

# The artist

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**Hyperrealist painting methods explained**



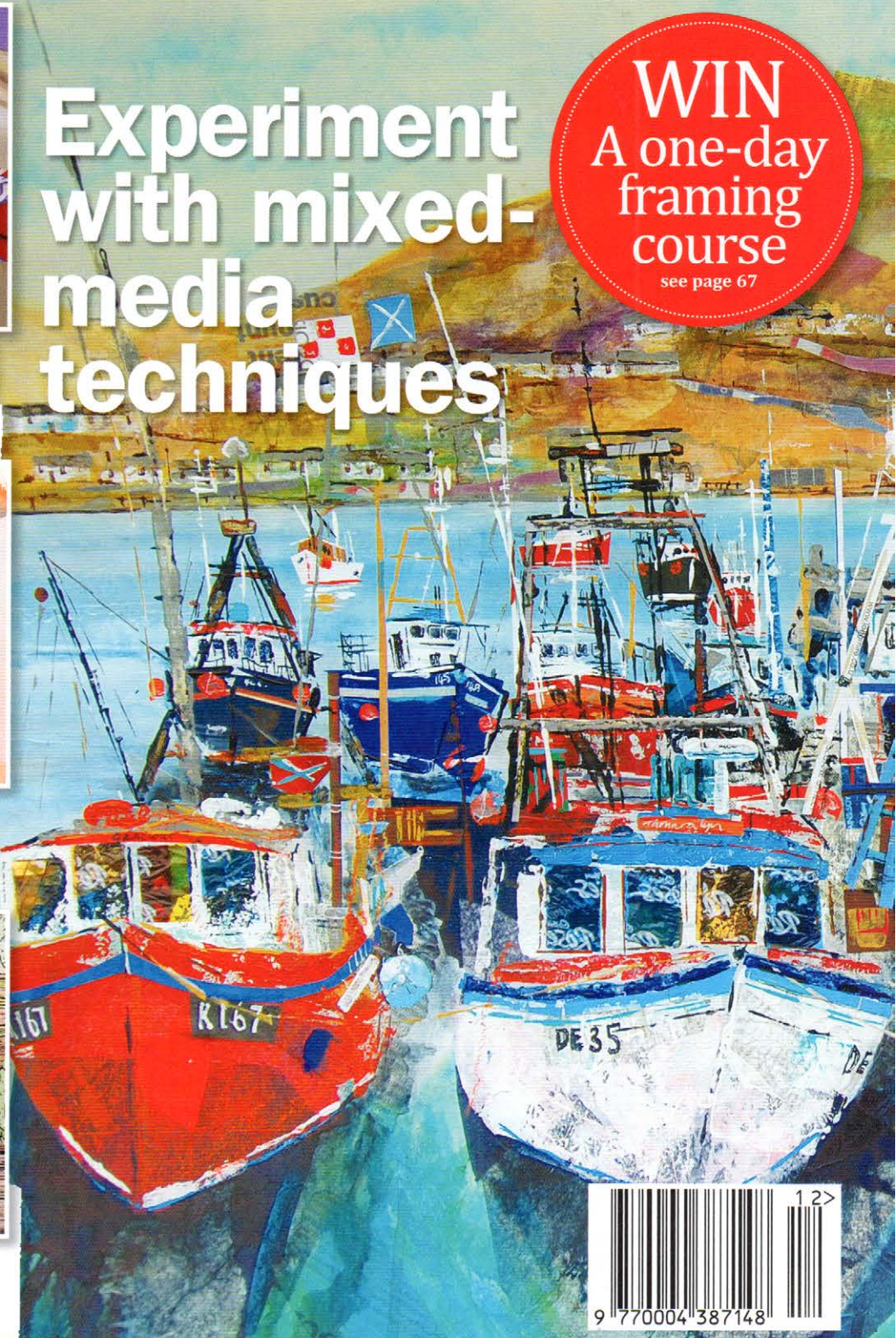
**Paint dark to light in watercolour**



**Try the wash-off technique**

## Experiment with mixed-media techniques

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# Painting in Cambodia

**Craig Penny finds an abundance of subject material in Cambodia. Here he recreates a scene in acrylics and offers advice on working from photographs**



## Craig Penny

Craig studied art at the Ballarat University, Victoria, where painting and graphic design attracted most of his attention. He pursued a successful career as an illustrator in the advertising industry and became a member of the Illustrators' Association of Australia and has also taught both traditional drawing and illustration at Victoria University and Swinburne University. Craig is represented by galleries in Australia, Singapore, Cambodia and the USA.

