Workshop Notes

Day 1:

About Gradation:

Most things in the world are made up of gradations of colour. Tone and hue gradate on every surface you see. Everywhere you look you will see gradation (well, you will now!). Mastering gradation of colour is perhaps THE most fundamental skill you can master. Gradation is your FOUNDATION skill. Everything else is texture and build (loosely speaking!). This painting is built around two large gradations.

Set Up Your Palette:

Set yourself up properly to remove “obstacles”. Your palette is for working stuff out on! Not your canvas! It is your workspace. Dish up more paint than you think you’ll need. 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. Managing your palette is particularly important when doing large gradations of colour.

Dish up your paints so that you have your widest paintbrush width between each colour to avoid contaminating your colours with others.

ATELIER INTERACTIVE

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 tends to dry reasonably
evenly all over. This means if you dish up a lot of paint, it is actually more economically efficient than dishing out a tiny pea-sized amount.

Mark also went into **HOW** to use Atelier Interactive to it's best ability - and set yourself up to have a "safety net". i.e use the Universal Medium to "lock" your painting in, and use the Unlocking Formula to "re-open" your Atelier Interactive. Check the links at the end of the notes for the video demonstrations on how to use these products. Adding water to your paint gives you another 10 minutes drying time, it's the same with Unlocking Formula (it will give you another 10 minutes drying time).

Unlocking Formula allows you to "erase" parts of your painting that you’re not happy with (as long as you've "locked" your previous layers in with Universal Medium first).

**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.

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.

**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

**So, let's paint:**

On our “exercise canvas”, we mixed some White, French Ultramarine Blue, Dioxazine Purple and a tiny tiny spot of Cadmium Yellow Medium on our palette, and then painted a blobby pale shape (cloud shadows) in the bottom left hand corner.

We then used our Summer Sky recipe to paint the sky, starting with French Ultramarine Blue and White close to the horizon, adding more French Ultramarine Blue and White coming up the canvas, and eventually adding Pthalo Blue towards the top.

We added highlights to our “blobby pale shapes” to create clouds along the horizon, and dragged a dry brush with White, to create “wispy, upper level” clouds, and hide any imperfections in our sky gradation. This also added interest and gave the painting movement.

We then painted some foreground clouds, starting with the shadows and using a mix
of Burnt Umber and French Ultramarine Blue, and as the clouds diminished into the distance, we added more sky colour to this initial "shadow" colour. The further away the object, the more sky colour was added.

An aside - 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!

How do we know what colour the cellophane is? We establish the light. We also discussed that water is exactly the same ie the more water/particles between us and what we’re looking at, the more the colour of the object will be affected.

So how do we decide what is the right "colour" for the light. I did a simple demonstration showing how the colour spectrum demonstrates the different times of the day. For a bit more explanation on this, see our Youtube clip at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XdaWQW3ID4Q

Ok, so back to cloud shadows. We added some White to the original cloud shadow colour, and painted highlights using a cross-hatch technique above our shadow. As before, we added more sky colour, and smaller and less distinct brush marks as the clouds receded off into the distance.

We repeated this process several times, until we were using almost pure White. A soft touch and cross-hatch motion is necessary here. No hovering blobs of doom.

We mixed Forest Green, Dioxazine Purple and Cadmium Yellow Medium and painted trees and shrubs at the bottom of our exercise canvas. We then grabbed Burnt Umber and a fine brush, and painted some trunks. We went
back to our original mix above, and using the tip of our brush, suggested fronds of a coconut tree. No hairy propellers!!

We added some Cadmium Yellow Medium to this mix and added highlights to both the coconut trees and shrubs beneath, keeping in mind the direction the light was coming from.

We repeated this process a couple of times to build depth.

We mixed a tiny bit of Cadmium Yellow Light and White to paint some highlights on the coconut trees, and we used a liner to make a line in the same colour down one side of the coconut tree to suggest the sun hitting it.

When that was dry we grabbed some White and pushed it up into the green to create the impression of white sandy tracks disappearing up into the foliage. This is our lovely tropical beach.

We mixed French Ultramarine Blue and Dioxazine Purple and White, and painted the shadows of the coconut trees on the sand, and shadows under the shrubs on the beach.

Now we went to our big blank canvas, and drew a line horizontally just above the centre.

We repeated that whole exercise again, above the line. This time, not making the mistakes that were made in the previous exercise!

