



Waipu Cove

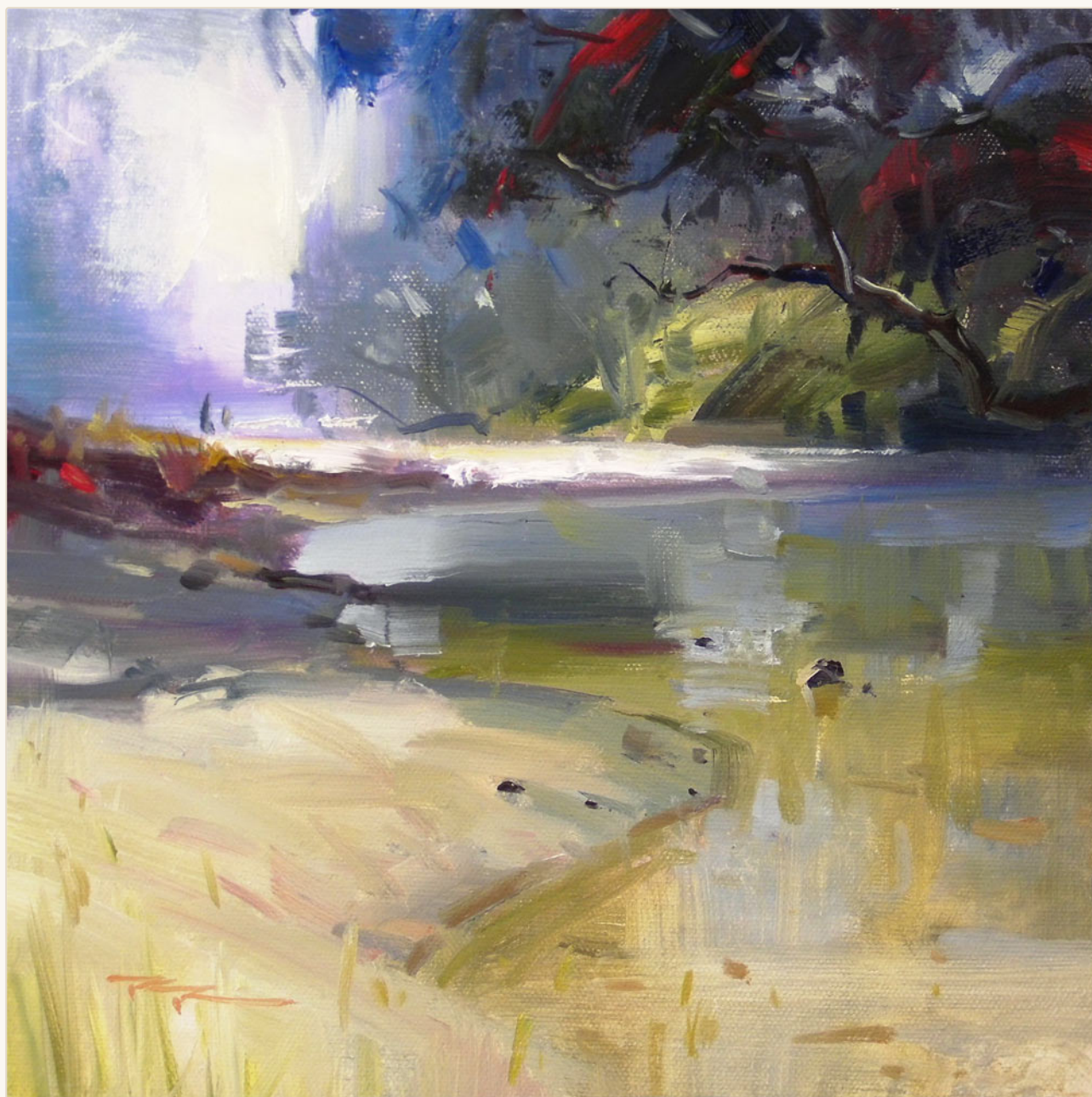
A step-by-step painting guide by Richard Robinson

Watch the full lesson at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/9-Waipu-Cove>

MY PAINTING CLUB

Introduction

In this chapter, I invite you to explore the captivating scene of Waipu Cove, where the challenge lies not just in capturing the beauty of the landscape, but in transforming it into a vibrant tapestry of abstract elements. As we delve into this lesson, you'll learn to appreciate the interplay of color, texture, and line, focusing on the variation within the major masses. The key is to balance soft and sharp edges, creating a dynamic contrast that enhances the painting's overall aesthetic. This approach encourages you to see beyond the literal representation of sand and water, embracing the abstract qualities that make each scene unique. While this method may take longer than a traditional step-by-step approach due to its trial-and-error nature, it offers a rewarding opportunity to refine your skills and gain a deeper understanding of your materials. Remember, mistakes are part of the journey, guiding you toward a clearer vision of what you wish to achieve. So, take your time, enjoy the process, and let the scene unfold in its abstract beauty. Don't forget to visit the online resource page for additional photos and information to support your creative journey.



"Waipu Cove" 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
- 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 Loosening Up Your Painting Style



Embrace Abstract Aesthetics

Focus on the abstract aesthetic quality of the paint as much as the realism of the scene. This involves creating a rich variety of color and texture on a small scale while still painting recognizable objects.

