

tropical beach(e)scapes

Newcastle April 2015

Workshop Notes

Day 1:

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.

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.

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

If you're using Atelier Interactive, these are the colours to set up on your palette, from left to right:

- Burnt Umber
- Dioxazine Purple
- French Ultramarine Blue (warm blue)
- Pthalo Blue (cool blue)
- Forest Green
- Cadmium Yellow Medium (warm yellow)
- Cadmium Yellow Light (cool yellow)
- Naphthol Red Light (warm red)
- Permanent Alizarine (cool red)
- Titanium White

Our job as artists:

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.

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.

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!).

Exercise: Sunset Gradation

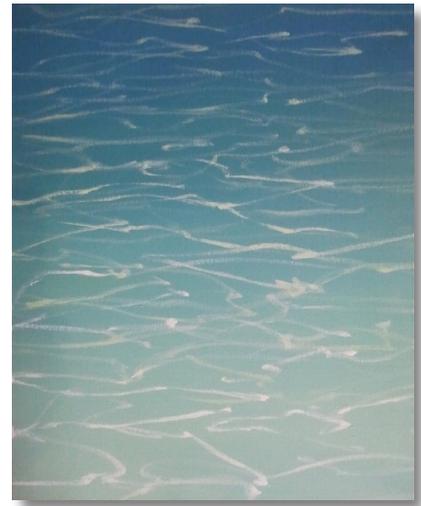
We dished out Pthalo Blue, Cadmium Yellow Light, Permanent Alizarine and White, and using a largish brush, mixed Pthalo Blue with a little bit of Permanent Alizarine and White, to make a bluey-purple colour. We applied this colour in loose "open" marks in the top right hand corner. We then mixed Permanent Alizarine with a little bit of Pthalo Blue, and filled in the gaps. Using the brush like a "shovel", we pushed paint into the canvas forcefully, using a cross-hatch technique. We then softened our touch to get a more gentle spread, and then used a very very soft touch, and just the tip just to soften and reduce the brush marks.



We then cleaned our brush of the previous mix, and mixed a paler, warmer colour using more Permanent Alizarine and adding a touch of Cadmium Yellow Light.

NOTE: If it goes green, there is still Pthalo Blue on your brush.

We applied that colour in a cross-hatch fashion and blended the colours together. We continued across the canvas, adding more Cadmium Yellow Light and White, and diminishing the Permanent Alizarine. Eventually we applied White, neat, and softened it to create the illusion of the sun dropping below the horizon.



This exercise was designed to discover more efficient ways of blending acrylics. We discussed mixing up enough paint, to make sure that we could cover the surface adequately. We also discussed applying lots of paint, so that the paint could do what it is supposed to do. Some of us added too much water, and thinned our paint so that there were “holes” in our gradation. We discussed the value of using plenty of paint and mixing the paint on the palette in order to get it right before we made a mark on the canvas.

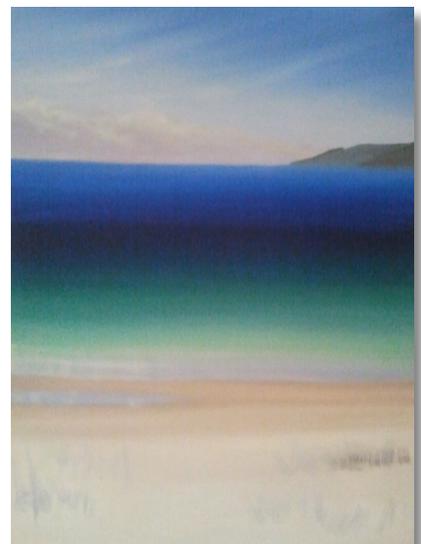
Exercise - Gradations

Using our Tropical Water paint recipe we painted a gradation from darker water to light down the canvas.

We grabbed another canvas and did another gradation of colour (top third of the canvas) as a Summer Sky.

(Paint recipes available further along in the notes).

On this canvas we then painted in the horizon using a mixture of Pthalo Blue, French Ultramarine Blue and White. The French Ultramarine Blue was there to suggest a reflection of the sky. We blended down, eliminating the French Ultramarine Blue, gradually using neat Pthalo Blue.

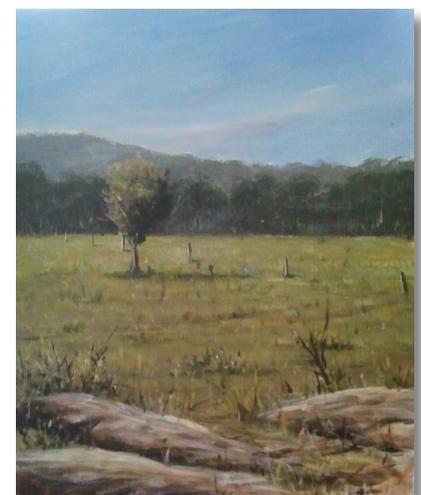


We continued down the canvas, adding Cadmium Yellow Light to our Pthalo Blue, and White, adding more Cadmium Yellow Light and White to eventually end up with shallow water. The last part of this gradation was a band of French Ultramarine Blue and White, suggesting that we had reflected the sky.

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!

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**

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:

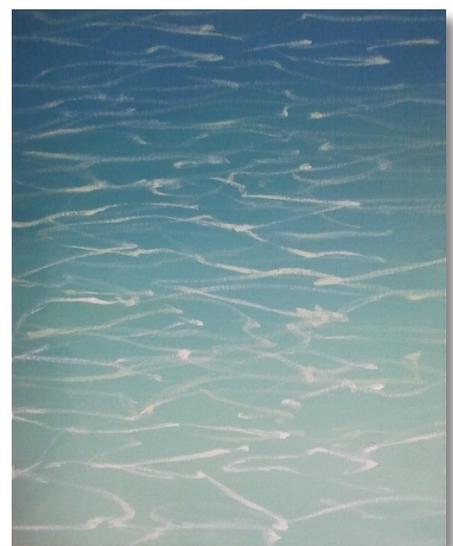
- **What is the substrate?**
- **What is the colour of the water?**
- **How much of the light is reflected on the surface?**

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

Exercise - Tropical Water - 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'll use the same Tropical Water paint recipe colours, however always remember to use a shallower colour for this refraction than the background colour you're applying it 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).

