

Beachscapes* | *a spotlight on pandanus

11th - 12th July 2015 - Sunshine Coast

Workshop Notes

Day 1.

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. We only used Dioxazine Purple at this point, BUT this is how Mark sets up his palette:

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

We took some thinned Dioxazine Purple on a small brush, and a blank canvas, and started drawing out the shapes of pandanus leaves.

This was our warm up.



Mark introduced the concept of using Paint Recipes, the 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

Then we grabbed another canvas, and did a gradation of colour using our Paint Recipe for Tropical Water.

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!).

We started at the top of the canvas with a lovely turquoise colour, gradually blending into a shallower water colour (adding more Cadmium Yellow Light and White) as we painted down the canvas. We painted each "section" of colour in a band, blending them together with a cross-hatch technique, and then softening the transition further with a clean brush and a soft touch. We made sure that we left the colours that we were painting in separate patches down our palette, for use later on, and also to judge that we were making the correct incremental tonal and hue changes.



We put this canvas aside and talked about the 3 fundamental concepts needed to make a great painting, with a particular focus on our perception skills:

3 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.

We looked into the garden where there were conveniently a couple of pandanus trees! Firstly we observed the way the sunlight hit the leaves directly. We then looked for the leaves in shadow, to observe how the blue sky was reflected on certain parts. We next studied the effect that sunlight made on the leaves when it shone through them.

We started then to look even more closely, and discovered that light was bouncing up, off the grass and was reflecting on the underside of the

branches and leaves. We discussed how this was amplified when the light was bouncing off something like sand.

We grabbed our "finished painting" blank canvas, and using the skills we practised in our first exercise, drew in our tree, our horizon, branches etc using thinned Dioxazine Purple.

We then blocked in our painting. We mixed our Foliage Paint Recipe colours and blocked in our leaves. We then mixed Burnt Umber and Dioxazine Purple and blocked in our branches. We mixed our Summer Sky Paint Recipe and blocked in our sky. We mixed French Ultramarine Blue, Pthalo Blue and White and painted the horizon in. We then painted a band of Pthalo Blue under that to represent the deep water, and did a gradation into the shallower water using our Tropical Water Paint Recipe from earlier. We painted a band of French Ultramarine Blue at the waters edge to represent the sky reflected in the wet sand, and then mixed our Damp Sand Paint Recipe in a band underneath that, and then added a pile of White in another band underneath that to represent drier sand, and a band of almost pure White under that to represent the dry sand. We did all of this around our trees.



We stood back and had a look at the colours we had made, and began the process of judging whether or not a) we had made shapes we were happy with, b) not committed too many compositional sins c) got our colours reasonably correct.

Because this is the roughing in part, everything is moveable. Our judgements are dispassionate, knowing we can change them any time.

We went back to our first gradation exercise, and added the refraction. For this exercise 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).

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.

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.

Day 2.

We need to think about the processes of making our painting. A tradesman will sequence a job to make the process more efficient. We can do the same thing. Stop and think, and plan, before you make your next move.

Looking at our painting project, we have a large gradation, representing the sky that blends with the horizon. We have 3 problems:

1. Creating a convincing horizon/sky blend.
2. Creating a convincing sky.
3. Doing that while keeping the paint workable, so that we can still blend.

The solution? Sequencing the "job". We mix up our Sky colour low to the horizon (ie no Pthalo Blue) and mix plenty of it. We mix up our horizon colour (Pthalo Blue, French Ultramarine Blue and White). When we blocked in yesterday, we may or may not have been happy with either of these two colours. Now is the time to make an adjustment if needed (lighter, darker, bluer etc).

We need to spend an appropriate amount of time getting our horizon right. Most people, even with the poorest observational skills will notice when it isn't. They may not be aware of it, however they'll just know something's wrong. Take your time, paint the water at the horizon, paint the low sky colour, straighten both of these, and blend them ever so softly together. You need a "slightly indistinct" straight, reasonably strong line. Once that's done, we go back to our low sky colour and began the process of painting our sky, blending up. Remember Atelier Interactive stays mobile for longer, if you put lots of paint out. You can extend the drying time by wetting it or by adding Unlocking Formula in a pinch.

