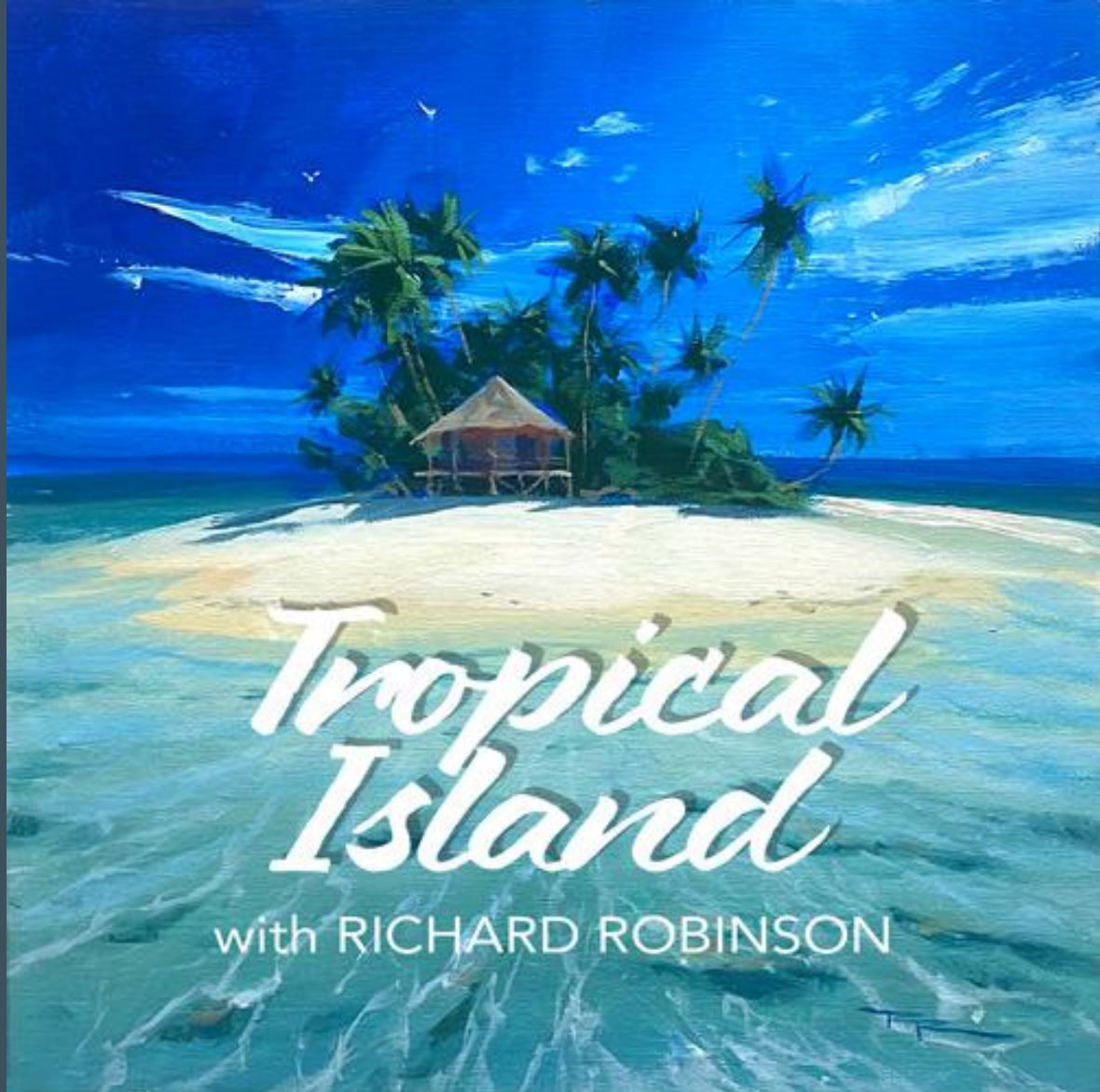




Tropical Island

with RICHARD ROBINSON

Tropical Island

A step-by-step painting guide by Richard Robinson

Watch the full lesson at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/245-Tropical-Island>

