



Big Sur, California 15x18" Acrylic on Linen

Richard Robinson

Find Your Style in 7 Days

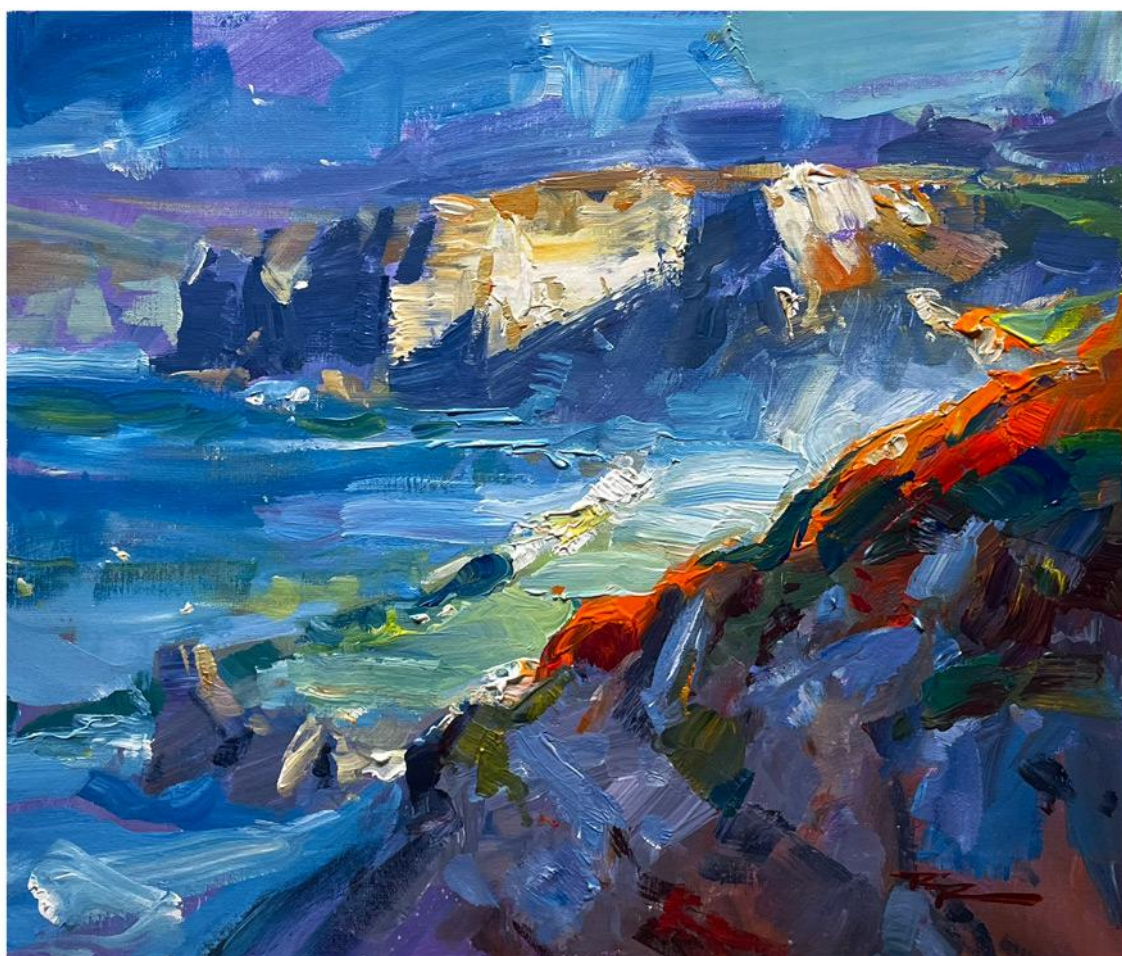
A step-by-step painting guide by Richard Robinson

Watch the full lesson at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/230-Find-Your-Style-in-7-Days>

