



Enjoying Painting 2

A step-by-step painting guide by Richard Robinson

Watch the full lesson at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/249-Enjoying-Painting-2>

MY PAINTING CLUB

Introduction

I had the pleasure of filming this lesson in a stunning location above the town of Glenorchy, where the breathtaking landscape offers a perfect canvas for artistic exploration. In this chapter, you'll learn from the talented New Zealand painter John Crump as he guides us through the essential techniques of setting out a landscape on canvas. We'll delve into the art of mixing colors and achieving that coveted 'painterly' brushwork that brings life to your paintings. To start, I recommend choosing a large canvas, like Frederick's Kent double primed pure linen, which provides ample space to capture the grandeur of the scene. With an average-sized brush and thinned down Windsor blue, we'll broadly lay out the shapes, focusing on accuracy while enhancing elements like the lagoon for added interest. By using brush lines instead of pencil, you'll maintain a clear view of your composition from a distance and save time. This approach not only enhances your painting process but also ensures that your work remains vibrant and engaging throughout. Join me in this rewarding journey as we bring the beauty of Glenorchy to life on canvas.



"Glenorchy Waters" Oil on Linen by John Crump



REFERENCE PHOTO 1

The scene as Richard found it.



REFERENCE PHOTO 2

The scene as Richard found it.



REFERENCE PHOTO 3

The scene as Richard found it.

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

- Winsor and Newton, artist's quality oil paints.
- Winsor blue (red shade)
- Venetian red
- Winsor green
- Titanium white
- Cadmium lemon
- Cadmium yellow pale
- Cadmium orange
- Gold ochre
- Permanent rose
- Cadmium red
- Magenta
- Brushes
- Size 12 chisel tip long bristle.
- Only one small brush, usually an ox /sable rigger type brush – size 1 or 2.
- Medium
- Liquin Original
- for painting medium.
- Canvas
- Fredrix Ultrasmooth Canvas
- , a polyflax, triple primed, fairly smooth surfaced canvas.

1 Canvas and initial layout



Select Your Canvas

Choose a large canvas, such as Frederick's Kent double primed pure linen, to give yourself ample space to work and express the landscape.

Set Up Your Painting Broadly

Use an average size brush with very thinned down Windsor blue to broadly lay out the shapes of your painting. Focus on keeping the shapes accurate while extending and enlarging elements like the lagoon to create more interest in the foreground.

Avoid Pencil Lines

Lay out your painting with brush lines instead of pencil lines. This allows you to see the composition clearly from a distance and saves time, as pencil lines often get covered up during painting.

PRO TIP

Use thinned down paint to broadly lay out your composition, allowing for easy adjustments and a clear view from a distance.

2 Focal point and mountain shapes



Determine Focal Point

Identify the highest mountain in your scene as the focal point. Ensure it has plenty of clearance from the top of the canvas to avoid a cramped composition.

Adjust Mountain Shapes

Carefully draw the mountain shapes, shifting them slightly to the left if needed. This adjustment helps balance the composition and directs the viewer's eye.