MY PAINTING CLUB

Introduction

As we embark on this tropical island painting journey, we'll transform a 14-inch square linen canvas into a vibrant paradise using a palette of Phthalo blue, brilliant magenta, phthalo yellow light, and titanium white. With the help of a gloss medium varnish and a trusty bucket of water for brush cleaning, we'll dive into an easy five-step process that captures the essence of a serene island retreat. This chapter will guide you through creating a dynamic design that balances dark and light areas, ensuring a slightly lighter composition to avoid splitting the scene. We'll breathe life into the island with additional trees, giving it an aged, timeless feel, and add a charming bungalow to evoke relaxation and enjoyment. You'll learn to craft swishy clouds in just two steps and create inviting tropical waters that beckon you to dive in. The palm trees will sway with life, and I'll guide you through each step, allowing you to explore and incorporate these elements into your own work. Together, we'll keep moving forward, opening new doors, and embracing the curiosity that leads us down new artistic paths.



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"Club Tropicana" 14x14" Acrylic on canvas 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

- Chroma Atelier Interactive Acrylics
- Phthalo Blue
- Brilliant Magenta
- 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.

1 Design concept



Establish Contrast

Focus on creating a design with dark versus light areas. Ensure there is slightly more light than dark to avoid splitting the composition in half.

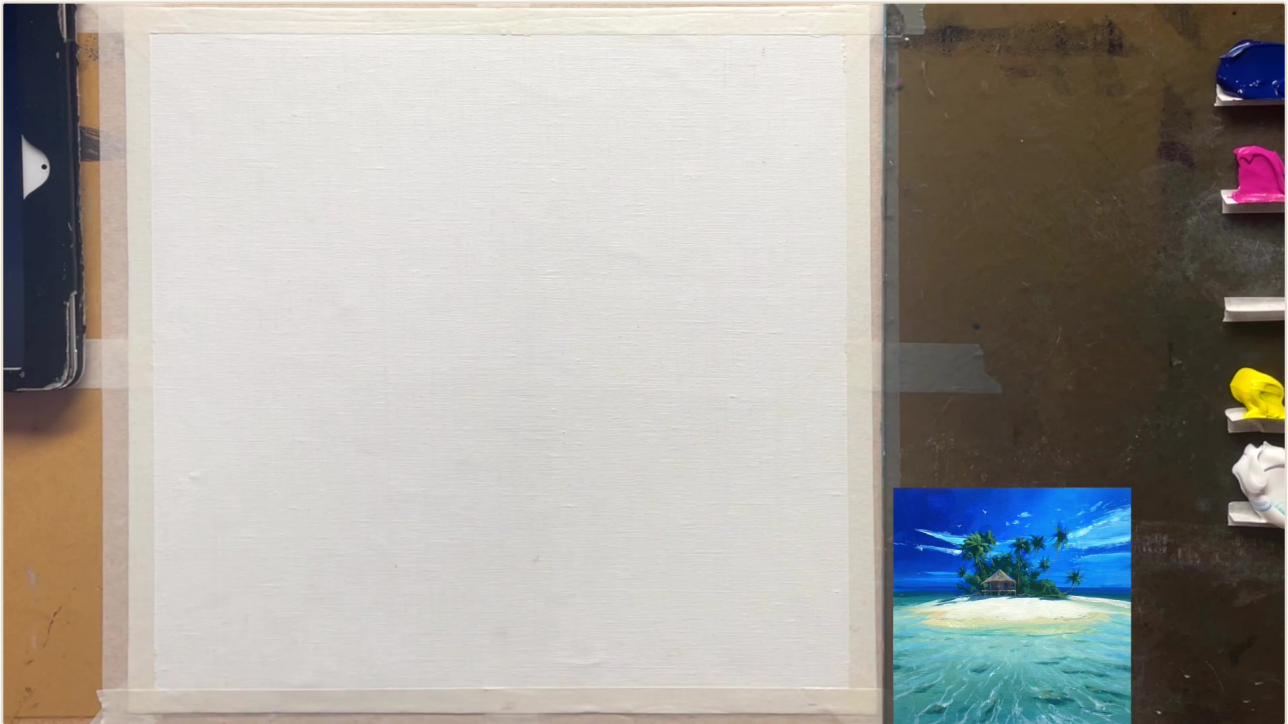
Enhance the Island

Add more trees to the island to give it an aged appearance. Include a charming bungalow to evoke a sense of relaxation and enjoyment of the tropical setting.

