

“Early Morning Beachscape”

9th & 10th April 2022
Esk, QLD

Workshop Notes

Day 1.

We started the day with some science and perspective. It took 13.8 billion years of stars exploding, gaseous clouds, atoms forming and reforming for the miracle that is YOU to exist, and to sit here in this hall.

We have approximately 80 years on this planet. Mark spent a little bit of time on this concept - we don't tend to think of "living in peace", really reserving this saying for people who have died. Let's try to make our lives more peaceful! Don't stress, don't waste your 80-odd years worrying about "stuff".

Why do we paint? For meditation, for peace. But when we start worrying about our paintings and the marks we're making, this takes us out of our peaceful state. This weekend, and going forward, we want you to notice when "YOU" gets in the way of your peaceful painting state.

NOTICE each time you get stressed. Instead of stressing, try to focus on the sound of the brush on the canvas to bring you back to quiet.

Let's try to suspend our judgement - this is a safe space, and our only job is to play and be kind, and have fun. Try to stay in the moment!

We are using painting as a tool that it's meant to be - an exercise to give you peace.





COLOURS:

We are using a very specific palette for this painting - predominantly 3 colours. French Ultramarine Blue, Cadmium Yellow Medium, White. Why are we doing it this way? Number one because at this time of the day these colours are quite harmonious. The other reason is to keep it simple.

In the examples Mark painted, he also added a tiny bit of Dioxazine Purple in one case, in another example he added Dioxazine Purple and Pthalo Blue, and in the last painting example he added Dioxazine Purple and Permanent Alizarine. Slight shifts in colour away from those base colours can make a powerful difference.

In this painting we are basically observing the transition of light across the picture. This will build our understanding of the traversing of the sun across the landscape.

TIP: Never lose your sense of wonder! When looking at the light, you're basically exploring the miracle of being alive!

At night, our palette is limited. As the light transitions through the early morning to midday the palette expands to include more colours, then starts to contract again towards the evening.

In this workshop we are going to explore what happens to light and colour as it travels away from the light source.

We have used a different approach to building this painting in that the light is the structure. Normally we would draw in shapes, block in everything and go from there. In this painting, it's more obvious that everything relates to the light.

TIP: Don't stress about your background gradation - everything is basically done to establish the light.

We're going to be adding detail as we go out from the light source - everything relates to the light source.

Close to the light source it is mainly whites. Cadmium Yellow Medium and French Ultramarine Blue occur in only tiny amounts. Everything we paint will be a strengthening or diminishing of those 2 colours.

Your second canvas is your safety harness. Use this to take the pressure off you mentally.

TIP: For some reason we think we are going to create a masterpiece every time we pick up a paintbrush. But we have to give ourselves a break! Ian Thorpe didn't just rock up to the Olympics and decide to enter - to be good at anything requires practise! Brush technique and observation are SKILLS that can be developed and enhanced. That's what your second canvas is for.

Set Up Your Workspace:

Set yourself up properly to remove "obstacles". Your palette is for working stuff out on! Not your "real" canvas! It is your workspace. Dish up more paint than you think you'll need. There is nothing worse than trying to match colours halfway through a painting because not enough paint was dished up at the beginning. These strategies will free your brain for painting. Your palette should support your practise.



For this workshop we are going to dish up our colours across the top of our palette, left to right, French Ultramarine Blue, Cadmium Yellow Medium and White.

The idea is closer to the light source, all colours will be affected by it. As we move away from the sun, we add yellows, and gradually more blues.

We're going to explore some tricks and hacks to fix your dodgy gradations too. The secret to painting is to paint with confidence. How to paint with confidence? Have a safety plan (like a second canvas) :)

So with this painting we're going to build on our base gradation, starting with the darker (furthest from the light source) areas first, adding a cloud bank and suggesting waves. We're going to mix French Ultramarine Blue and White, with a teensy bit of Cadmium Yellow Medium; and start at the furthest point away from the light source. We're going to paint our horizon in lightly as well as a few wave shadow lines.