**Day 2**

We grabbed another exercise canvas, and using our Tropical Water recipe and our gradation techniques from Day 1, painted a gradation down our canvas, beginning with a lovely turquoise mix of Pthalo Blue, Cadmium Yellow
Light and White at the top, and gradually adding more Cadmium Yellow Light and White as we painted down the canvas.

Once we did that we worked on our refraction technique.

REFRACTION

The next part of this process is to represent the refraction of light on the substrate. This is not an easy thing, however a technique I have developed makes it easier. You need to allow your brush to be controlled in an uncontrolled way. We used the same Tropical Water paint recipe colours, however remembered to use a shallower colour for this refraction than the background colour it was applied to. This is actually a gradation exercise too, in a way (as you'll need to adjust this colour going up and down the canvas).

Grab a small chisel brush size 4 or 6 and load it with paint. Roll your brush between your fingers whilst pushing it backwards and forwards horizontally across the surface of the canvas, creating extremely loose & wobbly diamond-ish shapes. Allow the brush to make its own way, to a certain extent.

TIP: Move from your shoulder and just move your fingertips. If your brush goes flying across the room a few times when you're doing this technique, you're probably holding it with the right amount of pressure.

This represents the light which is refracted by the surface of the water, down onto the substrate. Be aware that if you wish to create the illusion of distance then you must adjust the size of the "openings" as they recede into the distance.

I briefly explained the elements that make up the appearance of water:

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**

I then demonstrated the appearance of the surface of the water.

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.

REFLECTIONS RELATING TO WATER

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.

We grabbed our large painting canvas that we began on Day 1, and using the Tropical Water recipe colours, painted an undulating band under the island and in front of the sky, and gradated down from there, repeating the process and getting lighter as per the previous Tropical Water gradation exercise.

We put that out to dry and when it was dry, worked out how to paint the surface of the water using the demonstration from earlier.

We decided which “sections” of that undulating band were above the water, and to those added Summer Sky colour to the Tropical Water paint recipe, those further away had more Summer Sky colour added to create the illusion of distance.

We strategically added some of the “green island foliage” colour to the places in the “undulations” which we think would reflect those colours.

Finally we mixed a thin White, and painted a thin line separating above the water from beneath the water. This line represents the surface of the water pushing up against the lens (or your eyeball).
We didn’t take too much time to do this as the surface of the water was a small part of the painting and as such did not require so much detail.

We then grabbed a dry brush & White paint, and gently painted in some rays, keeping in mind the direction of the shadows on the sand.

We painted the coral next. We mixed the “coral shadow” colour which was Burnt Umber, Pthal Blue and White. We created some bigger shapes in the foreground, and as the coral receded into the distance, we added the tropical water colour to this mix - remember everything is covered in cellophane.

We continued this process until the patches of coral were almost indistinguishable from the background water colour.

We then mixed some bright coral colours for the foreground, yellows, reds, pinks etc, and applied each of them in the same way; adding the tropical water colour to them the further into the distance.

Closer to us we used the shallow tropical water colour, and the further away the coral was, the deeper the tropical water colour we added to the coral colour. We also used a softer brush stroke with less paint to suggest distance.

Then we came back and added refraction to the patches of sand and coral in the foreground, and diminished that as it receded into the distance. We used a flatter stroke for the refraction on the sand, and moved our brush in a more “round” manner to follow the contours of the coral for the refraction on the coral. We then used a smaller brush and pure colour (reds, yellows, bright blues etc) and created flecks of colour representing tropical fish. Go bright or go home.

When our fish were dry, we added a few more rays to put them “in” the picture and not “on” it, and finally for this people using the practise canvas for this exercise, repeated the entire process on the

Thanks so much to all you wonderful people in the Central Coast!!!

For those of you interested in the upcoming Fiji workshop, for more information go to:


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
www.explore-acrylic-painting.com/how-to-paint-water.html
www.explore-acrylic-painting.com/painting-waves.html
www.explore-acrylic-painting.com/gradation.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/shadow-painting.html
www.explore-acrylic-painting.com/sunset-painting.html
www.explore-acrylic-painting.com/skyscapes.html
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):

Painting The Right Light:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XdaWQW3ID4Q

Create Distance In Your Paintings | Atmospheric Perspective:
Brush Technique:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=icWYYJHJFVc

Painting Waves - Dry Brush Technique:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v:bgNhoede9Al

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=lDut2Tma1QU

Painting Waves - Perspective in Whitewash:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TDvlwo_e9Jl

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_JSb9iJVV

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
How To Paint Wet Rocks:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y4qv1uzfW7E

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