



What You Will Need

For this project we will use just 4 brushes. A 1" Flat, 1/4" Flat, Rigger, and 1/2" bristle.

The colors we will use are French Ultramarine, Permanent Alizarin Crimson, Indian Yellow (or Quinacridone Gold)

We will also use some White Gouache, Burnt Sienna Ink and Masking Tape.



French Ultramarine
Permanent Alizarin Crimson
Indian Yellow (or Quinacridone Gold)



Our Subject

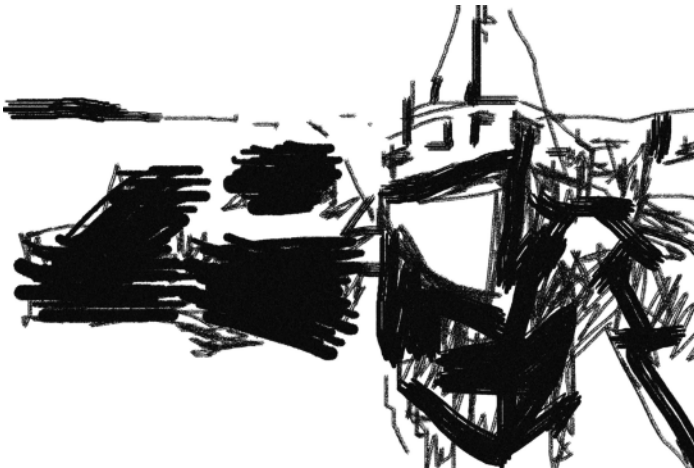
These old trawlers waiting to head out to sea make a great subject. At first glance it seems complex and detailed, but we are going to use a technique that makes it easy to overcome the complexity and get the initial, underlying drawing correct.

The biggest problem when drawing a complicated subject is falling into the trap of drawing what you think is there, not what you actually see. To overcome this problem we are going to eliminate all detail and reduce our subject to a few simple shapes.



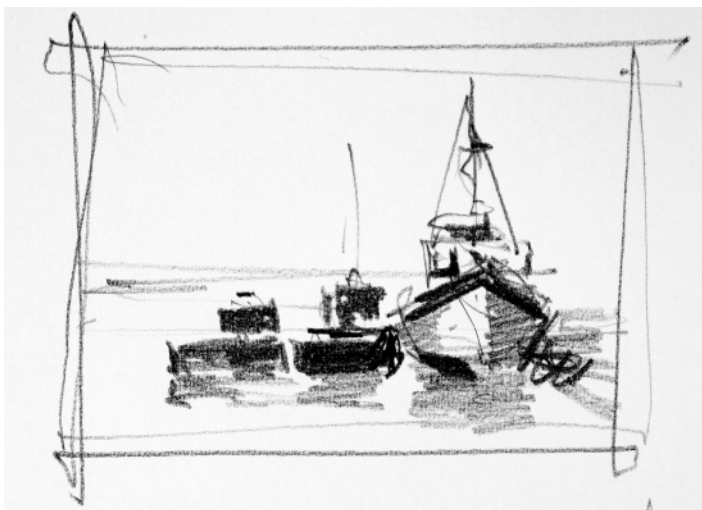
Seeing the Main Shapes

Rather than carefully studying the subject we are going to squint and blur our eyes, ignore any color and just notice the major light and dark shapes. We are not going to draw boats, masts, windows or rigging, we are simply going to carefully copy some abstract shapes.



Draw What You See

It is a simple matter then, to draw these shapes without any consideration as to what they are. Accurately copying these abstract marks gives us the correct underlying structure for our painting. Once these shapes are embellished with color and detail our painting will appear correct and convincing.



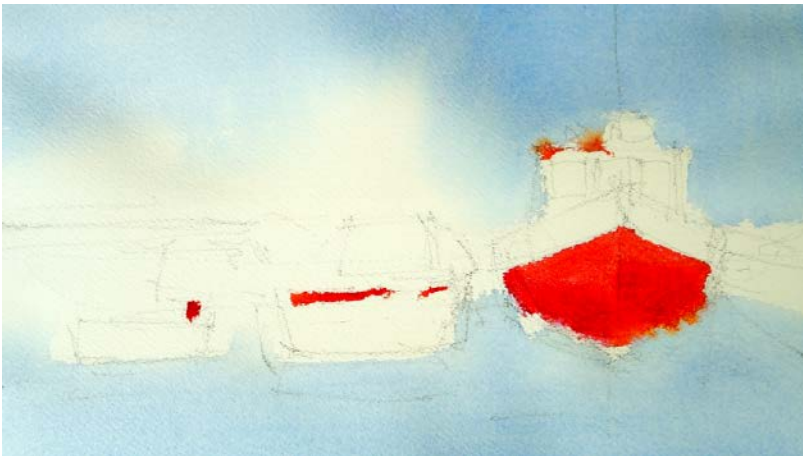
Thumbnail Sketches

Roughly sketching our basic shapes into small thumbnail sketches allows us to make a decision on how our subject should be placed within the rectangle of the painting. I prefer the arrangement on the right with the subject lower in the painting, but either option would work.