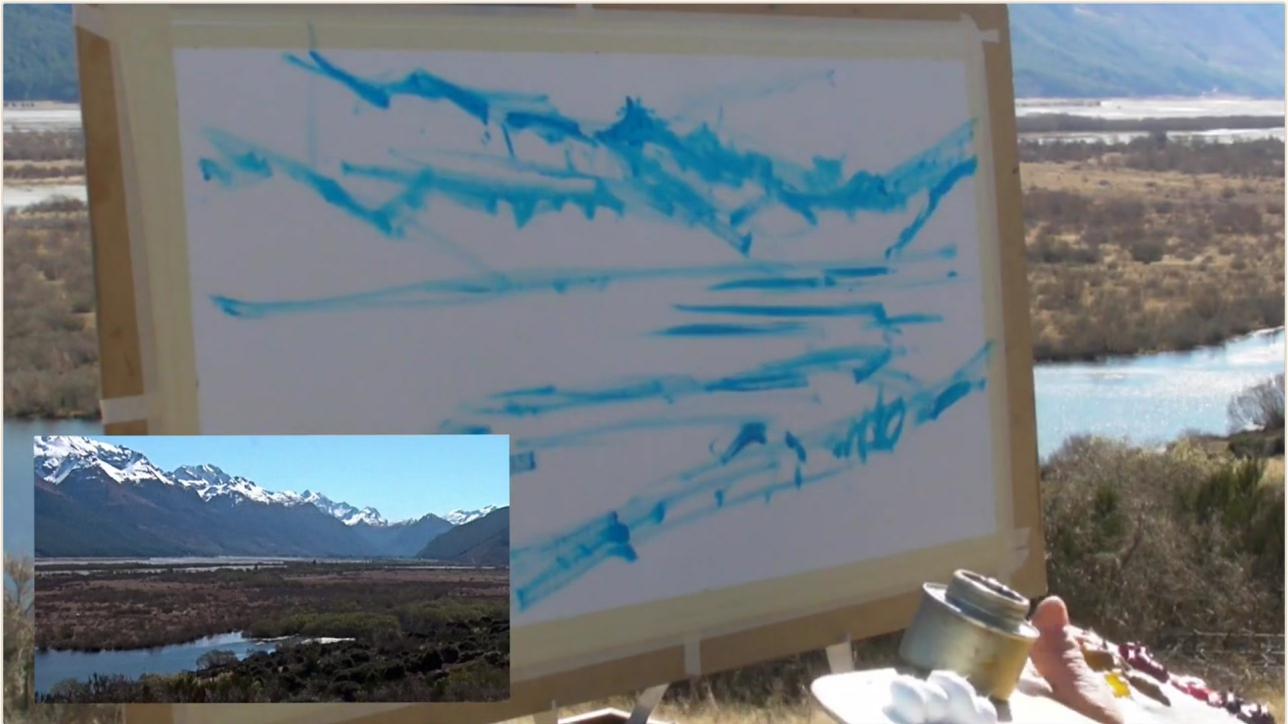
Create Soft Edges

Keep the edges of the mountains soft to prevent the eye from sliding off the canvas. Use soft lines or add a bit of cloud to blur the edges, maintaining focus on the focal point.

PRO TIP

Ensure the mountains have ample clearance from the top of the canvas to avoid a cramped feeling.

3 Setting shadows and light



Prepare Your Medium

Use a quick-drying medium like Liquin to ensure your sketch layout dries swiftly. This will allow you to paint over it without any issues.

Identify Light Source

Indicate where the center of the light is in your composition. Remember that the sun will set behind the mountains, affecting how shadows are cast.

Start with Darkest Darks

Begin by painting your darkest darks in the foreground. This establishes a reference point for depth and strength, guiding the placement of other darks as you move into the distance.

Set Shadows

Once the darkest darks are in place, use them to set the shadows. This will help define the light in your painting, regardless of changes in the sun's position.

Fill Between Shadows

After setting the shadows, fill in the areas between them. The highlight colors and tones typically remain consistent, allowing you to focus on depth and tone.

PRO TIP

Always start with the darkest darks to establish a reference point for depth and strength in your painting.

4 Tone and color hierarchy



Understand Tone Importance

Recognize that tone is crucial for adding depth to your painting. Use softening tones to create a sense of distance and lead the viewer's eye through the composition.

Prioritize Color Over Detail

Focus on color as a key element in your painting. Remember that detail is less important than tone and color, so avoid getting caught up in capturing every small detail.

PRO TIP

Use softening tones to create depth and distance in your painting.

5 Painting technique and brushwork



Maintain Clean Paint

Dip into the paint carefully to avoid leaving paint behind. This keeps the color storage areas clean and prevents them from becoming dirty.

Avoid Excess Paint

If you pick up too much paint, touch the brush on a clean spot on the palette to remove the excess. You can pick it up later if needed.

Use Liquin Sparingly

Add liquin frequently to ensure the paint remains light. Avoid applying heavy color on the painting at this stage.

PRO TIP

Dip into the paint in a way that keeps the color storage areas clean, preventing them from becoming messy.

6 Broad painting style



Start with Thin Layers

Apply the paint in a thinner layer initially. Use a bit of medium to help brush it out smoothly. This approach allows for easier adjustments without muddying the colors.

