



Castle Point

A step-by-step painting guide by Richard Robinson

Watch the full lesson at <https://mypaintingclub.com/lessons/253-Castle-Point>

MY PAINTING CLUB

Introduction

As I stand before the breathtaking landscape of Castle Point, I'm reminded of the incredible vibrancy and movement that a scene like this can bring to a painting. In this chapter, we'll explore how to infuse your work with that same energy and color, using a dramatic New Zealand landscape as our muse. You'll learn how to create a vibrant base layer that sets the tone for the entire piece, starting with a mid-value orange to complement the final blue hues. We'll work through the process step by step, from sketching major shapes to painting the sky in motion, focusing on soft edges and spotlight effects. With large brushes, we'll simplify complexity, achieving the illusion of detail effortlessly. The ocean will come to life in minutes with a few key details, and the headland's reflection will be a pivotal element, painted with soft blurring strokes. By the end, you'll have a beautiful beach painting, complete with the crisp details of foam and gulls that bring scale to the scene. I hope you'll find this process as rewarding and enjoyable as I do, and perhaps even discover new paths in your own artistic journey.



"Castle Point" 12x16" Acrylic on Panel by Richard Robinson



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.



REFERENCE PHOTO 4

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
- Pthalo Blue
- Brilliant Magenta
- Naphthol Red Light
- Arylamide Yellow Light
- Toning Grey Mid
- Titanium White
- Surface
- MDF board coated with 2-3 coats of gesso.
- Brushes
- [Rosemary & Co. Richard Robinson Brush Set](#)
- Palette knife
- Paper towels
- Bucket of water

1 Choosing to paint from a photo



Choose a Reference Photo

Select a photo of the scene you wish to paint. Ensure it captures the details and lighting you want to emphasize in your painting.

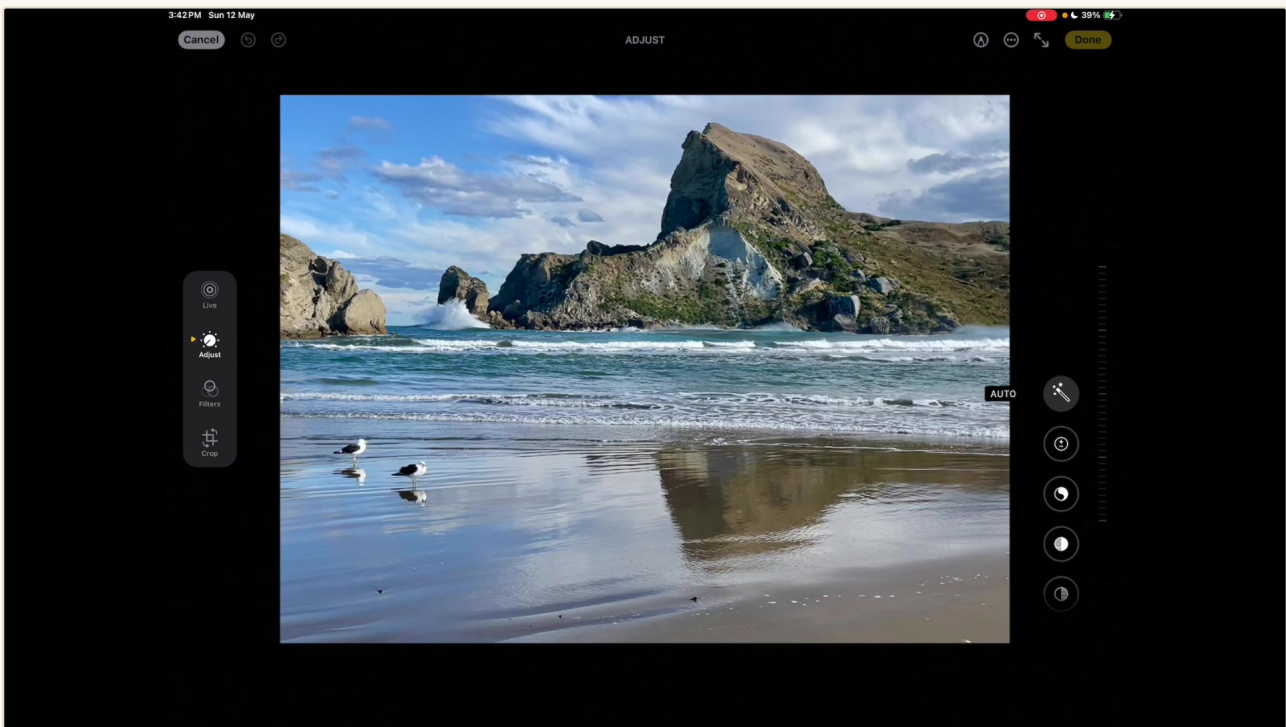
Use Digital Editing Tools

Utilize editing options on your iPad, phone, or other devices to enhance the photo. Adjust brightness, contrast, and colors to better suit your painting vision.

PRO TIP

Use digital editing tools to enhance your reference photo before painting.

2 Editing the photo for painting



Adjust Photo Settings

Open the photo editing tool and explore the auto adjustment feature. Tap 'auto' and slide the adjustment bar to see the different effects it creates. Notice how it can make the image more punchy and engaging.