Using the canvas painted with the Tropical Water gradation, 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.

Exercise - Beachscape - Sand

Going back to our beachscape canvas, we painted sand using a mix of Titanium White, Cadmium Yellow Medium and a tiny amount of Dioxazine Purple. Start with White and add tiny increments of colour.

We applied this colour in a band below the sky reflected in the wet sand.

We then added more White to this mix, and painted another band below that to suggest slightly drier sand. The remainder of the canvas was painted neat White.

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.

Exercise - Brush Technique

We spent some time with a blank canvas, investigating these elements.

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

Day 2:

We started a conversation about the next elements - the surface of the water and the light.

Using the sunset painting from Day 1, I painted trees and gradated them from cool to warm as I got closer to the light source. I also reflected the sky and the trees in the water. We discussed how in low light conditions, the appearance of the substrate disappears, and the colour of the water also disappears. We are left with only the surface of the water and the light. As the sun travels higher in the sky, and our viewpoint also travels higher in the sky, we tend to see more of the substrate, and more of the colour of the water.

I also demonstrated a streetscape with wet roads to show again, how these principles can be applied to anything that's wet.

We went back to our beachscape, and formed sand dunes using the grass technique we practised the day before. We shaped the sand dunes, and left a path. We then got some thinned Burnt Umber and a small brush, and suggested the grassy tendrils that spread along the beach. We used a similar technique to the refraction we did yesterday.

We're ready now to look at the surface of the 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).

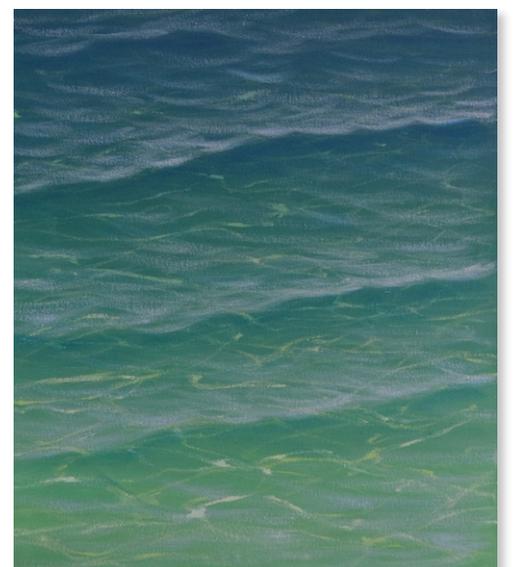
Imagine a bendy mirror, what will happen if you fold the corners in? The image will be distorted vertically. When you understand how the mirror has been shaped, then you can understand what it's going to do to the reflection.

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.

Anatomy of a Wave:

What is a wave? A lump of water = "deeper water colour" if you are looking through the face of a wave in deeper water. Think of waves as windows and mirrors. The back of waves reflect sky (mirrors) and you can see through the front of the wave (windows). Water isn't "perfect", you can get away with a lot in your painting because of this.

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



We went back to our beachscape painting and looked at how this applied. We decided that in our painting the waves were quite small, so some very thin Pthalo Blue, and soft long lines in the shallow water was enough to create the waves (lumps of water). We then mixed up some French Ultramarine Blue and White and painted that on the backs of the waves.

A few strategic white lines to suggest small breaking waves, and some reflections in the wet sand from the clouds, and our beach is done.

TIP: Dry brush down, damp brush across

We grabbed our thin Burnt Umber and painted some posts leading down to the beach. We painted neat White on the side of the posts directly exposed to the sun. We then mixed Dioxazine Purple, Pthalo Blue and the tiniest touch of Cadmium Yellow Medium and painted the shadows on the sand.

We painted the shadows to suggest there were footprints and undulations in the sand. In other words, a lumpy undulating line with varying thick and thin points.

For each shadow that was further away, we added a touch more White and French Ultramarine Blue to suggest atmospheric perspective.

Then we used our Burnt Umber again, and using a similar technique to the refraction pattern, created the branches of a small casuarina tree in the sand dunes. We then used our Trees and Foliage paint recipe mix to paint the leaves on the casuarina, in a similar way we painted the grass on the dunes, ie thinned paint, but not much on the brush. We then finished off with a flash of the sand shadow colour underneath the casuarina tree. And done.

A quick note on using mediums rather than water to thin your paint. Acrylic paint is basically coloured grit suspended in glue. If you use water to “break down” your pigment, you will start to break down the glue, and you may end up with patchy results. If you use a dedicated [medium](#) like Fast Medium & Fixer or Glazing Liquid, the pigment is then suspended in a layer of plastic, meaning your paintings end up more luminous (as light travels through the “plastic” down to the layer of pigment, and back through the “plastic” before it hits your eye. Lovely luminosity.

Thanks everyone for a sensational weekend!
Special thanks to Pat and her family for all their work in
facilitating this workshop!

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/color-mixing-guide.html

www.explore-acrylic-painting.com/perspective-in-painting.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/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/how-to-paint-clouds.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/support-files/aa013defaultsettingtropicalwater.pdf
www.explore-acrylic-painting.com/support-files/AA007SSDefaultSettings.pdf
www.explore-acrylic-painting.com/support-files/default-settings-trees.pdf
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

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

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>