We go back - we loaded our brush with the horizon colour, and pushed it down from our horizon. We added Pthalo Blue and repeated our blending process from the previous day, making adjustments as we went if necessary.

Water, sand, waves etc; all painted in with a good solid coat of paint. We let this dry over lunch.

We came back now with pure white, and established our whitewash. We then mixed some Sky colour and painted in the flat spots between the waves.

TIP: If you want to flatten water, reflect the sky. If you want a wave, don't reflect the sky.

We placed a line of shallower water colour in the faces of the waves to create the illusion of transparency. We mixed thinned Burnt Umber and painted a thin line at the base of the unbroken waves. This also compounds the illusion of depth.

We then mixed some Burnt Umber, Pthalo Blue and White, and painted the shadows in the whitewash. Whitewash has volume, and stops light. Therefore, it has shadows.

We now added a pile of White and French Ultramarine Blue to that, and painted paler shadows above the previous shadow colour. We then came back and used pure White to represent the sunlight hitting the higher parts of the whitewash. We also used this White and a small brush, to paint the lips on the waves, then grabbed a slightly bigger brush, and painted the reflections in the water in front of the whitewash.

TIP: Dry brush down, damp brush across

We used this process to create reflections in the wet sand as well.

Now to move on to the tree.

We re-established our leaves using our Foliage Paint Recipe, and then let the painting dry.

We looked at our painting, and discovered which parts of our leaves and branches would be reflecting the sky. Those with surfaces facing towards the sky are more likely to reflect the Sky colour, and this was painted in, being sensitive to the shapes of both the leaves and branches. A brushstroke that curved and followed the natural contours of the branches, creates the illusion of the "banding" that occurs in pandanus tree branches.

We then looked at the undersides of the leaves, and decided that the sand colour would be reflected on them. We mixed our Foliage Paint Recipe colour, adding some Cadmium Yellow Medium and a little bit of White, and a touch more Dioxazine Purple to warm it up a bit, and shaped the areas on

the underside of the leaves that were reflecting the light from the sand. This process often needs to be repeated with incremental layering using a lighter colour each time.

Leaving the leaves (ha!) for now, we moved onto the branches. We mixed Burnt Umber and Cadmium Yellow Medium and shaped the undersides of the branches. This represents the light from the sand reflecting onto the underside of the branches. Branches pushing away from you will reflect more sky and less of the sand colour. A branch that comes towards you (and goes over your viewpoint) will present more of the underside of the branch, and reflect more of the sand colour.

We looked at the ends of the leaves "killed them" by painting them with Burnt Umber. This represented the dead ends of the leaves. We also noticed that in the transition from the dead area to the "live" area, there is often some colour. This can sometimes be from an orange against the dead part, into yellows as the leaf dies. This is where we can add flashes of colour and warm up, and add interest to our painting. Don't forget to add highlights and reflections to these areas too.

Now that we have established the reflected light, and the shapes of the leaves, it's now time to represent the leaves that are hit directly by sun. White and a tiny touch of Cadmium Yellow Light, and the tiniest hint of Forest Green, began the process of highlit leaves. We added White to this colour to build up the highs on these leaves, eventually using pure White.

Some of these leaves are lit from behind. We are seeing the light through the leaf, which affects the colour. Forest Green and Cadmium Yellow Medium are perfect for these "backlit" leaves. We established the patches that were backlit, and sculpted the shapes of the leaves by adding more Cadmium Yellow Medium to the areas which were attracting more sunlight. This also added to the suggestion of "shape" in the leaves. Backlit leaves - Cadmium Yellow Medium and Forest Green, and leaves hit directly by the sun - Cadmium Yellow Light and White (plus a tiny bit of Forest Green).

TIP: When painting leaves that are backlit, there is often a very stark white highlit edge.

The rest of the day was spent with Mark demonstrating some of the finishing off points including holes in the leaves, and scratches in both the leaves and trunks. Check out the Youtube clip below about painting highlights on leaves.

Bam! Voila.

Thanks to everyone for a wonderful time on the Sunny Coast!

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
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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):

Painting Highlights on Leaves:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w7a4RGOY6TE>

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>