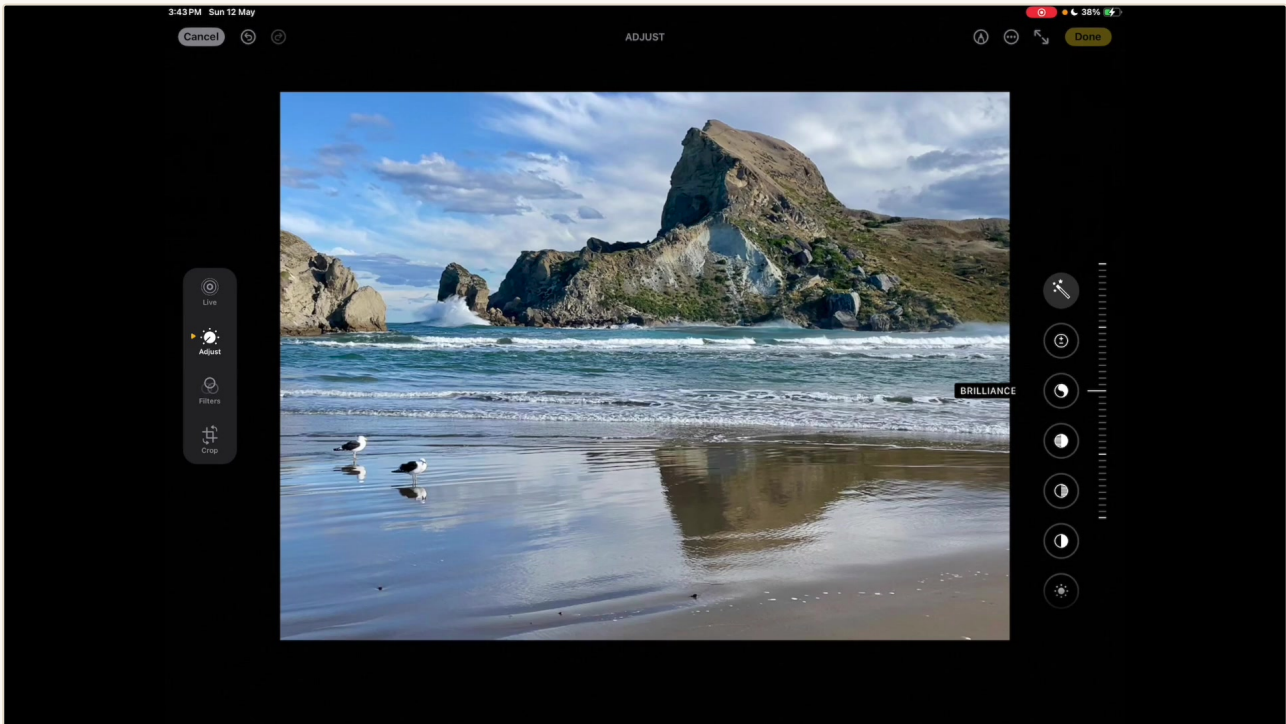
Manual Adjustments

Instead of relying on auto adjustments, manually tweak the settings for a more personalized result. Focus on individual elements like brightness, contrast, and saturation to tailor the image to your liking.

PRO TIP

Experiment with both auto and manual adjustments to find the best preparation for your painting.

3 Adjusting color and sharpness



Enhance Color Vibrancy

Increase the vibrancy or saturation to make the colors more punchy and vibrant. Use saturation for a full effect or vibrance for a subtler enhancement.

Adjust Warmth

Add a touch of warmth to the colors to give the painting a more inviting feel.

Reduce Sharpness

Lower the sharpness to remove excess detail, aligning with the softer look of a painting.

Apply Noise Reduction

Use noise reduction to slightly blur the image, which helps in creating a smoother painting effect.

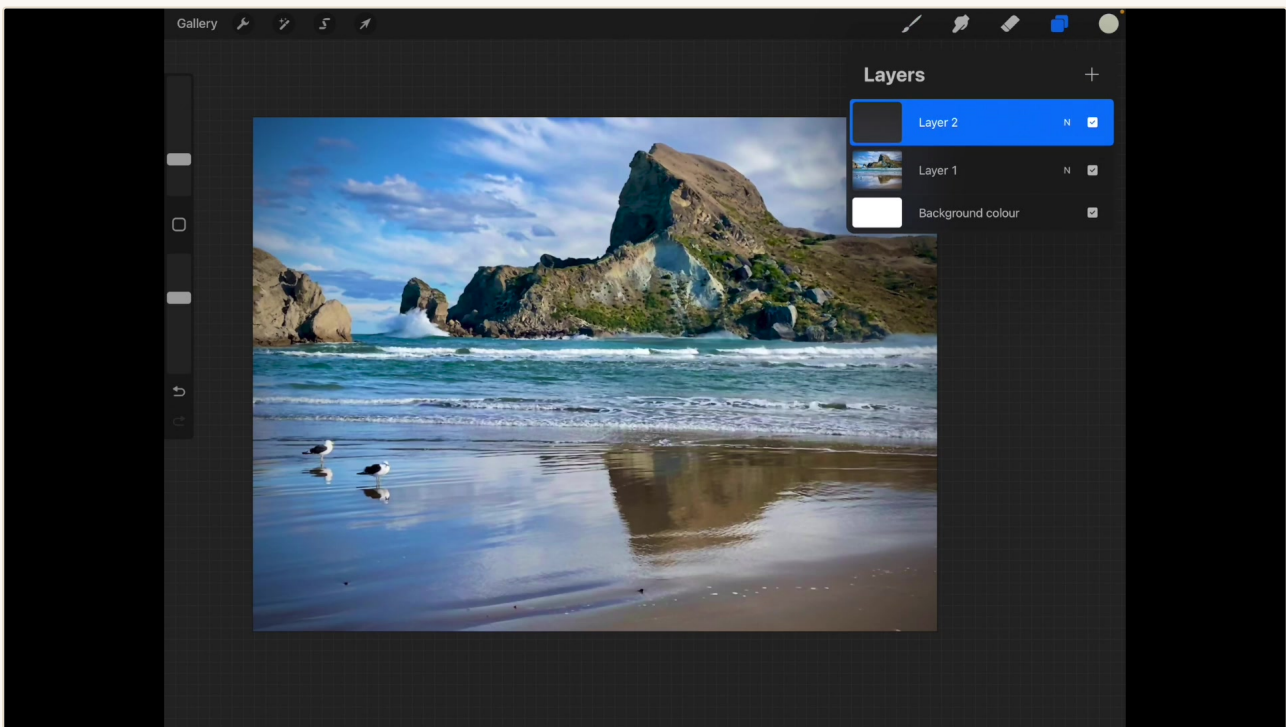
Add a Vignette

Darken the edges of the image to create a vignette effect, drawing the viewer's eye towards the center of interest.

