



a Walk to the Beach

A step-by-step painting guide by Richard Robinson

Watch the full lesson at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/246-a-Walk-to-the-Beach>

MY PAINTING CLUB

Introduction

As the summer sun graces the beaches of New Zealand, I find myself exploring these serene landscapes in my camper van, capturing their beauty to share with you. One such gem is Rangiputa on the North Island, a place that inspired this lesson. Although I couldn't paint it live as the sun set, I captured stunning photos that we'll use to guide our painting journey. In this chapter, I'll show you how to transform a simple photo into a vibrant, glowing painting. We'll delve into the art of editing your photos right on your phone to enhance their warmth and color, setting the stage for a masterpiece. Whether you prefer acrylics or oils, I'll walk you through creating a radiant sky and adjusting your palette to suit the scene. Together, we'll simplify complex subjects into manageable steps, ensuring you enjoy the process without the fear of mistakes. By the end, you'll not only have a beautiful sunset beach painting but also the confidence to infuse any scene with that captivating inner glow.



Rangiputa 15x15" Acrylic on Canvas by Richard Robinson



REFERENCE PHOTO 1

The scene as Richard found it.



REFERENCE PHOTO 2

The scene as Richard found it.

Materials

Gather these materials before you start. If you don't have the exact same supplies, use what you have and substitute freely.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- Chroma Atelier Interactive Acrylics
- Ultramarine Blue
- Burnt Sienna
- Naphthol Red Light
- Yellow Ochre
- Primary 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 Photo Editing for Painting Reference



Edit Your Photo

Open the photo you want to edit on your phone and select 'Edit'. Consider applying a filter to warm up the scene, enhancing the colors and overall warmth.

Adjust Saturation

Navigate to the 'Adjustments' section and increase the saturation to make the colors richer. Be cautious not to overdo it, as too much saturation can make the image look unnatural.

Modify Warmth

Use the warmth adjustment to further enhance the temperature of the image. You can make it warmer or cooler depending on your preference for the painting reference.

Compare Before and After

Tap on the image to toggle between the original and edited versions. This helps you see the impact of your adjustments and decide if further changes are needed.

Copy Edits to Another Photo

If you have another photo to adjust similarly, use the 'Copy Edits' feature. Go to the edited photo, click the three dots, select 'Copy Edits', then go to the new photo, click 'Edit', and 'Paste' the settings. This saves time and ensures consistency.

PRO TIP

Use the 'Copy Edits' feature to quickly apply the same adjustments to multiple photos, saving time and maintaining consistency in your painting references.

2 Canvas Preparation



Choose Your Canvas Base

Select a 15-inch square canvas board for your painting. Be aware that canvas boards are typically glued onto a base such as cardboard, gator board, or wood. Each base material can affect the texture of your painting surface.