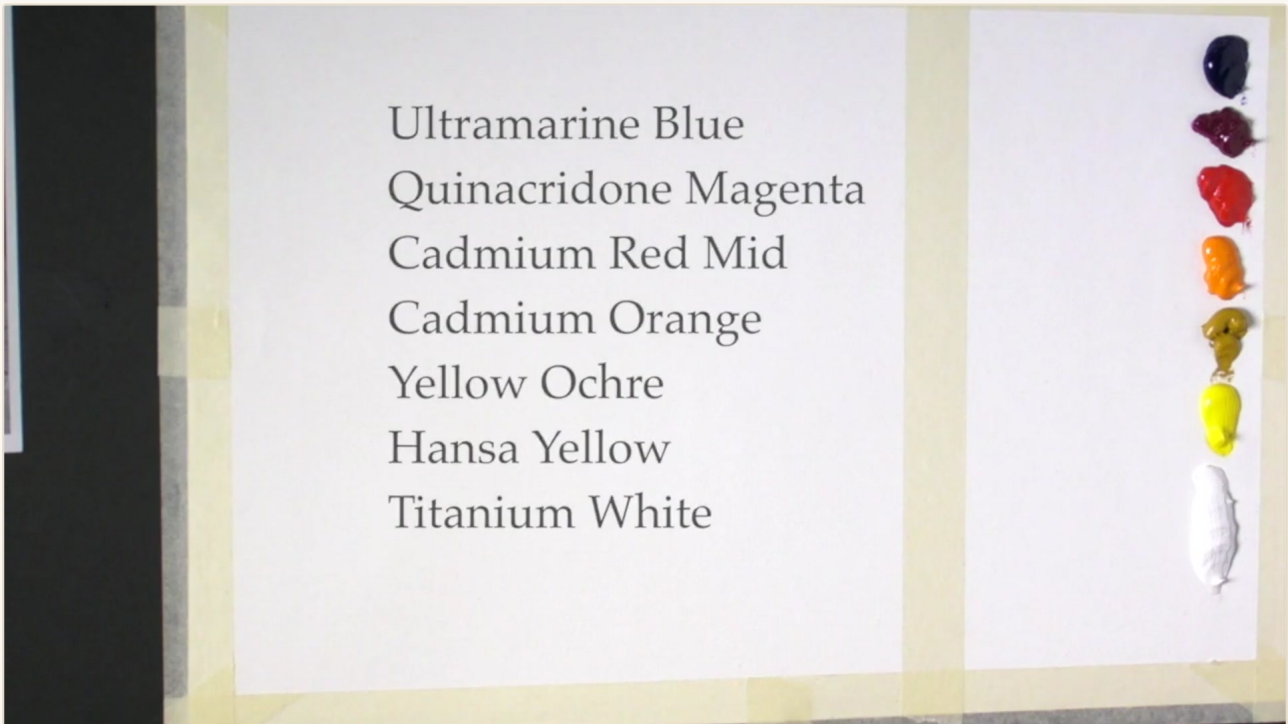
Balance Detail and Expression

Avoid the natural tendency to describe everything in minute detail. Instead, aim for a balance between detailed realism and free, expressive brushwork to achieve a more dynamic painting style.

PRO TIP

Consider both the abstract qualities and the realistic elements in your painting to achieve a balanced, expressive style.

2 Tools and Materials



Prepare Your Canvas

Tape down an 11-inch square canvas to your work surface to keep it steady while you paint.

Gather Your Tools

Select a wide variety of tools for this painting session. Include metal and rubber spatulas, palette knives, and brushes of different sizes and shapes. Prepare to use a cloth for rubbing off paint and your finger for blending.

Use Walnut Oil

Have a small tray of walnut oil ready to mix into your paints. This will help the paint flow better and make it easier to cover the canvas.

Prepare a Plastic Card

Find a piece of plastic, like a substitute credit card, and round off the corners. This tool will be useful for various techniques without dirtying your actual credit card.

PRO TIP

Use walnut oil to improve paint flow and coverage on the canvas.

3 Reference Photo and Vision Technique



Use a Black and White Reference

Print your reference photo in black and white. This helps you focus on the shapes and values rather than being influenced by the colors in the photograph.

Focus on Large Shapes

Draw a line to delineate a square on your canvas. Concentrate on the large shapes within this area, thinking about how to use beautiful paint to make these shapes interesting.

Blur Your Vision

Intentionally blur your vision to see only large, colorful shapes. This technique helps you focus on the composition and color dynamics rather than getting caught up in details.