PRO TIP

Lower sharpness to remove unnecessary detail, achieving a softer, painterly effect.

4 Adjusting canvas orientation



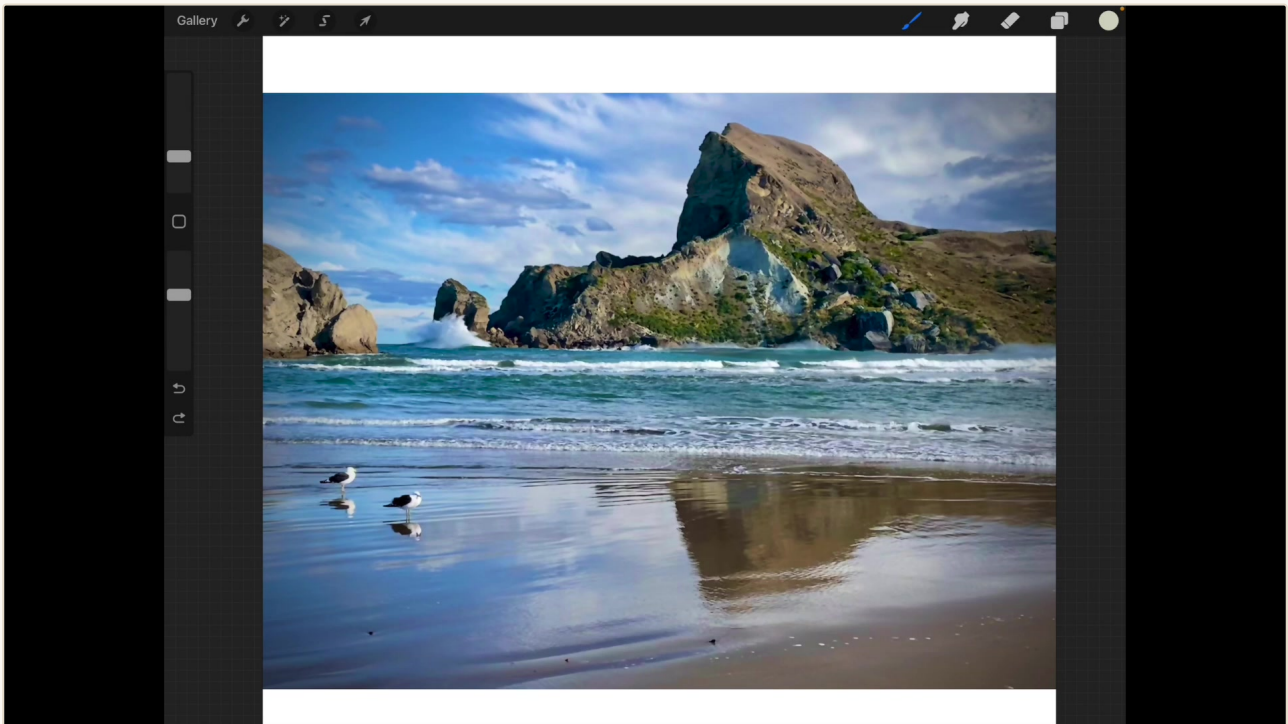
Adjust Canvas Orientation

Shift your canvas to a more vertical orientation. This adjustment emphasizes the towering vertical rock in your composition. It also provides more space for the mountain's peak and its reflection, enhancing the overall balance of your painting.

PRO TIP

A vertical canvas orientation can enhance the impact of tall elements in your composition.