MY PAINTING CLUB

Introduction

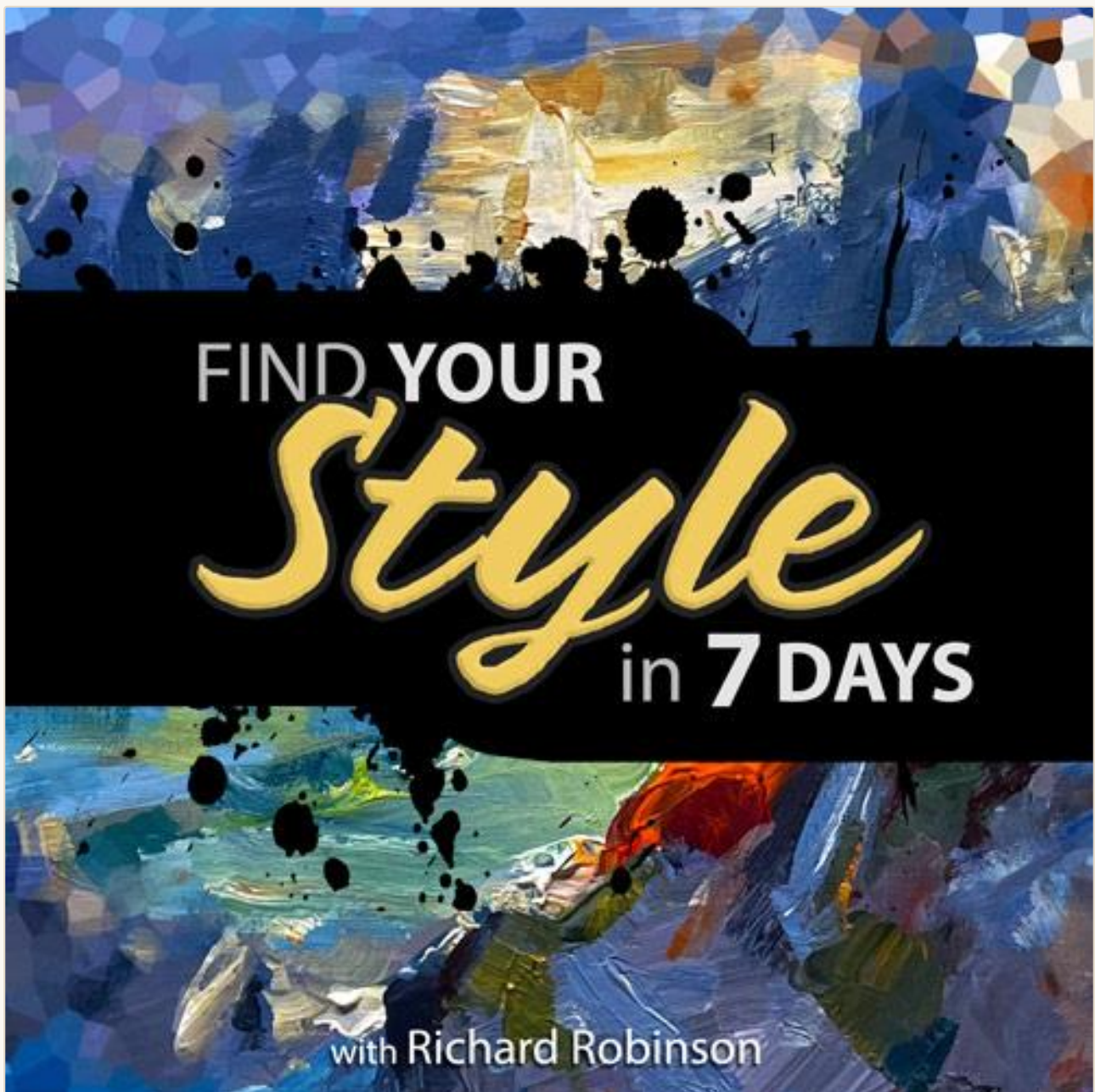
I've got an exciting journey lined up for us, starting right here with a linen canvas taped out on the board, measuring 18 by 15 inches. We're diving into the world of acrylics, specifically Italia Interactive acrylics, and I've laid out my range of flat synthetic brushes, along with a trusty flat palette knife. A bucket of water and a cap full of gloss medium varnish are ready to assist us. We'll kick things off by dipping a big brush into the gloss medium varnish and grabbing some phthalo. In this lesson, we'll explore the expressive brushwork of Van Gogh, with his short, flowing strokes, and the vibrant color palette of Monet's Venice, focusing on those high key mauve and blue tones. We'll start by selecting a photo of flowers from a local garden and altering the colors to be lighter and more saturated. Then, we'll paint over the photo, using Van Gogh's directional brushwork and Monet's color contrasts to create a 'Frankenstyle' that blends these influences into something uniquely yours. This is about finding your style by merging the old with the new, and I'm thrilled to guide you through it.



Big Sur, California 15x18" Acrylic on Linen

Richard Robinson

16x18" Acrylic 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.