Sky and Water

The first step is to draw our basic shapes lightly onto our watercolor paper with a charcoal pencil. Try not to draw boats, just the simplified blurred shapes you see. We will then wet the sky and put on a pure Ultramarine Blue wash, leaving a patch of light behind the boats on the left. Once the sky is applied the water can be treated in the same way.



Red Marks

Let the Ultramarine washes dry then, with a clean brush, mix some Alizarin Crimson and Indian Yellow to make a warm red. Put this onto the main hull, darkening the lower part of the hull with the addition of some pure Alizarin while everything is still wet. While we still have the red mixed up we can add a few marks to the other boats to help tie the color into the painting.



Dark Shapes

Now it's time to start building up the dark shapes. To get this strong dark mix the three colors together with very little water. Don't rinse your brush between colors and squeeze out plenty of paint. Put the dark marks on then use a clean damp brush to soften some of the edges – particularly where the dark sit in the water.

Pure Ultramarine

We will build up our dark shapes with some pure Ultramarine Blue worked into the two right hand boats. Put in a couple of patches of pure Indian Yellow to add impact to the focal point, then mix up a cool Grey for the upper area of the end boat. Drop some Alizarin into the cabin of the end boat while the Grey shape is still wet. The jetty wall on the far right can be washed in with the same Grey warmed up with some Indian Yellow.

Notice how there are patches of white paper left scattered through the main focal area. These patches can be easily eliminated if necessary, but they are great to have if areas of high contrast detail are needed.



Build up the reflections with another mixture of cool Blue/Grey made from our three colors. Paint the reflections in horizontal zig zags then, with a clean damp brush, soften and draw out the shapes in a horizontal direction.



Headland and Detail

The distant headland is a mauve mixture of the three colors (not much yellow) Put the shape on then feather out the edges with a clean damp brush. I used a clean 1 flat brush to lift pigment out of the bottom of the shape and establish a horizontal line where it sits on the water.

We can start to build up some detail now with our 1/4 flat brush and rigger brush. Railings, cabin and hull details, masts and rigging can all be suggested



Graded Side Wash

Let your painting dry thoroughly then, with a watery cool blue/Grey mixed from the three colors, wash over the sky and water on the left hand side. As soon as the wash is applied, rinse your brush clean, dry it slightly, then soften out the edge of the wash. You may have to wash out the brush and repeat the process a few times to make the edge of the wash disappear completely.



Lift Out Float

The round float beside the red boat is a great contrasting shape in the focal point, so we will lift pigment out of this area through a clean round hole cut in a piece of masking tape. Once the pigment has been removed with a bristle brush and paper towel, dark rock shapes can be added to the wall behind the float to provide more contrast. When the dark rock shapes dry a wash of alizarin can be put over the float.



Lift Out Ultramarine

We can also lift a couple of white shapes out of the Ultramarine cabin on the middle boat. This will break up the large blue area and suggest fish boxes or gas cylinders on the boat.



Burnt Sienna Ink

The next step is to thread some Burnt Sienna ink lines through the painting. Putting these lines on then quickly spraying them with a light mist of water adds to the weathered, rusty patina of these old boats.

Once the ink dries it cannot be removed, so have a piece of paper towel handy to blot up any blobs or splatters you don't like.



White Gouache

Now is the time to sharpen up some of the detail with your rigger brush and some white gouache. Railing details, hull markings, pieces of rope can all be suggested with some fine white lines.



Darken Sky, Strengthen Reflections

We will add some more strength to the reflections with a cool blue/Grey mixed from our three colors. We can use the same color to darken the sky on the right hand side of the red boat. Apply the wash then quickly wash out your brush, dry it slightly and soften the edge. This softening process may have to be repeated to make the edge completely disappear.



Graded Ultramarine Sky Wash

The final step is to let the painting dry again then run a graded wash of pure Ultramarine Blue across the top of the sky. This will help hold the eye in the area of the focal point.

Optional Subjects

After you have completed this painting you might like to practice simplifying and drawing complicated subjects using the techniques you have learned. The photographs below increase in complexity, allowing you to work your way up to the final image. Click on the photos to enlarge them before printing them out.



