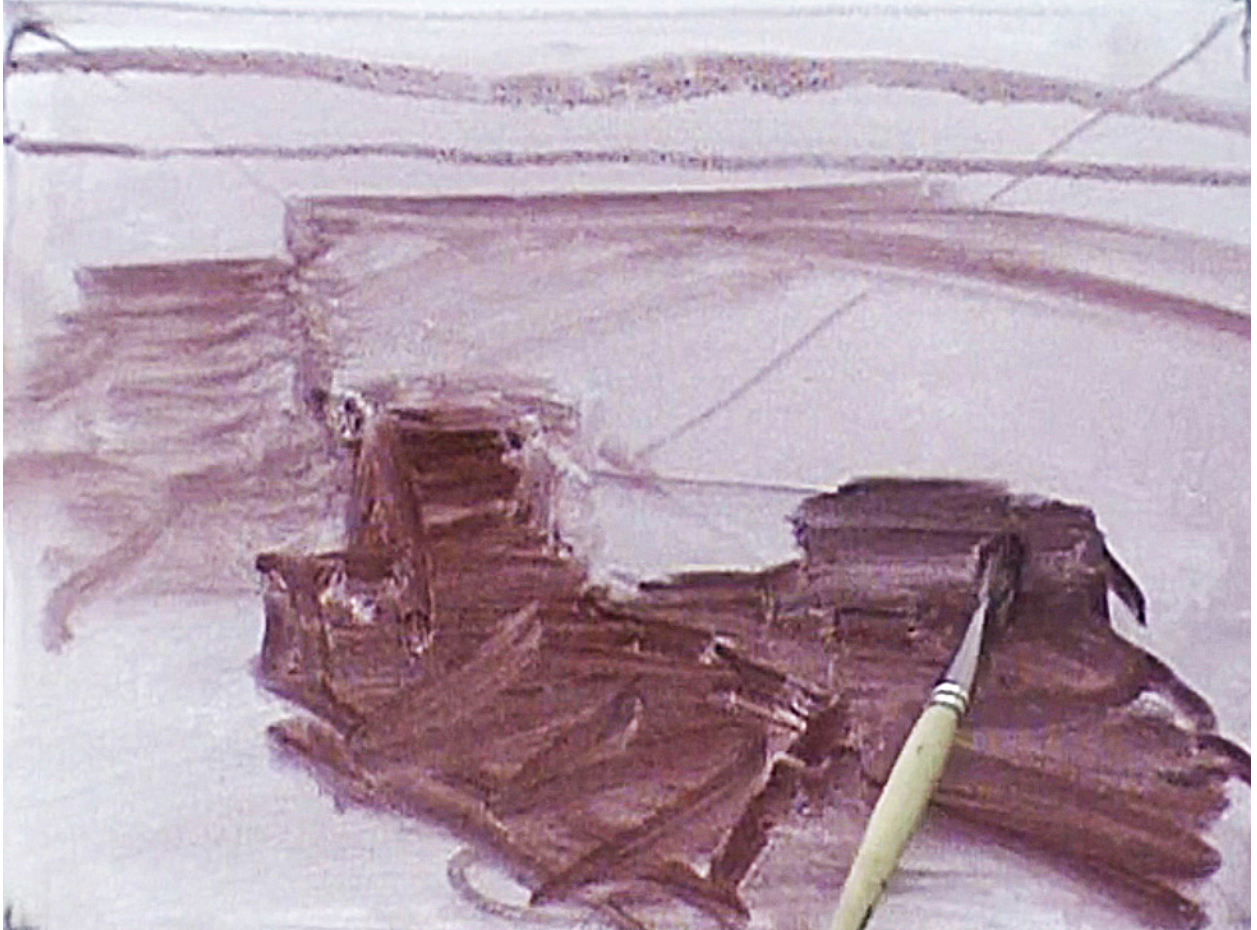


STAGES OF A PAINTING

By Phil Starke

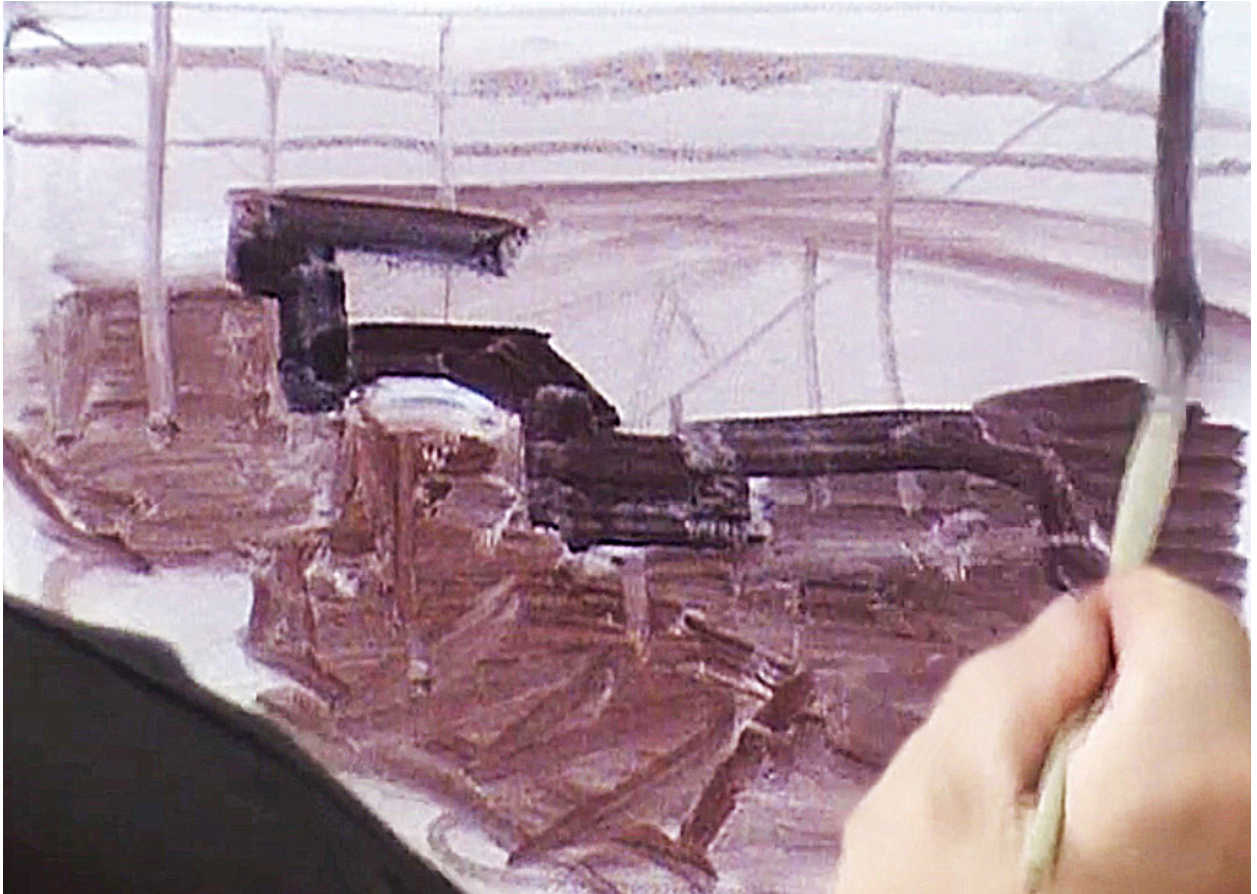


The goal of this demonstration is to take a more complicated subject matter and reduce it to simple terms, before blocking in color. While this reference has big, simple dark areas, and somewhat simple light areas, there's a lot of perspective and drawing involved. I'm going to break that down and make it simple to see and understand, and simple for the viewer to look at as well.