YOU AND AI

- [Click to Download Course Notes \(30mb PDF\)](#)

ANALYSING A STYLE

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MASTER COPY

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EXPLORING STYLE WITH AI

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NEXT STEPS

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JOHN-SINGER-SARGENT

- Oil Paints
- Ivory Black
- Burnt Sienna
- Venetian Red
- Permanent Alizarine
- Cad Red Light
- Cad Orange
- Yellow Ochre
- Cad Yellow Light
- Phthalo Green
- Ultramarine Blue
- Cobalt Violet
- Titanium/Zinc White (Permalba White)
- Canvas
- Fredrix Ultrasmooth Canvas
- (Give it a light sanding first)
- Brushes
- [Rosemary & Co. Richard Robinson Brush Set](#)
- Gamsol by Gamblin
- Alkyd walnut medium by M. Graham
- Paper Towels

SOROLLA

- Oil Paints
- Permanent Green Light
- Phthalo Green
- Phthalo Blue
- Ultramarine Blue
- Cobalt Blue
- Quinacridone Violet
- Alizarin Crimson
- Cadmium Red
- Cadmium Red Light
- Cadmium Orange
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1 Digital FrankenStyle Example



Analyze Influential Styles

Examine the brushwork of Van Gogh, noting the short, flowing, and expressive strokes. Observe the color palette from Monet's painting of Venice, focusing on the high key, mauve, and blue tones with strong warm and cool contrasts.

Prepare Your Base Image

Select a photo of flowers from a local garden. Alter the colors to be lighter, less contrasty, and with higher saturation to set the stage for your painting.

Apply Van Gogh's Brushwork

Begin painting over the photo, using directional flowing brushwork inspired by Van Gogh. Keep your strokes short and expressive to capture his style.

Incorporate Monet's Color Palette

Use light pastel colors, particularly injecting mauve into your painting. Balance the warm and cool colors to reflect Monet's vibrant contrasts.

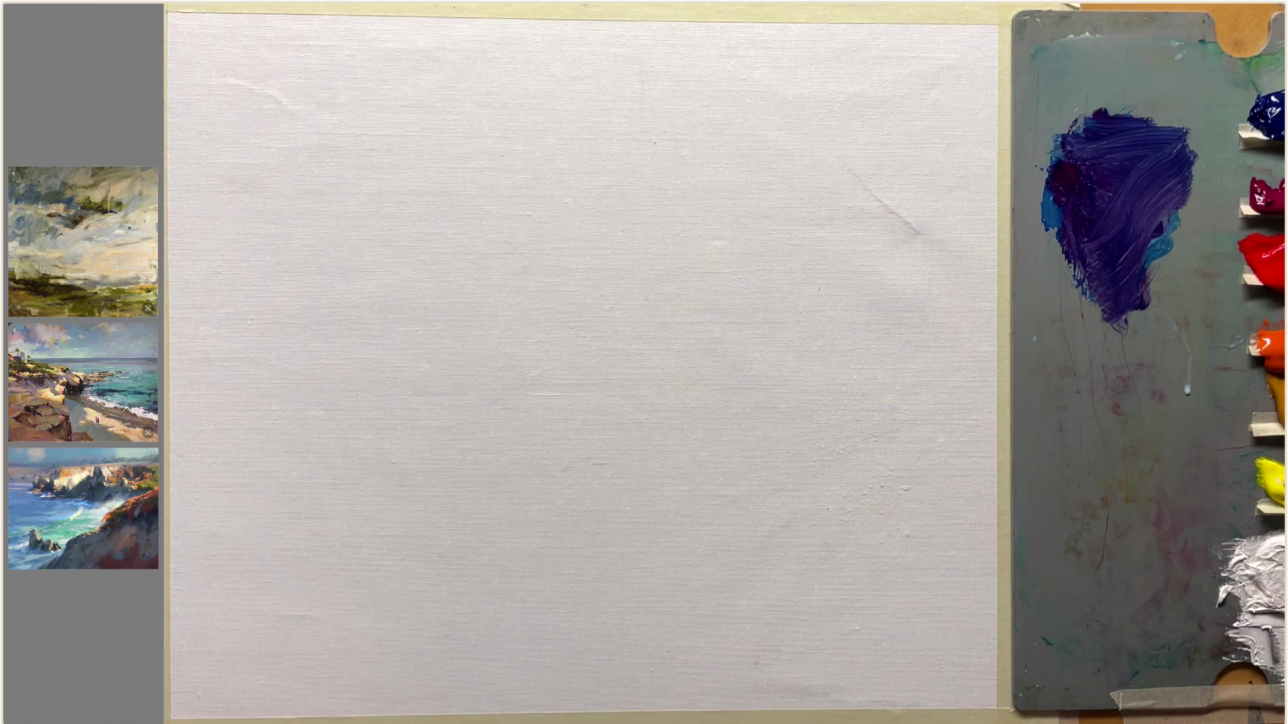
Create Your Unique Style

Combine the brushwork and color elements to develop a new style. This 'Frankenstyle' blends influences to create something unique and visually appealing.

PRO TIP

Use directional flowing brushwork to capture the expressive style of Van Gogh.

