Rock On!

Saturday June 17th, 2017

Workshop Notes

We jumped straight into this workshop, drawing in a scene with a few pandanus leaves, some rocks leading into the water behind the leaves, and plenty of water at the top of the canvas.

Mark explained today's workshop will be about using a process whereby he'll explain a step and give information and then you will have the opportunity to catch up.

Due to time constraints, the scene was drawn in with a pre-mixed colour Mark made up with was Atelier Free Flow Pthalo Blue, Cadmium Yellow Light and White.

At this point Mark went into a little more detail:

Set Up Your Palette:

Set yourself up properly to remove "obstacles". Your palette is for working stuff out on! It is your workspace. Not your canvas! Remove everything from your workspace except for your paints, brushes and water pot.

Dish Up Lots Of Paint!

Dish up more paint than you think you'll need. It's a hassle 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.

Dish up your paints across the top of your palette, so that you have your widest paintbrush width between each colour to avoid contaminating your colours with others, and so that you have the largest possible space to mix your colour.

(See the end of the workshop notes for a Youtube link on Mark's palette set-up).

Mark uses Atelier Interactive as it is a superior quality paint, which blends superbly. It also has unique properties which enable it to dry differently to "normal" acrylics, that is it doesn't form a "skin" but dries evenly all over. The bonus is if you dish up a

lot of paint it is actually more economically efficient than dishing out a tiny pea-sized amount.

Mark didn't really go into it in this workshop however you may be interested to know, his colours are:

Pthalo Blue
French Ultramarine Blue
Permanent Alizarine
Napthol Red Light
Cadmium Yellow Light
Cadmium Yellow Medium
Burnt Umber
Dioxazine Purple
Forest Green
Titanium White

He uses the coolest blue and the warmest blue (for example) so that there is the most versatility in the range. Using a limited range really helps teach you about colour mixing.

TIP: Pretend someone else is paying for your paint!

Managing your palette becomes very important, and you can keep your incremental colour mixes separate so that if you need to use or mix those colours again, you have a visual history of them.

Back to the scene:

We dished out Pthalo Blue, Cadmium Yellow Light and White at the top of the palette, and then mixed these colours together to create a "deep water" effect.

This colour was painted at the top of the canvas, gradually gradating down with a broken, cross-hatch pattern and a large brush.

Adding more Cadmium Yellow Light and White to the original mix, the gradation was painted down the canvas, ending at the underwater rocks. The join between the underwater rocks area and the water wasn't abrupt, but a broken/softer one to create more realism.

The gradation transition needs to be reasonable gentle.

At this point we added Burnt Umber and Cadmium Yellow Medium to the palette.

We mixed Burnt Umber, Pthalo Blue, Cadmium Yellow Medium and White to create a browny-greeny "underwater rock" colour.

Paint in your rocks with this colour, don't stress if your colour isn't "perfect" as there will be processes you will use over the top of this colour.

Try not to make patterns here, nothing too uniform; and don't worry about trying to "shape" your rocks. The surface of the water will distort your view - again, don't stress as there is a process you will use to paint over the top.

Now mix a colour using your previous mix, and add Cadmium Yellow Medium and White with a teensy bit of Burnt Umber to create a slightly lighter colour, and fill in the gaps here and there. Again, don't fee too constrained by the recipe as along the way we'll assess, push, pull etc.

Soften and blend the rocks "indistinctify" is the word you're looking for. It doesn't matter too much if there are little white spots showing however Mark tries to make sure he covers up all the white as soon as possible.

Mark took a moment here to reflect on the absolute miraculousness of what it has taken to be able to make a mark so easily on a canvas. We tend to get caught up and beat ourselves up about little "failures" on our canvases. However what the universe has been through to get us to this point, is simply a miracle. If you're feeling beaten up by your paintings ever - just take a minute to reflect on the miraculousness of what you are actually doing :)

We're now going to mix another recipe, this one for "dry granite boulders on a bright sunny day". Add Dioxazine Purple to your palette, and mix mostly Burnt Umber, with a touch of Dioxazine Purple and French Ultramarine Blue. Don't use any White here.

Paint the foreground rocks changing up the shapes and the angles, not leaving too many white spaces showing except for here and there.

Then with that colour come back here and there to suggest shadows in your underwater rocks, randomly.

We add White and Cadmium Yellow Medium to this previous colour and create highlights on the rocks. This is where you need to start being a little more deliberate about your brushstrokes. You can make the top edge of your highlight a hard line, and the bottom edge of the highlight line needs to blend into the original darker rock colour. Make sure you vary the sizes, shapes etc so you

don't end up with a pile of turtle shells. You are starting to give your rocks volume.