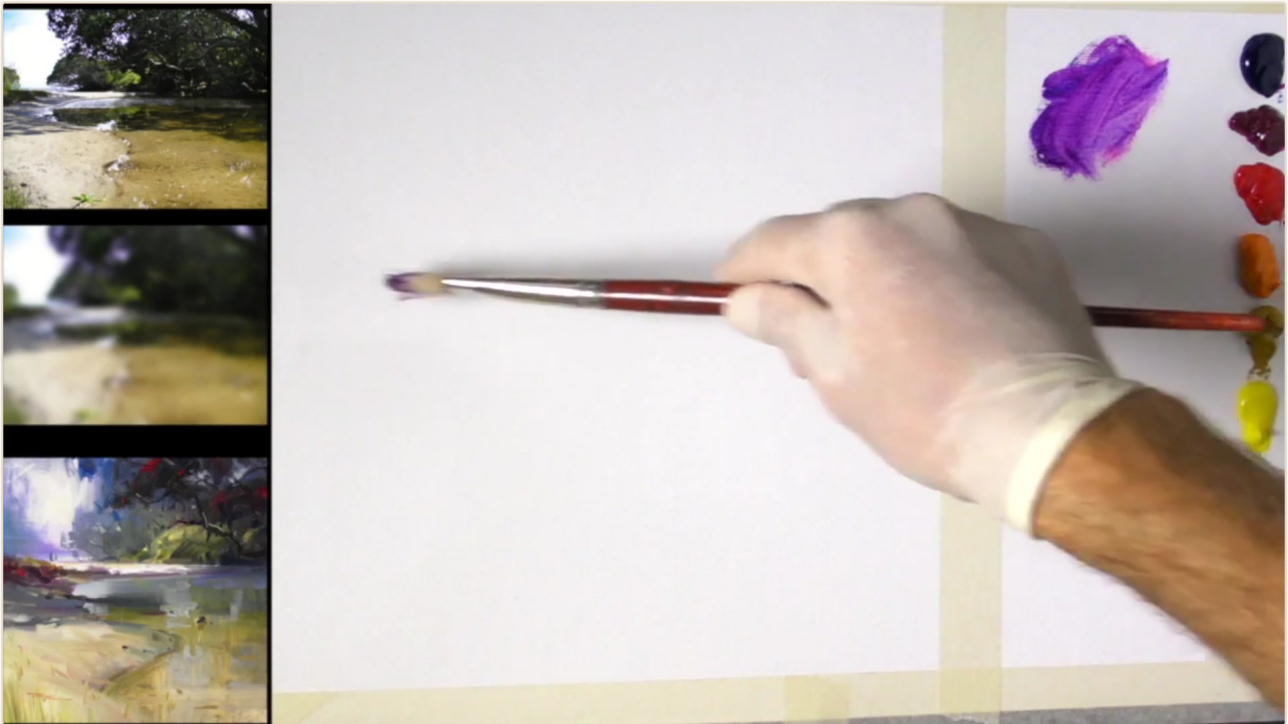
Add Detail at the End

Once the large shapes are established, add a little bit of detail to hold the whole painting together. This final touch will enhance the overall cohesion of your artwork.

PRO TIP

Blur your vision to focus on large, colorful shapes, simplifying the painting process.

4 Initial Drawing and Composition



Mix Initial Color

Create a thin mix using blue and magenta with plenty of walnut oil. This will serve as your drawing color for the initial sketch.

Draw the Horizon

Use the mixed color to draw in the horizon line. Focus on capturing the major shapes and aim for an asymmetrical balance.

Focus on Major Shapes

Blur your eyes to simplify the scene and concentrate on painting the major shapes. This helps in capturing the essence of the composition without getting lost in details.

Incorporate the S Curve

Identify and draw the beautiful S curve that leads into the painting. This curve adds movement and guides the viewer's eye through the composition.

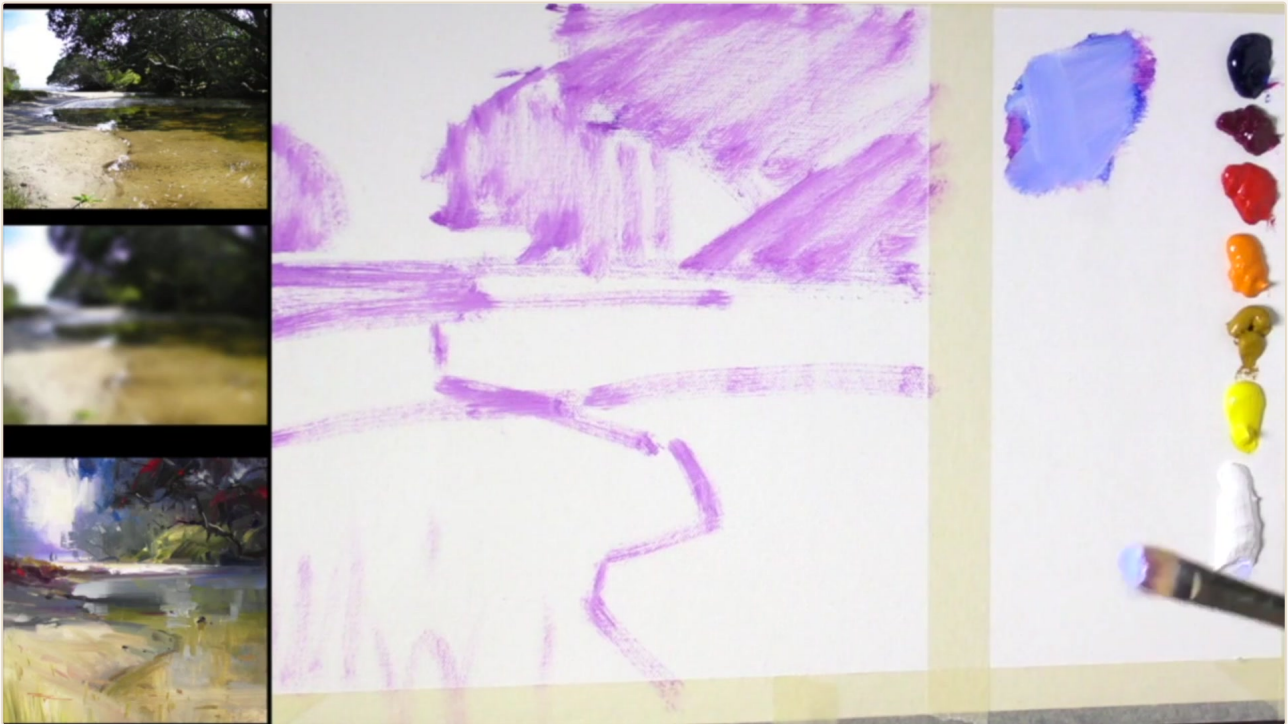
Add Foreground Details

Include a few grasses in the foreground to add interest and texture. These small elements provide a touch of spice to the overall scene.

PRO TIP

Blur your eyes to focus on major shapes and simplify the scene.

5 First Layer and Color Vibrancy



Start with Mid-Value Color

Use a number eight flat bristle brush and mix a bluish mid-value color with walnut oil for a thin application. Apply this color to the tree in the background to create depth and a glowing effect with the light coming through.