2 Base Color Application



Prepare the Base Color

Mix a little bit of magenta with some white to create a soft purple hue. This will serve as a base color for your painting.

Apply the Base Color

Quickly brush the mixed purple onto the background. This initial layer will provide a cooler undertone for the subsequent layers.

PRO TIP

Use a swift brushstroke to evenly spread the base color across the canvas.

3 Under-mixing Technique



Embrace Under-mixing

Allow the mixing to occur on the canvas rather than on the palette. This technique involves using less mixing on the palette, letting the colors blend naturally as you apply them. It creates a dynamic and textured effect in your brushwork.

PRO TIP

Let the mixing happen on the canvas to achieve a more dynamic and textured effect.

4 Expressive Brushwork Strategy



Use Bigger Brushes

Select larger brushes than you typically use. This will help you cover more area quickly and create bold, expressive strokes.

Paint Faster

Increase your painting speed to capture an expressive look. This encourages spontaneous decision-making and dynamic brushwork.

Apply More Paint

Load your brush with more paint than usual. This will result in richer, more vibrant colors and textures on your canvas.

PRO TIP

Make decisions quickly to enhance the expressive quality of your painting.

5 Blocking in Colors



Mix and Apply Color

Mix yellow with a bit of phthalo and some white to create a vibrant hue. Use large, bold strokes to block in this color on your canvas. This will establish a strong base for your painting.

Use a Palette Knife

Grab some of the mixed color with a palette knife. Push it through the painted area to add texture and interest. This technique enhances the dynamic quality of your work.

PRO TIP

Use large strokes to quickly establish the base colors and create energy in your painting.

6 Brush Cleaning Importance



Clean Your Brush

Wash your brush thoroughly in a large bucket filled halfway with water. This ensures that any residual paint is removed, allowing for clean colors on your canvas.

Maintain Clean Colors

Ensure your brush is free of previous colors to achieve a clean and accurate hue on your canvas. This step is crucial for maintaining the integrity of your painting's color scheme.

PRO TIP

Always clean your brush thoroughly to maintain clean colors on your canvas.

7 Defining Big Shapes



Define Big Shapes

Identify the major shapes in your composition, such as the big cliff and its long cast shadow. Use broad strokes to outline these elements, keeping your marks loose and flexible. Avoid detailing at this stage to maintain fluidity in your work.

Use Your Eyes Effectively

Squint or blur your eyes while painting to simplify the scene and focus on the essential shapes. This technique helps you to avoid getting caught up in unnecessary details and maintain the overall composition.

PRO TIP

Keep your initial outlines loose to allow for adjustments as you refine the painting.

8 Squinting Technique for Perspective



Use the Squinting Technique

Squint or blur your eyes while painting to simplify the scene. Focus on the foreground and allow the rest to blur, helping you see the overall composition.

Simulate Distance Perspective

Squinting mimics the effect of stepping back from the canvas. This technique helps you assess the painting from a distance, ensuring balance and perspective.

PRO TIP

Squinting helps you see the overall composition and balance without stepping back.

9 Warm Light Painting Tips



Create Soft Effects with Acrylics

To achieve soft effects with acrylics, work while the paint is still wet. This allows you to blend colors smoothly and create gentle transitions.

Add Warmth to Light Areas

When painting areas with warm light, ensure all your light colors have warmth. Even when using white, incorporate a touch of yellow to warm it up. This is crucial as white highlights the color of the light hitting it.

PRO TIP

Always add a touch of yellow to white when painting warm light to enhance the warmth.

10 Expressive Brushstroke Philosophy



Emphasize Warmth

Focus on capturing the warmth in your painting. Use a larger brush to cover more area and create a sense of depth and energy.

Infuse Character in Brushstrokes

Ensure each brushstroke is full of character, life, and energy. This approach will help convey the vibrancy and dynamism of the scene.

PRO TIP

Use a larger brush to convey warmth and energy effectively.

11 Keeping Paints and Brushes Wet



Keep Paints Wet

Use a spray bottle filled with water to lightly mist your palette. This will prevent the paints from drying out and maintain their workability.

Maintain Brush Moisture

Regularly spray your brushes with water to keep them moist. This helps avoid the hassle of cleaning dried paint from the bristles.

PRO TIP

Always have a spray bottle handy to keep your paints and brushes from drying out.

12 Gestural Focus Over Precision



Focus on Big Shapes

Squint at your resource photo and your painting to identify the big shapes. This helps you capture the overall gesture rather than getting caught up in precise details.

Embrace Gestural Brushwork

Change the angle of your brush strokes to enhance the gestural quality of your painting. Don't worry if the drawing is a little off; prioritize the expressive movement in your work.

PRO TIP

Squinting helps you see the big shapes and focus on gesture over precision.

