



Shelly Beach

A step-by-step painting guide by Richard Robinson

Watch the full lesson at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/243-Shelly-Beach>

MY PAINTING CLUB

Introduction

As we embark on this painting journey at Shelly Beach, you'll find yourself immersed in a process that combines the timeless charm of plein air painting with the innovative tools of digital and AI technology. We'll start by capturing the essence of the scene outdoors using gouache on a watercolor pad, a trusty companion I discovered years ago in France. This thick, 100% cotton paper is perfect for outdoor work, as it's pre-stretched and tensioned, ensuring your painting surface remains stable and warp-free. The scene itself offers a rewarding subject, with its interplay of warm light and cool shadows, inviting us to explore a simple yet expressive design. You'll learn to visualize the overall composition, focusing on the warm light filtering through where the tree meets the background hill, and using diagonal lines to draw the viewer's eye into the depth of the painting. This chapter will guide you through each step, from traditional techniques to modern digital enhancements, allowing you to choose which elements to incorporate into your own artistic practice. Let's embrace curiosity and open new doors together, as we paint our way through this beautiful landscape.



"Shelly Beach" 12x24" Acrylic on Linen by Richard Robinson

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

- Sorry, PaintyBot is no longer active. Please use
- OpenArt.ai
- instead.
- <https://procreate.com>
- Gouache Paint Set
- Gouache Paint Storage
- Watercolour Paper Block
- Chroma Atelier Interactive Acrylics
- Phthalo Blue
- Cadmium Red Light
- Brilliant Magenta
- Yellow Ochre
- Arylamide Yellow
- Titanium White
- Canvas
- Brushes
- Rosemary & Co. Richard Robinson Brush Set
- Palette knife
- Paper towels
- Bucket of water
- Linen Canvas:
 - 1. Quality and Durability: Linen canvas, made from flax, is often considered the highest quality among traditional canvas materials. It's durable and less prone to stretching or sagging over time compared to cotton.
 - 2. Texture: Linen canvas typically has a fine texture, which is preferred by artists who want a smooth surface for detailed and intricate work.

- 3. Aging: Linen canvas is known to age well and is less susceptible to yellowing or deterioration over time compared to cotton.
- 4. Weight and Stiffness: Linen canvas is usually lighter in weight and slightly stiffer than cotton canvas, which can be an advantage for artists who prefer a rigid painting surface.
- 5. Cost: Linen canvas is generally more expensive than cotton and synthetic canvases due to the higher cost of linen fibers.
- Cotton Canvas:
 - 1. Affordability: Cotton canvas is more budget-friendly than linen, making it a popular choice for artists, especially beginners or those on a tight budget.
 - 2. Texture: Cotton canvas often has a coarser texture, which can be desirable for artists who prefer a more pronounced weave or texture in their artwork.
 - 3. Absorbency: Cotton canvas is known for its good absorbency, which can be advantageous for certain painting techniques where paint absorption is desired.
 - 4. Stretching: Cotton canvas is generally easier to stretch tightly on a frame compared to linen, which can be more prone to slackness if not stretched properly.
- Synthetic Canvas (Polyester or Poly-Cotton Blend):
 - 1. Affordability and Availability: Synthetic canvases are often more affordable than natural fiber canvases (linen or cotton). They are also widely available.
 - 2. Durability: Synthetic canvases are known for their durability and resistance to moisture and environmental factors. They are less likely to sag or become damaged over time.
 - 3. Texture: The texture of synthetic canvases can vary, but they often provide a smooth, consistent surface suitable for a wide range of painting styles.
 - 4. Versatility: Synthetic canvases are versatile and can be suitable for various artistic techniques, including acrylics and oils.
- The choice between linen, cotton, or synthetic canvas depends on your specific needs and preferences as an artist. If you prioritize high quality and are willing to invest in premium materials, linen canvas may be the best choice. Cotton canvas is a cost-effective option suitable for many artists, while synthetic canvas offers affordability, durability, and versatility. The decision ultimately comes down to your artistic goals and budget constraints.
- Gouache is a type of water-based paint that is known for its versatility and opacity. It is often used by artists for painting, illustration, and design work. Gouache is similar to watercolor in that it can be mixed with water to create a range of effects, but it differs in its opacity and the ability to layer colors without the risk of transparency.
- Here's a basic guide on how to use gouache:
 - 1. Materials: Gather your materials, including gouache paints, brushes, water, a palette, and paper or canvas. Gouache can be used on a variety of surfaces, but paper specifically designed for gouache or watercolor is a common choice.

- 2. Setup: Squeeze out the gouache colors you want to use onto your palette. Gouache comes in tubes, and you can use it directly from the tube or mix it with water to achieve different consistencies.
- 3. Mixing: Gouache can be mixed with water to create different levels of opacity and transparency. You can dilute it with water for a more watercolor-like effect or use it straight from the tube for full opacity. Experiment with mixing colors to create a wide range of shades and tones.
- 4. Application: Apply the gouache to your paper or canvas using brushes. Gouache can be layered, so you can paint one layer on top of another once the first layer has dried. This makes it suitable for creating intricate details and achieving various effects.
- 5. Blending: Gouache can be blended while wet, similar to watercolors. You can blend colors together by applying them next to each other and then using a clean, damp brush to mix them on the paper.
- 6. Opaque Techniques: Gouache is known for its ability to cover underlying layers, making it great for opaque painting techniques. You can use it to create bold, flat areas of color or to correct mistakes by painting over them.
- 7. Detail Work: Gouache can be used for fine details and fine lines. It can be thinned with water to create a consistency suitable for delicate work.
- 8. Drying: Gouache dries relatively quickly, and the colors may lighten slightly as they dry. Keep this in mind when working on your artwork.
- 9. Finishing Touches: Once your gouache painting is complete and fully dry, you can add any final details or highlights using opaque white gouache or other colors as needed.
- 10. Sealing: To protect your gouache painting and prevent smudging, you can use a fixative spray or apply a clear acrylic varnish once the painting is completely dry.
- Gouache is a versatile medium that allows for experimentation and creativity. It's popular among artists for its ability to produce vibrant, opaque, and highly detailed artworks. Whether you're a beginner or an experienced artist, gouache can be a fun and rewarding medium to work with.

1 Design Concept



Plan Your Design

Visualize the overall composition. Focus on creating a simple, beautiful, and expressive design that captures the essence of the scene.

Emphasize Warm Light

Leave ample space for the warm light to shine through, especially in the area where the tree overlaps the background hill.

Simplify the Background

Keep the background hill simplified with minimal detail to allow the warm light and tree to stand out.

Create Depth with Diagonals

Incorporate swishy diagonal lines to lead the viewer's eye deeper into the painting, enhancing the sense of depth.