PRO TIP

Create a focal point by leading the eye to the area of highest contrast and sharpest line.

2 Painting the sky



Mark the Horizon

Mark the horizon slightly above the middle of your canvas. This will serve as a guideline for your painting.

Prepare Your Brush

Use a big flat 12 synthetic brush and dip it in water. This is especially beneficial for acrylic paints.

Mix the Sky Color

Mix Phthalo Blue with a little Magenta and a touch of white. Dab this mixture into the Gloss Medium Varnish for a smooth application.

Paint the Sky

Start painting the sky, beginning at the top. Gradually add less Magenta and more white as you move towards the sun to create a lighter and cooler effect.

Lighten the Horizon

Add more white to your mixture as you paint down towards the horizon. It's okay to paint over the horizon line; it can be adjusted later.

PRO TIP

Use a lot of paint with acrylics to achieve smooth transitions.

3 Adding and blending clouds



Prepare the Cloud Color

Mix white with a touch of blue to create a soft cloud color. This will ensure the clouds have a natural look and blend well with the sky.

Apply Clouds with a Palette Knife

Use a palette knife to apply the mixed color onto the canvas. Smoosh the paint flat onto the surface, creating a swishy, dynamic feel.

Blend the Cloud Edges

With a brush that has started to dry, gently soften the edges of the clouds. This will create a more natural transition into the sky.

Add Texture and Interest

Flick some paint upwards to add texture and interest to the clouds. Ensure the clouds are not symmetrical to avoid a balanced, scale-like appearance.

Enhance Atmospheric Perspective

Lower clouds on the horizon should have more blue and be smaller and flatter. This creates atmospheric perspective, making them appear further away.

Adjust Cloud Lighting

Brighten the edge of the clouds to suggest sunlight. This will add depth and realism to your painting.

PRO TIP

Always check your brush for clean colors before applying it to the canvas to maintain the purity of your hues.

4 Painting the ocean



Define the Horizon Line

Gently restate the horizon line on your canvas. Ensure it is straight and consistent, filling any gaps as needed. Don't worry about parts of the horizon that will be covered by the island and foliage.

Paint the Distant Ocean

Mix Phthalo blue with a little white to create the distant ocean color. Paint this mixture right on the horizon line, ensuring it is slightly darker than the sky. Keep your arm stiff and rotate from the shoulder for straight lines, or use a wheelie chair to rotate smoothly.

Blend Ocean Colors

Add a touch of yellow and white to the blue mixture and work it into the existing color. Create a soft blend from blue to green, indicating the transition from deep to shallow water. Add more white to lighten the color further, forming a subtle curve to represent the circular island's shallows.

Extend the Ocean

Brush the color down a little further to extend the ocean. This will help illustrate the edge of a large ellipse, representing the circular shape of the island and its surrounding waters.

PRO TIP

For straight lines, keep your arm stiff and rotate from the shoulder, or use a wheelie chair for smooth movement.

5 Painting the island and beach



Prepare the Island Color

Mix a little magenta, a little yellow, and a lot of white to create a warm, slightly orange-white color. This will be the base color for your island.

Paint the Island

Carefully apply the mixed color to form the island, being mindful of the amount of paint you pick up from underneath to maintain the desired hue.

Adjust the Sand Color

As the sand approaches the water, add a touch of brown to the mix. Be cautious with the yellow, as it can easily overpower the other colors.

Enhance the Beach

Add more white to the island color to achieve a bright, sandy beach. This contrast will make the light sand stand out against the dark sky, emphasizing the main design of your painting.

PRO TIP

Use more white in the beach area to create a striking contrast with the dark sky.

6 Blending water and adding rocks



Mix Sky Colors

Mix a very tiny touch of phthalo blue into a lot of white, adding a small amount of yellow. The yellow is strong, so add it sparingly. This mixture should be very close to the sky color, allowing for a smooth transition.

Blend the Water

Work the color down while the paint is still wet to achieve a smooth finish. Mix enough paint initially to avoid remixing. Gradually add more blue and a touch of yellow to darken the color slightly, aiming for a similar but darker shade.