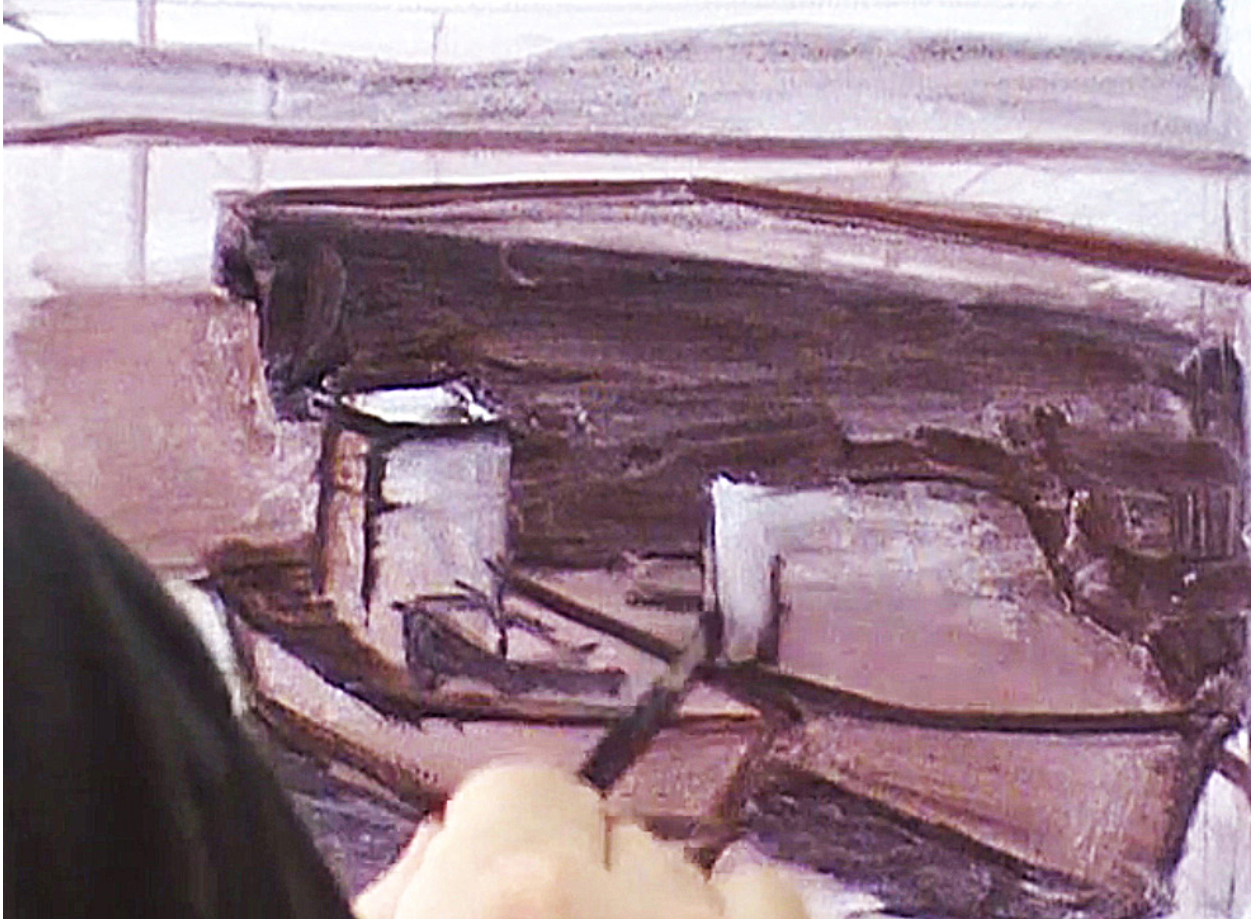


For the drawing, I first determine the center of the canvas and then where I want to place the focal point around the center of the canvas. Since I don't want the focal point in the exact center of the canvas, I want to decide which side of the center I want to place the focal point in relation to the rest of the painting. You can see where I've gone from corner to corner to determine, roughly, the center of the canvas. I have just gestured in, or roughly drawn in where I want the boats placed. I've done this lightly using turpentine, blue and red. I look at the overall shape, squinting to see the negative shape. I have gestured in the shape of the boats and the surrounding area quickly without much lifting of my brush, preventing me from outlining the boats. All I'm doing is finding volume and mass, keeping proportions correct. The technique of gesturing has allowed me to map things out without becoming too permanent, I can set the shapes up quickly and see if I need to adjust things. This gesture has taken me about a minute and I

haven't wasted a lot of time on line drawing.



The initial gesture has included the mass of the boats, the placement of the dock and the vertical lines of the masts which are important, like trees in a landscape, they break up the horizontal lines. You can see where I've gone a little darker, placing in the negative shape around the boats. I'm trying to simplify, keeping everything big, so I'm going to ignore all the little darks and lights and see the large main shapes.