We're still at the blocking in stage, so no need to be super particular about this process, but you do need to start being a little more deliberate.

TIP: Dry rocks are different from wet rocks!

Mark went into painting water theory a little (not this much, but we've added some more information here for you!):

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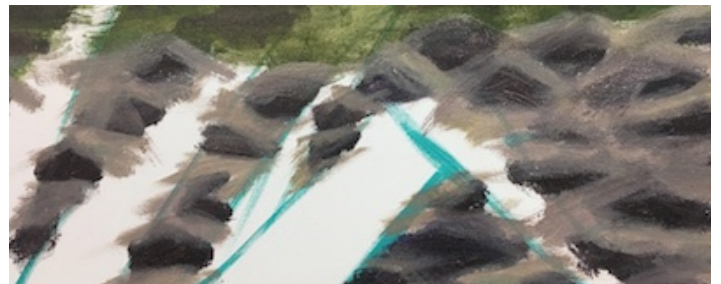
Observe. Think of painting water and waves as a series of mirrors and windows. The flatter to your eye the water is - the more will be reflected on its surface. The **face of the wave is a window**, and the **back of the wave is a mirror**. This is handy to think of when you are painting waves in water.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

So, when you're painting water, the shift in hue makes a difference. We agreed that the colour of the water is predominantly blue. Therefore anything we want to represent under the water we would add the "water colour" to, ie Pthalo Blue. The same thing happens with the rocks! Anything close to the surface of the water (but still underwater) we add less water colour to it.

The "normal" refraction technique Mark uses tends to beat people up, so he has decided to change it up a little by creating the refraction in a different way.

Starting in the mid-shallow water, mix a predominantly yellow mix of Cadmium Yellow Light, White and a touch of Pthalo Blue. Mix a colour the same as your shallowest water colour, thin it out and using the edge of a flat brush, apply it in short strokes throughout the middle of your painting. Applying these strokes on a **slight** angle (not too steep or it will look like a tsunami wave coming to wipe out your village). This slight angle creates the illusion of movement and is a great compositional trick.

Because the shape of the surface of the water distorts things underwater, these short strokes we're making here will realistically represent the refracted light on the substrate. The surface of the water will distort what is underneath it - therefore there will be sand colour and rock colour in sometimes unexpected places.

Add more Cadmium Yellow Light and White to this mix and come into the shallows (your colour should be lighter and yellower than your shallowest water colour) using the same stroke technique.

TIP: Use Free Flow and a watercolour brush for this technique.

TIP: You can adjust and change things eg if the ripples are a bit steep, come back with your original "water" colours and paint it again.

You can push a little of the lighter colours up into the darker stroke colours, again because the surface of the water will distort things a little so that colours appear here and there.

Ultimately we are going to cover the canvas with these little lines. Ensure you are painting the strokes a shade lighter than the area you are painting on. To create the illusion of distance you can flatten the strokes as you come into the foreground areas.

We're now going to start with these strokes over the underwater rock areas. Mix up the underwater rocks colour again, Burnt Umber, Pthalo Blue and Cadmium Yellow Medium and run a few lines over the top of the dark patches. The surface of the water illusion is created by distorting the shape of the rocks underneath.

Add Burnt Umber to that colour and paint over the shadow areas with this colour. As you

come further into the foreground diminish the Pthalo Blue, and use a mix of Cadmium Yellow Medium and Burnt Umber over the tops of the rocks underwater.

Concentrate the brown strokes over the brown patches, and the yellow strokes over the yellow areas.

TIP: To create the illusion of distance underwater, add more "water" colour between you and the object under the water. The more distance between your eye and it, the more water colour you'll add.

Mark talked about three concepts that go into making 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 compelling 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 after a while ("cat sat on the mat" exercise). We stop noticing the minutiae in the world. As artists we need 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.

Take the time to notice the small moments. Really, really notice the detail. Allow yourself to be a small child and investigate the world. At the end of the day, it is ONLY PAINT! The worst thing that can happen is that you'll have to paint over it!

Back to our scene:

The surface of the water is determined by REFLECTIONS. How you paint your reflections will determine a number of things - for example where the wind is coming from, if there are objects being reflected in the background. It doesn't matter how clear or dirty the water is; providing you put the reflections in, it should look like water!