Darken the Water

Continue to darken the water by adding more blue, being cautious with the yellow. Use a big brush for easier blending and to maintain wet paint for smoother transitions.

Add Rocks

Mix some blue with a touch of yellow to create the shadow color for the rocks. Vary the size and shape of the rocks for a natural look, avoiding uniformity. The rocks should create a zooming effect, drawing the eye to the center of the image.

Soften Rock Edges

As the rocks approach the shore, make them smaller and less distinct by lightening the color. Soften the edges while the paint is wet, using a big soft dry brush. Clean the brush frequently to prevent muddiness and maintain soft edges.

PRO TIP

Use a big brush for blending large areas to achieve smoother transitions and maintain wet paint.

7 Caustic lighting effect



Add Rock Highlights

Add a slight color change to the tops of the rocks if the paint is still wet. This subtle adjustment enhances the appearance of rocks under the water. Soften all edges for a natural look.

Understand Caustic Lighting

Caustic lighting is the reflected and refracted light on the ocean floor caused by the water's lensing effect. It creates a beautiful effect, often seen as wriggly oval shapes pointing toward the vanishing point on the horizon.

Paint Caustic Lighting

Mix white with a touch of blue and use a dagger or liner brush to paint the caustic lighting. Ensure the lines are wriggly and not straight, pointing toward the vanishing point. As they approach the beach, make them closer together and less distinct.

Enhance Light and Shadows

Add more white to intensify the lighter areas, mimicking the lens effect of water. Avoid painting lines straight over rocks; instead, let them end and continue elsewhere. Use a lighter color to enhance the sparkle effect, as acrylics darken when dry.

Darken Rock Shadows

Before the paint dries, darken the shadows of the rocks slightly. This creates the effect of clearer water, making the rocks more visible. Keep all edges soft for a cohesive look.

PRO TIP

Use a lighter color to intensify highlights, as acrylics tend to darken when they dry.

8 Sketching palm trees and hut



Prepare the Base Color

Mix Phthalo Blue with a little Gloss Medium and a touch of white. This will be your base color to mark out the positions of the elements.

Sketch the Palm Trees

Lightly sketch the base of the trees using the mixed color. Indicate the positions of a big tree, smaller trees to the side, and a low tree.

Define the Palm Fronds

Switch to a smaller square brush to sketch the palm fronds. Start at the center point of each tree and brush outwards, creating a floppy star shape.

Plan the Foliage and Hut

Mark out additional foliage areas below the trees. Indicate where the little shack will be placed.

PRO TIP

Use a smaller square brush to effectively sketch the palm fronds with more precision.

9 Painting palm trees



Mix Shadow Green

Combine blue and yellow to create a dark green for the shadow areas of the palm trees. Focus on applying this dark green in the center of the palm trees to capture the depth and shadow.

Enhance Color Saturation

Remember that tropical colors are highly saturated. Increase the intensity of your colors to reflect the vibrant hues typical of tropical locations.

Add Light to the Trees

Mix yellow and white into your green to create a lighter shade. Apply this lighter green with more precise brush strokes, especially on the smaller trees, to highlight the areas catching light.

Create Motion with Blurred Edges

Use slightly blurred edges and a blue background to suggest motion in the foliage. Avoid sharp edges to prevent the scene from appearing static and windless.

Adjust Color Tone

Add a little white and blue to tone down the green slightly. This softens the color and helps differentiate between different types of foliage.

Observe Palm Tree Shapes

Take time to study the shape of palm trees and how you can represent them with brush strokes. Avoid painting from memory to ensure your trees look realistic and not like basic symbols.

PRO TIP

Use blurred edges to suggest motion in the foliage, avoiding sharp lines for a more dynamic scene.

10 Adding palm tree trunks



Prepare the Brush

Wash your liner or rigger brush thoroughly to ensure it's clean. This will help in achieving smooth lines for the palm tree trunks.

Mix a Warm Grey

Create a warm grey by mixing more magenta and yellow than blue with your existing colors. This will give the trunks a natural, warm appearance.

Load the Brush

Rotate the brush and push it into the paint pile to load it evenly. Avoid big blobs of paint to ensure a smooth application.

