

# *Everyone Wants To Paint Water*

## *March 8th-9th 2015*

### *Mandurah, WA*

#### **Workshop Notes**

Introduced the idea that this is not “the way” - it is just my way! Take what you can use and discard the rest! We all borrow ideas from each other - you will always put your own spin on everything you have borrowed.

We covered some initial theory with these fundamental concepts:

- **Perception** - the ability to find information out in the world. Very important. Find the information that makes the difference. This workshop is designed to escalate your perception skills.
- **Conceptual** - this is YOUR area - relatively handled today.
- **Physical ability** - ability to manipulate your tools - to make exactly the mark you want. To master this will take time, practise and willingness to put the time in. Because we have worked a lot on our perception skills, it's now more important that we continue to develop our physical ability.

Painting is primarily about problem solving - asking the questions is how you will solve your painting problems. The more questions you ask, the more problems you'll solve.

For example:

Q: What colour is water?

A: What's under it? What's above it? What's contaminating it?

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?



#### **Brushes 101:**

A little bit of theory about brushes, and the mark you want to make. There are 3 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, 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.**

The elements that make up to the appearance of water were introduced and/or reinforced.

### **The Four Elements:**

- **Substrate** - can be lots of different colours ie pebbles, sand, rocks, kelp etc.
- **Colour of water** - can also be lots of different colours.
- **Surface** - probably the most important element - from underneath and above.
- **Light**

Observe. Think of painting water and waves as a series of mirrors and windows. The flatter to your eye the water is - the more will be reflected on its surface. The **face of the wave is a window**, and the **back of the wave is a mirror**. This is handy to think of when you are painting waves in water. When you are looking at water at a flat angle, the water becomes very reflective like a mirror.

When you want to paint a water scene, ask yourself a series of questions so you can work it out:

- **What is the substrate?**
- **What is the colour of the water?**
- **How much of the light is reflected on the surface?**

Then paint it in that order, first the substrate, then the colour of the water, then the surface (and the light).

**TIP: At the top of the canvas ie further away from you, (closer to the horizon) there will be more sky reflected, or more mirrors, or less water showing. Closer to the bottom of the canvas there will be more water showing, until you'll be able to see the substrate in shallow water.**

**TIP: In a low light situation - you will still see the light reflected on the water - but you can't really see through it - low light is more about reflections than anything.**

**TIP: Wet sand is treated the same way as water when painting. It has a substrate, it has a surface, and it reflects light. The only difference is the water is so shallow that its colour can't be seen.**

### **Paint Recipes: Concept of a "starting point" set of colours.**

Tropical Water:

Cadmium Yellow Light

Pthalo Blue

Titanium White

### Warm Summer Skies:

Ultramarine Blue

Titanium White

Pthalo Blue (add a little as you get higher in the sky)

### Shadow Under Waves:

Burnt Umber +

Pthalo Blue (into deeper water)  
(thin wash)

### Sand:

Cadmium Yellow Medium

Dioxazine Purple

Titanium White

(for drier sand add more Titanium White)

### Foliage:

Cadmium Yellow Medium

Dioxazine Purple

Forest Green

## Atmospheric Perspective

We talked about how with seascapes we like to establish the illusion of depth and dimension in our paintings. We talked about how the air has a colour due to the “stuff” in it, and how we can assume this colour is blue (sky colour - White + French Ultramarine Blue). So in order to push elements further back - we can first establish their colour close up, and then to push back simply add sky colour. To push back even further, add more sky colour.

Think of the world having layers of coloured cellophane between you and whatever you are looking at. The further away, the more layers of cellophane, the closer to you, the less!

## Exercise - Gradation - Tropical Water into Shallow Sand

Start with the Default Settings colours for tropical water of Pthalo Blue, Cadmium Yellow Light and White. Start at the top of your canvas with mainly Pthalo Blue & a tiny amount of Cadmium Yellow Light. As you move further down the canvas add more Cadmium Yellow Light and White & back off the Pthalo Blue.

If you add a tiny amount of Dioxazine Purple (TINY - like 3 hairs on your paintbrush) to a Cadmium Yellow Medium & White mix, you will end up with a lovely “sand colour” at the bottom of your canvas.