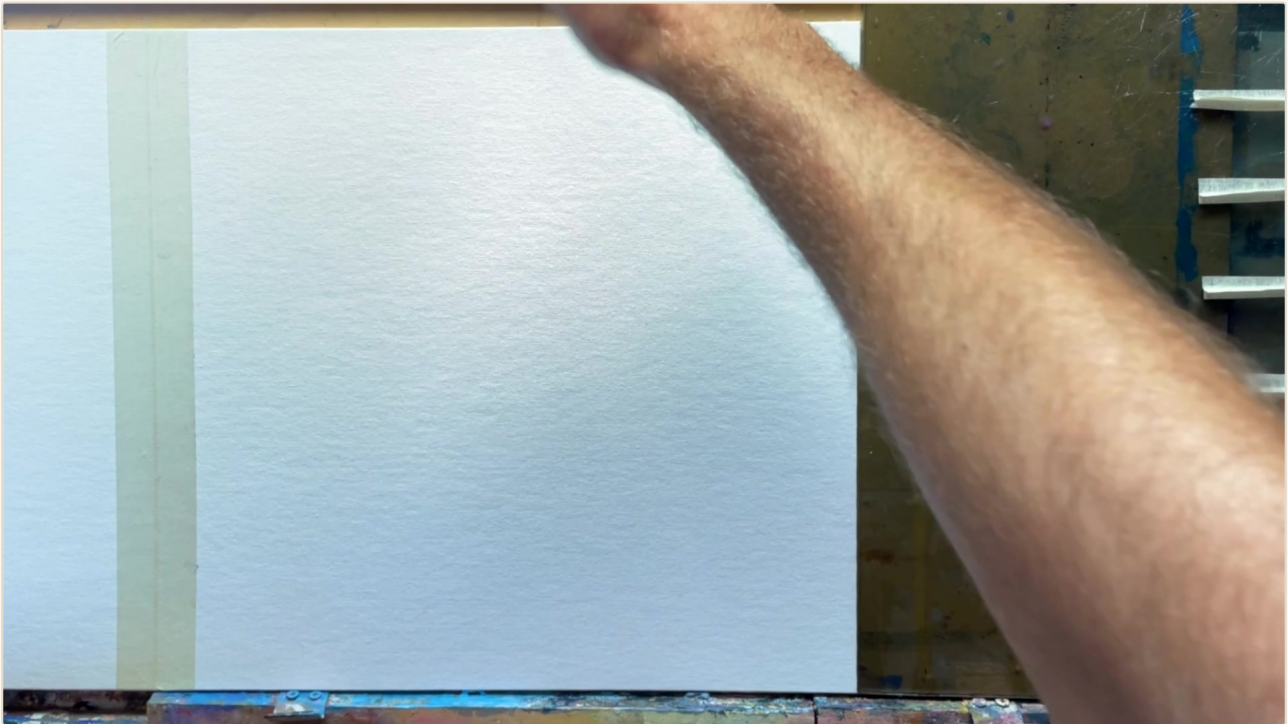
Consider Texture Effects

Inspect the texture of the canvas board. Cardboard bases may show a mottled texture due to glue, which can affect your painting. Opt for gator board or wood bases to avoid this texture if desired.

PRO TIP

Check the base material of your canvas board to ensure it suits the texture you want for your painting.

3 Applying the Undercoat



Apply the Undercoat

Start with an undercoat of arillamide yellow light. Wet your brush first and cover the entire canvas with this color. You can use any yellow or warm color like red or orange if preferred.

Add Orange to the Bottom

Mix Naphthol Red Light with some yellow to create an orange hue. Apply this to the bottom of the canvas while it's still wet for a smoother effect. Use the brush in various directions to avoid creating lines.

Soften with Red

Add a little more red to the orange area and soften it up using the tip of your brush. This technique will give a very smooth finish, especially with a big flat brush.

Let It Dry

Leave the undercoat to dry. Since it was painted thinly, it should take about 20 minutes to dry. This is one of the advantages of using acrylics.

PRO TIP

Use the brush in various directions to avoid creating lines and achieve a smooth finish.

4 Initial Drawing and Composition



Prepare Your Materials

Ensure you have a palette of interactive artist acrylics ready. Keep a big bucket of water and a cleaner jar of water nearby. Use a spray bottle to keep your paints from drying on the palette.

Select Your Brushes

Choose a range of flat and angled synthetic brushes with mainly long bristles. Include a liner or rigger brush for finishing touches.

Draw Basic Shapes

Use an angle brush, wet it, and pick up a little red to draw the big basic shapes. Start with the horizon line, as everything works from there. Notice where the big shapes intersect the horizon and the angles they form.

Add Details to Shapes

Within the big shapes, start adding smaller shapes like clumps of grass. Remember, these clumps will appear larger as they get closer to the foreground. Block in shadow areas and darker elements in the foreground.

Consider Composition

Ensure the path fans out from a single point perspective, leading to a point in the distance. Lightly indicate where the clouds will go, and avoid straight lines that could make the scene look unnatural.

Prepare for Painting

Wash your brush and switch to a bigger one. Wet the brush, then grab some white and a little yellow to start painting from the top down, beginning with the sky.

PRO TIP

Ensure your path fans out from a single point perspective to create a natural flow in the composition.

5 Painting the Sky



Prepare Your Brush and Colors

Wet your brush and mix white with a little yellow. Test the color by mixing in some red to see the result before applying it to the painting. Consider adding brilliant magenta for a mauve feel if desired.

Paint the Sky Near the Sun

Dip your brush in yellow and add a drop of water to keep the paint wet. Paint outward from where the sun is, using horizontal and vertical strokes to create a bright, punchy color.