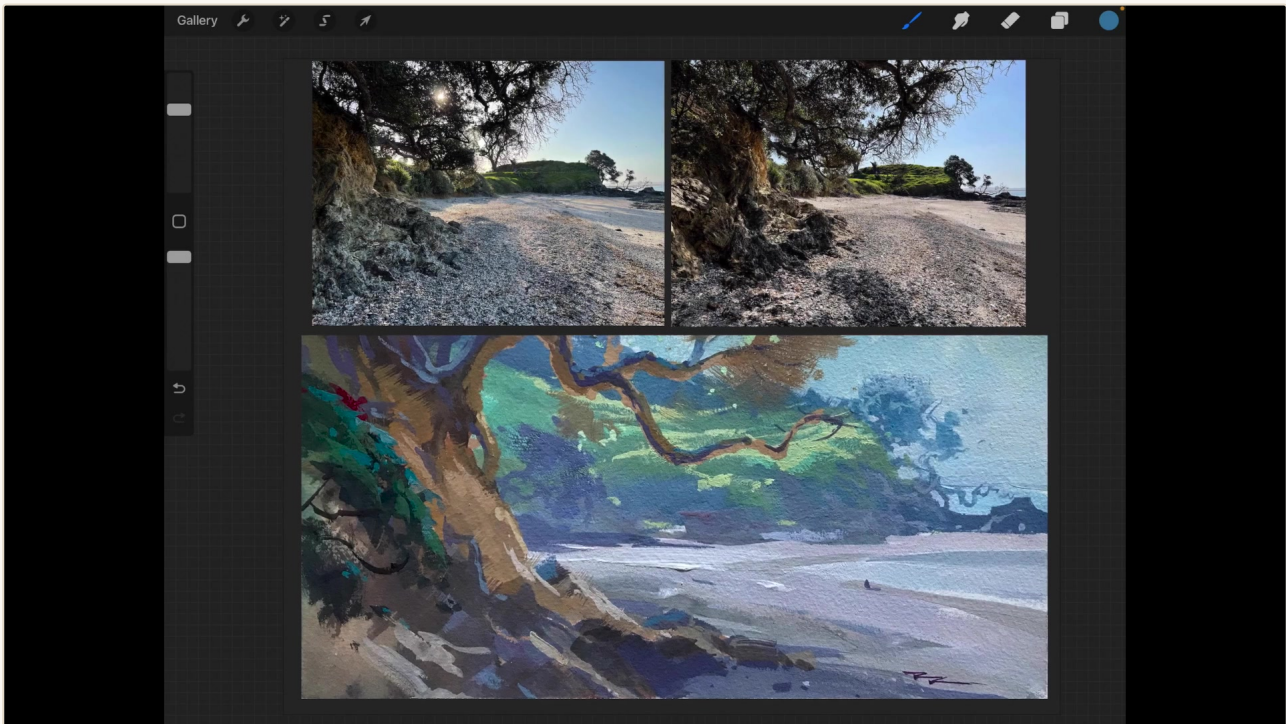
Contrast Warm and Cool

Contrast the warmth of the foreground rocks with the coolness of the background to create visual interest.

PRO TIP

Contrast the warmth of the rocks against the coolness of the background for a dynamic composition.

2 Photo Reference Analysis



Analyze Photo References

Examine the two photos taken at different times of the day. Notice how the first photo, taken with the sun overhead, lacks long shadows but has strong contrast. The second photo, taken later, shows the sun raking across the landscape, creating interesting blue shadows and enhancing the form of the beach.

Evaluate Lighting and Contrast

Consider how the lighting changes over time. The later light creates more shadow and depth, which can be visually appealing. However, the earlier photo has stronger warmth due to the sunlight bouncing off the rock face, which adds a pleasing contrast to the cooler background.

Decide on Key Elements

Decide which elements to emphasize in your painting. The warmth of the rocks and the coolness of the background create a striking contrast. Enhance this by exaggerating the coolness in the background to push it further back, allowing the rocks and tree to stand out as the focal point.

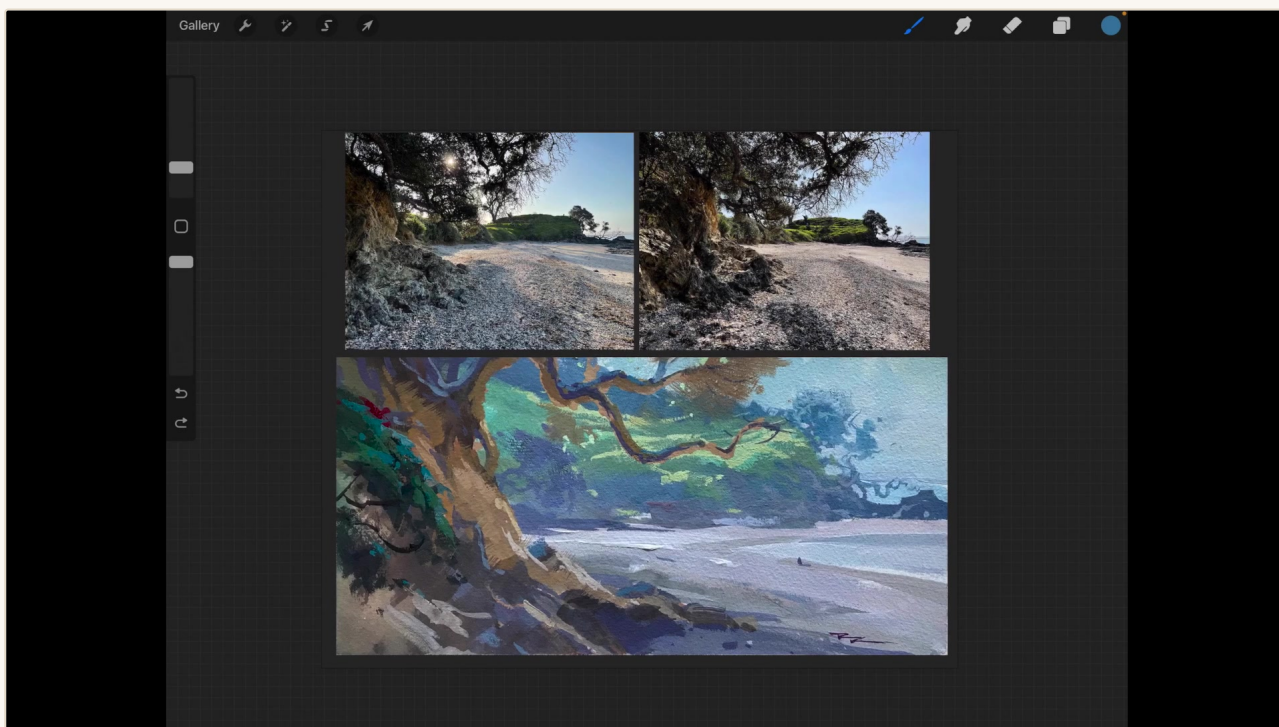
Adjust Values for Depth

Adjust the values in your painting to reflect atmospheric perspective. In real life, distant objects appear lighter and cooler due to atmospheric veils. Ensure the background elements are lighter to create depth and separate them from the foreground.

PRO TIP

Enhance the contrast between warm and cool areas to make the focal elements stand out more strongly.

3 Composition Adjustments



Enhance Contrast with the Tree Trunk

Position the tree trunk against a lighter background to create high contrast and sharper edges. This draws the viewer's eye to the tree and rock, your center of interest. Adjusting the curve of the trunk adds variety and makes the shape more engaging.

Introduce Dynamic Lighting

Utilize the space under the tree to incorporate dynamic lighting shapes. Consider removing or repositioning the small tree to emphasize the lighting effect. Simplify the background to give the branch a neutral stage, enhancing the lighting variety with light on one side and shadow on the other.

Balance Light and Shadow

Think about lighting on both large and small scales in your painting. Create variety by having shadow in the foreground moving into light at the center of interest. Apply this concept to major subjects, ensuring each has a balance of light and shadow.