Add Texture Later

Once the base layer is established, add texture by incorporating thicker paint. This creates life and dimension in your painting with lumps and bumps.

Use Broad Brush Strokes

Work with broad brush strokes to give your painting a relaxed and confident feel. Avoid being overly careful with your strokes to maintain a sense of freedom and expression.

PRO TIP

Apply paint in thinner layers first to allow for easier adjustments and prevent muddy colors.

7 Painting aims and philosophy



Maintain Momentum

Continue painting without stopping whenever possible. If you find the painting taking too long, consider taking a short break for a fresh perspective.

Limit Outdoor Painting Sessions

Aim to limit outdoor painting sessions to about three hours. Beyond this, mistakes can increase, and the painting may lose its spontaneity and life.

Focus on Realism

Concentrate on painting real objects rather than abstract forms. This focus helps ground your work and aligns with the aim of capturing tangible subjects.

PRO TIP

Limit your outdoor painting sessions to three hours to maintain spontaneity and avoid fatigue.

8 Abstract vs. figurative painting



Understanding Abstract and Figurative Painting

Recognize that all art, whether abstract or figurative, is an expression of feelings and ideas. Embrace the freedom to express how you feel about your subjects, whether they are real objects or abstract concepts.

Expressing Emotion in Figurative Painting

When painting real subjects like still lifes, flowers, or landscapes, focus on expressing your emotions about these subjects. Prioritize the painting process itself, ensuring your strokes are confident and your colors are vibrant to create an engaging artwork.

PRO TIP

Express your emotions through confident brushwork and vibrant colors, regardless of the subject matter.

9 Adjusting mountain tones



Adjust Mountain Tones

Assess the tone of the distant mountains. If they appear too light, adjust the hue by darkening it slightly. Add a touch more Windsor Blue to enhance the strength of the color and create a more realistic depth.

Paint the Next Valley

Begin painting the next valley as a rough guide. Ensure the color is stronger to account for the haze effect in the distance. Use a mix of Windsor Blue, Permanent Rose, and a touch of Gold Ochre to achieve the desired tone.

Neutralize and Adjust Colors

Add Gold Ochre to the mix to neutralize the purple hue slightly. Aim for a more neutral tone that leans towards green, reflecting the heavy bush and pasture at the base of the mountains.

PRO TIP

Use Gold Ochre to neutralize a purple hue and shift it towards a more natural green tone.

10 Canvas and paint flow



Consider Your Canvas

Choose a canvas that allows paint to flow smoothly. A double-primed canvas is ideal for this purpose. Alternatively, use MDF board primed with a thick layer of gesso for a cost-effective option.

Be Generous with Paint

Place a generous amount of paint on your palette. This encourages you to use more paint on your brush, allowing for better flow and coverage on the canvas.

Start with Broad Guidelines

Begin your painting with broad guidelines. This approach helps form the painting more quickly and provides a clear direction for your work.

PRO TIP

Use a generous amount of paint on your palette to ensure smooth flow and coverage on your canvas.

11 Palette handling and flexibility



Hold the Palette

Place the palette on your arm to allow mobility and flexibility while painting. This technique enables you to step back and assess your work from a distance, ensuring you're satisfied with the layout and tones.

Use a Dark Coat

Wear a dark coat to prevent light from reflecting off your clothes onto the canvas. A dark coat also hides any paint that may accidentally get on your clothing, making it a practical choice for painting.

Embrace the Traditional Palette Design

Consider using a palette based on the traditional French design with a thumb slot. This design allows you to walk with the palette, providing the flexibility to mix colors in different lighting conditions, such as in the sun or shade.

PRO TIP

Hold your palette to mix colors in varying light conditions, enhancing your painting flexibility.

12 Focal point and brush management



Identify the Focal Point

Choose a single focal point for your painting. Ensure it is well off-center to create a more dynamic composition. Avoid placing the focal point in the exact center of the canvas.

Create Points of Interest

Add one or two additional points of interest that complement the focal point. These should enhance the painting without competing with the main focal point.

Manage the Horizon Line

Position the horizon line away from the center of the canvas. This helps maintain balance and avoids splitting the painting into equal halves.