Add Orange Near the Horizon

Switch to an orange color closer to the horizon. If the paint becomes gritty, allow the base layer to dry thoroughly before continuing.

Refine the Sky Colors

Once dry, start with yellow and blend into a pink at the top using white and red. Add water to smooth the transition and work back up with yellow and white for a seamless blend.

Adjust the Base Color

At the base, experiment with yellow ochre, but if it doesn't work, add a touch of toning gray to the palette to achieve the desired effect.

PRO TIP

Test your color mixes on a separate surface before applying them to the painting to ensure you achieve the desired hue.

6 Adding Clouds



Mix a Warm Grey

Add a touch of mid-gray to the palette. Mix in yellow, a little bit of red, and some white to create a warm grey. This mixture will be used for the clouds and can also be applied to similar colors in the water.

Choose the Right Blue

Use Ultramarine Blue for a warm feel in your painting, as it contains a bit of red. Avoid Phthalo Blue if you want to maintain a warm color scheme.

Paint the Clouds

Begin painting the clouds with the warm grey mixture. Start from the front and work your way back, gradually adding more grey and a touch more red as you move further back to create depth and warmth.

PRO TIP

Use Ultramarine Blue for a warm color scheme, as it contains a hint of red.

7 Painting the Trees



Select the Right Brush

Switch to an angle brush to work on the trees while the background is still wet. This will help achieve a nice blend with the existing colors.

Mix Tree Colors

Mix burnt sienna with a little yellow ochre and red. Aim for a color that captures the general feel of the trees rather than an exact match.

Paint Tree Shapes

Paint outwards from the center line of each tree using calligraphic strokes. Focus on creating varied, family-like shapes rather than making them all the same.

Consider Future Layers

Keep in mind that the grass will come up above the trees, so finish the tree shapes accordingly. Allow the edges to blend softly into the grey background, as this is just the first layer.

PRO TIP

Always brush outwards from the center of the tree to create natural-looking shapes.

8 Color Relationships and Sand Details



Prepare the Base Color

Use toning grey as your base color. Spray the palette to keep the colors wet and workable. Mix in a little burnt sienna and yellow ochre to create a darker, warmer grey for shadow areas.

Adjust for Soft Light

Ensure the grey is warm and dark enough for soft transitions from shadow to light. This will help maintain the soft light effect without hard shadows.

Explore Color Relationships

Notice how the warm grey appears cool against the orange. This demonstrates the relative nature of color. Be mindful of the amount of cool tones you introduce to maintain an overall warm feel.

Add Warmth to the Sand

Squint at your reference photo to identify warm and cool grey areas. Add more yellow ochre and a touch of bright yellow to warm the grey further, especially on sand planes facing the sunset.

Understand Sand Color

Remember that white sand rarely appears pure white in low light. Trust the process of using warm and cool greys to depict the sand accurately.

Create Smooth Transitions

Aim for smooth edges rather than sharp ones. Use a palette knife to add texture where needed. Adjust the color to reflect the light and sky, ensuring the cool grey areas appear lighter and cooler than the warm grey.

PRO TIP

Use a palette knife to add texture and create smooth transitions between warm and cool greys.

9 Building Grass Textures



Create Tire Tracks and Sand Texture

Observe the sharp edge of the tire rut and the dimples in the sand. Paint the flat bit on top and the wheel track inside, which should be a little darker. Look for interesting shapes and ensure some areas reflect cool light by identifying planes facing upwards.

Add Color Variation to Sand

Mix a little yellow and blue to create a greenish hue in certain areas for color variation. Add more detail with shadows, using grey and red, while maintaining mostly soft edges. Use a palette knife to apply chunky paint in the foreground, enhancing depth.

Paint the Base Layer of Grasses

Use yellow ochre to brush in the base layer of grasses. Add a touch of red and burnt sienna for the foreground patch, using big brush strokes to create texture and movement. Brush out into the sand, ensuring your brush is clean to avoid muddy colors.

Develop Grass Texture and Color

Add green by mixing yellow with a touch of blue, keeping it a warm brown-green. Use soft edges on top and vary brush strokes to build interesting texture. Retain individual clumps of grass for a more natural look, and use the side of the brush for soft indications.