13 Palette Knife Textures



Enhance Light with White

Add more white to your palette to create stronger light areas in your painting. This will help to emphasize the highlights and bring more contrast to your work.

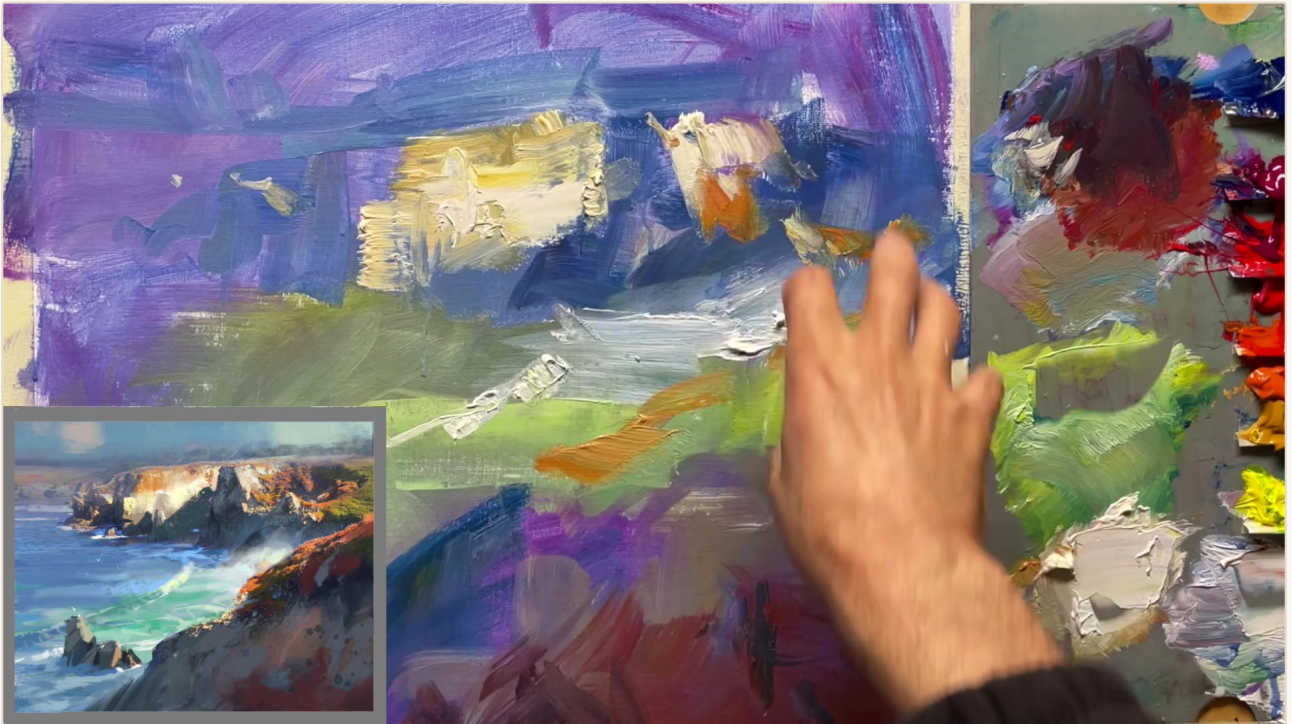
Use the Palette Knife for Texture

Lightly brush the palette knife across the surface of your painting. This technique will drag the paint off, creating unique textures that brushes can't achieve. It's an effective way to add interest and depth to your artwork.

PRO TIP

Use a palette knife to create textures that brushes can't achieve by lightly dragging it across the paint surface.

14 Using White in Acrylics



Keep Brushes Wet

Ensure your brushes remain wet throughout the painting process. This prevents the paint from drying on them and helps maintain smooth application.

Use Plenty of White

Incorporate a generous amount of white when working with acrylics. Use three to four times more white than other colors to achieve the desired opacity and brightness.

PRO TIP

Use significantly more white in acrylics than other colors to enhance opacity and brightness.

15 Dark Accents and Brushwork



Add Dark Accents

Incorporate darker accents into your painting by using a darker green. This will add depth and contrast to your work.

Evaluate from a Distance

Keep squinting at your painting or step back frequently to assess how it looks from a distance. If it looks good, resist the urge to make changes.

PRO TIP

Leave beautiful brushwork alone if it looks good from a distance.

16 Textural Effects and Color Vibrancy



Create Textural Effects

Use a palette knife to smush some paint, creating varied textures. Alternatively, use a rag or a big brush for different effects. Experiment with these tools to achieve the desired texture.

Enhance Color Vibrancy

Introduce stronger colors into the dark areas of your painting. Focus on using reds and blues to add vibrancy to your shadows. Avoid using yellows in these areas to maintain depth.