Refine Edge Shapes

Straighten edges that appear too rounded to add power and interest. Pay attention to the beautiful shapes of the tree roots and foliage, ensuring they don't unintentionally overlap into other areas like hills.

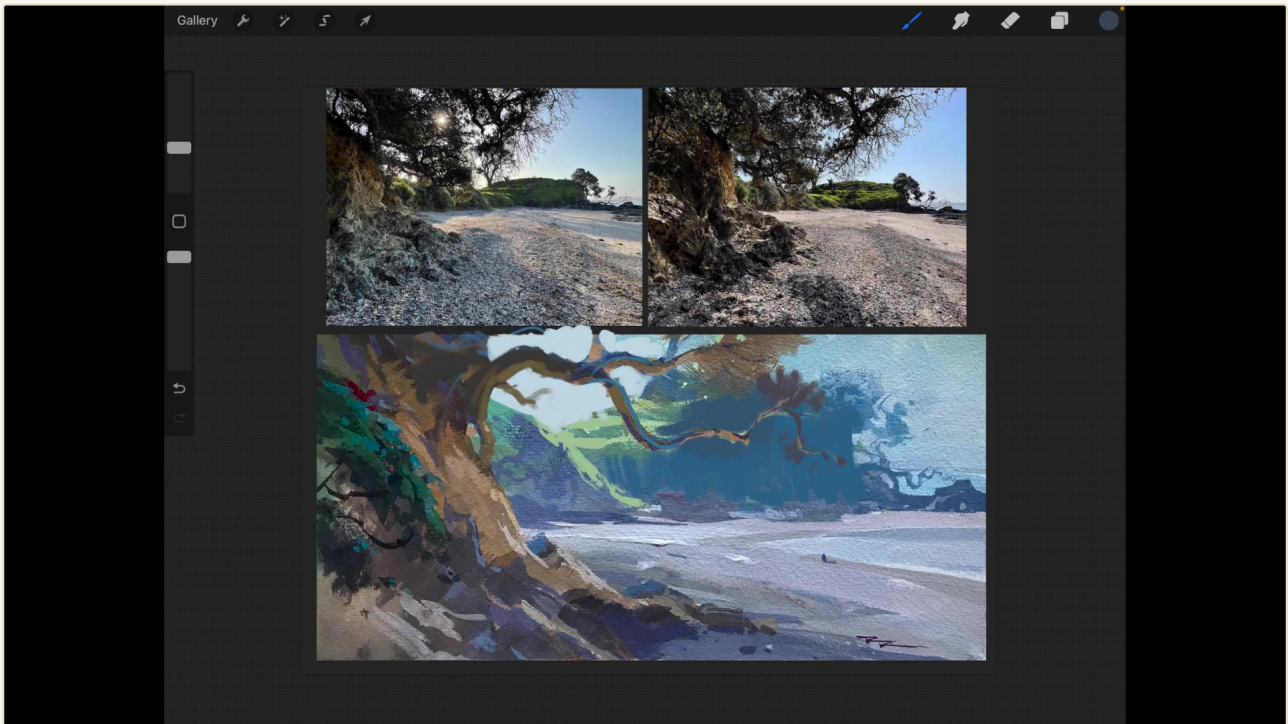
Adjust Trunk and Hill Relationship

Decide whether the trunk should exit and re-enter the canvas or remain more contained. Avoid creating shapes that mimic the hill's contour, as this can appear unnatural. Adjust the hill's shape if necessary to improve the composition.

PRO TIP

Simplify the background to allow the tree's branches and foliage to stand out without competing for attention.

4 Light and Shadow Considerations



Enhance Foliage Density

Add more foliage to the upper area for increased density. Create sky holes through the foliage to add interest. This will make the shapes more dynamic and visually appealing.

Intensify Cast Shadows

Strengthen the blue aspect of the cast shadows on the beach. The white shells reflect the blue sky, creating a blue-gray cast shadow. Apply this effect subtly to other areas for a more interesting light effect.

Adjust Shadow Angles

Ensure shadows point back towards the sun, fanning out as the light does. Shadows should not maintain the same angle across the beach; they should angle more towards the sun. This creates a realistic depiction of light and shadow.

Darken and Warm Foreground

Darken and warm the foreground to differentiate it from the background. Use a dark blue-gray with a soft brush to achieve this effect. This adds depth and interest to the painting.

Simplify Shadow Shapes

Simplify the shapes in the shadows by creating big, complex yet unified shapes. Ensure these shapes are interesting and varied but not overly detailed, allowing them to read well from a distance.

Create Breathing Room

Consider extending the scene to provide more breathing room. This adjustment can enhance the composition and make the scene more inviting.

Experiment with Light Effects

Apply a more powerful light effect through the hill section using a warm color. Adjust the blending effect to achieve a vibrant light effect, enhancing the color's vividness. Experiment with different colors to find the most appealing effect.

PRO TIP

Ensure shadows fan out towards the sun, as this creates a realistic depiction of light and shadow.

5 Using PaintyBot for Ideas



Upload Your Image to PaintyBot

Visit PaintyBot.com and log in. Upload your sketch image using the image-to-image feature. This will serve as the starting point for generating new ideas.

Describe Your Scene

Type a description of your scene, such as 'beach with Pahutakawa roots and rocks'. This helps PaintyBot understand the elements you want to include in your painting.

Choose a Model and Fidelity

Select a model like 'real' or '3D anime' and adjust the fidelity to control how closely the output resembles your original image. Start with 50% and adjust as needed to explore different interpretations.

Experiment with Different Settings

Try various models and fidelity settings to see how PaintyBot alters your image. Each setting can introduce new elements or simplify existing ones, offering fresh perspectives for your painting.