5 Enhancing light and shadow



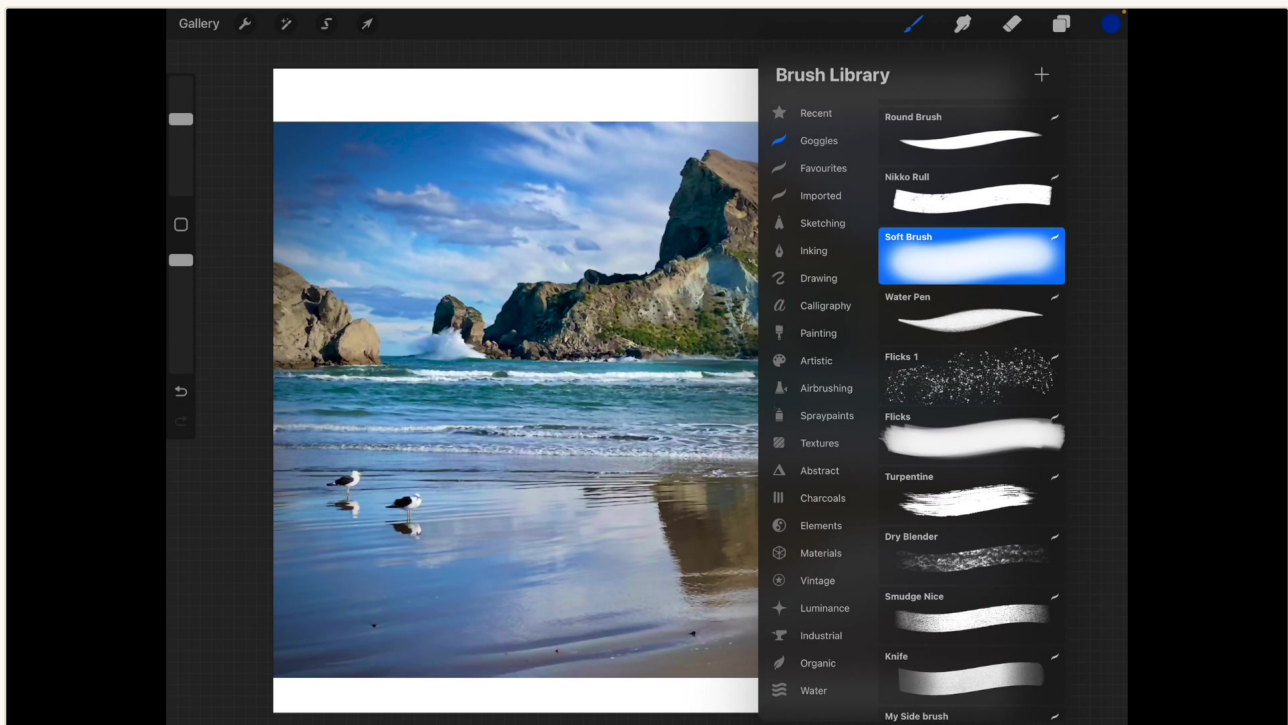
Enhance Light and Shadow

Observe the existing light and shadow in your painting. Notice how the vignette effect subtly guides the viewer's eye towards the area of strong light. To enhance this effect, adjust the curves slightly to deepen the shadows around the light area, further directing focus to the center of interest.

PRO TIP

Use a vignette effect to subtly guide the viewer's eye towards the focal point by enhancing light and shadow contrast.

6 Planning composition with diagonals



Identify Strong Horizontals

Observe the strong horizontal lines in your composition. These lines can act as barriers, preventing the viewer's eye from moving through the scene effectively.

Incorporate Diagonals

Consider adding diagonal lines to your composition. Diagonals create a more dynamic flow and guide the viewer's eye through the painting, enhancing the overall visual experience.

Adjust Composition for Key Elements

Ensure that important elements, like reflections, are not obscured by the new diagonals. Adjust the curves and angles to maintain visibility of these special features.

PRO TIP

Use diagonal lines to create a dynamic flow and guide the viewer's eye through the painting.

7 Considering big shapes and shadows



Evaluate Big Shapes

Focus on the big light and dark shapes in your painting. Consider how these large pieces fit together to create a harmonious scene.

Strengthen Shadow Shapes

Observe the small, scattered shadows in your painting. Combine some of these into larger shadow shapes to create a stronger visual impact. Ensure the larger shadow remains interesting and organic in form.

PRO TIP

Combine small shadows into larger shapes to enhance visual strength.

8 Setting up materials and colors



Prepare Your Surface

Use a 16 by 12 inch MDF board, hardboard, or canvas. Ensure it has a couple of coats of gesso to prepare the surface for painting.

Select Your Colors

Set out Brilliant Magenta and Aurelamide Yellow Light. You can substitute Aurelamide Yellow Light with Cadmium Yellow or Lemon Yellow if preferred.

Create an Orange Underpainting

Mix the Brilliant Magenta and Yellow to create an orange hue. This complementary color will provide a vibrant base for the largely blue painting.

Use Gloss Medium

Dip your brush into gloss medium to help seal the first layer. Brush it on broadly over the surface to prepare for the next layers.

PRO TIP

Use gloss medium to seal your underpainting and enhance the vibrancy of the colors.

9 Applying the underpainting



Seal the First Layer

Use a one and a half inch synthetic flat brush to apply the first layer broadly over the canvas. Ensure the brush is soft to cover the canvas effectively.

Keep the Paint Wet

Use a spray bottle with water to lightly mist the canvas and paints, keeping them wet. This is crucial when working with acrylics to maintain a workable surface.

Add Yellow to the Wet Layer

While the initial layer is still wet, introduce yellow into it. This will create a wet-on-wet effect, adding depth and interest to the underpainting.

PRO TIP

Use a spray bottle to keep acrylics wet and workable on the canvas.

10 Planning painting layers



Prepare the Undercoat

Apply an undercoat of color to the canvas to create a base layer for your painting. Allow this layer to dry completely before proceeding.

Plan the Painting Layers

Organize the painting process by planning the order of layers. Start with the sky, followed by the hill, then the ocean, and finally the beach.

PRO TIP

Ensure each layer is dry before adding the next to prevent colors from mixing unintentionally.

11 Preparing brushes and sketching



Prepare Your Brushes and Palette

Wet your brushes in water to protect the ferrules and prevent paint from drying in them. Set out your paints: phthalo blue, brilliant magenta, naphthol red light, Irelamide Yellow Light, Toning Grey Mid, and plenty of Titanium White. Use synthetic brushes, mainly flats and angled, with one filbert for rounder marks. Have a square palette knife ready and use Ritata Medium to slow the drying of acrylics.

Sketch the Mountain Base

Begin by sketching a quick line for the horizontal base of the mountain. This will serve as the foundation for your composition.

PRO TIP

Wet your brushes before starting to protect them and ensure smoother application.

12 Sketching the landscape



Draw the Mountain Base

Start with a quick line for the horizontal base of the mountain. Position it above halfway on your canvas to establish the landscape's foundation.

Indicate Major Shapes

Lightly sketch where the major shapes will be, focusing on the center area. Darken these lines slightly to make them visible, but remember they are just a rough guide.

Add Dark Shapes and Shadows

Sketch in the big dark shapes and the soft cast shadow across the area. This will help in planning out the composition.

Mark Reflections

Drop vertical lines down from key spots to indicate where the reflections will appear. These reflections will add depth and interest to your painting.

Create Leading Diagonals

Draw curves and diagonals that lead the viewer into the painting, enhancing the composition's flow.

PRO TIP

Use vertical lines to mark reflections, adding depth to your landscape.

13 Starting with the sky



Begin with a Large Brush

Use a large square or flat brush to start your painting. This helps cover more area quickly and sets the foundation for a painterly feel.

Apply Blue to the Edge

Paint a little blue on the edge of your canvas. This will serve as a base to work into with the sky, allowing for interesting edge effects.

PRO TIP

Start with large brushes to establish the main areas and create a painterly effect.

14 Creating painterly sky effects



Mix a Grayed Blue

Combine blue with a touch of gray to create a dark, slightly grayed blue. This mixture will serve as the base for your sky, allowing for a more natural and subdued tone.