Paint the Trunks

Apply the paint to create the palm tree trunks, allowing them to fade into the foliage. Avoid hard stops at the bottom to suggest that bushes are obscuring the trunk bases.

PRO TIP

Rotate and push the brush into the paint to load it evenly for smooth application.

11 Painting the hut



Paint the Roof Underside

Mix a warm orange and tone it down with a little blue to create the base color for the underside of the roof. Use a crisp, small brush to apply this color, capturing the warm light bouncing off the sand.

Add Roof Highlights

Mix white with a touch of blue to create a lighter tone for the cone on top of the roof. Apply this color to add dimension and prevent the roof from looking flat.

Create Structural Lines

Use the same light blue mix to paint structural lines on the hut. Use a fine brush with fine bristles, smoothing out the paint on the palette before picking it up with the brush to achieve fine lines. Remember, the lines don't need to be perfectly straight as the hut is a rustic shack.

Add a Wash for Depth

Mix blue, magenta, and a little yellow to create a warm dark wash. Apply this wash to add depth and darkness to areas like the doorway.

Enhance with Highlights

Add a little white to your wash mix to create highlights. Apply these highlights sparingly to add variation and realism to the wood and other elements of the hut.

PRO TIP

Use a fine brush and smooth out the paint on the palette to achieve fine lines for structural details.

12 Adding shadows



Mix Shadow Color

Create a blue-grey mix for the shadows. This color will add depth and realism to the scene.

Determine Shadow Direction

Position the shadows slightly to the left, as the sun is positioned a bit to the right. This will ensure the shadows appear natural and consistent with the light source.

Apply Tree Shadows

Add shadows beneath the trees using the blue-grey mix. This will ground the trees and enhance the three-dimensional effect.

Add Hut Shadow

Extend a shadow from the hut in the same leftward direction. This will create a cohesive look with the other shadows in the scene.

PRO TIP

Position shadows to the left if the sun is slightly to the right to maintain consistency in lighting.

13 Reflections and water details



Reflect the Sky in Water

Use a bigger brush to apply a mix of white and phthalo blue to the water on the sides. Ensure the color is bluer and slightly lighter than the existing water color. Apply with small, thin strokes, then brush down to create a shallow effect.

Darken Undersides

Switch to a dry brush and add a touch of phthalo blue. Darken the undersides of the shapes you just painted to enhance the reflection effect.

Add Water Edge Details

Use fine lines to add more detail along the water's edge, enhancing the overall realism of the scene.

PRO TIP

Use small, thin strokes to mimic the subtle reflections of the sky in the water.

14 Final touches and signing



Add Seagulls

Use a small square brush to add a couple of seagulls to your painting. Dip the brush in white paint and make simple, small marks to suggest the birds. This adds life and movement to your scene.

Optional Beach Details

Consider adding a few small shells on the beach for extra detail. Use a very light warm grey to paint them so they blend subtly into the scene without drawing too much attention.

Sign Your Painting

Sign your painting to complete it. Choose a spot that doesn't distract from the main composition, and use a color that complements the overall palette.

PRO TIP

Use a light warm grey for subtle details like shells to ensure they don't overpower the scene.