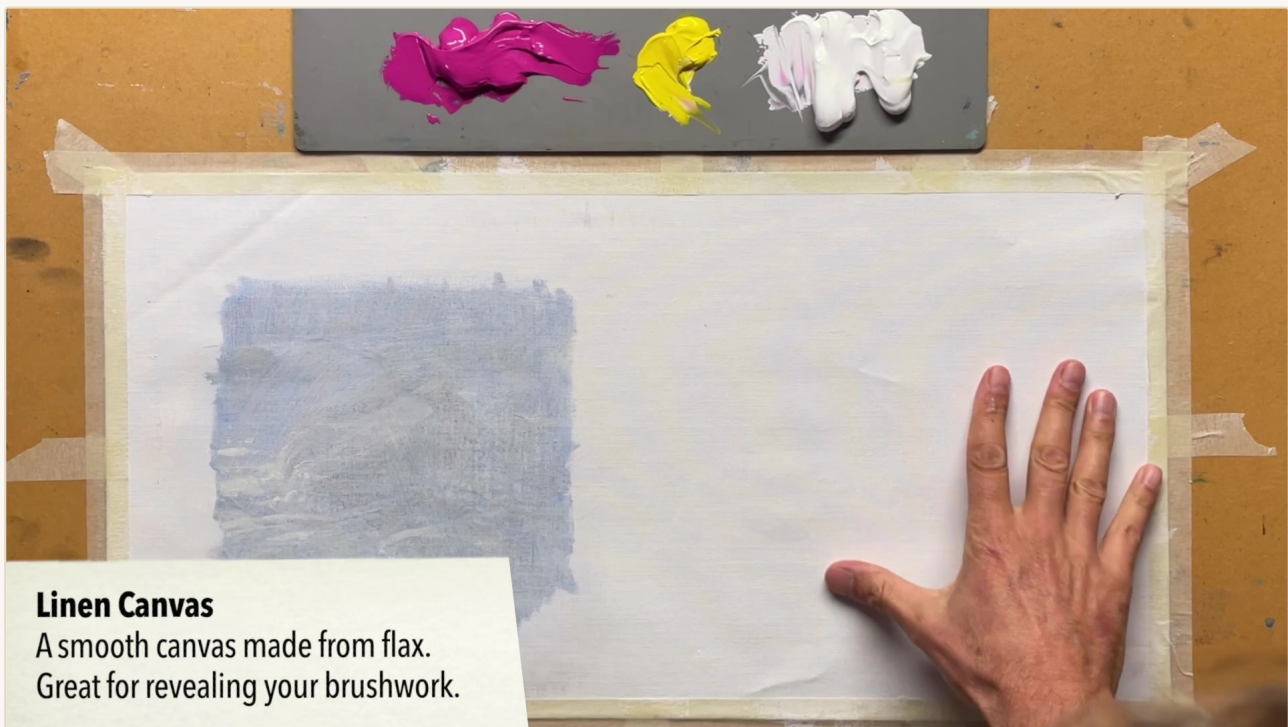
Download and Compile Ideas

Download the PaintyBot images that inspire you. Combine them with your resource photos and sketches in a program like Photoshop. This compilation will guide you as you paint, allowing for organic development.

PRO TIP

Experiment with different models and fidelity settings to discover new ideas and perspectives for your painting.

6 Canvas Preparation



Linen Canvas

A smooth canvas made from flax.
Great for revealing your brushwork.

Prepare the Canvas

Ensure your canvas is stretched and ready. Apply a coat of gesso if needed to cover any previous work. This will provide a fresh surface for your new painting.

Mix the Base Coat

Use acrylic paint to mix a warm base coat with brilliant magenta, primary yellow, and titanium white. Add gloss medium varnish to the mix to create a vibrant and harmonious underlayer.

Apply the Base Coat

Wet a 2-inch bristle brush to prevent paint from drying in the ferrule. Dip the brush into the gloss medium varnish and start applying the base coat in a circular motion from the warmest spot, where the sun will be. Work quickly to spread the paint evenly.

Create a Warm Transition

Add more paint to achieve a softer transition from the sun's center outward. Ensure the color is vibrant and covers the canvas well, as it will peek through the final layers.

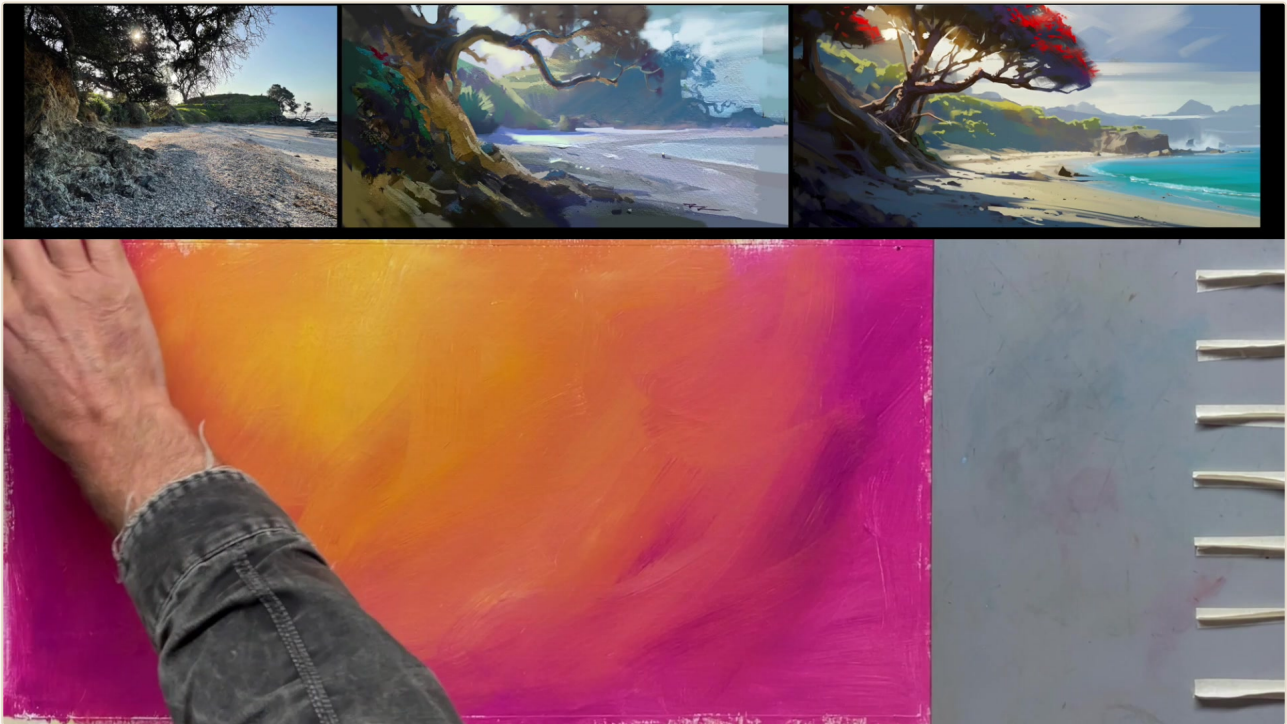
Clean Up

Wash your brush quickly to prevent the gloss medium varnish from setting in the bristles. Return any excess paint to the jar for future use.

PRO TIP

Always lay out more paint than you think you'll need, as it's easier to return it to a jar than squeeze it back into a tube.

7 Sketching the Composition



Prepare the Surface

Ensure your canvas is dry before beginning the sketch. This usually takes a couple of hours, depending on the paint thickness.

Set the Horizon Line

Use a pencil to lightly sketch the horizon line a little below the center of the canvas. Avoid pressing too hard to prevent the graphite from showing through the paint.

Sketch Big Shapes First

Begin by sketching the large shapes in your composition. Focus on the overall layout and how these shapes interact with each other.