PRO TIP

Use reds and blues to add vibrancy to shadowed areas, avoiding yellows to keep depth.

17 Value Over Color



Focus on Value

Prioritize getting the right value over the right color. Consider color in terms of value, as it is the main design component of painting.

Mix Shadow Colors

Use reds and blues to create shadows, avoiding yellows as they tend to turn into oranges and browns in the darks. Aim for the correct value to enhance the depth and form in your painting.

Add Shadows to Rocks

Combine white, blue, and red to mix a shadow color for the rocks. Focus on achieving the right value to ensure the shadows look natural and cohesive.

PRO TIP

Think of color in terms of value to enhance the main design component of your painting.

18 Square Brush Effects



Shape the Shadows

Use square brushes to shape the shadows in your painting. These brushes create beautiful, crisp edges that enhance the modern, designer feel of your artwork.

PRO TIP

Square brushes are excellent for achieving crisp edges and a modern look in your painting.

19 Edge Variety



Differentiate Planes

Add a slightly lighter tone to separate different planes in your painting. This helps distinguish the shadow plane from other areas, enhancing depth and clarity.

PRO TIP

Use lighter tones to create separation between planes for better depth.

20 Center of Interest



Create a Center of Interest

Use a more vibrant orange for the ice plants in the area you want to emphasize. Avoid using the same orange everywhere to maintain focus on this center of interest. This contrast will draw the viewer's eye to the most important part of your painting.

PRO TIP

Use vibrant colors selectively to highlight the center of interest.

21 Thick Paint and Sky Technique



Work with Thick Paint

Use thicker paints to add texture and depth to your painting. Enjoy the process of applying the paint generously, allowing it to create interesting effects on the canvas.

Create the Sky

Apply paint to the sky area without over-mixing the colors. Let the colors blend naturally on the canvas, creating a dynamic and lively sky.

PRO TIP

Allow the paint to mix on the canvas for natural blending and texture.

22 Energy in Brushwork



Infuse Energy with Brushwork

Apply paint with energy and excitement to convey dynamic brushwork on the canvas. This approach adds vitality and movement to your painting.

Introduce Textural Variety

If a section feels monotonous, use a palette knife to smush the paint slightly. This technique introduces more variety and texture to the area.

Vary Your Edges

Be mindful of your edges, such as those of distant trees or hills. Incorporate both soft, lost edges and occasional sharp edges to create interesting variations.

PRO TIP

Use a palette knife to add textural variety when a section feels too uniform.

23 Atmospheric Perspective



Understand Atmospheric Perspective

Recognize that distant colors are less vibrant compared to those in the foreground. They tend to blend with the color of the atmosphere, which in this case is a bluey purple.

Apply Atmospheric Perspective

Adjust the colors in the background of your painting to reflect the atmospheric color. This will create a sense of depth and allow the viewer's eye to travel into the distance.

PRO TIP

Use atmospheric colors like bluey purple to create depth in your painting.

24 Detail and Color Placement



Add Detail to the Rock

Focus on the small rock and add tiny bits of detail or flicks of color to enhance its interest. These small touches can make a significant impact on the overall composition.

Coordinate Colors Across the Painting

When using a specific color, identify other areas in the painting where this color can be applied. This approach will help maintain color harmony and save time.

PRO TIP

Use the same color in multiple areas to create unity and save time.

25 Ocean Painting Techniques



Start with the Dark

Begin by applying a dark base to the ocean area. Use a powerful color like phthalo blue to capture the depth and energy of the water. Allow the paint to mix directly on the canvas for a natural, dynamic effect.

Paint the Wave

Focus on the wave as it banks up. Use your brush to shape the wave, capturing its movement and form. Let the colors blend naturally to enhance the wave's dynamic appearance.

PRO TIP

Use phthalo blue to create a powerful and dynamic ocean base.

26 Maintaining Color Vibrancy



Maintain Pure Color

To achieve high saturation, be vigilant about the source of your paint on the canvas. Use paint directly from the tube for the purest color.

Avoid Over-Mixing

Limit mixing with other colors to maintain vibrancy, as mixing often reduces color intensity.

Monitor Color Sources

Be aware of other colors on your palette, brush, and canvas that can dull your color. Keep these areas clean to preserve high chroma.

PRO TIP

Use paint directly from the tube for the purest, most vibrant color.

27 Expressive Painting Cadence



Lighten the Foam

Add a little bit of magenta to the foam area to make it lighter. This adjustment will help create a more vibrant and expressive look.

Avoid Over-Detailing

When adding detail, be cautious not to become too descriptive or finicky. Maintaining a balance will help keep your painting expressive.