I've taken a paper towel and wiped out the boat shapes so I can now begin to draw with line since I know where everything goes. It's a lot easier to draw with shapes then use line to modify the drawing. Too much detail is unnecessary because I'm going to fill it all in with large areas of color anyway, so I want to make sure I keep the drawing very simple.



At this stage, if I need to correct something, it's easy to take a paper towel and wipe out where I need to make the correction. I don't want to throw on a lot of color without separating these shapes.

I've taken a clean brush and wiped out where the vertical lines should go. There's enough dark on the canvas at this point, so I'm going to start painting the lights. I'll start by getting simple shapes of light areas on the boats without any detail.



Using white and a little yellow, I establish the lightest areas on the tops of the boats. Don't paint these areas with a small brush, use a no. 4 at least to block in the light areas. There are different angles on these boats, some planes are flat, some are slanted so there needs to be a value change within the lights.

Next I'm going to place in the darks and I've got several darks to deal with. The overall dark on the boats is white, ultramarine blue with a little orange. This gives me a cool, grayish blue which suggests the shadow. I'm keeping my paint thick so I can paint more color back into it. I'm not trying to render these areas, I'm just getting the darks and lights separated. The purpose of the initial block-in is to get everything covered with simple darks and lights, making everything look three-dimensional.



I've painted the dark area below the pier and placed some of the items on the boat in the background with the darker colors. This allows for a little breaking up of the shape of the boat. The color of the water is affected by a lot of things. If it's deep water, then the boats and sky will reflect into the water, if it's shallow, then the rocks or mud will show through and effect the water color and value. I see an orange-green color in the water, so I start with that. The ripples on the water catch the blue in the sky. I'll paint the water with very thick paint because I want to be able to paint back into it to get more color notes from all the reflections. The land mass in the background is a dark blue, but I've added a little yellow and red to mute it and create more distance.

The shadows in the water are more on the green side with a little red. So I mix a color that is slightly green with some red so the green doesn't overpower the shadow. Since I've already painted the water with thick paint, I can move the shadow color into it easily. I've also painted planking into the shadow area of the dock, breaking up that large dark area.



I've achieved depth by the colors getting lighter as they go back into the distance. Now I need to get depth within the planes of the objects close up. Subtle color changes, and subtle value changes will give me depth in these areas. I want to see reflected light in the shadows and a suggestion of detail.



I'll use orange and yellow to break up the color in the whites of the center of interest. That gives the subtle reflection of light bouncing around the hull of the boats. It warms it up just a bit, but yet stays in the shadow. As I scrub it into the shadow, it's affecting the color instead of covering it up. Everything is very subtle. The left side of the boat has to remain a little cooler, it doesn't have as much sunlight bouncing around in it.



Here the windows and other defining parts of the boats have been added. I've used a lot of color in both the shadow and light areas from the light bouncing around, and the reflected light on the the water in the darker areas. This adds to the depth of a three- dimensional object. I haven't changed the values, just added color. The boxes and gear on the boats allow for more color and value changes, adding interest. The added vertical pole on the middle boat breaks up the all white cabin. I keep checking my values, making sure they're in right relation to each other. I haven't tried to add detail to the cargo on the boats, I just wanted to suggest shapes and color.



Now you can see I've added more color. The buoy at the back of the green boat, the cargo on the boats, and the broken color of reflected light are areas I can take advantage of to put in more color. The darks under the dock have added colors too, very subtle. If I had made it black, it would look like a dark hole in the canvas, there's color even in the darkest spots. I've also added some color to the surface of the dock, but it still reads as old wood. You can also see quite a bit of color breaking up the surface of the water.



I've broken up the color in the hillsides and background water, gradually blending the background water as it moves forward in the painting. The edges in the background need to remain soft. This stage is ready for more detail. A small brush is used to add the masts, ropes, and other small details. Thick paint is used to allow painting on top of wet paint. I've ignored a lot of the detail to help simplify the composition. Notice how the ropes make a very nice directional change within the composition, adding interest.



The masts and posts now show sunlight catching their edges. Small things are being finalized like more details on the boats. Not overly detailed to make them too busy, but enough to make them read right. I've used a palette knife to knock down the thickness of the paint in the dark areas, thick paint in the darks can create glare.



In the finished painting you can see all the broken color in the different areas. Most of the reflected colors are color changes, not much value change.