

# Paint Light, Paint Bright



In the first in a series of articles, PA, **Joe Francis Dowden** considers the importance of tone in a painting and how, even using the muddiest of colours, you can create light, bright landscapes.



awaiting first two pictures or use this one to fill>

## PAINT MUDDY!

Why do colours go muddy? The answer is almost always nothing to do with colour at all, but tone. If brown colours are used when there is no tonal range in the painting, they will look dead. If there are extreme whites and darks to offset them, then they will look mature and credible. You should be able to use the dirtiest colours possible and still have a painting that shines. After all, how else would you paint mud in a glittering sunset? If you think your colours are muddy, perhaps you should look elsewhere for the real problem.

The key to success is early preparation and saving whites. The painting will jump into life at the last stage when we place the darks. Everyone wants to paint light in their landscape. Sort out tone and colour will sort itself. Don't just paint landscape, paint "brightscape". Here is how.

**Paper:** Hahnemuehle Cornwall rough.

### Tube Colours: -

French Ultramarine  
Cobalt Blue  
Burnt Sienna  
Burnt Umber  
Alizarin Crimson or Quinacridone Magenta  
Cadmium Lemon  
New Gamboge  
Naples Yellow  
Masking fluid

1

2

## 1 Composition, drawing and masking.

Choose the "aperture" shape for your painting. Mask edges firmly. Here we use a landscape format. Don't allow the paper to dictate the shape of the composition. Keep your focal or main points away from centre and avoid symmetry.

Place the horizon high in order to get the feeling of distance. The long narrow space above the horizon creates the feel of breadth and wide open space. The deep foreground gives depth. Place the horizon, mud banks and shoreline of the beach with light pencil lines using a ruler. Make some "key marks" either side of the image area so you can find the horizon again. Place the horizon very high and the beach edge above the half way line. Mask the sun's reflection with one blob in the central area and a few smaller spots around it – refer to finished image. Mask some thin bands for the long light flashes on the water. The water is completely calm, being dragged past in one unbroken sheet by the tide. Where it gets near the mud bank edges it gets ruffled as it drags past, and here it catches the sun's light where it lies below its track in the sky. The masking can dry while you start preparing your mixes.

## 2 First wash.

Mix a lot of Naples Yellow and New Gamboge in a lot of water. Wet the whole paper and paint on the mix. Make sure it is the same colour all over, like painting a wall. Let it dry.

## 3 Water & Sky – first washes.

The water and sky are going to be painted in one flat wash.

Mix plenty of mud grey colour with Cobalt Blue, Quinacridone Magenta and Burnt Sienna. Brush the colour evenly all over the sky and water area down to the shoreline of the foreground beach. I have just left some additional lights of the yellow undercoat and inside these are the original masked whites.

**4 More mud.** With the previous stage dry, wet the foreground beach area only, and apply the sky colour in streaks keeping the track of the sun's reflection clear. Once this is done, drag a few streaks of colour across the wet reflection area.

**5 Mud Texture.** Mix a watery mix of Burnt Sienna and add a little of the mix used for the mud sea/sky colour.

For the beach texture make sure the image is thoroughly dry and drag and dry brush this colour across the beach in horizontal streaks using the point of the brush for some marks and





the belly for others. I got this pattern largely from spattering horizontally across, stenciling off the water and sky area. Use a good sable brush of at least size 6. This was size 12 in the foreground and size 8 a little further away. If you are working to a smaller scale, (recommended), a 6 should do it. If you work with a synthetic brush, the colour will go miles, so protect the curtains and put a bag over your spouse.

#### 6 Darks, horizon trees and mud banks.

First, turn the board upside down. Using the mud colours, with the point of your brush, run along the horizon in a straight edged streak along the horizon line. Lighten the colour where it crosses below the sun and add Burnt Sienna. This is all much easier to do from on top than underneath. Turn the board the right way up and loosely model the tree tops in the wet wash without going back and tidying up. It is better to rely on the beauty coming from the lucidity of the brush marks than fiddled about accuracy. Get it right once and leave it alone if possible.

Drag the same colour across for mud banks leaving plenty of speckles of light showing through. Be careful to make sure the mud bank edges coincide with the flashes of sunlight in the water.

Drag a lighter mix of this colour across the beach adding a little water and Burnt Sienna where it crosses the track of the sun's reflection.

#### 7 Stones on beach.

Mix a red from Cadmium Yellow and Alizarin Crimson or Quinacridone Magenta. Mix a yellow with Cadmium Lemon. Keep these mixes separate and make an additional mix of orange out of them.

Mix an extreme dark of French Ultramarine and Burnt Umber. Paint the stones around the masked sun area in yellow and moving outwards change this to orange and then brown of Burnt Umber, and finally the dark mix of French Ultramarine and Burnt Umber. Work it wet in wet. This produces the halation effect.

Dash in the foreground stones loosely with the biggest well pointed brush you have. For the smaller ones in the distance use a smaller brush. You can spatter a few as well. Notice a

few darks are very carefully painted along the waters edge.

#### FINISHING OFF

Paint the boat hulls with the sky colour and a little more Cobalt blue. Paint the masts after carefully re-positioning the board to suit the natural sweep of your hand. Don't even attempt the masts without doing this.

When the hulls are dry, paint the dark stripes and wet the water below, letting some boat colour run down into this. Paint the mast reflection and the dark reflection under the left boat. To finish off, remove the masking.

The next article in this series will show how to get excellent light quality into any scene, how to make any landscape a brightscape.

For details of Saturday Watercolour Workshops with Joe Francis Dowden visit [www.joedowden.com](http://www.joedowden.com) or phone 01903 237096. 0788 799 8499

Workshops held at Findon - A24 five miles north of Worthing £40.00 for the day.

Joe will also be tutoring a course 'Water in Watercolour' at Broadland Arts Centre on the Norfolk Broads Friday 10th August 2007. For details visit [www.broadlandarts.co.uk](http://www.broadlandarts.co.uk) or call 01702 475361 / 01692 536486



'Brilliant Sunset over Water' Image size 21" x 14"