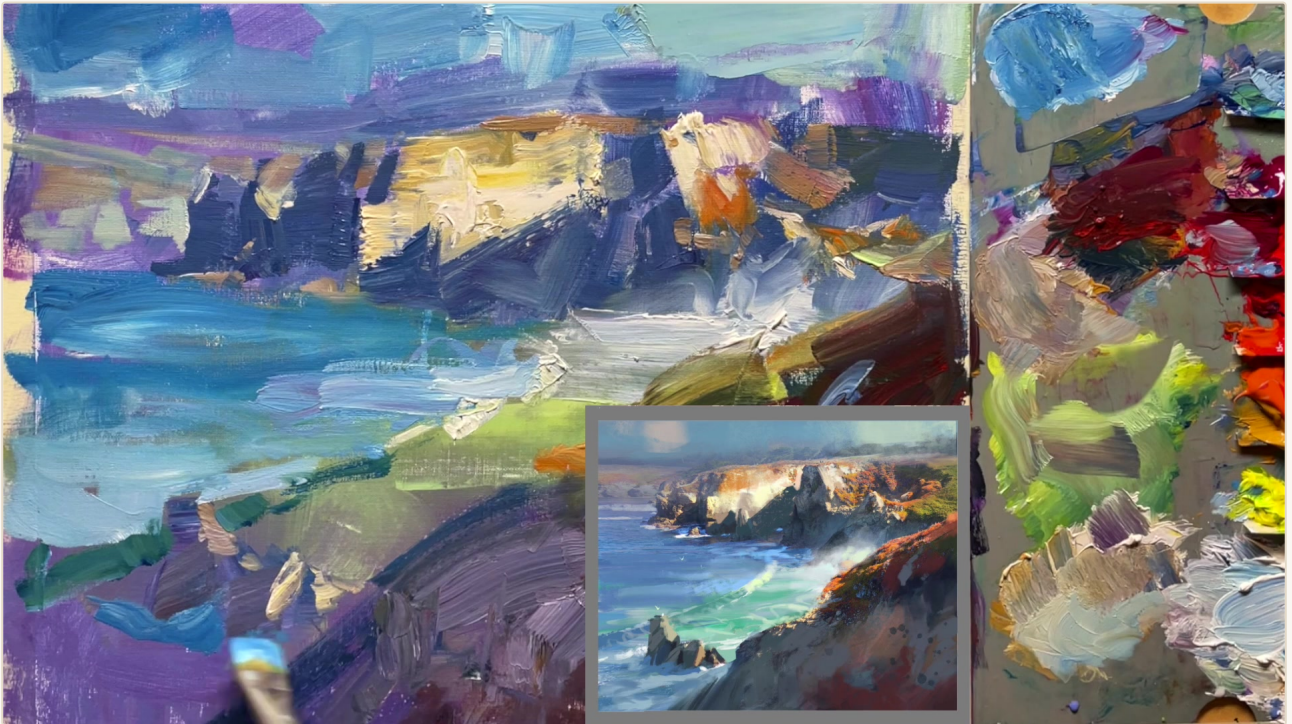
Maintain Expressive Cadence

Focus on your state of mind and the speed at which you are painting. The cadence of your painting contributes significantly to its expressiveness.

PRO TIP

Be vigilant about your painting speed to maintain an expressive style.

28 End of Painting Challenges



Maintain Your Pace

As you near the end of your painting, resist the urge to slow down. Keeping a steady pace helps maintain the expressive quality of your work.

Avoid Over-Preciousness

Don't become overly attached to specific sections of your painting. While it's natural to appreciate certain areas, focusing too much on preserving them can hinder your overall progress.

Stay Focused

Concentrate on the painting as a whole rather than individual parts. This approach ensures a cohesive and balanced final piece.

PRO TIP

Maintain a steady pace to keep your painting expressive and cohesive.

29 Avoiding Overworking



Avoid Overworking Your Painting

Be mindful of overworking your painting. It's easy to get carried away with details. Remember the saying: it takes two people to paint a painting, one to paint it and one to tell them when to stop. Keep this in mind to maintain balance in your work.

Know When to Stop

Stop painting as soon as you feel like you have just five more things to do. Avoid the temptation to add 'just one last thing,' as this can often lead to overworking and potentially ruining your painting.

PRO TIP

Stop painting when you feel like you have just five more things to do to avoid overworking.

30 Final Touches



Enhance the Foam

Add a bit more light to the foam by mixing a lighter shade of your existing foam color. Apply this to the areas where the light naturally hits to create a more realistic and vibrant effect.

Increase Foreground Vibrancy

Introduce more vibrancy into the foreground by using brighter colors. Mix a lively hue that complements the existing palette and apply it to the foreground to make it pop.