**S**iem Reap in Cambodia is a frontier town. With the colourful scenery, the amazing temples and the local villages with their hand-build huts there are plenty of great subjects to paint and draw.

## My approach

I paint from photographs rather than *en plein air* – this is a legacy from my illustration days. Nothing beats open air painting for developing and improving observational skills, but the convenience of a photo is here to stay. I follow a few guidelines and encourage my students to do the same:

- If you think you have the perfect photograph to paint, leave it as a photo, otherwise you will just duplicate it.
- Use your own photos.
- Choose a photo that lets you be creative and interpret the scene.
- Be prepared to crop photos and explore layout and design ideas within it.
- Because something is in the photo, it doesn't have to be in your painting.
- Set a deadline when working from a photo and try to stick to it.

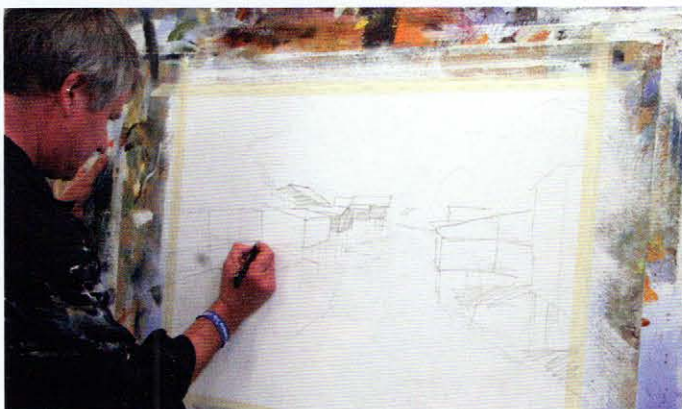
- When painting, look more at the painting than the photograph.
- I suggest discarding the photo when you think you are two-thirds or three-quarters through the painting.
- Don't let the photograph dictate the final outcome.

My approach to all my work is to attack it – I set a deadline and stick to it. I lay out the colours I think I need in the way of open jars of paint as I prefer to get raw paint from open jars and mix colour on the surface I am working on. I only use my wooden painter's palette when I need to mix up a specific colour in a small quantity. Large quantities are mixed in a small plastic container with an airtight top.

## Materials

I always use flat brushes, usually Da Vinci impasto brushes and Da Vinci green-handled student brushes. I also use decorators' brushes that have hog bristle, along with a range of flat nylon brushes and some nylon rigger or script brushes. For paints I use thick or heavy body and prefer Matisse, Atelier and Golden. ▶

## DEMONSTRATION *Siem Reap River*



### ▲ STAGE ONE

I began by soaking a piece of good-quality Not paper that I stapled to a wooden board. When dry, I gave it a coat of gesso. A good rag watercolour paper probably doesn't need gesso when using acrylics, but it does help to slow down the absorption rate of the acrylic paints. Once dry, the staples and the edge of the paper were covered with masking tape and I drew the scene quickly and loosely with a HB pencil. When working from photographs I find the quicker the drawing the better – this allows more interpretation of the photo. The key structural elements of the photo helped me to compose the scene: things that finish half way, a structure that protrudes out about a third from the side, or where the water starts about a third from the top, for example, are key visual points in a scene. The drawing process warms me up for a quick, spontaneous painting



### ▲ STAGE TWO

A mix of cobalt blue and titanium white was applied to the sky and dried with a hair dryer. With a 5cm flat brush and a 15mm flat brush, I painted the trees in the top third. The distant trees are a combination of Hooker's green, cobalt blue and titanium white, the cooler the green the more distant they will look. For the trees in the middle ground I introduced stronger greens using green gold, Hooker's green, primary yellow and, for darks, raw umber. With the drawing still fresh in my mind I painted distant buildings using yellow oxide, raw umber and titanium white