Take your time with this, these lines will diminish as we paint towards the light.



An aside.

BRUSHES 101

Decide what mark you want to make BEFORE you make it. How are you going to make it? Which paintbrush? Which pressure? Which area of the bristles do I need to use to achieve that effect?

There is a mistaken belief that if you buy a different brush it'll solve all of your problems. Your brush is like a swiss army knife - you need to know all the different strokes it will create. You need to know what mark you want to make and how you can make it BEFORE you start.

There are 3 main functions of your paintbrush which affect the mark you make. These are:

- The amount of pressure you apply
- The amount of paint on your brush
- The medium you use

Within each of these areas there are lots of variations (if you think of each area having a scale of 1-10, for example), resulting in potentially thousands of different marks you can make with just one brush!

So, before you make a mark, ask yourself questions. Is this the mark I want to make? Is this the brush I need? What do I need to do to get the mark that I need? **KNOW YOUR BRUSHES.**

Another great tip is to make a mark on something else first, before you touch your brush to your "real" painting, ie nearby easel or spare canvas etc.



Ok, we're going to add White to the previous colour and a tiny bit more Cadmium Yellow Medium, as we paint towards the light source. We're going to add this colour to the left of the darker cloud banks to create the highlights, as well as creating the shadows of the clouds closer to the light source.

So, the highlights on the clouds furthest away become the shadows closer to the light source. Use this colour to come in closer to the light source with the waves also.

We can soften these cloud banks with a clean, damp brush.

We're going to continue our horizon line lightly with this colour as well as a few more wave shadow lines.

Add more White and Cadmium Yellow Medium to this colour, and paint more highlights to the existing clouds on their left sides, and then paint the band almost so it's disappearing into the light. You can barely see this colour against the background.

While we have this colour, start adding some vertical reflections to your wet sand areas using a dry brush and a soft touch. This is the start of the reflections on the wet sand.

Start adding some horizontal brush strokes here too. As we move closer to the light source, the sun and most of the colour disappears.

Keep adding a suggestion of wavelets here and there - use a subtle approach. You should be starting to see the body of this painting take shape.

TIP: You're only trying to convince people that a painting works from a metre or two away from it.

Always step back from your painting while you're working on it.

Warm to Cool Concept

There is a concept which totally changed the way Mark painted, and that is - generally speaking, objects closer to the light source appear warmer, and as you get further away from the light source, these colours appear cooler. When you really start looking, you will see this concept everywhere, even in different parts of the same shadow. When you can apply this knowledge to your paintings, you will add a layer of realism which looks incredible.

A little further into this, you can also change the time of the day by adding colours to your recipe mixes. For example, to create a "3pm" kind of time of day (there would be more Cadmium Yellow Medium in this mix), you add some Cadmium Yellow Medium to every colour mix you would normally use in a "midday" painting. It's not as simple as this of course, but you'll be surprised how incredible the results you can get. See the Youtube link at the end of this page for a demonstration "Painting The Right Light".

In the morning there tends to be a little more moisture in the air, making the colours appear "whiter" than they potentially would at the end of the day. At the end of the day there is more dust in the atmosphere, which can make the colours appear warmer.

TIP: If you make your clouds bigger, you'll need to leave a bigger gap between the cloud bank and the horizon for it to look realistic. If you make them smaller, a smaller gap is fine. This gives realistic perspective for your clouds.

Mark stopped everyone at this point to show an example of a painting he was working on - the whitewash shadow areas were darker than the clouds. Why? Because there'll be colour (lighter shades) painted over the top of this.

He also took a moment to explain that there are layers to this light. For example it changes outwards from the light source across the painting, but it also changes



from the light source to the foreground of the painting, and in every element as a little micro-example of lighter to darker/warm to cool. The more you can represent these shifts, the more realistic and compelling your paintings will be.

So now we're going to define the waves, and create the impression of volume. As with everything in this picture, we need to be very sensitive about what the light is doing here.