Mix Paint on Canvas

Mix paint directly on the canvas by adding white and other colors to achieve a freer, juicier look. Allow the colors to blend naturally on the canvas rather than on the palette.

Create Gradations in Color Blocks

Paint big blocks of color with gradations, not flat. Gradate one color into another, such as adding yellow to blue to create green. Maintain consistent values within each color block to ensure the background sits back behind the foreground.

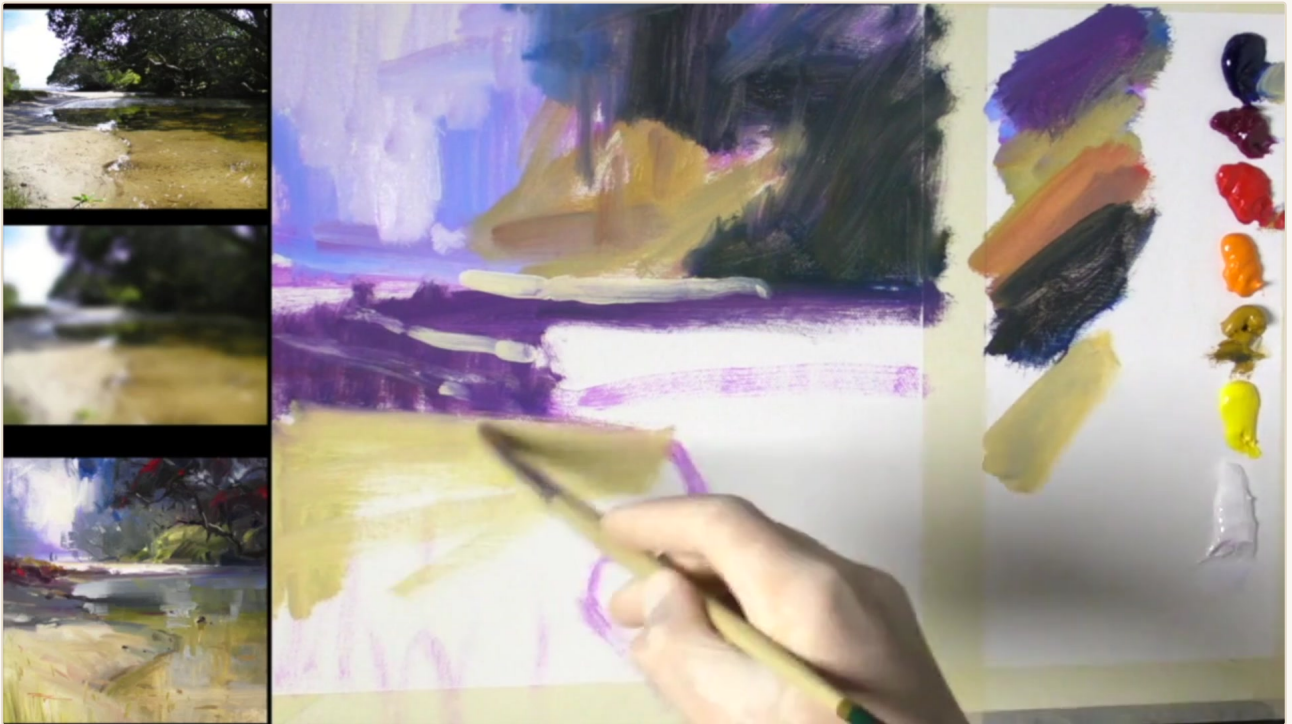
Enhance Color Vibrancy

Push the vibrancy of colors in the first layer to be brighter than the final intended look. This initial vibrancy will tone down as you apply subsequent layers, resulting in a more subtle finish.

PRO TIP

Mix paint directly on the canvas for a freer, juicier look as colors blend naturally.

6 Foreground Color Relationships



Mix Sunlit Sand Color

Combine white with a little of the two yellows to create the sunlit sand color. This mixture will capture the bright, warm tones of the sand under sunlight.

Understand Foreground Color Relationships

Focus on the two major color areas in the foreground: the sand and the light under the water. These areas are crucial for the painting's overall color harmony.