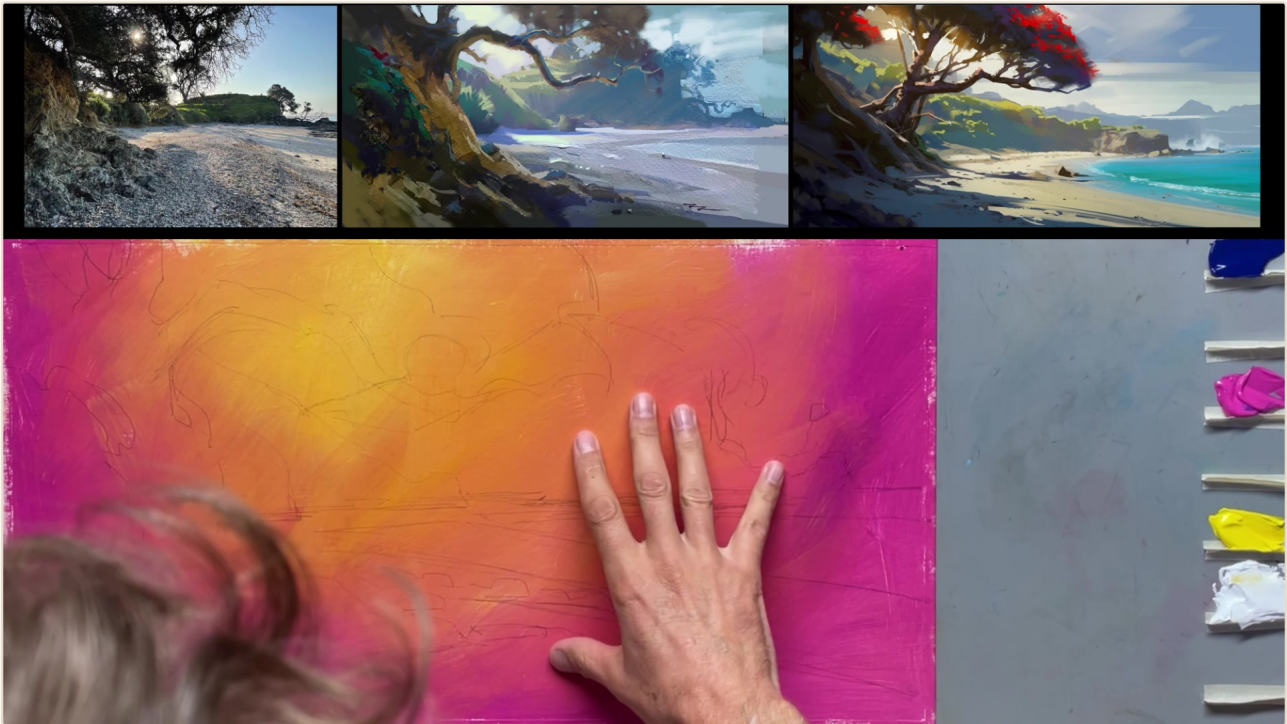
Add Details to the Sketch

Within the big shapes, add smaller shapes and details. Remember that the beach slopes slightly downward, so incorporate a gentle slope in your sketch.

PRO TIP

Sketch lightly with a pencil to prevent graphite from showing through the paint.

8 Painting the Sky



Prepare Your Materials

Use Phthalo Blue, Brilliant Magenta, Primary Yellow, and Titanium White. Select a 1-inch synthetic flat brush and dip it in water before starting.

Begin with the Warmest Spot

Mix some white with a little yellow to start at the warmest, lightest spot in the sky. Work outwards from this point, using plenty of paint for a painterly effect.

Create Color Transitions

Add a touch of Brilliant Magenta as you move outward to push the color towards orange. Spray with water to keep the paint wet and use big strokes.

Introduce Blue-Gray Tones

Gradually add a tiny bit of Phthalo Blue to transition the color to a blue-gray. This creates a dynamic shift from yellow to pinky orange to blue-gray.

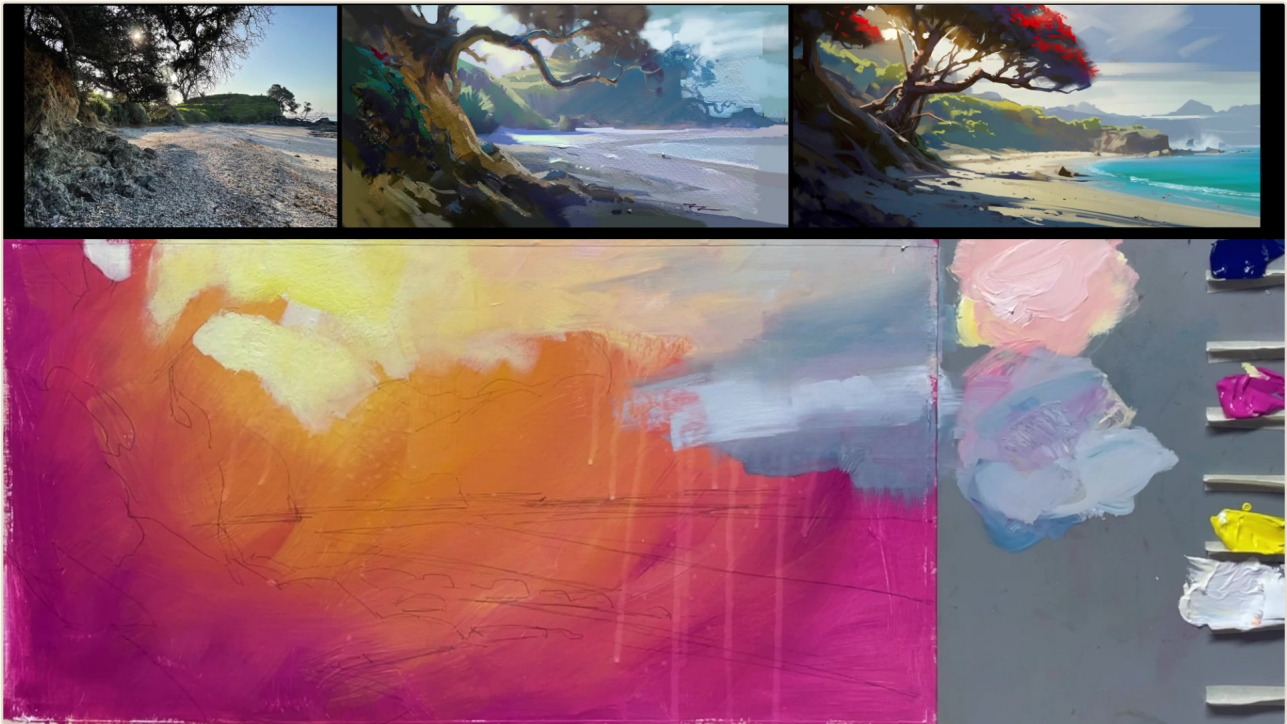
Focus on Edges

Consider where you want soft and hard edges in the clouds. Use a mix of both for visual interest, softening edges while the paint is still wet.

PRO TIP

Use a lot of paint and keep it wet with a spray bottle for smooth transitions and soft edges.

9 Painting the Headland and Hill



Mix the Base Color

Use the same brush to mix a fair amount of blue, a little magenta, and some white. This will be the base color for the headland and hill, as it covers a large area. Keep your palette wet to maintain the paint's workability.

Define the Hill and Foliage

With the base color, define the shape of the hill. Use the flat of the brush to dab and create varied strokes for the tree foliage, avoiding repetitive shapes.

Paint Branches and Trunks

Switch to a small square brush to paint in the branches and trunks. Create interesting, wriggly shapes for the trunks, thinking of them as a family of shapes with a 'hero' shape and smaller ones branching off.

Add Light and Warmth

As you move towards the sunlit area, add lighter and warmer tones, using yellows and whites. Blend while the paint is wet to create a glowing light effect.

Create Sky Holes and Details

Add sky holes by painting the negative space between branches. Keep the shapes varied and consider the clumps of foliage you're designing. Add highlights and details with a dagger brush, using lighter colors near the sun.

Adjust Colors and Shapes

Darken areas that need more depth and adjust the shapes for interest. Add touches of green by mixing yellow and white into shadow colors, and use magenta to warm up greys for rock faces.

