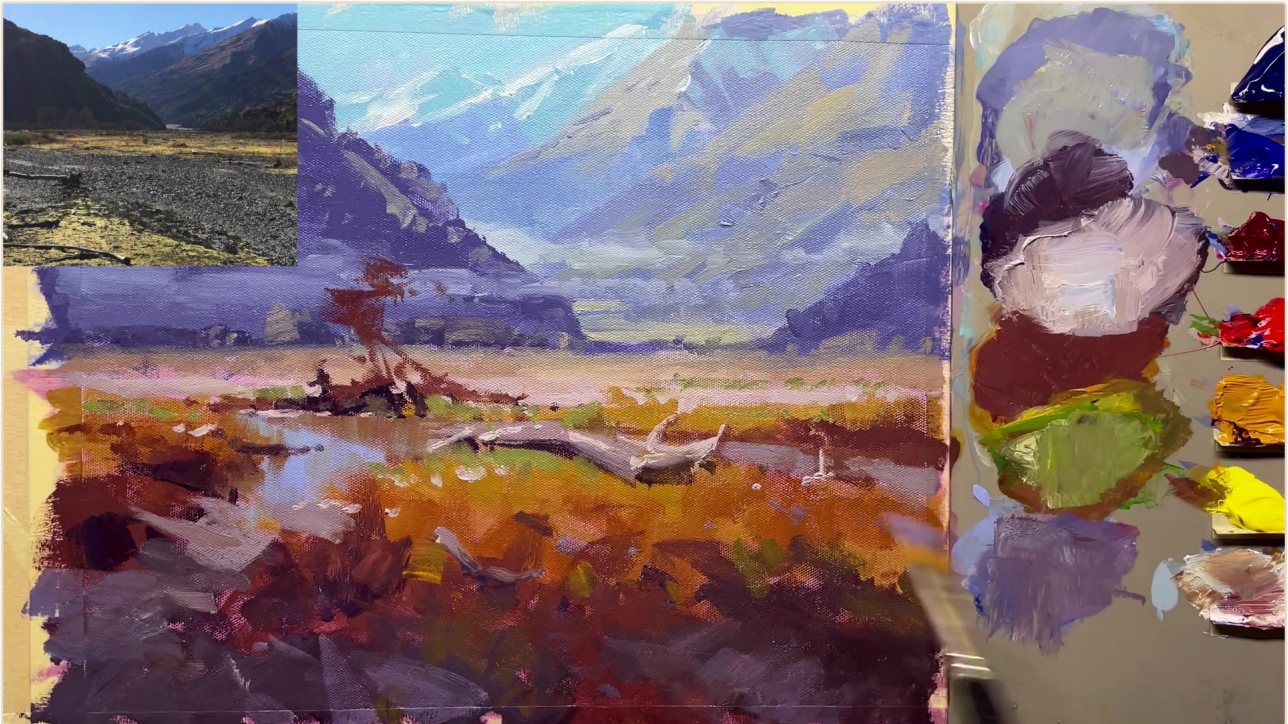
Lighten the Riverbed Reflection

Apply a lighter blue-grey to the riverbed area in shadow. This color mimics the sky reflecting off the riverbed, adding a touch of light and reducing the foreboding appearance.

PRO TIP

Use a lighter blue-grey to reflect the sky on shadowed areas, adding light and depth.

48 Final details



Add Mauve Highlights

Introduce a few subtle mauve tones around the painting to create a gentle shimmer effect. This will add depth and interest to the scene.

Enhance Rock Details

Paint a small rock with light tones to make it stand out. Be careful not to overdo the details, as simplicity often enhances the overall composition.

PRO TIP

Use subtle color variations to create a shimmering effect without overwhelming the painting.

49 Adding water details



Add Light Accents

Use a small brush to apply light accents to the water. This will help create a sense of movement and sparkle on the surface.

Apply Dark Accents

Introduce a few dark accents to contrast with the light areas. This adds depth and dimension to the water.

Create River Details

Add a hint of a river extending into the background with a bluer tone. This suggests distance and continuity in the landscape.

Reflect Surroundings

Paint reflections of nearby elements in the water. This connects the water with the surrounding landscape and enhances realism.