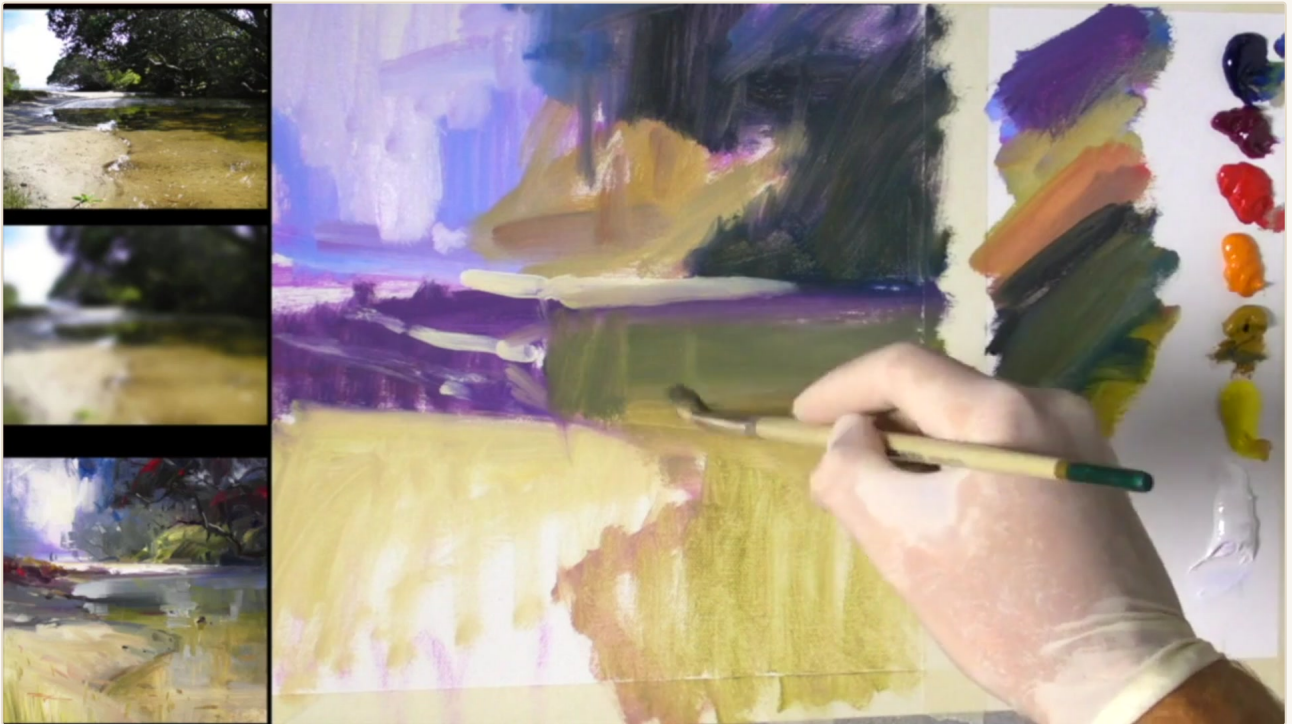
Adjust Tonal Variation

Ensure the sand color on the right is slightly darker and greener compared to the dry sand on the left. This subtle tonal variation will enhance the realism and depth of the scene.

PRO TIP

Pay attention to the tonal variation between the sand under the water and the dry sand to maintain accurate color relationships.

7 Painting Shadows and Water



Paint the Shadow Across the Sand

Add a dark shadow across the sand, ensuring it flows seamlessly into the water. This shadow is cast by the large tree, so maintain its consistency.

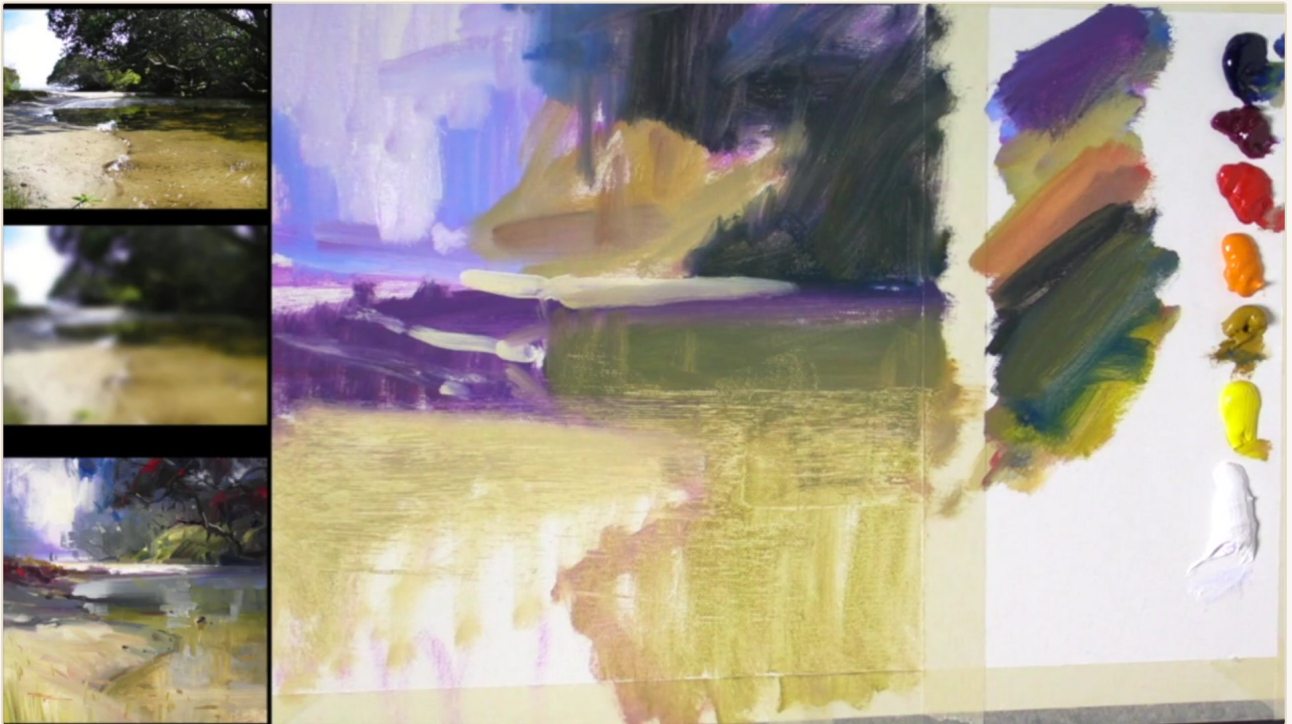
Maintain Stroke Direction in Water

Use horizontal or vertical strokes when painting calm, reflective water. Avoid diagonal strokes as they can disrupt the calmness of the scene.

PRO TIP

Use horizontal or vertical strokes to maintain the calmness of reflective water.

8 Using Tools and Softening Edges



Experiment with the Card Tool

Try using a card tool on thicker paint to see how it affects the texture. Avoid using it on thin paint as it may not be as effective. Feel free to experiment and find what works best for your style.

Soften Edges with a Large Brush

Use a large brush to soften the edges of your painting. Smooth out the texture by gently brushing over areas where you want softer transitions. Continue through the painting, softening edges where needed to create a cohesive look.

PRO TIP

Use a large brush to soften edges and create smooth transitions in your painting.