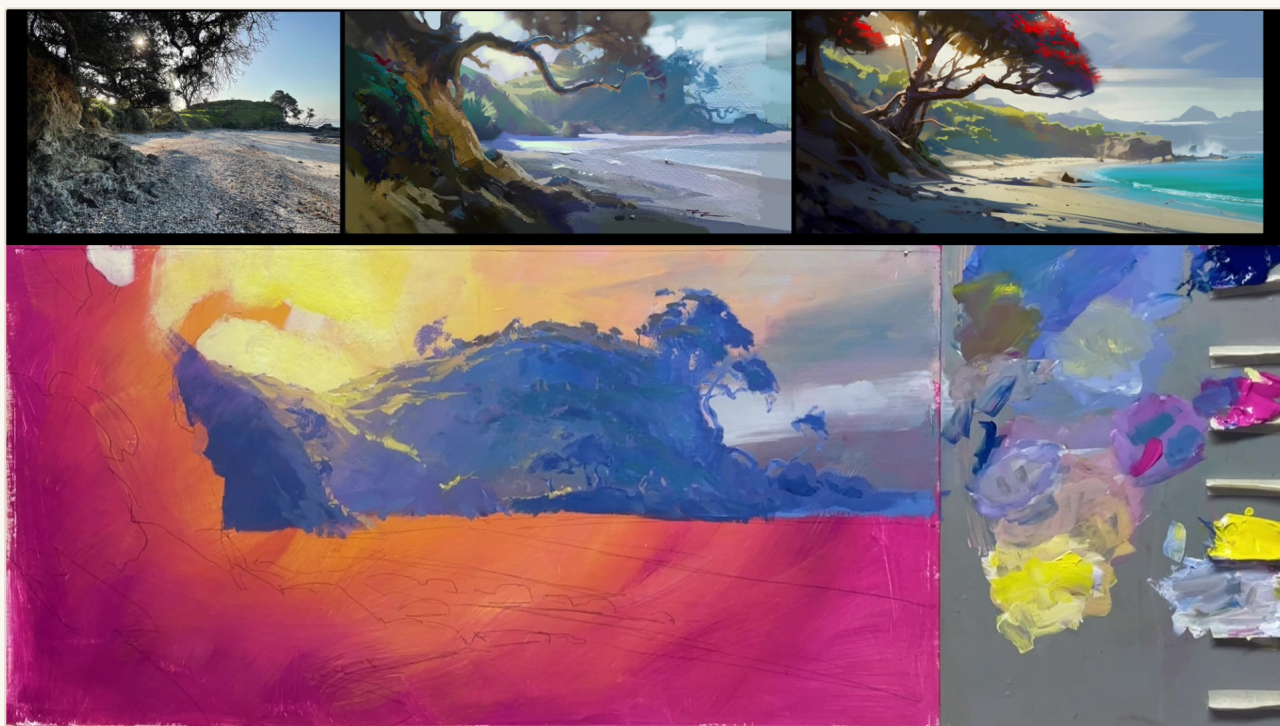
Finalize with Highlights

Add highlights to trunks and fence posts with a mix of yellow and white. Use warm greys to suggest the hill rounding over the top, catching the sky's color.

PRO TIP

Keep your palette wet to maintain the paint's workability, especially when blending large areas.

10 Transition to Beach Painting



Adjust the Gray Cloud

Bring more color into the gray cloud by lightening and warming it slightly. Be mindful of the changes in dried acrylic, as darks may lighten and lights may darken. Aim for a balanced and vibrant effect.

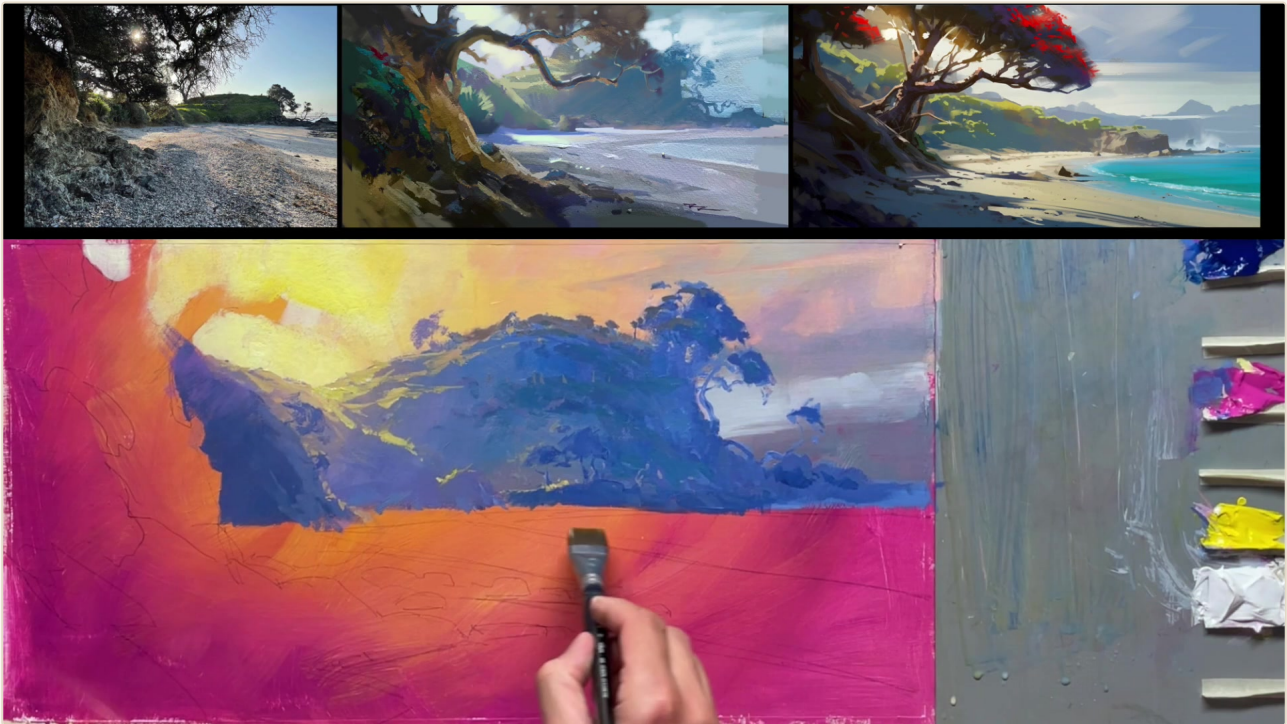
Transition to the Beach

Prepare to move on to painting the beach by scraping off any excess paint from your palette. This will ensure a clean working area for the next section of your painting.

PRO TIP

When working with dried acrylic, remember that colors can shift, so adjust accordingly to maintain vibrancy.

11 Painting the Beach



Prepare the Base Color

Mix white with Naphthol Red Light and a touch of blue to create a purpley grey. Use a big flat brush to apply this color to the central section of the beach, creating crisp zigzag lines.

Add Light and Texture

Mix white with a little yellow to warm the color. Apply this lighter mix over the base color, letting it blend while wet. Use thicker paint to add texture, simulating the grain of the beach.

Create Depth with Shadows

Darken the lower areas of the beach to show the form curving away from the sun. Paint small rocks, ensuring their flat bottoms aim slightly downhill to indicate the beach's slope.