PRO TIP

Use a small brush for detailed accents to add movement and depth to the water.

50 Final color highlights



Add Vibrant Yellow Highlights

Introduce a bright, puppy yellow highlight to the painting. Place it strategically where it contrasts with the surrounding blue. This contrast is essential to the painting's theme of blue versus yellow-orange.

Create Depth with Grayed Yellow

To add depth, take the yellow highlight back into the painting's space. Gray it down slightly to suggest distance and continuity. This helps the viewer's eye travel from the foreground to the background, connecting elements across the scene.

PRO TIP

Use contrast between vibrant yellow and blue to emphasize the painting's theme.

51 Optional details



Add Highlights to the Tree

Consider adding a small highlight to the tree in the light area. This will enhance the sense of light and depth in your painting.

Include a Distant Bush

Paint a small bush in the background to help guide the viewer's eye into the painting. This adds depth and interest to the scene.

Add Small Birds

Paint a couple of small birds in the sky to add life and movement to your composition.

Sign Your Painting

Sign your painting in a useful spot, such as the bottom corner. Use a bold color like red to make it stand out.

Consider a Red House

Think about adding a small red house on the prairie in the background. This can add a charming focal point to your landscape.

PRO TIP

Use bold colors for your signature to make it stand out.

Summary & Key Takeaways

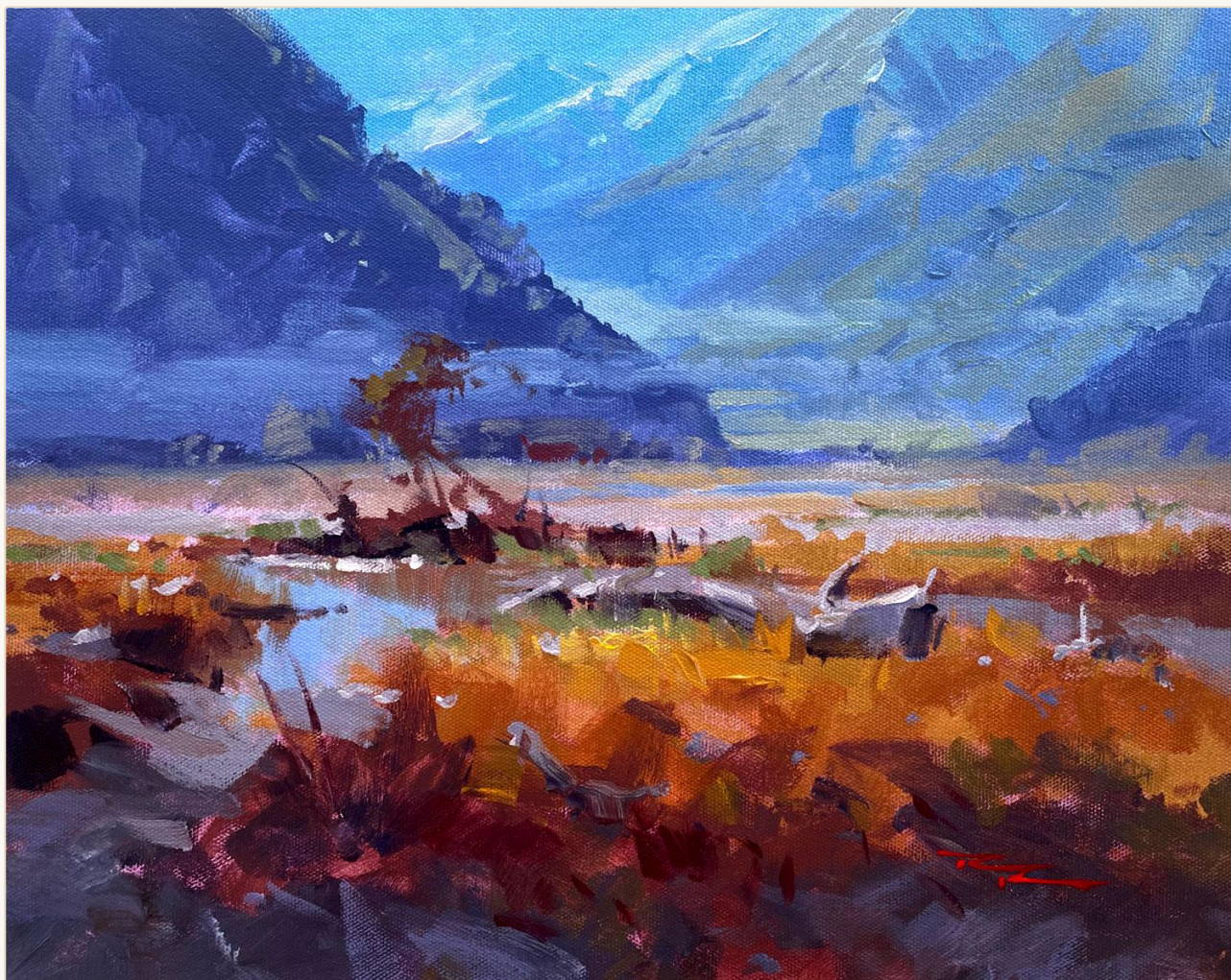
Embark on your painting journey by embracing the vibrant contrast between the blues of the mountains and the warm yellows of the foreground. This striking contrast will guide your theme and set the tone for your Golden Valley masterpiece. Begin by preparing your materials and selecting a limited palette and brush set to maintain consistency and ease throughout the process.