Mark used the same colour combination of more blue in the bluer area of the painting to add the shadow to the waves. He added White and Cadmium Yellow Medium to this colour to paint these waves slightly closer to the light source.



TIP: The wave colours get a little washed out the closer to the light source you get.

Add more White and Cadmium Yellow Medium to this colour and continue painting the waves closer to the light source again.

TIP: Don't be scared of that limey green colour in the water - it works if you put it in the right place. Mother nature generally won't put colours together that don't work.

After lunch we had a bit of show and tell. It's very easy to get caught up in being critical of your own paintings. After lining everyone's paintings up against the wall, we could all see there was something compelling about every single painting. Every painting evoked a feeling, and everyone agreed that no paintings were wrong or right. We tend to work very insularly - to bring them all out like this gives us some separation from our own work. Space = clarity!

Up until this point in time we have been following a formula. Now we need to go off the path a bit. Everyone's paintings are going to be their own, there will be elements in there where you need to decide what needs to be emphasised, de-emphasised etc.

Mark got his picture out to demonstrate a dry brushing technique to make the clouds a little bit stronger, a little less 'soft'. He mixed a colour using French Ultramarine Blue, White and Cadmium Yellow Medium.

He used an old brush, and took most of the paint off the brush and scrubbed the darker colour into the shadows.

He repeated this process with White and Cadmium Yellow Medium to add highlights to these clouds moving closer into the light source, as before.

Remember, your palette is your workspace - be almost 100% sure that you are happy with the colour, the brush you are using, the amount of paint on your brush and the mark you want to make BEFORE you put any paint on the canvas.

At this point Mark mentioned you can put out an extra colour, Dioxazine Purple on the palette.

He mixed a bit of a sand-ish colour of Cadmium Yellow Medium, White, French Ultramarine Blue and Dioxazine Purple, and added this colour to the clouds in the darker area. This colour was a transition between the highlights and the deeper shadows in the clouds. Remember whatever happens in the sky needs to happen in the water/wet sand as well, so add some horizontal and vertical strokes for reflections.

He mixed Cadmium Yellow Medium and White together (because the predominant light source is a mix of these colours), and added the highlights to the clouds. He then repeated this colour for the reflections in the wet sand - lining up the reflections roughly with the cloud heads.

He added more White and Cadmium Yellow Medium to this mix to layer up the highlights, and again repeated this in the wet sand for the reflections. This process will be repeated and repeated to tidy up imperfections.

TIP: Use pure White to define cloud edges.

Mark went back in with pure White - and even painted down over the horizon to really highlight how that glare permeates everything at that time of the day.



TIP: Mix up your brush strokes for maximum realism.

Dry brush the White into the foreground sand as well - this is another way of hiding imperfections in your gradations and waves.

You can come back in with that White, and dry brush over the close-to-the-light clouds and just disappear them into the glare.

TIP: If your clouds are too strong, mix a bit of the sky colour and dry brush over the top of them to push them back.

Atmospheric Perspective - An Aside:

Air is not clean and clear. It has 'stuff' in it. It has a colour. To create the impression of something appearing to be further away, you need to establish the object colour in the foreground, then add sky colour to push them further into the background.

Mark added a headland to another example pic - he mixed French Ultramarine Blue, Cadmium Yellow Medium and White but then added the sky colour to this mix (another mix of those colours incidentally) to create the impression of distance.

An aside:

Our brains are hardwired to learn something, then know that thing, then stop looking. For example, "the cat sat on the". Our jobs as artists is to put enough information in our paintings to convince the viewer to connect the dots. We want to regurgitate the information in a powerful way that generates a connection with our viewer.

TIP: Sometimes the way to paint well is to distract everyone from our "mistakes".