Apply the First Layer

Use the grayed blue to paint around the edges of your sky area. This is just the initial layer, so focus on covering the area with this base color.

Create Soft Edges

While the paint is still wet, work the edges to create a soft transition. This will help in achieving a more painterly effect in the sky.

Add Cooler Tones

Mix more blue with a bit of gray to create a cooler and slightly lighter tone. Apply this over the initial layer to add depth and variation.

Introduce White for Highlights

Start adding white to your mixture to create highlights. Don't worry about dribbles or messiness; embrace them to enhance the painterly quality of your sky.

PRO TIP

Work wet-on-wet to maintain soft edges and a painterly effect in your sky.

15 Using brush speed for effect



Determine Mid Value

Ensure your paint is at a mid value. If converted to black and white, it should appear around the same value as the surrounding area.

Create Gestural Strokes

Make gestural strokes into the wet paint to achieve a painterly effect. Use confident, sweeping motions to avoid timidity.

Control Brush Speed

Adjust the speed of your brushstrokes to influence their appearance. Slow, careful strokes create crisp edges, while quick strokes add energy and fluidity.

Consider Stroke Intent

Think through each stroke, considering speed, angle, and the desired effect. Balance thoughtful planning with dynamic execution.

PRO TIP

The speed of your brushstroke affects its appearance; use this to create varied textures.

16 Adding crisp edges



Prepare the Paint

Mix a slightly thicker layer of paint, incorporating a touch of yellow for warmth. This will help create a vibrant and dynamic edge.

Load the Brush

Smooth the paint onto your brush to ensure a flat, even application. This technique is essential for achieving a crisp, clean edge.

Create Crisp Edges

Use the loaded brush to carve down into the painting, forming a precise and defined edge. This adds clarity and sharpness to your work.

PRO TIP

Ensure the paint on your brush is smooth and flat for the best crisp edge results.

17 Detailing the rock edges



Observe the Resource Photo

Examine your resource photo carefully to understand the angles and details of the rock edges. This will guide your painting process and help you capture the rock's structure accurately.

Maintain Crisp Edges

Reload your brush frequently to avoid blurring the edges. Aim for a crisp finish, especially in areas of interest, to enhance the focus and detail of your painting.

Keep the Brush Clean

Regularly clean your brush to prevent unwanted mixing of colors. Wipe off excess paint before dipping into new paint to maintain clarity and precision in your work.

Plan Paint Thickness

Apply paint thinly in areas where you want to avoid mixing. This foresight will help maintain clean lines and prevent colors from blending unintentionally.

PRO TIP

Reload your brush frequently to maintain crisp edges and avoid blurring.

18 Softening sky edges



Lay in the Base Colors

Apply the base colors for the sky, focusing on creating a blocky appearance initially. This will serve as the foundation for adjusting the edges later.

Create a Swishy Energetic Feel

Keep the paint wet and work quickly to achieve a swishy, energetic feel in the clouds. This technique helps maintain a sense of movement and atmosphere.

Soften the Sky Edges

Focus on creating mainly soft edges in the sky to enhance the atmospheric effect. Allow a few hard edges to remain for added interest, but ensure the overall feel is soft and natural.

PRO TIP

Work quickly with wet paint to maintain soft, atmospheric edges in the sky.

19 Creating depth with cloud layers



Differentiate Cloud Shapes

Extend one of the cloud shapes to make it larger. This will help avoid repetitive patterns that can make the clouds look man-made. Aim for a more natural feel by varying the sizes and shapes of the clouds.

Soften and Define Edges

Soften the edges of the clouds towards the back to create depth. Add a little more definition to the edge of the hill to contrast with the soft cloud edges. This contrast will enhance the natural look of the scene.

Add Darker Clouds Near the Horizon

Introduce a darker layer of cloud near the horizon. This darker layer helps create a sense of space and depth in the painting, enhancing the overall composition.

PRO TIP

Avoid repetitive cloud shapes to maintain a natural look.

20 Mixing colors for mountain shadows



Prepare for Mountain Shadows

Use a slightly smaller angle brush to begin working on the mountain. This will give you more control over the details.

Mix Dark Colors

Mix a combination of blue and yellow to create a base color for the shadows. Add a touch of red to introduce warmth and a little grey to balance the tone.

Apply Thick Paint

Apply the paint thickly to create strong contrast between light and dark areas. This contrast will make the mountain visually appealing.

Feather the Edges

Feather the edges of the paint to create smooth, soft transitions. This will help the mountain blend naturally into the surrounding landscape.

PRO TIP

Feather the edges of the paint to create smooth, soft transitions for a natural look.

21 Painting shadow areas



Mix a Dark Dull Green

Use a slow retarder medium and mix in a little bit of yellow, pushing it towards green. Aim for a dark dull green to use as the starting point for shadowed green sections. Apply with big bold brushwork.

Create a Browner Version

Add some red and a little yellow to the green mix to create a browner version. Adjust the color by adding blue to reduce vibrancy, but use only a small amount as blue is very powerful.

Apply the Brown Version

Use the brown version, which should be the same value as the muted green, at the base of the rocks and in other areas needing color variation.

PRO TIP

Use only a small amount of blue to adjust the vibrancy of your mix, as it is a very powerful color.

22 Creating foliage texture



Prepare the Brush

Clean your brush thoroughly to ensure no previous colors interfere with the new mix.

Mix the Base Green

Combine yellow and blue to create a base green. Adjust the shade by deciding on the intensity; for a less punchy green, aim for a darker and warmer tone.

Adjust the Green Tone

Add a touch of red to the base green to achieve a darker, warmer color. This will help in creating a mid-tone that is lighter than the shadow color.

Create Foliage Texture

Use the side of the brush to lay the paint flat across the surface. Drag the brush to create texture, mimicking the foliage seen in the photograph without focusing on tiny details.