At this point Mark mixed Cadmium Yellow Medium and Burnt Umber and then added a few "squiggly line" refraction patterns over the underwater rocks. This continues the illusion of the rocks underwater.

> **TIP: Suggest patches of sand in between the rocks using the shallow water colour.**

TIP: You will find the answers if you keep looking
                        - keep asking the questions.

Now, let's mix up a Summer Sky colour to reflect the sky - We'll use a mix of French Ultramarine Blue, White and a teensy bit of Pthalo Blue

To reflect the sky, use the same short strokes, thin the paint with water, take most of that off the brush, and use a chisel on it's edge (or a watercolour brush).

> **TIP: Use the same brushstrokes as you did for the earlier refraction lines. This combination of colours creates the illusion of the surface of the water/depth.**

Use larger and further apart strokes in the foreground, smaller and closer together in the background.

An aside - Reflections relating to water

Painting reflections in the context of water - because water is highly reflective it is easier to find reflections, but sometimes harder to paint them.

There are two elements of water that affect the "reflectivity" of water

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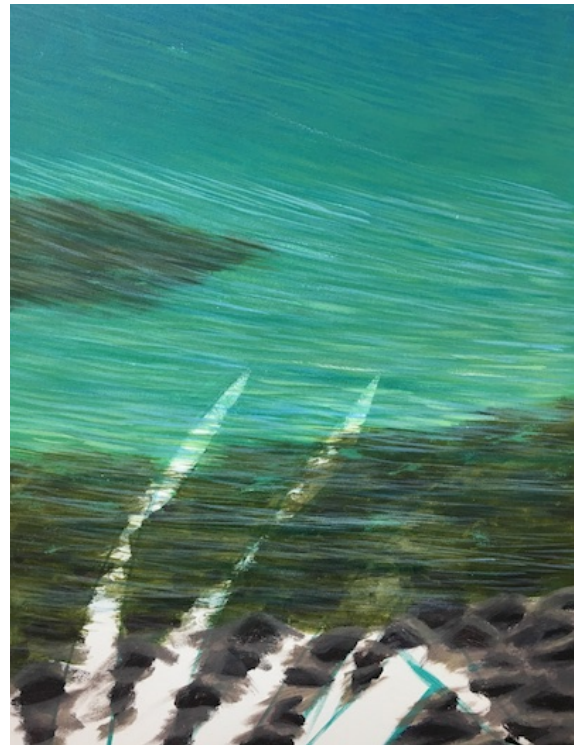
The angle of your eye relative to the surface of the water, and to the light will affect the appearance of these two things.

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! The face of the wave is the window.**

Add straight Pthalo Blue, thinned and with most of the paint removed with a VERY soft touch to create wavelets or little windows in amongst your sky reflections, effectively creating waves.

Reflect the sky to create the flat spots in between waves. With water, swell and chop can occur from opposite directions - this is where peaks occur.

Come back to the dry rocks now with another highlight colour of mostly White, Cadmium Yellow Medium and Dioxazine Purple and add another layer of highlights, same as before a hard edge along the top of the highlit line and the bottom edge of this blending into the rock to create volume and shape.

Pandanus - painting the pandanus leaves over the top can distract from any mistakes in the background :)

Use a mixture of Forest Green, Dioxazine Purple and a teensy bit of Cadmium Yellow Medium. Block in the shadows of the leaves.

Mix a medium highlight colour using the same colour as above but adding Cadmium Yellow Light and White. Paint the leaves that are in direct sunlight with this colour.

For the next highlight colour use a mix of White, Cadmium Yellow Light and a teensy bit of Forest Green.