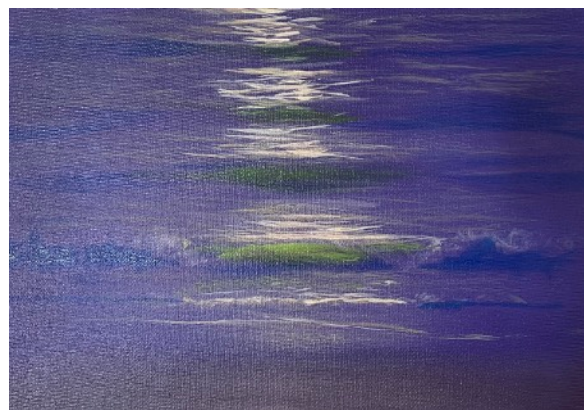


DAY 2:

Mark started the day with a moonlit wave demo in order to illustrate the concept of painting waves by not painting the waves :D

The background was blocked in with Dioxazine Purple, leaving a small strip at the bottom where a little Cadmium Yellow Medium was added to this colour.

He mixed up a colour using Dioxazine Purple, French Ultramarine Blue and White (an intermediate colour) and started painting the highlighted areas first where the moon would be reflecting off the water. In this instance the moon is the light source.



Mark showed how 3 incremental shifts in colour could create a realistic picture by painting the space in between the waves, rather than the waves themselves.

He used pure White for the lightest highlights, and then came back with neat Pthalo Blue and painted in the whitewash of the waves - because it is cooler in the shadows (and Pthalo Blue is a cool colour).

He mixed another colour using Pthalo Blue and Cadmium Yellow Medium and painted this colour in the lit areas in the faces of the waves where the moon is shining through. Instant *bam*!

He added Cadmium Yellow Medium and White to this colour to bump it up even more, and then mixed up Permanent Alizarine and Pthalo Blue into the shadows to warm them up a little bit.

A bit of an experiment here, he mixed Permanent Alizarine and Cadmium Yellow Medium to create an orange just outside the moonlit areas on the lip of the wave - does this work?



We considered the possibility that both shadows and highlights are impacted by the light source.

He added more Permanent Alizarine to the above orange colour and painted further out again from the light source.

This is just a little exercise to start with a gradation and then use highlights and colour etc to paint the "not-waves". A great warm up exercise to play with the concept even more!

So now we're going back to our painting to work on the whitewash.

Mark demonstrated by painting into the lightest part of the painting first using pure White Free Flow, and working into the lightest areas and painting all the reflections in that area first (or, the "not-waves").

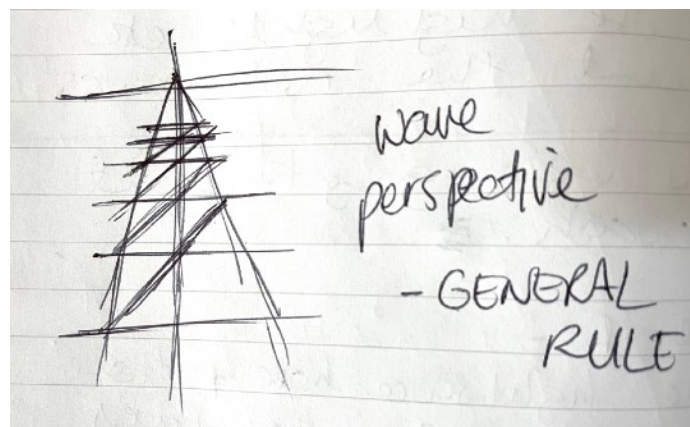
He then went to the furthest point from the light source and mixed all those sky colours together in that area, but tending towards blues, to find a colour that will work for the whitewash highlights in that area of the painting.

He then added Cadmium Yellow Medium and White to this colour for the middle area whitewash highlights, to fill in the wave whitewash highlights in this area.

Everything is either in the White, Yellow or Blue area in this painting. Keep referring your whitewash and wave areas to these parts of your sky when painting them.



An aside - Wave Perspective!



This is a valuable tool for considering where to put your waves as a starting point!

Draw your horizon line and your wet sand line, add a wave in the middle. Then draw a vertical line through the middle of this line, and a vanishing point on either side of it to the horizon. To figure out how big, and where to make your next waves, draw an intersecting diagonal line, ending at each side of the vanishing point lines. (See examples). Obviously nature doesn't actually really work like this, but it is a great framework and starting point.