Paint the Water

Mix blue with white to paint the water, adding darker tones in shadow areas. Highlight the foam with a mix of white and a touch of yellow, cooling it down as it moves out of the spotlight.

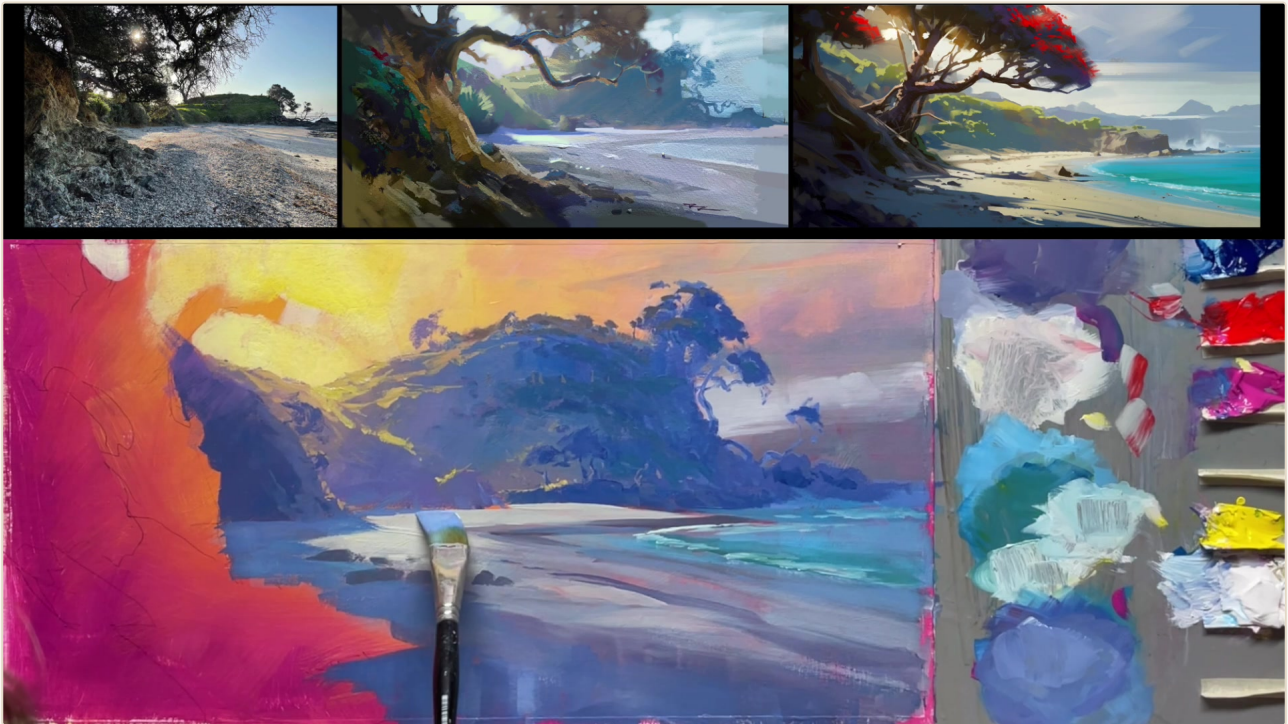
Add Reflections and Shadows

Introduce reflections in the water with a soft touch, using a medium dark purple grey. Add cast shadows onto the beach, lightening them with a bit of white as they approach the sun.

PRO TIP

Use big flat brushes for crisp zigzag lines and broad strokes to create texture and depth on the beach.

12 Painting the Water and Reflections



Define the Tree Trunk

Use an orange mixture to define the tree trunk's path. Consider the trunk's thickness and how it interacts with the background. Pay attention to the geometrical and slightly square aspects of the trunk's curves.

Add Foliage and Roots

Plan the foliage and roots around the tree trunk. Use a long synthetic brush for detailed work. Think in terms of family groupings of shapes to create a natural look.

Paint the Rock Area

Mix blue and red with a bit of yellow for a dark tone. Apply this to the rock area, ensuring soft edges where shadows meet shadows. Avoid using pure black to maintain color interest.

Create Texture in Rocks

Use the brush direction to create texture in the rocks. Add a variety of soft and hard edges for a natural appearance. Introduce a warm tone to the rocks by adding red and brown.

Add Highlights and Reflections

Use a chisel, angular brush to add highlights to the rocks. Be judicious with highlights to avoid overdoing them. Introduce cooler tones to reflect the sky and add dimensionality.

Incorporate Color Variations

Mix a gray-orange base and add cool tones for color variation. Reflect cooler light on the rocks to enhance dimensionality. Adjust the green tones to maintain harmony with the warm surroundings.

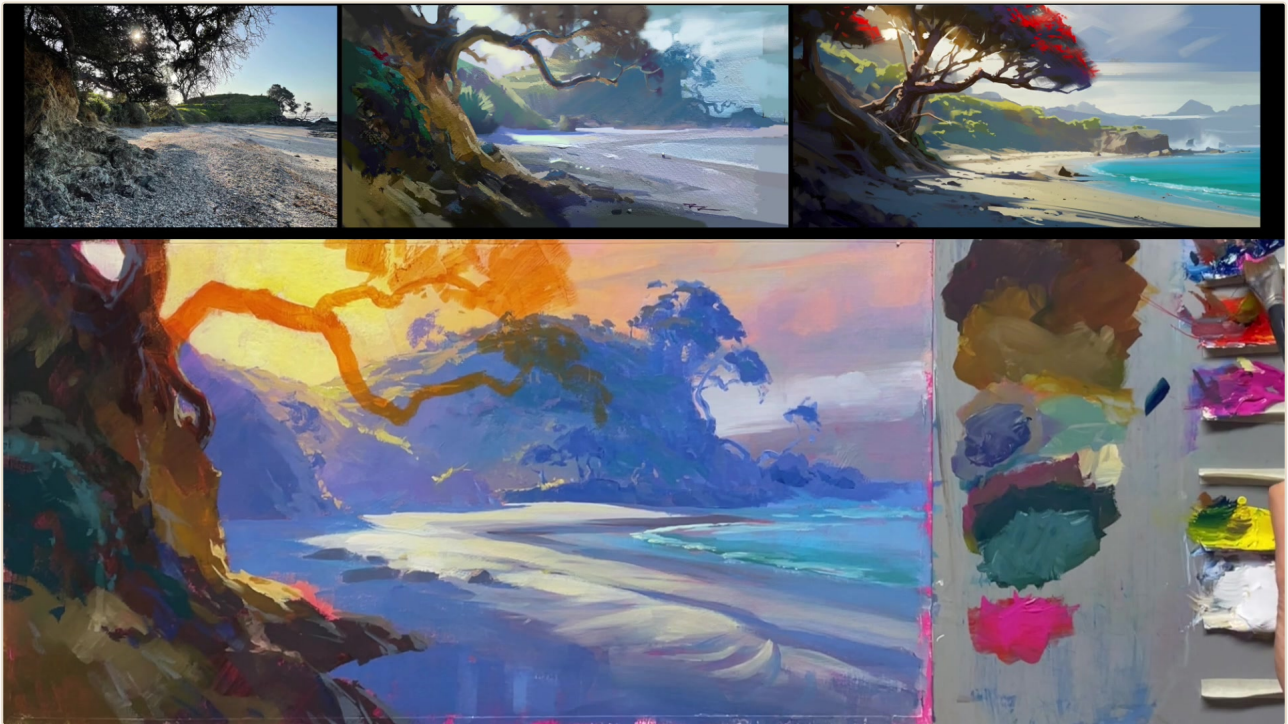
Add Final Details

Add small flicks of color to indicate leaves and blossoms. Use cool reflected light for highlights in shadowed areas. Focus on creating families of shapes and brush marks for texture.