PRO TIP

Use the side of the brush to create texture by dragging it across the surface for natural-looking foliage.

23 Building up to light



Create Texture with Brushwork

Use every plane of your brush to create texture. Apply very small strokes and broad strokes, alternating between slow and fast movements. This will result in an interesting abstract effect that engages the eye.

Build Up to Light

Start with a mid-tone base as the foundation for your painting. Gradually build up to lighter tones. Avoid using the lightest light immediately, as it can make the painting appear flat.

PRO TIP

Use varied brush strokes to add texture and interest to your painting.

24 Adding texture to rocks



Mix a Warmer Halftone

Create a warmer mixture for the halftone on the rocks. Ensure it has the same value as the green shadow colors above, but slightly warmer. Consider making it a bit lighter for added contrast.

Add Texture to Rocks

Apply the warmer halftone to the rock sections with a few gestural brushstrokes. Focus on creating interesting textures without detailing with a tiny brush. This approach will give your painting a lively and fun appearance.

PRO TIP

Use broad, gestural brushstrokes to add texture and keep the painting lively.

25 Deciding when to stop detailing



Evaluate Your Painting

Assess your painting to determine if adding more details will enhance or detract from it. Consider if further details will add value or if they might be unnecessary.

Focus on Key Elements

Identify the main elements of your painting, such as a swirling pattern or a sharp edge, and ensure they are well-defined. Prioritize these over minor details.

Trust Your Instincts

Continue painting until you feel that additional details would be superfluous. Trust your intuition to decide when the painting feels complete.

PRO TIP

Remember, sometimes what you leave out of a painting is more important than what you include.

26 Finalizing rock details



Use Crisp Brushes for Sharp Edges

Utilize synthetic square and angle brushes to achieve sharp, crisp edges on your rocks. These brushes are excellent for adding precise details that enhance the realism of your painting.

Add Light Details on the Hill

Observe the light hitting certain areas of the hill, even though most of it is in shadow. Apply a lighter tone to these areas to create a striking contrast and add interest to your landscape.

PRO TIP

Use synthetic square and angle brushes for sharp, crisp edges in your painting.

27 Planning light and shadow contrast



Plan Light and Shadow

Observe the painting area where you want to create a spotlight effect. Notice the darker areas with soft edges and plan for crisp edges where the light will be strongest.

Build Up the Spotlight

Gradually lighten the area as you approach the center of interest. This will create a natural spotlight effect, drawing attention to the focal point.

PRO TIP

Use soft edges in shadow areas and crisp edges in the light to enhance the spotlight effect.

28 Mixing and applying light greens



Mix a Lighter Green

Start with a base green color and aim to make it a little lighter and brighter. Use thicker paint as this area is the center of interest, requiring more pastel-like paint.

Adjust Warmth and Brightness

Add small amounts of warmer colors to the mix, as the scene is under warm light. Avoid overly vibrant greens that would look out of place.

Balance with White

Add white cautiously to lighten the green, keeping in mind that white cools the color slightly. Consider white as a very light blue, which can affect the warmth of your green.

PRO TIP

Use thicker paint for areas of interest to create a more engaging focal point.

29 Highlighting foliage



Add Warmer Highlights

Apply a warmer version of your color to the top of the foliage. Brush it out into the halftone to avoid creating a sharp edge as it transitions into the shadow. Soften the edge slightly with your finger to maintain a natural look.

Focus on Key Details

Squint at your subject to avoid getting overwhelmed by details. Identify and add only the few little details that stand out, such as striations, while focusing on the big shapes.

PRO TIP

Squinting helps you focus on the essential details and big shapes, preventing you from getting lost in unnecessary detail.

30 Adding light details to rocks



Prepare the Brush and Paint

Switch to a slightly smaller angle brush to gain more control over the details. Start with a straight grey color, then add some warmth to it, making it a little darker and warmer.

Apply the Paint

Apply the mixed color to the rocks, using a combination of soft and sharp edges. Brush the paint across the surface, gradually working your way up to the lighter areas without starting with the lightest light.

Add Light Details

Look for small spots where light might catch the rocks, creating highlights. Add these details sparingly to suggest a lively and dynamic surface.

PRO TIP

Gradually work up to the lightest areas, rather than starting with the lightest light.

31 Highlighting key areas



Mix the Highlight Color

Add a little more white to your existing mix, along with a touch of yellow, to create a warm light color. This combination will help define the light areas effectively.

Apply the Highlight Sparingly

Carefully consider where to place this highlight color to define the light shape. Avoid spreading it everywhere, as this could diminish the center of interest in your painting.

PRO TIP

Use the highlight color sparingly to maintain the focus on the center of interest.

32 Darkening shadows for contrast



Darken the Shadows

Wash your brush and prepare to darken the shadows. Mix blue, a little red, and some gray to create a darker tone. This will add contrast and make the lighter areas appear brighter.

Apply the Dark Mix

Use the dark mix to create crisp edges in the shadow areas. Focus on the sides that need more depth and punch, enhancing the overall contrast.

Maintain Light at the Base

Keep the base of the shadows lighter to achieve a misty sea spray effect. This contrast will help define the shadow side without making it look like a hole.

Use Retarder Medium

Add a slow drying medium to your paint to maintain a wet and wet feel. This technique is particularly useful with acrylics to achieve a more painterly effect.

Reflect Blue Sky

Lighten the top edge of the shadow areas to reflect the blue sky. This will add a natural light effect to the shadow side of the rocks.

PRO TIP

Use a retarder medium to keep acrylics wet longer, allowing for a painterly wet and wet technique.

33 Adding ocean splash details



Prepare the Brush

Wash your brush thoroughly to ensure it's clean and ready for the next color application.

Mix Splash Colors

Combine blue with a touch of grey on your palette. This mixture will create the shadowy tones needed for the ocean splash details.

Add Ocean Splashes

Apply the blue-grey mixture to the canvas to depict ocean splashes. Focus on placing these splashes along the base of the scene, ensuring they are horizontal and straight for a realistic effect.