Sometimes it can be difficult to see the lightest highlit areas if the area is too lit up! A little trick to get around this is make the wave area a little darker in tone. Mark



mixed up French Ultramarine Blue, Cadmium Yellow Medium and White and used a dry brush to "green" up this area a little bit. Now the highlights will stand out more!

Detail in Whitewash:

Mark used thinned, mobile paint to add some whitewash shadows (using the usual mix of French Ultramarine Blue, Cadmium Yellow Medium and White) and painted this colour into the "blue" area of the painting. He added Cadmium Yellow Medium and White to this colour and added the shadow areas into the "yellow" area of the painting.

He added some suds/whitewash trails at this point.



TIP: When painting suds trails, remember PERSPECTIVE - the suds trails will follow the vanishing point (or points), roughly speaking. Hold your brush flat and parallel to the bottom or top edge of the canvas.

Suds and whitewash trails are the trapped air left behind the breaking waves.

TIP: White tends to go a little blue when it's thinned, which is great when there's blue in the sky that you're reflecting, you don't need to add any blue to it!

TIP: You want to create a series of planes with the whitewash to give your whole picture cohesive dimension.

Build these highlights up by adding more White to this colour. Back off the yellow in whitewash as it will mainly be reflecting the blue behind it (in this case).

At this point Mark introduced these three fundamental skills you need to make a painting:

- Conceptual Skills
- Physical Ability
- Perception Skills

Conceptual Skills:

This is your spin on the image. Is the concept (of the image you want to paint) compelling to you? If it is, that's great! You're not painting for anyone else! Having said that we want to make a piece that is evocative in some way. Your conceptual skills can modify an image (perhaps something as simple as cropping) and make it somehow "something else". And yours.

Physical Ability:

This is the ability to move your paint around. If you practise your physical skills this will eventually also enhance your perception and conceptual skill areas.

Perception Skills:

As artists and humans, we notice when things don't look right. (For example the sunlight shining through a bushfire, instantly looks strange). As artists we should take this further and go beyond this, to see what is wrong, or find the nuance, and investigate.

Our brains don't tend to see everything - we stop noticing the minutiae in the world. As artists it's useful to look at everything like it's the first time we've noticed it. These nuances are the things you can exaggerate and share with the world.

Painting is a lot about creating illusion - knowing some tricks to help create these illusions is very useful!!

These three concepts (Physical Ability, Conceptual Skills and Perception Skills) can be used as a problem solving tool when you are making paintings. Use this tool to refine your own arts practise.

Next time you're at an arts show, look at the paintings - holding these three concepts in your mind - and really evaluate the paintings. For example you might love a particular concept, but notice that the artist lacked the painting technique. You can learn a lot about your own painting practise by looking at others' paintings in this way.

See the Youtube link at the end of these notes for a bit more info on these concepts "3 Skills to Make a Painting".

TIP: Observe the world in a way that lights you up to paint it!

A few people were beating themselves up about the way their paintings were looking. Mark demonstrated with just White and a dry brushing technique how you can use a process to hide mistakes - in this case he re-established that light area to create that glare and push the clouds back a bit.

Just using dry brush technique on those clouds close to the sun can push them right back.

So after lunch, Mark took 3 different paintings up the front of the class. This has been one workshop, with only three colours, one subject matter. And yet, every painting is different. One is light and spacious, another has gorgeous blues and purples. Another has an incredible stormy feeling.

We started this workshop talking about finding peace, and cultivating peace in our painting practice and in our lives. However we've been spending a lot of time beating ourselves up in this class!

Everyone in this class nailed the light spectacularly! This workshop is about developing the skills to paint like YOU, not like Mark :)

We spent a bit of time developing the skill of asking the questions to yourself in being able to diagnose what you think is wrong with the painting, and also being able to find the tools and the skills to fix it yourself. This process is teaching you how to self-diagnose and troubleshoot.

Thanks everyone for an awesome workshop!