PRO TIP

Use the brush direction to create texture in rocks, ensuring a variety of soft and hard edges for a natural look.

13 Painting the Rocks and Shadows



Adjust the Shadow Colors

Mix a little blue into the shadow areas to tone down the punchy color. This will create a more natural and balanced look in the shadows.

Refine the Tree Trunk

Start with an orange base and gradually work outwards, making the colors slightly darker and cooler as you move away from the sun. Be careful when adding white to orange, as it can cool down the color and reduce its saturation.

Smooth Transitions

Create smooth transitions by layering light orange over darker areas. This may require several layers to achieve a seamless blend. Consider using zinc white for a less opaque effect if needed.

Add Cooler Grey Highlights

Mix a cooler grey for the top side of the branches. This will complement the warm tones and add a dynamic contrast to the painting.

Warm Up the Branch Undersides

Enhance the warmth on the undersides of the branches with lighter tones. This will emphasize the light source and add depth to the painting.

Incorporate Sky Holes

Wash your brush and mix white, yellow, and a touch of magenta to create sky holes. Adjust the color to match the sky behind the tree for a realistic effect.

Add Moss and Highlights

Introduce some green for hanging moss and add highlights on the tree and foliage. This adds texture and interest to the scene.

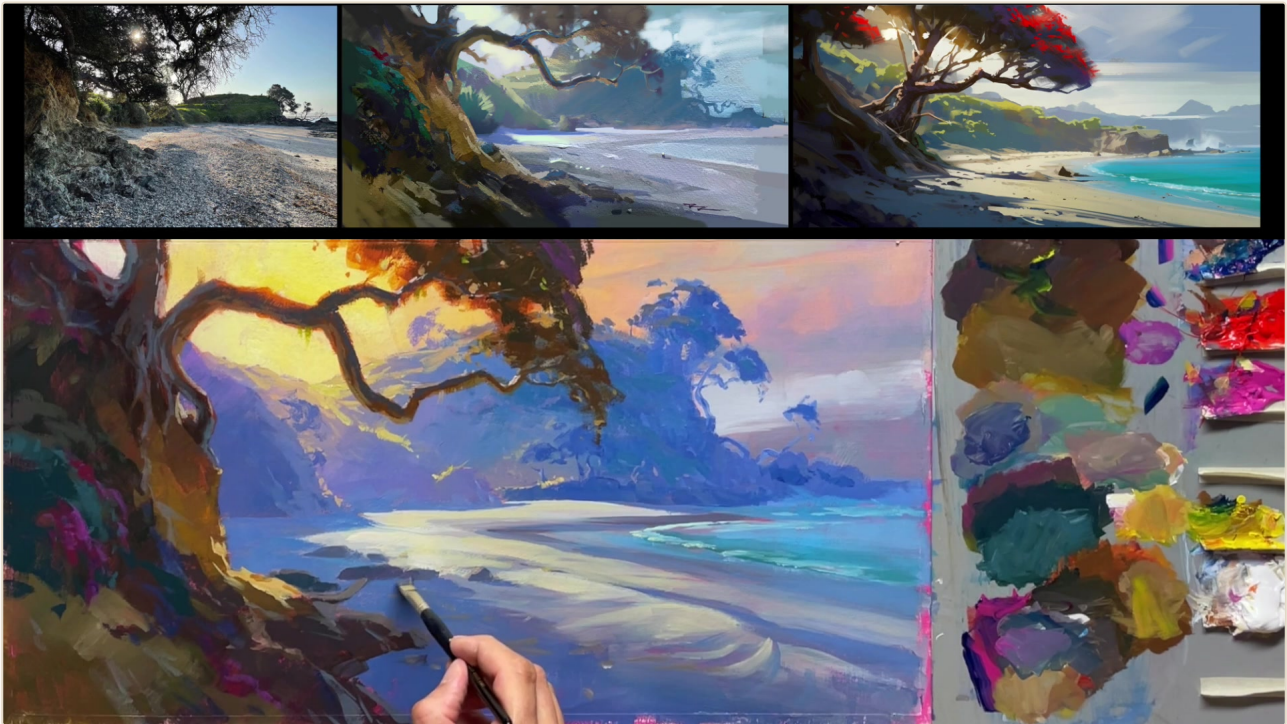
Darken the Rocks

Darken the rocks slightly to create a middle value between the foreground and background. This adjustment will help them stand out and add depth to the landscape.

PRO TIP

Mix colors beside your first color on the palette to see the transition before applying it to the painting.

14 Final Touches and Signature



Add Birds

Use a dark grey to paint small bird shapes in the sky. Add a touch of light to them with a mix of yellow, white, and magenta to create highlights.

Create Reflections

Paint a reflection of the birds in the water below them. Use the same colors to ensure consistency and harmony in the painting.

Enhance with Yellow

Add a little more yellow to areas that need brightening. This will enhance the warmth and vibrancy of your painting.

Sign Your Painting

Choose a spot to sign your painting with your preferred signature style. This is your final mark of completion.

Remove the Tape

Carefully pull off the tape to reveal clean edges and a finished look.

PRO TIP

Always step back to view your painting from a distance before adding final touches.

Summary & Key Takeaways

Embark on your painting journey by visualizing the overall composition of your scene. Begin with a simple and expressive design that captures the essence of Shelly Beach. Focus on creating a dynamic contrast between the warm foreground rocks and the cool background, using swishy diagonal lines to guide the viewer's eye and enhance depth. Simplify the background to allow the warm light and tree to stand out, setting the stage for a captivating focal point.

As you progress, pay close attention to the interplay of light and shadow. Analyze your photo references to decide which lighting elements to emphasize, adjusting values to reflect atmospheric perspective. Position the tree trunk against a lighter background for high contrast, and use dynamic lighting shapes to highlight your center of interest. Simplify the background further to ensure the tree's branches and foliage are the stars of the show.

Finally, bring your painting to life with vibrant colors and textures. Prepare your canvas with a warm base coat and sketch your composition lightly. Use bold, painterly strokes to paint the sky, headland, and beach, ensuring smooth transitions and soft edges. Capture the essence of the beach with textured brushwork and subtle reflections in the water. Let your creativity flow as you experiment with different models and perspectives, and embrace the organic development of your painting.

LESSON POINTS TO REMEMBER

- Contrast the warmth of the rocks against the coolness of the background for a dynamic composition.
- Enhance the contrast between warm and cool areas to make the focal elements stand out more strongly.
- Simplify the background to allow the tree's branches and foliage to stand out without competing for attention.
- Ensure shadows fan out towards the sun, as this creates a realistic depiction of light and shadow.
- Always lay out more paint than you think you'll need, as it's easier to return it to a jar than squeeze it back into a tube.
- Sketch lightly with a pencil to prevent graphite from showing through the paint.
- Use a lot of paint and keep it wet with a spray bottle for smooth transitions and soft edges.
- Keep your palette wet to maintain the paint's workability, especially when blending large areas.



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