PRO TIP

Keep the splash details horizontal and straight to maintain a realistic ocean effect.

34 Painting ocean waves



Prepare the Light Color

Use a ruler to ensure straight lines if needed. Mix white with a touch of yellow to warm up the light color. Consider how you will use the brush to achieve the desired look.

Identify Edges

Examine the painting to identify where sharp edges and soft edges occur. This will guide your brushwork and help you create a more realistic ocean wave.

Work Back with Ocean Color

Switch to a larger brush, like the one you started with. Scrape the surface lightly to prepare it for the next layer. Mix blue with a little mixing grey, a touch of red to tone it down, and some yellow to push it towards green. Add slow medium to the mix.

Apply the Ocean Color

Ensure your brushstrokes are straight and horizontal. Dash the color in first, then refine the details on top of that base layer.

PRO TIP

Use a ruler to maintain straight lines in your painting.

35 Creating wave texture



Establish the Horizon

Start with the darkest tone and add a little more grey to it. Work out the horizon line, placing it a little higher on the canvas.

Lighten the Seafoam

Adjust the seafoam by lightening it up. Apply this lighter tone in areas where the seafoam would naturally appear.

Create Wave Texture

Use a large, crisp brush sideways to create long, elegant wave-like strokes. Make these strokes very thin, close together, and horizontal to build a wave-like texture.

Add Texture with Grey

Continue adding grey to the waves, allowing the brush to leave some texture. This helps in creating the effect of broken white water.

Introduce Warmth

Add a little warmth to the grey tones. This can enhance the overall effect and add depth to the water.

PRO TIP

Use a large, crisp brush sideways to create long, elegant wave-like strokes for realistic wave texture.

36 Adding wave highlights



Mix and Prepare White Paint

Grab some white paint, allowing it to mix slightly with other colors to avoid pure white. Flatten the paint and push the brush into it to create a nice ridge.

Apply Wave Highlights

Look carefully at the waves and make very horizontal marks with your brush. You can brush down or along, but keep the marks on the same line to represent a single swell.

Adjust and Soften Highlights

Gray the highlights down as they move towards the shadowed area near the base of the mountain. Soften the edges with your finger to blend them smoothly.

Reflect Highlights in Water

Reflect the softened highlights in the still water in front of the whitewash to enhance the appearance of a reflective water surface.

PRO TIP

Keep wave highlights on the same horizontal line to represent a single swell.

37 Detailing wave reflections



Add Light to Wave Reflections

Enhance the light on the wave reflections by adding a bit more brightness. Remember that the wave is curving, which will create some turbulence where the reflections meet. This turbulence will add interest and realism to the water.

Define the Wave Edge

Create a distinct edge where the wave curves down. This edge will help to define the wave's shape and add depth to the scene.

PRO TIP

Pay attention to the curvature of the wave, as it affects how light and reflections interact on the water's surface.

38 Enhancing wave highlights



Enhance Wave Highlights

Apply a thicker layer of paint to the highlight on the feature wave. This will help draw the viewer's eye to this area, making it stand out more prominently. Aim for a nice, punchy effect to enhance the wave's impact.

PRO TIP

Use thicker paint for highlights to draw attention and create a punchy effect.

39 Painting hill reflections



Prepare Your Colors

Mix blue, red, yellow, and some grey to create a base color for the hill reflection. Add more grey to warm it up slightly, especially if you're working with sand colors in the foreground.

Apply the Reflection

Paint the dark reflection of the hill using vertical strokes. Occasionally add a few horizontal strokes for variation. Avoid diagonal strokes to maintain the natural look of reflections.

Align with the Hill

Ensure the reflection aligns with the highest parts of the hill. Refer to the photograph to see how the reflection should match the hill's contours.

PRO TIP

Use vertical and horizontal strokes only to create realistic water reflections.

40 Adding light and shadow reflections



Add Cool Shadow Reflections

Use a soft brush to apply a cool blue tone for the shadow reflections. If the paint is still wet, it will create a soft, reflective effect. Apply the color straight down and gently blur the edges for a natural look.

Add Warm Light Reflections

Mix a slightly darker and warmer tone to reflect the warm light. Apply this color to the water, ensuring it reflects the light source. The warmth and darkness will give the reflection a more realistic appearance.

PRO TIP

Work on wet paint to achieve soft, reflective effects in your reflections.

41 Blending sky reflections



Mix Sky Colors

Combine a little blue with a touch of magenta to match the sky color. Aim for a slightly darker and warmer tone than the surrounding area.

Apply and Blend

While the paint is still wet, softly brush the color onto the canvas. Create a soft edge rather than a crisp one to mimic the sky's reflection.

Align and Extend

Ensure the shape of the reflection lines up with the sky. Gently whisk the color outward, allowing it to darken as it reaches the edges due to the surrounding darkness.

Add Variation

Use vertical and slightly diagonal brush strokes to add variety. Incorporate soft edges throughout, similar to the sky, and let a few orange bits show through for added interest.

PRO TIP

Keep the paint wet to achieve soft edges and smooth blending.

42 Adding wavelet details



Mix a Darker Brown

Combine a little grey with some brown to create a darker brown. Use the blue and red already on your palette to naturally form a brown hue. Adjust the mixture until you achieve the desired shade.

Enhance Sky Reflection

Lighten the sky reflection slightly to give it more punch. Be careful not to overdo it; aim for a subtle enhancement.

Add Wavelet Details

Introduce small wavelets and bits of foam to the water. Focus on creating a curved wavelet that trails off, intensifying the effect as it moves across the canvas.

PRO TIP

Use existing colors on your palette to naturally form new shades, like brown from blue and red.

43 Reflecting foam on water



Add Foam Squiggles

Use a flat or dagger brush to create small squiggles of foam on the water surface. These brushes are ideal for capturing the irregular shapes of foam.