Establish Major Color Movements

Consider the major movements of color, using warmer and cooler browns and greens. Focus on creating cohesive large shapes of color, then break them down into smaller shapes to maintain harmony and avoid a disjointed appearance.

PRO TIP

Use a palette knife to apply chunky paint in the foreground, enhancing depth and contrast with the background.

10 Adding Depth with Darker Tones



Mix Darker Tones

Create a dark warm green by mixing blue, burnt sienna, and yellow. Aim for a dull, greyish tone rather than a vibrant green.

Brush Upward

Brush the mixture upward from the bottom, focusing on creating mainly soft edges. This helps in building depth and a natural look.

Adjust Tones

Add a little more brown to the docks on the side for variation. Keep squinting at your reference photo to focus on the big color shapes rather than details.

Strengthen Red and Darken

Apply a stronger red in areas where needed. Mix more blue with burnt sienna to achieve a darker tone for additional depth.

Use a Large Brush

Continue using a large brush for a gestural feel, even for smaller elements. This prevents the painting from looking too precise and man-made.

Add Dark Accents

Lightly brush in a few dark accents using the same dark mixture. This adds contrast and interest to the composition.

Maintain Soft Edges

Focus on keeping edges soft to prepare for adding hard-edged elements like the 'bunny tails' later. Avoid making all marks uniform to maintain a natural appearance.

PRO TIP

Use a large brush to maintain a gestural feel and avoid overly precise marks.

11 Refining Grass and Texture



Create Vertical Shapes

Use a flat brush and brush sideways to create vertical shapes in the grass. This technique provides a different feel than brushing straight down. Refer to your photo for inspiration and ensure these shapes complement the overall motion you want to achieve.

Adjust Darkness and Warmth

Be cautious not to make the dark areas too heavy, as this can detract from the lightness of the scene. If needed, adjust the color to be slightly warmer while maintaining the same value to enhance the light effect.

Add Foreground Details

Return to mid values in the foreground and add more plant details. Cover most of the orange on the canvas, as lights will be painted on top later. Use patience and kindness with yourself during this process.

Experiment with Brush Sizes

If your shapes become too large, consider wiping them back with your finger or switching to a smaller brush. However, use a larger brush as long as possible to maintain a gestural feel. Focus on creating shapes within the big shapes, rather than painting randomly.

PRO TIP

Use a flat brush sideways to create vertical shapes, giving a unique texture to the grass.

12 Highlighting Grass Tips



Prepare Your Palette

Clean your brush and palette to ensure clear, vibrant colors. Use a glass palette for easy cleaning with a razor blade.

Mix Highlight Colors

Mix bright yellow with a touch of red and a hint of blue to create a soft green. Adjust the mixture until it is bright enough to highlight the grass tips.

Apply Soft Highlights

Focus on the tops of the grass clumps, maintaining their shapes. Use soft, fuzzy strokes rather than painting individual blades to keep the natural look.

Enhance with Different Tones

Add a little more red to your mixture for variation in grass color. This adds depth and interest to the painting.

Use a Dagger Brush for Fine Lines

Switch to a dagger brush to create fine, calligraphic lines. This brush holds more paint and allows for longer, more fluid strokes, perfect for adding detailed highlights.

PRO TIP

Use a dagger brush for long, beautiful lines when highlighting grass tips.

13 Painting Bunny Tails



Add Random Grass Blades

Add a few random blades of grass in different directions to create a natural look. Use a darker gray-green to vary the tones and avoid uniformity.

Prepare for Bunny Tails

Switch to a square brush and wet it slightly. Mix a warm light color using yellow ochre, bright yellow, and a lot of white. This will be used for the bunny tails.

Paint Bunny Tails

Paint the bunny tails with the warm light mix, ensuring their sizes are consistent within their area. Use smaller strokes for distant tails and larger ones as they get closer. Consider using a smaller brush or a toothbrush for tiny ones.

Add Depth to Bunny Tails

Mix a slightly darker color by adding more yellow ochre to tone down the contrast for closer tails. Paint this darker shade inside each tail to suggest they are backlit.

PRO TIP

Use a smaller brush or a toothbrush for tiny bunny tails to achieve finer details.