Guys, we will be filming this process for Youtube so you can follow along again with Part 1 and Part 2 when we get to that!



Overheard in Class:

"Hear that everyone? He painted the 'not-waves'. Whoda thunk!"

"Now I'm going to have to sit and look at bloody water, aren't I"

"I'm going to let you in on a little secret here - you're not going to win."

For support material about what you learnt over the weekend, check out these pages from our website:

Have a look at this page first to do some of your own exploring!

<http://www.explore-acrylic-painting.com/sitemap.html>

www.explore-acrylic-painting.com/perspective-in-painting.html
www.explore-acrylic-painting.com/skyscapes.html
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www.explore-acrylic-painting.com/create-unique-paintings.html
www.explore-acrylic-painting.com/workshops-past.html (to access previous workshop notes)

and these video clips! (make sure you subscribe to our Youtube channel for all the latest clips):

Sunset Wave Painting Part 1:

<https://youtu.be/vZww6NkXqul>

Sunset Wave Painting Part 2:

<https://youtu.be/3XVKEmpIPhk>

Sunset Wave Painting Part 3:

<https://youtu.be/SGydt8g3rPU>

Beachscape Tutorial 1 - background:

<https://youtu.be/MDLQnWt-83k>

Beachscape Tutorial 2 - waves:

<https://youtu.be/wDrhXwMGPS4>

Beachscape demonstration:

<https://youtu.be/0myDupSiOOE>

Painting The Right Light:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XdaWQW3lD4Q>

Know Your Brushes!

<https://youtu.be/20CjkSzXICc>

Creating Planes:

https://youtu.be/4MsJwKRtD_E

Painting Your Horizon:

<https://youtu.be/XsVGv9eH6U0>

Creating Distance In Your Paintings | Atmospheric Perspective:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0ecBhJUifXU>

Brush Technique:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=icWYYJHJFVc>

Learn How To Paint - Gradation:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vy-Z0FQ2kpg>

Acrylic Painting Tips - Colour Matching:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A5gzJuX8EEU>

How To Paint Shadows:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IDut2Tma1QU>

3 Skills to Make a Painting:

<https://youtu.be/WPfiMs32kXk>

Atelier Interactive demonstration:

<http://www.atelieracrylic.com/atelier-interactive-acrylic>

Unlocking Formula demonstration:

<http://www.atelieracrylic.com/atelier-unlocking-formula>

If you'd like to order Mark's book "It's All About the Light", click [here](#)!

Apple and Currant Slice

Ingredients:

**2 cups plain flour
1 cup SR flour
1/2 cup icing sugar
185g butter, chilled, cubed
1 egg
450g cooked granny smith apples
1/3 cup currants
1 tbsp brown sugar
1/2 tsp ground cinnamon**

Method:

Preheat oven to 180°C. Grease and line a 3cm deep, 24cm x 29.5cm lamington pan.

Process flours, icing sugar and butter to resemble breadcrumbs. Add egg. Process until dough comes together. Turn onto a floured surface, knead lightly.

Press two thirds of dough into prepared pan. Refrigerate. Wrap remaining dough in plastic wrap. Place into freezer until firm (about half an hour).

Spread apple over dough base. Sprinkle with currants, brown sugar and cinnamon. Grate frozen dough over top. Bake for 40 minutes, or until firm to the touch.

Slice up and nom nom

Enjoy!

Date & Lemon Slice

Ingredients:

**1 cup chopped dates
1 cup SR Flour
1/2 cup caster sugar
2tsp grated lemon rind
125g melted butter
1 whisked egg**



For the Glaze:

**3 cups sifted icing sugar
juice of 1 or 2 lemons to make a nice consistency!**

Method:

Preheat oven to 170°C. Line a large baking tray with baking paper and set aside.

Place all ingredients in a bowl and mix well. Press into tray and cook for 10-15 minutes.

Make icing by adding enough juice to your sifted icing sugar to make a thick, spreadable consistency. Ice while warm.



Enjoy!