For the final highlight colour, use Pure White (Free Flow is best for this) on the edges of the leaves. See the Youtube link at the end of these notes for a great tip on painting pandanus leaves.
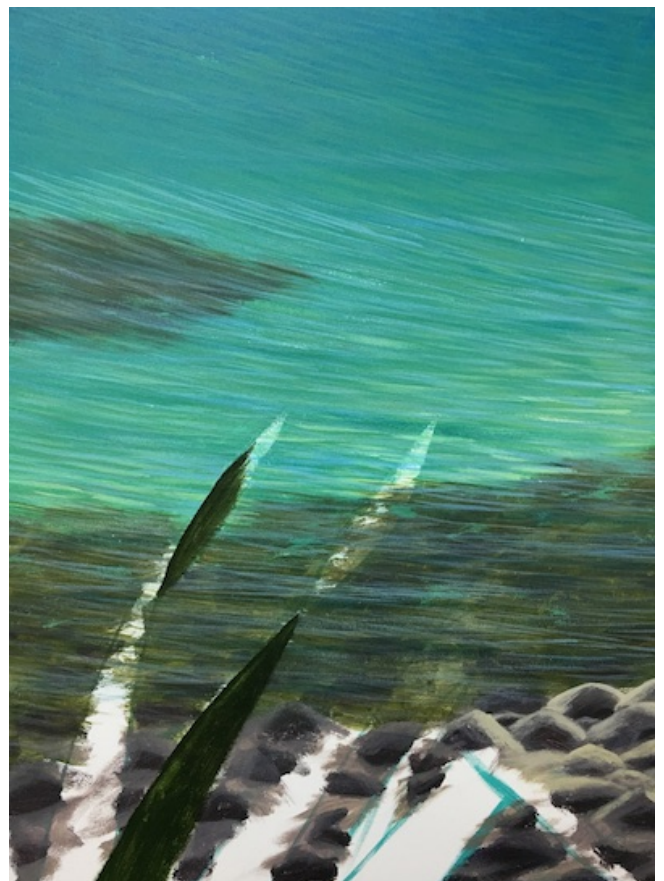
TIP: If you have a system for pandanus

they won't tend to beat you up as much.

TIP: If you're stuck with the way these leaves travel and twist, find a line and follow it!

RULE OF THREE - an aside

From Mark: "For me, my OCD-ness represents itself in an inability to paint a transition without at least three incremental shifts in hue or tone.

The value in this process is that is forces me to look at the object that I'm painting in a series of shifts in hue or tone. It helps me to dissect an element in the image into areas of dark and light, warm to cool, etc. Being able to distil the subject into three areas in this way, allows a complicated subject to be more easily managed mentally. And allows a process to be formed. That rule of three when applied practically, and the colours pushed and pulled together, delivers a surprisingly effective result.

This rule of three, while very effective and efficient (and of course nice and simple) is obviously not the whole answer. There are always additions and subtle nuance that needs to be taken into account. The beautiful thing about the rule of three, is that if you use it as a starting place, a much more complicated image can be more easily broken down. Subtle nuance can be added once the "bones" of the rule of three have been established. These examples are just the tip of the iceberg, and I have many more applications for this rule of three that I'll dig out further down the track.

Something major to take into account with the rule of three is that there are usually three sources of light to consider too - direct light, and at least two sources of reflections. (There will usually be light coming in from somewhere else).
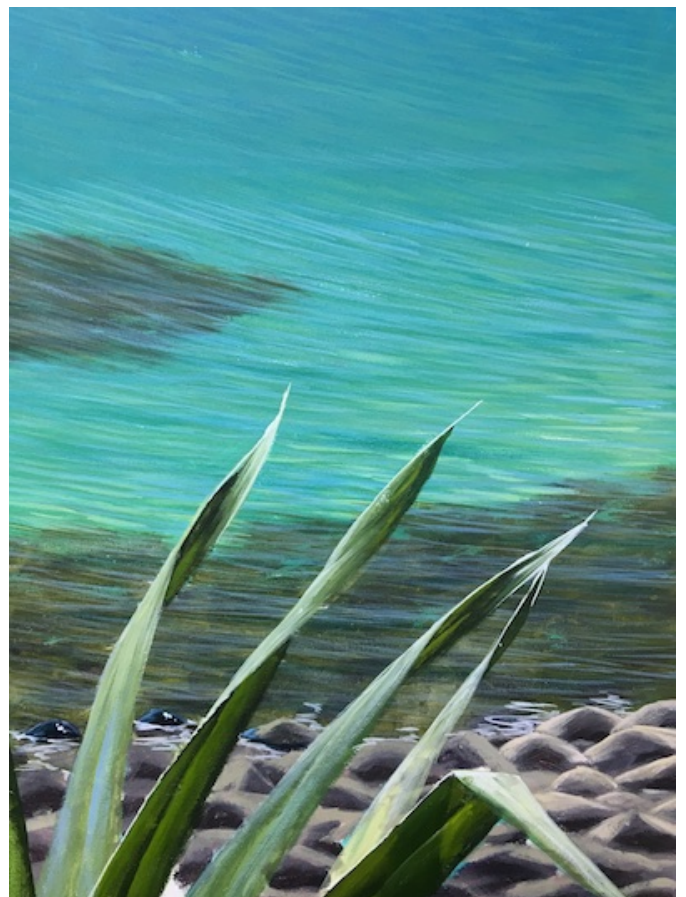
You can easily create depth and volume in anything by reflecting the light!