14 Final Touches and Details



Add Sky Holes

Use a square brush to add a few sky holes through the trees. Ensure they are darker to prevent them from standing out too much. Consider incorporating a pink or pinky-orange hue for a sunlit effect on the cloud.

Enhance with Bunny Tails

Introduce pampas grasses, also known as bunny tails, to add interest. These elements are optional but can enhance the scene's natural feel.

Balance with Red

Apply a stronger red in the corner to balance the composition. This will help to harmonize the colors across the painting.

Add Final Details

Consider adding seagulls or other small details to complete the scene. Decide when your painting feels finished, as you can always keep adding more.

PRO TIP

Use a square brush for sky holes and clouds to achieve a natural, sunlit effect.

Summary & Key Takeaways

Embark on your painting journey by carefully preparing your reference photo, enhancing its warmth and saturation to guide your artistic vision. As you move to canvas preparation, select a surface that complements your desired texture. Begin with a vibrant undercoat to establish the mood and set the stage for your composition.

With your composition sketched out, focus on building the scene from the sky downward, blending colors to capture the essence of light and atmosphere. Introduce clouds and trees with thoughtful color choices, ensuring each element harmonizes with the overall warm scheme. As you progress, pay attention to the interplay of warm and cool tones, especially in the sand and grass, to create depth and interest.

In the final stages, refine textures and add highlights to bring your scene to life. Use a variety of brush techniques to maintain a natural, gestural feel, and incorporate details like grass tips and bunny tails to enhance realism. Remember to keep your edges soft and your colors vibrant, allowing your painting to evoke the serene beauty of a walk to the beach.

LESSON POINTS TO REMEMBER

- Use the 'Copy Edits' feature to maintain consistency in your painting references.
- Check the base material of your canvas board for desired texture.
- Use the brush in various directions to avoid creating lines.
- Ensure your path fans out from a single point perspective for natural flow.
- Test your color mixes on a separate surface before applying them.
- Use Ultramarine Blue for a warm color scheme.
- Use a palette knife to add texture and create smooth transitions.
- Use a dagger brush for long, beautiful lines when highlighting grass tips.



Rangiputa 15x15" Acrylic 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.

A Walk to the Beach 12 x 12 Oil on Wood Panel



A Walk to the Beach 12 x 12 Oil on Wood Panel

Wow some really vibrant colour in here Louise and you've made it so inviting with your trademark soft edges and simplified shapes. One thing I would **ILIKE** you to consider here is the hue and value contrast between the light grey clouds on the right and sky around them. There's a discord there that can be mended by warming that grey up. Another small not, the light stalks in the foreground could do with ore variety in thickness, length and angle. We have to stay vigilant against pattern making, and this is one of those areas where it's easy to let that happen. Overall it great work, Louise, and it'll certainly brighten up a room.

A walk to the beach. Acrylic on canvas



A walk to the beach. Acrylic on canvas

Hey Deborah, you've done well in maintaining the warm light throughout the painting though it could do with a little more neutral grey in the shadow planes to add more variety.

I especially love the way you've added texture and detail in the foreground, which pulls the viewer right into the painting.

Beware of adding straight drawn lines in a landscape painting I LIKE the one on your horizon as it smacks of something manmade and draws the attention where it's not warranted - the grasses are really the star of the show. Overall, this is a great piece that shows your strong sense of color and brushwork — keep at it!

Walk to the beach



Walk to the beach

Hi Dawn, nice colour contrasts in here between warms and cools, but that is avoiding the point of the exercise which was to remove those cool colours from your palette in order to create a harmonious warmth overall. Still, you've got a nice transition from dark to light and large to small in the foreground, giving a great sense of depth and movement with your brushwork. You might want to try using a ruler or masking tape for getting your horizon level and straight, and do be careful to avoid the shine off your painting when photographing it. Hope that helps some. I look forward to seeing your next one.

A Walk to the Beach by Tracy Randell, Adelaide South Australia. 12 x 12 oil on canvas board



A Walk to the Beach by Tracy Randell, Adelaide South Australia. 12 x 12 oil on canvas board

Great punchy colour, Tracy, and some nice action in the grasses! That's a beautiful smooth sun glow you've got working too. On the whole this is a beautifully atmospheric painting, and you've done a wonderful job capturing the warmth of the light through the scene which was the whole point of the exercise.