9 Building Texture and Interest



Enhance Texture and Interest

Work through each major area of your painting, focusing on building texture and interest in the smaller shapes. Use your tools and materials creatively to add variety to the texture of your paint.

Tackle Reflective Water

Approach the reflective water carefully, as it is complex with darks meeting lights. Use colors methodically, applying them where needed across the canvas to create harmony.

Follow Your Intuition

Engage with your painting, asking it what it needs to improve. Trust your intuition and don't hesitate to wipe off and redo areas to achieve a better result.

PRO TIP

Use colors on your brush across the canvas to create color harmony and speed up the painting process.

10 Sky Reflections and Hillside



Add Sky Reflections

Use horizontal or vertical strokes to paint the sky reflections in the still water. Notice that the reflections are a bit greyer than expected, so adjust your colors accordingly.

Enhance Hillside Roundness

Introduce a half tone green into the hillside. This will help create a sense of roundness as the light transitions into shadow.

PRO TIP

Use horizontal or vertical strokes to capture reflections in still water effectively.

11 Balancing Abstract Elements



Use a Large Brush for Bold Strokes

When you find yourself getting too detailed, use a large brush to apply a bold stroke. This helps maintain a balance between detail and abstraction in your painting.

Experiment with a Rubber Spatula Brush

Try using a rubber spatula brush to create interesting effects. Ensure you have a fair amount of paint on the brush to avoid picking up paint from the surface.

Add Vertical Texture with a Thin Brush

Use a thin brush to introduce vertical texture in specific areas. This adds variety and interest to the composition.

Balance Abstract Elements

Consider the painting as an abstract composition. Balance different areas by contrasting calm with interest, dark with light, and scumbled with smooth textures. This creates a harmonious and engaging tapestry.

PRO TIP

Use a large brush to break away from finicky details and maintain a balance between detail and abstraction.

12 Final Details and Finishing Touches



Create Leafy Texture

Drag a palette knife across the textured surface of the canvas to create a laced effect, resembling tiny leaves. Use large gestural strokes to achieve detail without excessive effort.

Add Crisp Edges and Distant Waves

Use a flat synthetic watercolor brush to achieve crisp edges. Dab the brush to suggest distant waves in the painting.

Indicate Figures and Add Blossoms

Switch to a smaller synthetic brush to indicate tiny figures on the beach. Add pure cadmium red to represent the Christmas blossoms of the Pōhutukawa tree.

Enhance Light and Draw Branches

Apply intense dark blue to enhance the infused light from the background. Use a fine sable brush to draw branches, keeping them dark and dashed rather than overly detailed.

Add Highlights and Reflected Light

Use a blue-grey mixture with a fine brush to add highlights. Introduce a little green reflected light underneath the trunk to suggest water reflection.

Detail Foreground and Soften Edges

Add flicks in the foreground for shells and pebbles. Darken and warm the reflections of rocks to suggest depth. Lightly soften some edges with a soft sable brush, especially around the painting's perimeter.

Introduce Foreground Red and Sky Holes

Add a touch of red to the foreground sand to echo reds elsewhere in the painting. Create irregular sky holes to suggest a tree, not a building.

PRO TIP

Darken and warm the reflections of rocks in the foreground to create the appearance of looking through the water's surface sheen.

Summary & Key Takeaways

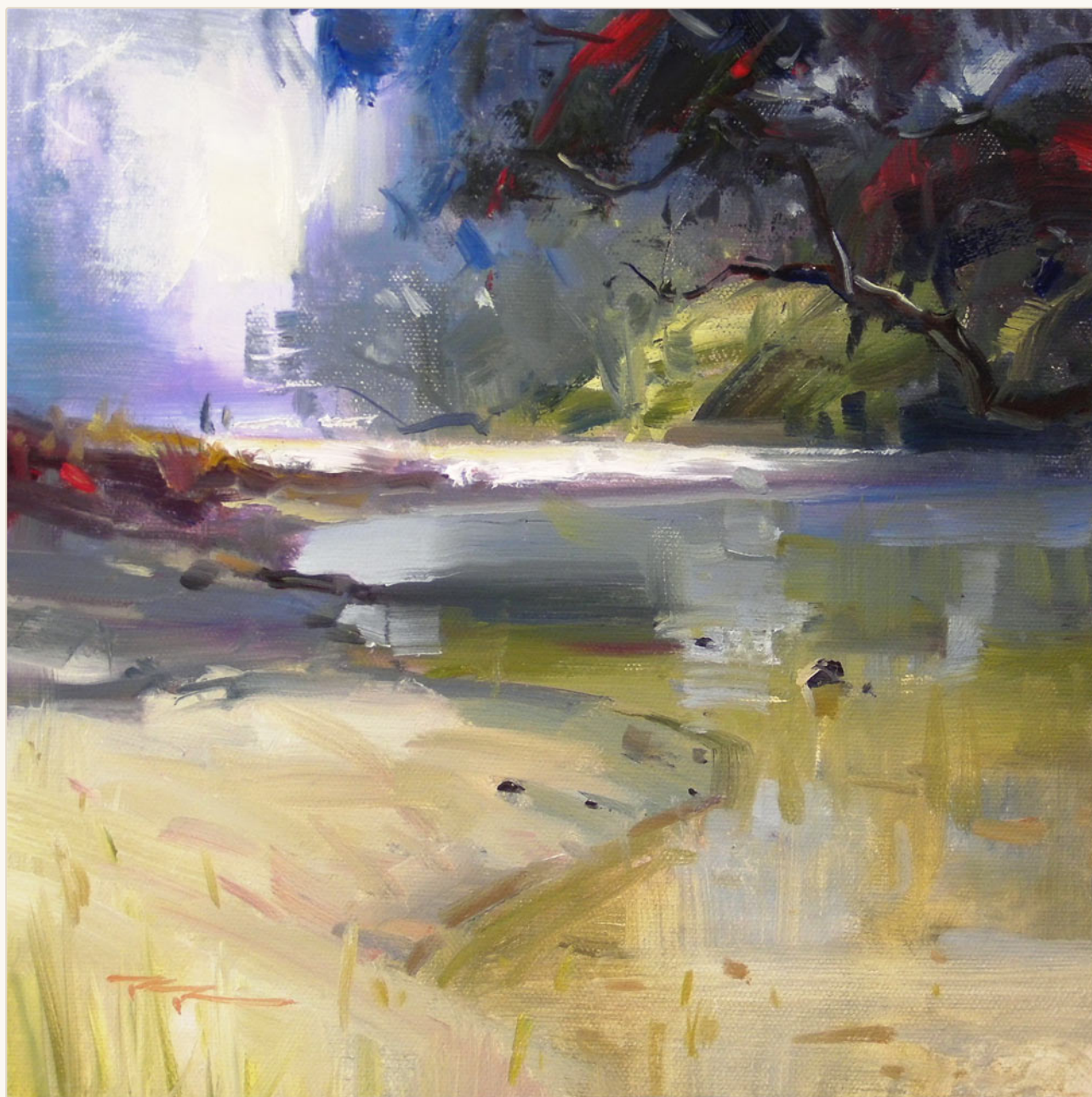
Embark on your painting journey by embracing both the abstract and realistic elements of your scene. Begin with a focus on the overall composition, using a variety of tools and techniques to create dynamic textures and vibrant colors. As you block in the major shapes, remember to blur your vision to simplify the scene and capture its essence without getting lost in the details.