## Refraction technique:

The refraction process is what happens when the light hits the surface of the water and creates tiny rainbows of patterned light on the substrate. Refraction is affected by the depth of the water. Hold your small chisel brush on the side and from the front, parallel to the canvas, and loosely between your thumb and forefinger (or fingers) roll it back and forth, and up and down to create a series of loose diamond-y irregular flat rectangles.



The further away from you (ie the higher up the canvas & closer to the horizon), the flatter and smaller, and less distinct the “diamonds” will be. Remember perspective - that is, objects further away from you will appear smaller and flatter and less distinct.

*TIP: When using this technique, try to turn your brain (mostly!) off. This exercise is more difficult than it looks! When you master this technique it can be used for a number of different things including representing spinifex grass on the beach, or highlights on clouds on the horizon. Random chaos!*

Add the ripples - to do this you paint the sky reflection! Use the tip of your brush on its edge. We experimented with a dark colour on a white canvas, to see how soft we could make those marks. Developing a soft touch is very important when painting the surface of the water.

To accentuate the “face” of the ripples, use a thin wash of Pthalo Blue (a glaze) to create gorgeous windows in your waves.



## Theory - Anatomy of a wave

The steeper the wave, the harder and sharper the lines are going to be (shallower water = sharper lines).

You can chalk in your waves - Decide where you want your waves to break etc. You can also use White to paint them in initially “non-committally”.



Create your waves by using a very dry brush, and create the flat spots on the backs of the waves (using the sky colour of Ultramarine Blue & White, this creates the reflection of the sky on the back of the waves). Use the tip of your brush on its edge. At the bottom of the wave you will see more of the sand showing - add some "greeny-yellow colour (shallow water colour) using some Cadmium Yellow Light - cool yellow - gradating to a greeny colour in the middle of the wave. Then add a shadow line to your wave using the default setting (very thin wash) of Burnt Umber & Pthalo Blue.

### **Exercise - Painting small waves**

You can loosely chalk in or paint with white paint where you want your waves to go.

Start with your darkest shadow areas in the whitewash - use a mix of Pthalo Blue, Burnt Umber & White. For the next level of shading add a pile of White to this mix & Ultramarine Blue. Then add pure White to build up the final highlights of the whitewash.

Add your vertical and horizontal reflections to the front of the whitewash and your paintings will zing with realism! You can create the illusion of a steeply breaking wave, or a soft crumbly wave using these White horizontal (ish) and vertical reflections.

Add some soupy whitewash trails to your foreground using perspective and a loose elliptical pattern, with a vanishing point in mind to create realism in your painting. To give even more zip add a light shadow under the soupy pattern of a very VERY thin wash of Burnt Umber. Instant depth in the shallows.

Add your vertical and horizontal reflection lines right down on the wet sand. Wet sand is highly reflective.

**TIP: Any time you wet something, the principles of water apply. That is, wet rocks, wet roads, wet sand. Anything wet you can treat in the same way you would a water painting!**

**TIP: Remember whitewash has perspective. Use the edge of the chisel brush held flat and softly add the "soup" trailing behind the waves. This soup should point towards the vanishing point.**

**TIP: The area between waves is flat. This area will reflect the sky colour - use a drier brush & a soft touch.**

**TIP: When painting gradations (particularly sky gradations), get plenty of colour down, then pull the colours together in a cross hatch fashion to blend. Then use the tip of a clean, large-ish brush to soften the transition even more.**



**TIP: If you want to paint a luscious cool water, use lovely cool colours.**

**TIP: Determine the sky first - the light will determine everything in the rest of your painting.**

**TIP: When doing gradations of colour, shifts in colour as well as tone will make your paintings POP!**

## **Reflections!**

What do we know about them?

- Reflections are all about the light!
- Almost everything reflects light.
- Exemptions are - things that absorb light. There is proper science behind these theories, but if you want to know more about this, look up Google Scholar.

Most of the time people aren't aware of the nuance and all-pervading aspects of reflections. Uncovering and painting reflections will make your paintings amazing.

Your job is not necessarily to recreate nature, but to give people access to the discoveries you've made. You get to exaggerate what's really there, and play and dance.

We discussed how our brains work. That is, we can leave out information (think "the cat sat on on the mat x"), and still create a convincing painting. You can represent things without putting in every tiny detail and nuance - people's brains will do the rest.

We don't fully process all the information. We stop looking, because we think we already know. Forget that you know - look at everything like you're a brand new person, with a sense of wonder.