Ensure Adequate Clearance

Leave enough space around the edges of your painting. This allows for adjustments or framing later without losing important details.

Use Multiple Brushes

Keep a variety of brushes on hand to avoid the need for constant washing. This allows you to maintain a clean workflow and switch between colors and techniques easily.

PRO TIP

Keep a variety of brushes on hand to avoid interrupting your workflow with constant washing.

13 Applying paint on paint



Prepare Your Brushes

Ensure your brushes are clean and in good condition. Use soft brushes that can lay paint smoothly over the surface. Even older brushes, if well-maintained, can work effectively for this technique.

Allow Paint to Set

Let the initial layer of paint set for a few minutes until it begins to tack up slightly. This slight tackiness will help prevent cutting through to the undercolour when applying new paint.

Apply Paint Lightly

Load your brush fully with paint, ensuring it has a nice, clean consistency. Apply the paint lightly over the tacky surface, using a gentle touch to avoid disturbing the underlayer. This technique allows for a clean application of new colour, such as a white with a touch of yellow.

PRO TIP

Let the initial paint layer tack up slightly before applying new paint to avoid cutting through to the undercolour.

14 Highlighting and contrast



Balance Highlights and Shadows

Ensure your painting has a strong contrast by balancing highlights and shadows. Avoid equal amounts of light and shade, as this can make the painting look flat and middayish. Aim for either lots of shadow with some highlights or vice versa to create dynamic contrast.

Enhance Highlights

Apply highlights sparingly to allow them to stand out and twinkle against the shadows. This will give your painting depth and interest, making the highlights more effective and visually appealing.

PRO TIP

Avoid equal amounts of light and shade to prevent a flat, midday appearance in your painting.

15 Covering the canvas



Cover the Canvas

Quickly cover the entire canvas with paint. This helps establish the base for your painting and allows you to adjust colors and add details later.

PRO TIP

Cover the canvas as soon as possible to create a foundation for further adjustments and details.

16 Learning from experience



Start with Dark Areas

Begin your painting by focusing on the dark areas first. This approach helps to establish the overall composition and balance of the painting. Develop the painting across the entire canvas simultaneously to maintain harmony.

Add Reflected Light

Introduce reflected light by adding lighter tones in specific areas. This will enhance the depth and realism of your painting. Be mindful not to overdo it, as too much reflected light can distract the viewer's eye.

Paint Rocks with Variety

When painting rocks, ensure each one has a unique shape and size. Avoid repeating the same form, as this can make the painting look unnatural. Aim for diversity in the rock formations to create a more realistic and engaging scene.

PRO TIP

Avoid overloading your painting with too many similar shapes, as this can distract the viewer's eye and reduce the painting's impact.

17 Variety in landscape shapes



Observe Natural Variety

Look at the landscape around you and notice the variety in shapes and forms. Avoid creating repetitive patterns and instead aim to capture the natural, haphazard beauty of nature.

Paint Shadowed Mountains First

Begin by painting the shadowed areas of the mountains. This establishes the strength and tone of the mountains before adding the sky.

Add the Sky

Once the shadow color is applied to the mountains, paint the sky behind them. This helps you assess if the mountains stand out as desired.

Adjust as Needed

Stand back and evaluate your work. If the mountains and sky are too similar, adjust the tones or colors to ensure the mountains are distinct.

Consider Mountain Colors

Choose the mountain colors based on the day's lighting. The shadowed snow can range from flat gray to beautiful blue or steely green-gray, depending on the sky and lighting conditions.

PRO TIP

Paint the shadowed mountain first to set the tone before adding the sky.

18 Mixing colors cleanly



Maintain a Clean Palette

Mix colors on clean sections of the palette. When the palette becomes too loaded with paint, use a painting knife to scrape it clean and create new pools of mixed color.

Avoid Contaminating Your Medium

When dipping your brush into the medium, be careful not to touch the sides or bottom of the dipper. This prevents paint from being left behind, which can dirty the medium and affect the cleanliness of your lighter colors.

PRO TIP

Regularly clean your palette to keep your color mixes fresh and vibrant.