Summary & Key Takeaways

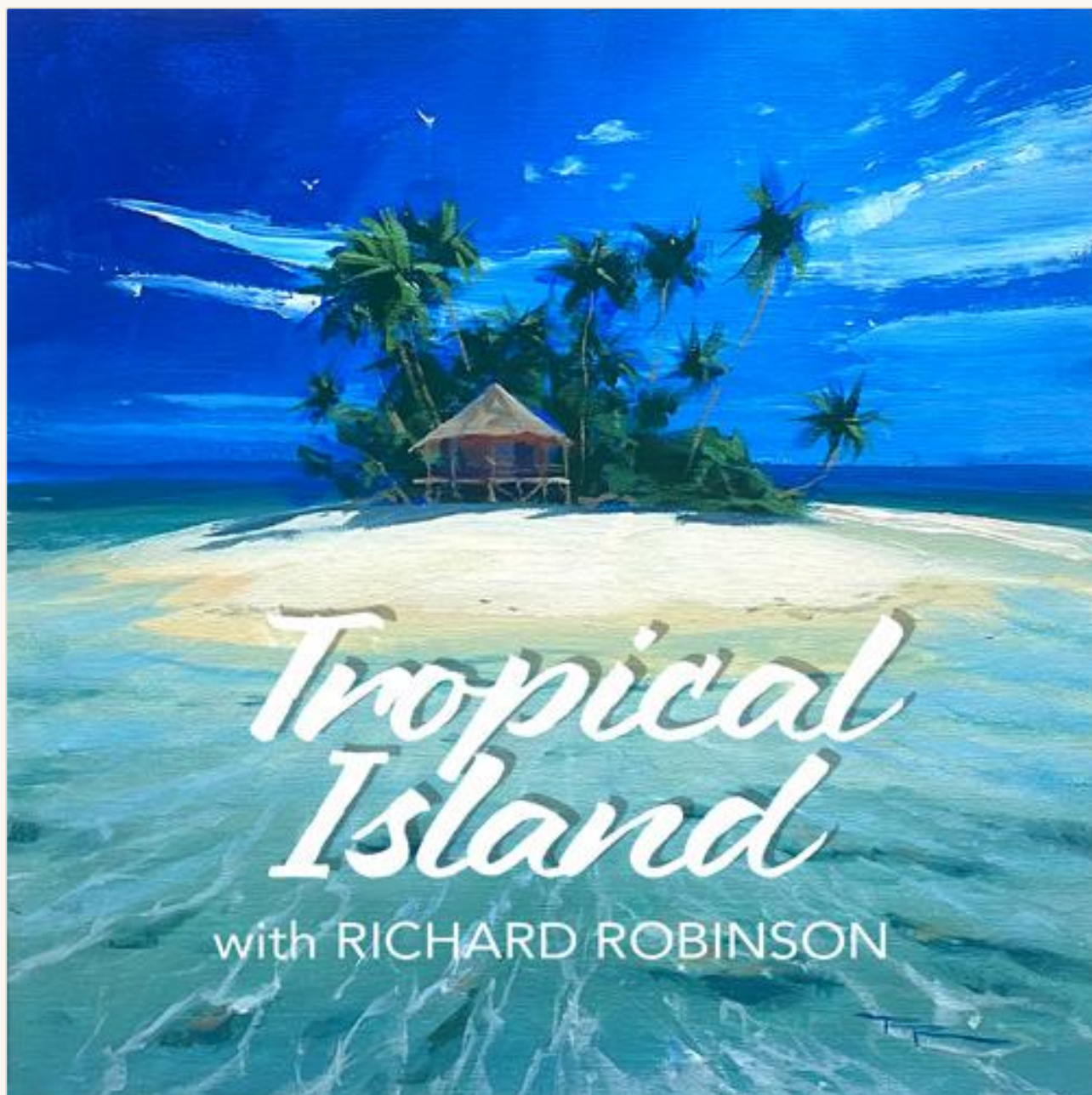
Embark on your tropical island painting journey by establishing a thoughtful design concept, balancing light and dark areas to create a captivating composition. Begin with the sky, using a smooth gradient of blues and magentas to set the scene. As you progress, blend soft clouds into the sky, ensuring they appear natural and dynamic.

Move on to the ocean, carefully crafting the transition from deep to shallow waters with a harmonious blend of blues and greens. As you paint the island and beach, focus on contrast to highlight the sandy shores against the darker sky. Incorporate rocks and caustic lighting effects to add depth and realism, enhancing the illusion of clear, tropical waters.

Finally, bring your island to life with palm trees, a charming hut, and subtle details like seagulls and shells. Pay attention to shadows and reflections to maintain consistency in lighting, and use fine brushwork for the finishing touches. Sign your masterpiece with pride, knowing you've captured the essence of a serene tropical paradise.

LESSON POINTS TO REMEMBER

- Create a focal point with the highest contrast and sharpest line.
- Use a lot of paint with acrylics for smooth transitions.
- Check your brush for clean colors to maintain hue purity.
- Keep your arm stiff and rotate from the shoulder for straight lines.
- Use blurred edges to suggest motion in foliage.
- Position shadows to the left if the sun is slightly to the right.
- Use small, thin strokes to mimic subtle reflections in water.
- Sign your painting in a spot that complements the composition.



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