As you progress, pay attention to the relationships between colors and values, particularly in the foreground and background. Use your tools creatively to build texture and interest, and maintain the calmness of reflective surfaces with careful brushwork. Balance detail with abstraction by stepping back and applying bold strokes when needed.

In the final stages, refine your painting with thoughtful details and finishing touches. Use a variety of brushes to add crisp edges, delicate highlights, and subtle reflections. Let your intuition guide you as you make adjustments, ensuring that each element contributes to a harmonious and engaging composition.

LESSON POINTS TO REMEMBER

- Consider both the abstract qualities and realistic elements for a balanced style.
- Use walnut oil to improve paint flow and coverage on the canvas.
- Blur your vision to focus on large, colorful shapes, simplifying the painting process.
- Mix paint directly on the canvas for a freer, juicier look as colors blend naturally.
- Pay attention to the tonal variation between the sand under the water and the dry sand.
- Use horizontal or vertical strokes to maintain the calmness of reflective water.
- Use a large brush to soften edges and create smooth transitions in your painting.
- Darken and warm the reflections of rocks in the foreground to create the appearance of looking through the water's surface sheen.



"Waipu Cove" 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.

"Sea Scout Hall (Loose)" by Nigel Necklen

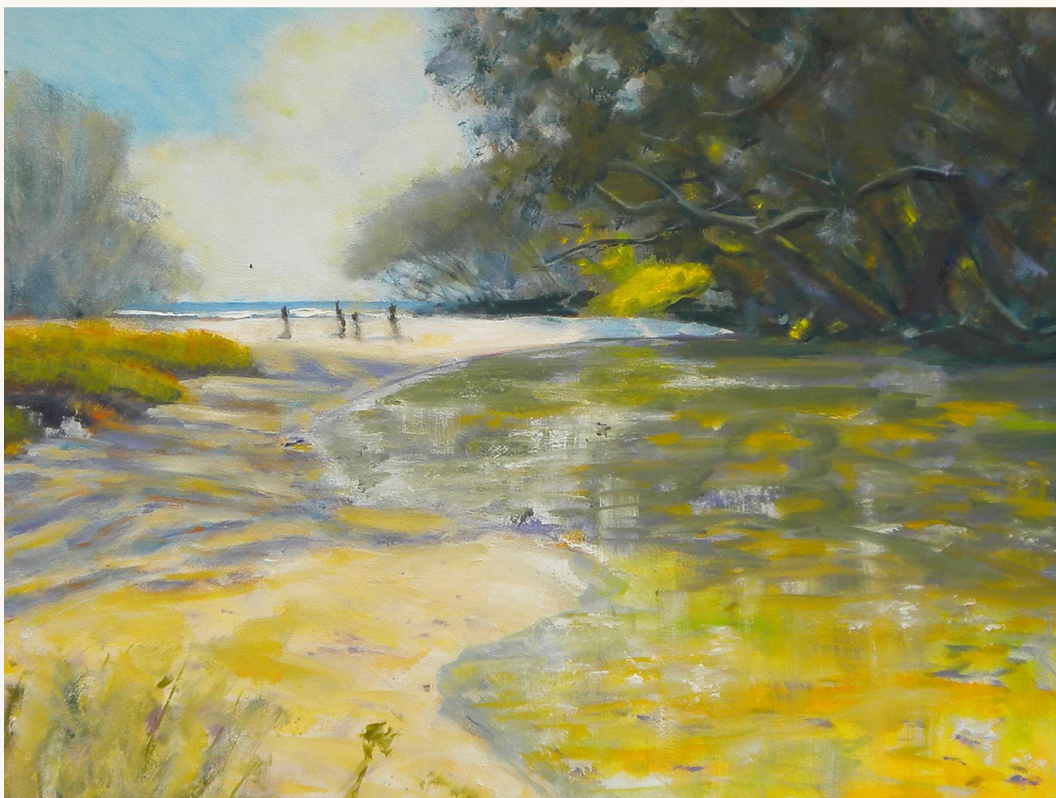


"Sea Scout Hall (Loose)" 12x24 Acrylic on Canvas by Nigel Necklen

Nigel it's great to see you breaking away from your more detailed style and trying to loosen things up. As you probably found it's much easier to try this with a subject you know well and have painted before as I saw your two previous paintings of this scene which were very good. I've personally painted the Waipu Cove scene about 8 times so far and find it easier each time to add lib and push things a little further and I noted that some of the painters in the workshop this time have painted the scene this month as many as 10 times! Monet new something about the power of this too I think.