19 Painting water and reflections



Suggest Reflections Broadly

When painting water, aim to suggest reflections in a broad way. Imagine a gentle breeze scuffing the surface, creating the beginnings of reflections without forming true mirrors. This approach prevents the reflections from competing with the focal point.

Indicate Light and Shade

Indicate areas of light and shade above the water to create a sense of reflection. Use subtle variations in tone to suggest the presence of reflections without overwhelming detail.

Simplify Distant Details

For distant elements like Mount Alfred, keep details minimal. Use the slope and angle of the mountain to guide the viewer's eye inward, avoiding too much complexity that might distract from the main composition.

PRO TIP

Suggest reflections with broad strokes to avoid competition with the focal point.

20 Painting challenges and persistence



Assess the Light and Color

Observe the light on the tussock and scrub in your painting. If the light has softened, adjust your colors to reflect this change, ensuring they are not as intense as before.

Evaluate Your Progress

Take a moment to assess your painting. If you feel it has lost something or isn't progressing as expected, consider whether it's worth continuing or starting anew.

Decide Whether to Persist or Restart

If after 20 minutes you are still unhappy with your painting, it might be best to start again. However, if you feel there is potential, continue working and see if you can bring it back to life.

Maintain Enthusiasm

Ensure you remain enthusiastic about your painting. If you lose energy, the painting may become flat. Keep your momentum going to maintain vibrancy and interest.

PRO TIP

If you're not happy with your painting after 20 minutes, consider starting again.

21 Foreground details and small brush use



Add Foreground Darks

Introduce dark tones in the foreground to establish depth and contrast. Use a small brush to carefully apply these darks, ensuring precision in the details.

Highlight with Small Brush

Use a small brush to add thin strips of light where the sun catches the river in the distance. Focus on the Reese River, then the Dart River further away, to create a sense of distance.

Control Small Brushwork

Be cautious with the small brush to prevent highlights from becoming overwhelming. If the highlights get out of control, use a larger brush with surrounding colors to soften or remove excess highlights.

PRO TIP

Use a small brush for precise highlights, but be ready to adjust with a larger brush if needed.

22 Chasing the light mistake



Avoid Chasing the Light

Resist the temptation to adjust your painting as the light changes. Stick to the initial light conditions you started with to maintain consistency and coherence in your work.

Focus on Initial Vision

Concentrate on capturing the original elements that inspired you, such as the glint on the mountains or the glow of the scene. This focus will help you achieve the intended atmosphere and mood in your painting.

PRO TIP

Stick to the original light conditions to maintain consistency in your painting.

Summary & Key Takeaways

Embark on your painting journey by selecting a large canvas to give yourself the freedom to express the landscape fully. Begin with broad brush lines using thinned paint to lay out your composition, allowing for easy adjustments and a clear view from a distance. As you progress, focus on establishing a strong focal point, such as the highest mountain, and ensure it has ample clearance from the top of the canvas to avoid a cramped feeling.

As you develop your painting, start by setting the darkest darks to establish depth and strength. Use these as a reference to guide the placement of shadows and highlights, which will define the light in your composition. Emphasize tone and color over detail to create depth and lead the viewer's eye through the scene. Apply paint in thinner layers initially, then build texture with thicker paint to add life and dimension.

Maintain a dynamic composition by choosing a well-off-center focal point and complementing it with additional points of interest. Keep your brushwork confident and expressive, and embrace the freedom to convey your emotions through vibrant colors. As you refine your painting, ensure strong contrast between highlights and shadows to avoid a flat appearance. Cover the canvas quickly to establish a base, and continuously evaluate and adjust your work to capture the natural beauty of the landscape.

LESSON POINTS TO REMEMBER

- Use thinned down paint to broadly lay out your composition.
- Ensure mountains have ample clearance from the top of the canvas.
- Start with the darkest darks to establish depth and strength.
- Use softening tones to create depth and distance.
- Apply paint in thinner layers first to allow for easier adjustments.
- Limit outdoor painting sessions to three hours to maintain spontaneity.
- Express your emotions through confident brushwork and vibrant colors.
- Let the initial paint layer tack up slightly before applying new paint.



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