Add Texture

Add more texture to the foreground by using thicker paint. Squish the paint onto the canvas to create a tactile, dynamic surface that enhances the overall composition.

PRO TIP

Use thicker paint to add texture and depth to your painting, especially in the foreground areas.

31 Foreground and Color Punch



Enhance with Vibrant Orange

Apply a vibrant orange to the desired section of your painting. Ensure the orange is surrounded by cooler tones to make it stand out more effectively. Use a brush for initial application and refine the texture with a palette knife or another tool of your choice.

Mix and Apply Warm Tones

Combine orange, red, and a touch of darker magenta to create a rich, warm tone. Apply this mixture to areas where you want to add depth and intensity, enhancing the overall vibrancy of your painting.

PRO TIP

Surround vibrant colors with cooler tones to make them appear more striking.

32 Shadow and Accent Refinement



Enhance Shadow Areas

Work into the shadow sides to create depth. Use a punchy approach to make the shadows stand out.

Add Lighter Patches

Introduce lighter patches by adding a little yellow. This will help to brighten the green areas and add contrast.

Incorporate Dark Accents

Add dark accents where needed to match the style or coloring style you are aiming for. This will enhance the overall composition.

PRO TIP

When combining multiple styles, focus on balancing the elements to avoid overwhelming your composition.

Summary & Key Takeaways

Embark on your painting journey by blending the influences of masters like Van Gogh and Monet, creating a unique 'Frankenstyle' that captures expressive brushwork and vibrant color contrasts. Begin with a digital exploration and translate it onto your canvas, using flowing, directional strokes and a balanced color palette to set the stage for your artistic expression.

As you progress, focus on building your painting with dynamic techniques such as under-mixing on the canvas, using larger brushes for bold strokes, and incorporating texture with palette knives. These methods will help you establish a strong foundation and add depth and interest to your work. Remember to keep your brushes clean and your paints wet to maintain clarity and workability throughout the process.

In the final stages, refine your composition by emphasizing big shapes, using atmospheric perspective, and strategically placing vibrant colors to highlight the center of interest. Let the paint mix naturally on the canvas to create lively textures, and use squinting techniques to maintain focus on the overall gesture and balance. By prioritizing value over color and using tools like square brushes for crisp edges, you will achieve a cohesive and dynamic painting that reflects your personal style.

LESSON POINTS TO REMEMBER

- Use directional flowing brushwork to capture Van Gogh's expressive style.
- Let the mixing happen on the canvas for dynamic and textured effects.
- Make decisions quickly to enhance the expressive quality of your painting.
- Always clean your brush thoroughly to maintain clean colors on your canvas.
- Squinting helps you see the overall composition and balance without stepping back.
- Use a palette knife to create textures that brushes can't achieve.
- Think of color in terms of value to enhance the main design component of your painting.
- Use atmospheric colors like bluey purple to create depth in your painting.



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16x18" 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.

“Elmari van Zyl” by **Elmari Van Zyl**



Elmari van Zyl

Great work Elmari! Very accurate colour and drawing, rich brushwork and interesting textural variety. Lovely. Would just like to see a little more care in the foreground rocks. Consider the direction of the light and how that will shape the jetty as a whole and also each block. Be clear about the line at which the rocks enter the water. That could be achieved with a blue-green glaze at this point. Again, beautiful work.

“Fall Lighting” by Jorge Zamora



Fall Lighting

Hi Jorge, good on you for entering a different painting using similar ideas. Nicely done too. Interesting variety of texture and brushwork. You've made a good sense of light and shadow across the scene. The foliage has been nicely developed with multiple layers and you've captured that sense of dappled light. Personally I'd like to see the central main sunlit tree reflected a little more strongly in the water to add more exciting colour there, and I'd consider using blue greys in the distance on the left to indicate another layer of depth there into the far distance.

Great job.

"Sargent by Martha Waardenburg" by Martha Waardenburg



Sargent by Martha Waardenburg

Good effort Martha, I can see you've paid particular attention to the drawing and brushwork. Just three things I'd look at changing: The black boat need to extend further left to be the right size for that big sail. The foreground rock wall is making a pattern of shapes that are too similar. Similarly, the four trees behind the building are shaped and placed in a pattern, as are the four windows. In short, avoid making patterns because they are less interesting than off-beat rhythms.

“Martins Sargent” by **Martin Soja**



Martins Sargent

Some great work in here Martin. I love how you've taken care with the modelling of the foreground wall and the drawing overall is very good. I'd like to see you take another shot at the reflections of the yellow sail in the water. Don't be afraid to scrape off and try again to you're fully happy with it. The hull of the white boat should be slightly deeper and bring the reflection of the sail there a little closer to the boat too.