



Materials list

PIGMENTS

Cadmium Yellow Lemon
 Cadmium Yellow Deep
 Yellow Ochre Light
 Raw Sienna
 Transparent Oxide Red
 Terra Rosa
 Permanent Red Violet
 (or Alizarin Crimson)
 Ultramarine Blue Deep
 Cobalt Blue Light
 Viridian
 Titanium White

BRUSHES

a selection of small, medium
 and large brushes (see page 14)

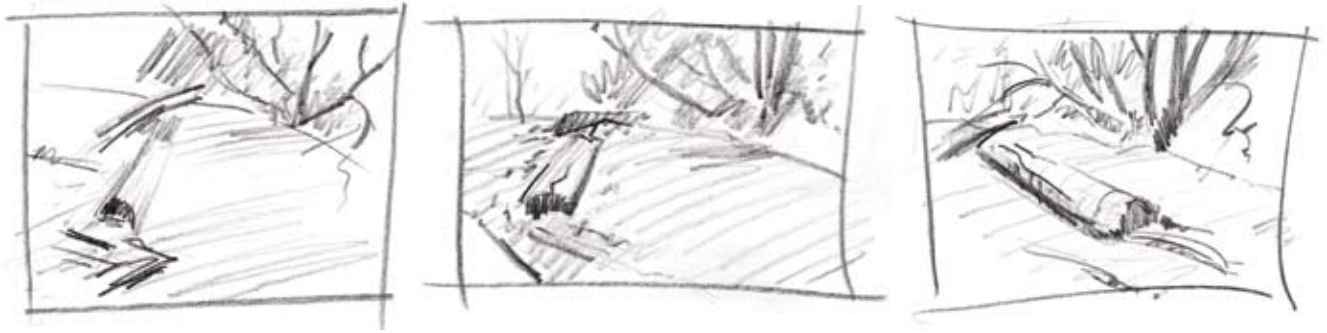
TOOLS

painting knife
 rag
 mineral spirits or turpentine

balance your intention with your intuition

After completing a few thumbnail pencil studies, you have a destination—a clear intention. What actually takes place on the canvas, however, will be revealed in the process of painting. Even after all of your careful planning, you will make many decisions intuitively. This particular painting has never been painted before; there is no precedent, so you get to make things up. Paintings seldom turn out the way you think they will. Balancing intention with intuition is going/into the unknown while taking along what you know.

As you paint, let a part of you stand back and observe without judgment. Let go of expectations. There may be a stage of chaos where the canvas looks nothing like the subject you are painting, and you may think, This is not going to work. Lock up the inner critic; it is active when you experience feelings of fear, anxiety or disappointment. Forget about ending up with a masterpiece and focus on the work at hand. As you proceed, you may have no idea how to get from here to there. Nevertheless, you have to jump off the cliff, allowing the free fall where something new can come out of the process. Keep painting. You cannot step back from the edge and do something new. Your intention is your parachute. At some point you'll say, "Oh! This actually works!"



1 **^ COMPLETE A FEW THUMBNAIL SKETCHES**
Determine what you want the painting to express. What is most important and what is less important?

2 **< LOCATE THE MAIN SHAPES**
After toning the canvas, locate the main shapes with a large flat bristle—two fallen logs, a landmass, and the area to be occupied by a leafy tree, which will overlap the distant plane. Keep the paint thin during this stage. A few simple brushstrokes are enough. Wipe off and redo until you are satisfied. Think shapes (both positive and negative), not logs, land and tree.

- 1 Transparent Oxide Red
- 2 Cobalt Blue Light + Transparent Oxide Red
- 3 Raw Sienna + Cadmium Yellow Deep
- 4 Viridian + Raw Sienna



3 **< ESTABLISH REFERENCE VALUES**
Continuing with thin paint and a large brush, capture the light and shadow pattern across the land mass and over the log with light and dark values and a few incremental halftones. Cast shadows follow the form onto which they fall. Although the logs are the intended center of interest, just get them started and move on. You'll develop them as you go, keeping their refinement a little in advance of other parts.

- 1 Cobalt Blue Light + Transparent Oxide Red
- 2 Cadmium Yellow Deep + white to previously mixed Cobalt Blue Light + Transparent Oxide Red
- 3 Permanent Red Violet + Ultramarine Blue Deep + Transparent Oxide Red
- 4 Transparent Oxide Red + Cobalt Blue Light
- 5 Ultramarine Blue Deep + Transparent Oxide Red



MUSINGS | I need to tolerate ambiguity—to be able to not know. Even though I have an idea about what I want a painting to say or do, and I know some things about how to bring that about, I don't always know as the painting develops whether it's working or not.