Create some backlit leaves using a mix of Forest Green and Cadmium Yellow Medium.

So what happens when water and rocks interact? Aeration! When the water fills with air you get that lovely sudsy stuff - use pure White (Free Flow is good) around some of the rocks. For more information on painting wet rocks check out the Youtube link at the end of the notes "Painting Wet Rocks".

Use Burnt Umber and Pthalo Blue to make wet rocks - reflect the sky on the outside edge of these wet rocks to create realism.

Some other recipes you may find useful:

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

Summer Sky:
Ultramarine Blue
Titanium White
(+ Pthalo Blue as you paint higher into the atmosphere)

Fluffy Clouds (shadows):
French Ultramarine Blue
Titanium White
Burnt Umber
(add more sky colour to create distant clouds - add more White to create highlit areas)

Tropical Water:
Cadmium Yellow Light
Pthalo Blue
Titanium White

Sand:
Cadmium Yellow Medium
Dioxazine Purple
Titanium White
(for drier sand add more Titanium White)

Shadow on Sand:
Dioxazine Purple
French Ultramarine Blue
Titanium White

Foliage/Hills:
Cadmium Yellow Medium
Dioxazine Purple
Forest Green

Spinifex Tendrils:

Burnt Umber, Thinned

Shadow Under Waves:
Burnt Umber +
Pthalo Blue (into deeper water)
(thin wash)

Whitewash:
Pthalo Blue
Burnt Umber
White

BRUSHES 101 - another aside

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 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.

TIP: Buy a brush to suit a purpose, not to solve a lack of skill problem.

For example if you know you'd like to make a long thin line, use a watercolour brush. The softer bristles will hold more paint. If you want to push a lot of thick paint around, use a firmer brush.

Start being mindful of the mark you want to make. Look at the marks that Mark is making and if yours are different, ask why!

Hold these 3 functions in your mind when practising. Be rigorous about your understanding of what your paintbrush will do.

TIP: Develop your physical skills to the point where you don't have to think anymore - so you can dance with your painting.

You need to know what your brush will do - every brush has a job. The good news is you don't need as many brushes as you think you do. AND you don't need to spend a lot of money!

Your homework!! Go out and find some images of water over rocks - then try and find holes in the information that Mark has given you today :)

THANKS SO MUCH TO ALL OF YOU FOR SUCH A GREAT WORKSHOP!

Overheard in Class:

"Never underestimate a dry brush."
"Pthalo Blue is like the chilli of paint"

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

www.explore-acrylic-painting.com/color-mixing-recipes.html
www.explore-acrylic-painting.com/ocean-landscapes.html

www.explore-acrylic-painting.com/color-mixing-guide.html

www.explore-acrylic-painting.com/gradation.html

www.explore-acrylic-painting.com/how-to-paint-water.html

www.explore-acrylic-painting.com/painting-waves.html

www.explore-acrylic-painting.com/free-painting-lessons.html

www.explore-acrylic-painting.com/brush-technique.html

www.explore-acrylic-painting.com/paintbrushes.html

www.explore-acrylic-painting.com/acrylic-glazing.html

www.explore-acrylic-painting.com/support-files/
aa013defaultsettingtropicalwater.pdf

www.explore-acrylic-painting.com/Acrylics_Anonymous-acrylics-
anonymous-019.html

www.explore-acrylic-painting.com/atelier-free-flow.html

www.explore-acrylic-painting.com/acrylic-glazing.html

www.explore-acrylic-painting.com/rock-painting.html

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

Atelier Interactive demonstration:
http://www.atelieracrylic.com/atelier-interactive-acrylic

Unlocking Formula demonstration:
http://www.atelieracrylic.com/atelier-unlocking-formula

Atelier Free Flow demonstration:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uicinMfZNy8

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 Tips - Colour Matching:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A5gzJuX8EEU

How To Paint Shadows:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lDut2Tma1QU

How To Paint Shadows on Sand:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bVrX8001Scw

Acrylic Painting Techniques - Glazing - How to Paint Water:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=spJETxwJsdk

Artist Palette set up:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=57krxyDyagY

How To Paint Tropical Water - Paint Recipes:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vH8xAeu6njY&list=UUIzzJZa8_Obui-WGHgdUnng

Painting Tips - Large Paintings:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MK78GTjBDHs

Painting Highlights on Leaves:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w7a4RGOY6TE

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