Everywhere you go now, you'll see reflections. Keep asking questions, peeling back the layers. When you've found all the information, then you can decide what information to include (or not).

**TIP: Your job is to go and look carefully at everything!**

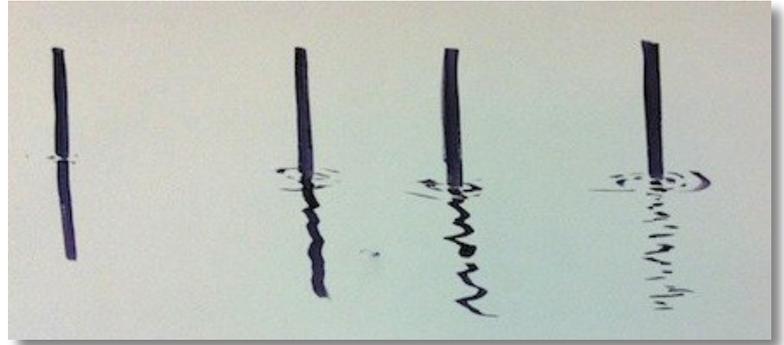
**TIP: When painting from photos, try and observe the same scene in real life as well, at the same time of day. You will notice many things that when represented in your painting will give it real life, zest and pop.**

We talked about painting reflections in the context of water - and that because water is highly reflective it is easier to find reflections, but sometimes harder to paint them.

We talked about the two elements of water that affect the "reflectivity" of water

- The Surface
- The Light

The angle of your eye relative to the surface of the water, and to the light will affect the appearance of these two things.



The wind or the surface of the water affects the reflections, let's investigate that.

### **Glassy - no wind = mirror**

When you think about the shape of the surface of the water, you will understand reflections on water. The surface of the water relative to your eye will determine how much reflection you see.

**TIP: Water is made up of windows and mirrors!**

**TIP: Generally, shadows will point towards (or away from) the light, reflections will point towards you (or the viewer).**

Imagine a bendy mirror, what will happen if you fold the corners in? The image will be distorted vertically. When you understand how the mirror has been shaped, then you can understand what it's going to do to the reflection.



**Windy = lots of little concaves.** We investigated the concaves, and how light hits them. We discussed that towards the bottom of the concave, light would be reflected from the higher part of the sky. Towards the top and flattest parts relative to your eye, the lower part of the sky would be reflected. We used French Ultramarine Blue and White as our paint recipe for the lower (warmer) sky reflection, and added a touch of Pthalo to reflect the higher (cooler) sky.



To demonstrate this we painted together a water scene with very little wind, and smooth undulating waves. We painted our background colour using the Tropical

Water paint recipe, this time though making the water a little darker. We painted in our refraction very loosely, to demonstrate that the technique for refraction in this case really wasn't important.

We then, with a very dry brush, and our paint recipe for Summer Sky, created very low, flat ripples on the surface of the water. We added white to this mix and painted this towards the front of those ripples (the top edge of the wave). We then mixed Pthalo Blue and brushed it beneath that area to create a "higher" "lump of water". To highlight this, we added to the top of the waves, the reflection of trees in the background using our Foliage paint recipe mix.

We highlighted around these greeny-browny areas by adding White to our French Ultramarine Blue and White mix.

### **Afternoon Wave Demo:**

You can loosely chalk in or paint with white paint where you want your waves to go. Mark painted a wave to demonstrate.

He blocked in all the major colour areas on the wave using a mix of Pthalo Blue, Cadmium Yellow Light and White. He then mixed up thinner versions of these colours and applied these in a band across the face of the wave, to create the illusion of clarity in the water. He then got White and roughed in the lip of the wave, and the whitewash. He began reflecting the whitewash on the surface of the water.

Add your vertical and horizontal reflections to the front of the whitewash and your paintings will zing with realism! You can create the illusion of a steeply breaking wave, or a soft crumbly wave using these White horizontal (ish) and vertical reflections.

He mixed Pthalo Blue with White to paint the whitewash bouncing up inside the wave and gradually added more White as he came closer to the entrance/exit of the tube. He then mixed more Pthalo Blue and placed that under the lip in the highest, steepest part of the wave to create the illusion of light shining through the face of the wave.



He then started building up the darkest shadow areas in the whitewash - using a mix of Pthalo Blue, Burnt Umber & White. For the next level of shading he added a pile of White to this mix & Ultramarine Blue. Then he added pure White to build up the final highlights of the whitewash.