As you progress, focus on building your composition from the background forward, layering colors to create depth and perspective. Use techniques such as scrubbing and blending to achieve smooth transitions, and be mindful of maintaining clean brushes to ensure vibrant colors. Pay attention to the placement of major lines and masses to create dynamic space divisions and avoid symmetry.

In the final stages, enhance your painting with atmospheric effects and fine details. Use subtle mist and snow highlights to add interest and realism, and ensure your shadows and highlights maintain the depth and contrast necessary for a captivating scene. Remember, each brushstroke contributes to the overall harmony and balance of your painting, so take your time to refine and perfect your artwork.

LESSON POINTS TO REMEMBER

- Focus on the first element you love about a scene to guide your painting's theme.
- Use a mid-grey palette to better judge the values of your colors.
- Wet your brush before starting to prevent acrylic paint from drying in the ferrule.
- Avoid placing major lines on the halfway mark to create more interesting space divisions.
- When using acrylics, start from the back and work your way forward for the best layering results.
- Brush the color past where you want it to finish for a seamless transition.
- Squint at your painting to ensure the lights and darks are close together, matching the subtle differences in the reference.
- Use subdued greens to maintain depth and avoid bright colors that stand out too much.



Golden Valley 13x15" Acrylic 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.

Summer valley by Lindsay Shaw



Summer valley by Lindsay Shaw

Great work Lindsay. Strong colour and contrast. Decent drawing, though I'd like a little more info in the distant mountains seeing as that's where we're leading the eye too. The purple and grey-green combo isn't working so well, mainly because the grey-green is darker than the purple. It should be lighter since it's actually the sunlit tops of the foliage. Lovely interesting impasto foreground. The log needs a reflection where it touches the water. Good stuff!

Golden Valley demo painting study by Marie-France L'Ecuyer



Golden Valley demo painting study by Marie-France L'Ecuyer

Very rich work, Marie. A pleasure to look at with so much going on. A landscape made from paint! Beautiful. Wouldn't change a thing.

Golden Valley by Nancy Newton



Golden Valley by Nancy Newton

Good job Nancy. Great colour, drawing and brushwork. Your little tree looks a bit odd like it's made from fence posts, but then, so does mine. :-)

"Rees Valley" watercolour & gouache, Eric Hillmer, Toronto, ON Canada



"Rees Valley" watercolour & gouache, Eric Hillmer, Toronto, ON Canada

Nice one Eric. Good drawing. I'd like to see larger brushwork in the foreground and less grey. Hard to get that back in watercolour I know. Good to see you playing with the colour in the sky. Looks good. Need some colour variety in the foreground tree and trunk because they're looking a bit flat. Also look at where the grasses should be reflecting in the water. A little more detail in the central plain, a few subtle shadows of bushes will help that somewhat flat area a little.