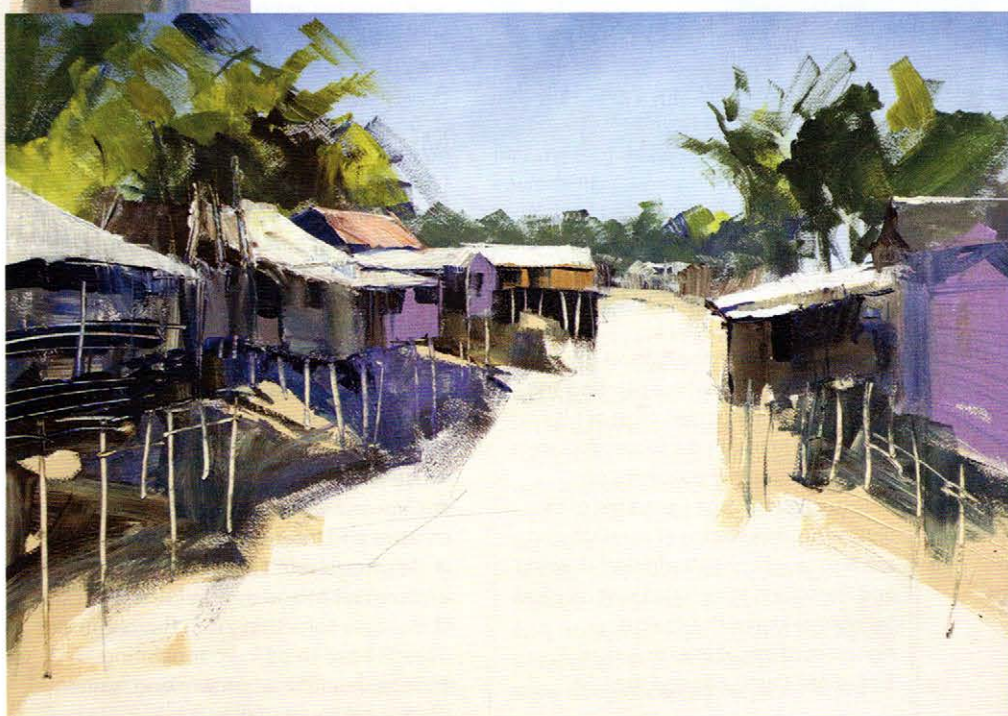


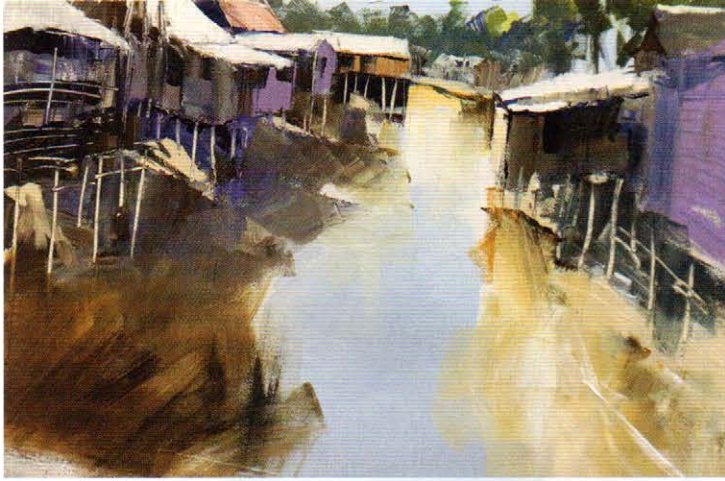
### ◀ STAGE THREE

The colour of the simple wooden dwellings in the photo appeared to be a range of greys. To liven them up, I used a 15mm nylon flat with combinations of raw umber, Prussian blue and white, which gave me a range of greys, and light violet, which added colour. I painted the rooftops with titanium white and a hint of burnt sienna over the green of the trees

### ▶ STAGE FOUR

Using a 5cm flat brush I added a coat of unbleached titanium to the spaces underneath the buildings, then blends of Pacific blue, Prussian blue and raw umber. The first coat of unbleached titanium stopped the darks becoming too dark. To add interest and to introduce detail, I scratched the support poles and other structural elements of the buildings into the wet paint with the end of my brush. This needs to be planned, as without a drying retarder, the paint will dry quickly and you can miss the opportunity





### ◀ STAGE FIVE

I began painting the water, using sky blue, titanium white, and in the distance, yellow oxide. Reflections and shadows were introduced to each side, still with a 5cm flat brush. On the left, I used raw umber and a small amount of red gold with a wash-like technique. On the right, I used unbleached titanium and a small amount of red gold. I was careful not to mix the red gold into the blue of the water

### ▶ STAGE SIX

Working quickly while the paint was still wet, I lifted out reflections of the support poles in the water on the left-hand side. On the right side, using a nylon rigger or script brush size 2, I added reflections of the support poles using raw umber. Still with the rigger brush and using paint, I quickly drew in detail such as wooden planks or old weatherboards – this is my favourite part of the painting process. Random shapes of colour were added to suggest clothes hanging from the buildings

### ▼ FINISHED PAINTING

**Siem Reap River**, acrylic on 140lb (300gsm) Not watercolour paper, 22×30in (56×76cm).

After a few minor adjustments and some more fun with the rigger brush, I was happy with the painting. This piece took me an hour and a half, although I allowed two hours. I find that by working quickly I can create a more interesting painting when working from a photo