This was the beginning of the process. The roughing in had begun, he then repeated this process again, gradually building up and tightening the image.

*Thanks to everyone for a most excellent workshop in  
Mandurah!*

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

[www.explore-acrylic-painting.com/ocean-landscapes.html](http://www.explore-acrylic-painting.com/ocean-landscapes.html)

[www.explore-acrylic-painting.com/color-mixing-guide.html](http://www.explore-acrylic-painting.com/color-mixing-guide.html)

[www.explore-acrylic-painting.com/perspective-in-painting.html](http://www.explore-acrylic-painting.com/perspective-in-painting.html)

[www.explore-acrylic-painting.com/how-to-paint-water.html](http://www.explore-acrylic-painting.com/how-to-paint-water.html)

[www.explore-acrylic-painting.com/painting-waves.html](http://www.explore-acrylic-painting.com/painting-waves.html)

[www.explore-acrylic-painting.com/gradation.html](http://www.explore-acrylic-painting.com/gradation.html)

[www.explore-acrylic-painting.com/free-painting-lessons.html](http://www.explore-acrylic-painting.com/free-painting-lessons.html)

[www.explore-acrylic-painting.com/brush-technique.html](http://www.explore-acrylic-painting.com/brush-technique.html)

[www.explore-acrylic-painting.com/paintbrushes.html](http://www.explore-acrylic-painting.com/paintbrushes.html)

[www.explore-acrylic-painting.com/acrylic-glazing.html](http://www.explore-acrylic-painting.com/acrylic-glazing.html)

[www.explore-acrylic-painting.com/how-to-paint-clouds.html](http://www.explore-acrylic-painting.com/how-to-paint-clouds.html)

[www.explore-acrylic-painting.com/shadow-painting.html](http://www.explore-acrylic-painting.com/shadow-painting.html)

[www.explore-acrylic-painting.com/sunset-painting.html](http://www.explore-acrylic-painting.com/sunset-painting.html)

[www.explore-acrylic-painting.com/skyscapes.html](http://www.explore-acrylic-painting.com/skyscapes.html)

[www.explore-acrylic-painting.com/support-files/aa013defaultsettingtropicalwater.pdf](http://www.explore-acrylic-painting.com/support-files/aa013defaultsettingtropicalwater.pdf)

[www.explore-acrylic-painting.com/support-files/AA007SSDefaultSettings.pdf](http://www.explore-acrylic-painting.com/support-files/AA007SSDefaultSettings.pdf)

[www.explore-acrylic-painting.com/support-files/default-settings-trees.pdf](http://www.explore-acrylic-painting.com/support-files/default-settings-trees.pdf)

[www.explore-acrylic-painting.com/Acrylics\\_Anonymous-acrylics-anonymous-019.html](http://www.explore-acrylic-painting.com/Acrylics_Anonymous-acrylics-anonymous-019.html)

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

**Brush Technique:**

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

**Painting Waves - Dry Brush Technique:**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bgNhoede9AI>

**Learn How To Paint - Gradation:**

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

**Acrylic Painting Techniques - Shadows in Waves:**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OfIAtF-0UoM>

**Acrylic Painting Techniques - Reflections in Whitewash:**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IUDJHY9h9fA>

**Acrylic Painting Tips - Colour Matching:**

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

**How to Paint Water - Refraction:**

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

**Acrylic Painting Techniques - Glazing:**

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

**How To Paint Shadows:**

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

**Painting Waves - Perspective in Whitewash:**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TDvlwo\\_e9JI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TDvlwo_e9JI)

**Acrylic Painting Techniques - Glazing - How to Paint Water:**

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

**How To Paint Landscapes - Light Effects:**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-2\\_Jsb9iJVY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-2_Jsb9iJVY)

**Default Settings - Trees:**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rXbtL9HrgUs>

**April 11th 2014 Webinar Promo:**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LETOyuON6yk>

**Tropical Beach V-log Episode 1:**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0fiDO1UagEU>

**How To Paint Tropical Water - Paint Recipes:**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vH8xAeu6njY&list=UUlzzJZa8\\_Obui-WGHgdUnng](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vH8xAeu6njY&list=UUlzzJZa8_Obui-WGHgdUnng)

**How To Paint Wet Rocks:**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y4qv1uzfW7E>

**Artist Palette set up:**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=57krxyDyagY>