Reflect Foam on Water

Reflect the blobs of foam on the water by painting their mirror images below them. This enhances the realism of the reflective surface.

Switch Brushes

Use a fine synthetic square brush to add detail to the foam reflections. Dampen the brush slightly with water for smoother application.

PRO TIP

Reflect foam blobs on a reflective surface to enhance realism.

44 Adding small wave details



Add Dark Gaps for Detail

Introduce a small dark gap in the water to create a crisp detail. This will enhance the realism of the scene.

Create Small Wavelets

Mix a little green to form small wavelets that appear on the water's surface. These wavelets add texture and depth, allowing you to see into the water.

Reflect the Sky in Water

Reflect more of the sky onto the flat sections of the water. Use a mix of blue, white, and a touch of magenta for a lighter tone that captures the sky's reflection.

PRO TIP

Use small dark gaps to add crisp details and enhance realism in your water scenes.

45 Enhancing wave highlights



Enhance Wave Highlights

Use very thin horizontal strokes to create highlights on the wave. Taper off the strokes at both ends to achieve a natural look. Add a little more highlight to make the wave more exciting and visually appealing.

Add Spray to the Beach

Apply some spray effect at the base of the wave where it meets the beach. This adds realism and dynamic movement to the scene.

PRO TIP

Use thin horizontal strokes with tapered ends to create natural-looking wave highlights.

46 Painting seagulls



Add Seagulls on the Ground

Mix a dark color to paint the seagulls on the ground. Keep them fairly small to maintain scale. Consider placing them near a splash for added interest. Paint two seagulls at the same height but with slightly different shapes to suggest variety.

Create Reflections

Add reflections for the seagulls on the ground. Ensure that the reflections match the size and shape of the seagulls above them to create a realistic effect.

Paint Seagull Details

Use grey and blue to define the body and shadow of the seagulls, considering the light source. Add a small amount of light to the seagulls, keeping it cool and indirect. Optionally, add a thin touch of red for the legs to enhance realism.

PRO TIP

Keep the seagulls small to maintain the painting's sense of scale.

47 Adding seagulls in the sky



Add Seagulls to the Sky

Use the same brush and utilize just the edge of it to paint a couple of seagulls in the sky. Consider adding a few to create a sense of movement and life in your painting.

PRO TIP

Use the edge of the brush for delicate details like seagulls.

Summary & Key Takeaways

Embark on your painting journey by selecting a captivating photo that inspires you. Use digital tools to enhance the image, adjusting brightness, contrast, and colors to align with your artistic vision. As you prepare your canvas, consider the composition and orientation to highlight the most striking elements of your scene, such as towering rocks or reflective waters.

As you begin painting, focus on establishing a strong foundation with your underpainting. Use broad strokes and vibrant colors to set the stage for your masterpiece. Pay attention to the interplay of light and shadow, using techniques like vignetting and diagonal lines to guide the viewer's eye through your composition. Embrace the dynamic flow created by these elements, ensuring that your painting captures the essence of the scene.

In the final stages, refine your work by adding details and textures that bring your painting to life. Use varied brushstrokes to achieve painterly effects, and focus on creating crisp edges where needed to enhance clarity. Balance these with softer transitions to maintain a natural and cohesive look. Remember, each stroke contributes to the overall harmony of your painting, so approach each layer with intention and creativity.

LESSON POINTS TO REMEMBER

- Use digital editing tools to enhance your reference photo before painting.
- Experiment with both auto and manual adjustments to find the best preparation for your painting.
- Lower sharpness to remove unnecessary detail, achieving a softer, painterly effect.
- A vertical canvas orientation can enhance the impact of tall elements in your composition.
- Use diagonal lines to create a dynamic flow and guide the viewer's eye through the painting.
- Combine small shadows into larger shapes to enhance visual strength.
- Use gloss medium to seal your underpainting and enhance the vibrancy of the colors.
- Work wet-on-wet to maintain soft edges and a painterly effect in your sky.



"Castle Point" 12x16" Acrylic on Panel 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.

“Castle Point in Oils on oil paper” by Geoffrey Geeson



Castle Point in Oils on oil paper

Ooh this is a cracker, Geoffrey! I love the vertical enhancement you've made to the hill - much more drama and a better sense of the height of it. It appears that lowering the horizon and giving the hill more space to stretch up was a better idea than mine of giving more lead-in to the hill. The hill is the star of the show, so, yes give it more space as you have done. Nice!

You've used beautiful fluid brushwork everywhere too, uniting the painting. You have also achieved a great spotlight effect on the hill and in the sky. Congratulations!

“Castle Point Oil on canvas 11x14” by Nancy Newton



Castle Point Oil on canvas 11x14

Wow that's a really striking little painting, Nancy, power packed with strong colour contrasts beautiful interesting shapes and bold brushwork. I'm loving it all except for the white lines in the bottom half of the painting. They just look a little heavy handed and laboured compared to the rest. The main culprit is that double pronged lightening shaped foam touching the left side just below half way. Remove or edit that and I'll sleep better tonight. :-) Beautiful work!

“Castle Point Acrylic on 11" x 14" Canvas Board by Patti Zlotocha in Oconomowoc, WI, USA” by Patricia Zlotocha



Castle Point Acrylic on 11" x 14" Canvas Board by Patti Zlotocha in Oconomowoc, WI, USA

Great work here, Patricia, with good attention to the transition from shade to light and lots of interesting variety in everything you've painted. Nicely done!

“Castle Point after Richard Robinson, acrylic on birch” by Rachel Chard



Castle Point after Richard Robinson, acrylic on birch

Hi Rachel, some really nice work here with strong colour and expressive brushwork. Good to see. 3 ideas for improvement:

1. Add more interesting chinks of rock to the profiles of the land.
2. Keep the foam lines in line more carefully and avoid making marks all the same size.
3. Flip the painting upside down or view it in a mirror to clearly see the reflection shape versus the hill shape. Currently they're not quite in line.

Hope that helps.