You chose to add more colour into the trees which is nice but you missed an opportunity for more colour variation in there with the more reddish tree directly behind the boatshed. I'm not saying it would look good with a bright autumnal tree in there, but a little variation from the green would add more interest in that area as would a little of that browner hue as the land reaches the water, especially since you made the roof greener as well. These trees presented a good opportunity to try out the 'infused light' look as they disappear around the corner too and I think some of that could have helped add more interest as well, especially seeing that saturated blue sky. Nice that you opened up the trees a little behind the shed to relieve the darkness there and you could have reflected a little of that in the water to help there too. Overall a pretty pleasing result and I'd like to see if this idea will impact on your future work.

“Mystic River (with tribesmen approaching)” by Jon Main



"Mystic River (with tribesmen approaching)" 40x50cm Oil on Canvas by Jon Main

Nice painting there Jon with a lot going right. Good to see you battling to loosen up and mostly winning. You've achieved something of an overall colour harmony by keeping your yellows and greens quite close and greying your darks and blues and you've certainly achieved the look of a summers day within that smaller colour gamut. Your water colours are very convincing although they're marred a bit by the sky reflection which seem a bit patchy and a little light in places.

You have carried your shadows well from the water to the sand although their size and spacing begins to look too regular on the sand making me wonder at the shape of the tree that could cast those shadow shapes. The drawing of the distant scenery and figures is very good though and draws my eye into the painting which has great depth. I would however question the value jump of the furthest dark bank to the tree which grows on it. Seems like those values should be closer where they meet, which practically means that the bank there should be a little lighter. I would also challenge you to repaint the beach in the close foreground and give those grasses another bash as they have smudged into mud at present. Keep up the good work Jon!

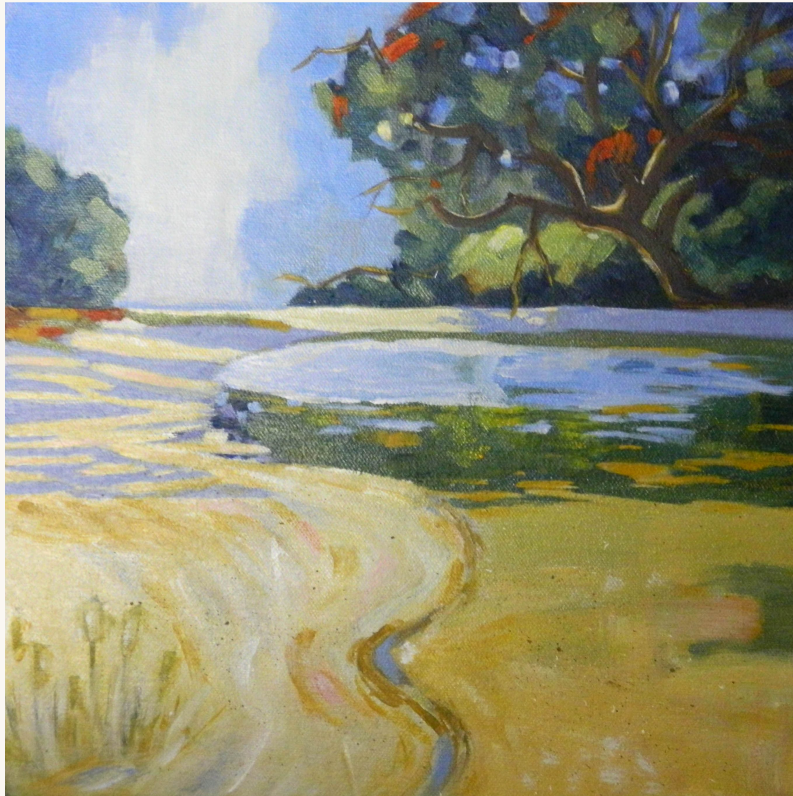
"Waipu Cove" by Donna Spears Lauzon



"Waipu Cove" 9x12" Oil on Linen by Donna Spears Lauzon

Wow I love this painting Donna. You've pushed it more into the realm of abstraction than I have dared to do but retained just enough realism to encourage the viewer to figure out what's going on amongst all that beautiful colour. How intriguing! You've got more variation in there in terms of colour, shape, line and texture than I could shake a stick at - a real pleasure to explore. You've inspired me to break out and do something more drastic in my next painting and I'd like to see what you come up with next in this vein. Good stuff!

"Waipu Cove" by Sharon J Kosmin



"Waipu Cove" 12x12" Acrylic on Canvas by Sharon J Kosmin

Sharon this is lovely. It's so interesting to see how we all approach the same subject differently and your stylised graphic approach is certainly a refreshing take on it as well. The balance of colour areas seems very good and your values are pretty good too. Some painters will say that if you get the colour right you don't need to worry about value, but I find it helpful to be able to think of colour in terms of its 3 components of hue, value and chroma. The two areas where your value has gone awry are the shadows on the sand on the left and the large reflection of the sky in the water. Both are too light. That's one of the trickiest part of the painting where these two intricate shapes merge into their colourful neighbours and if I were you I'd give these areas another shot because the rest of the painting is great. I love the lyrical line you've made of the water's edge and also the towering cloud on the horizon. Great work!