4 < WORK FAR TO NEAR

You'll want to get the large tree in place early on so you can verify the composition, but first paint the distant plane. If you can see the ridges of the brushstrokes in the distant areas, which will be overpainted with the tree mass, scrape some of the paint off with the painting knife so you have only a moderate paint layer that can be easily covered.

- 1 Permanent Red Violet + Ultramarine Blue Deep + a touch of Transparent Oxide Red + white
- 2 Cadmium Yellow Lemon + a touch of Viridian + white



5 ^ DRAW WITH THE BRUSH

Use a no. 6 flat bristle on its edge to draw the tree skeleton. This framework will help you correctly locate masses of foliage. Take a practice swing in the air before painting a brushstroke. Avoid heavy build up of pigment; some of this will soon be painted over.

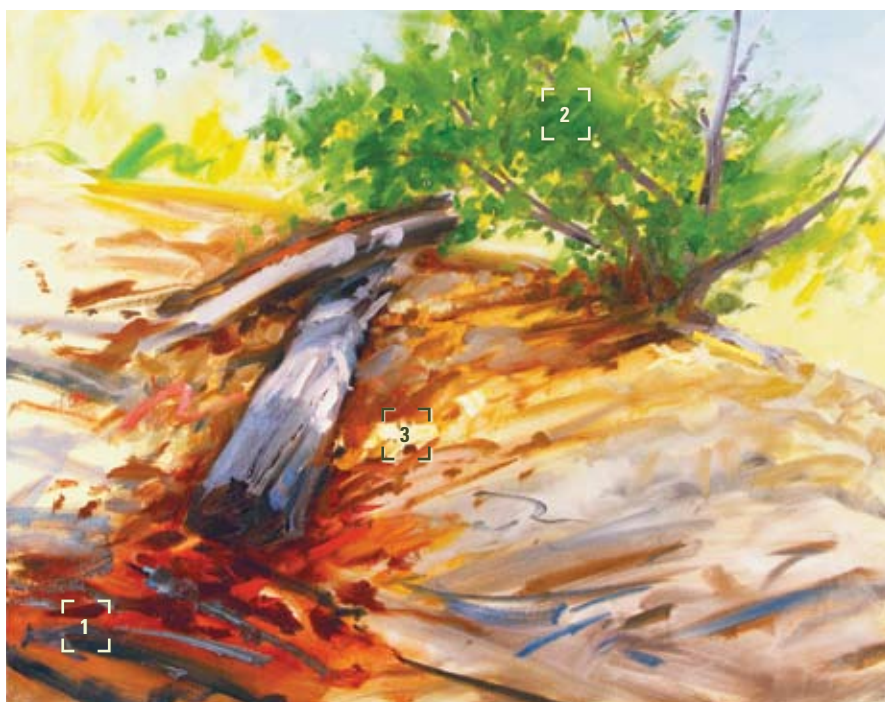
- 1 Cobalt Blue Light + Transparent Oxide Red

Expressive Oil Painting copyright George Allen Durkee
North Light Books



6 < BUILD THE TREE FOLIAGE
 Build the tree foliage with a medium size flat bristle—think large masses. Use one color mixture only and get color and value differences by brushing into the background color. Leave plenty of background color showing through. Use soft edges around the periphery. You'll work darker values over this tree foundation.

1 Viridian + Raw Sienna + Cadmium Yellow Deep



7 < YOU DON'T NEED TO BE PERFECT
 Now brush a slightly darker pigment mixture over and into the tree allowing the two layers to mix together a little. Avoid rubbing and scrubbing with the brush, trying to make the perfect tree. What may look inept at this stage will often work just fine after more of the painting is painted. Develop smaller leaf patterns, especially at the edges of tree shapes, and come back to the tree later.

Get the foreground started with a few random transparent washes, followed by some semitransparent and opaque brushstrokes.

- 1 Ultramarine Blue Deep + Transparent Oxide Red
- 2 Viridian + Cadmium Yellow Deep + Transparent Oxide Red
- 3 Cadmium Yellow Deep + white



8 < LAYER THE FOREGROUND

Texture and thick paint are not necessarily the same. Build thin layer over thin layer with a variety of brush sizes. Then, achieve contrasting impact with a few thoughtful strokes of thick paint with a knife and brush. Use a few cool colors to indicate reflected light from the sky. Details now come into play, but keep most of the foreground unrefined to allow greater emphasis in the more important middle distance.

- 1 Terra Rosa + white
- 2 Permanent Red Violet+ Ultramarine Blue Deep + white
- 3 Yellow Ochre Light + white
- 4 Various combinations of Cobalt Blue Light, Ultramarine Blue Deep and Transparent Oxide Red



9 < BACK TO THE TREE

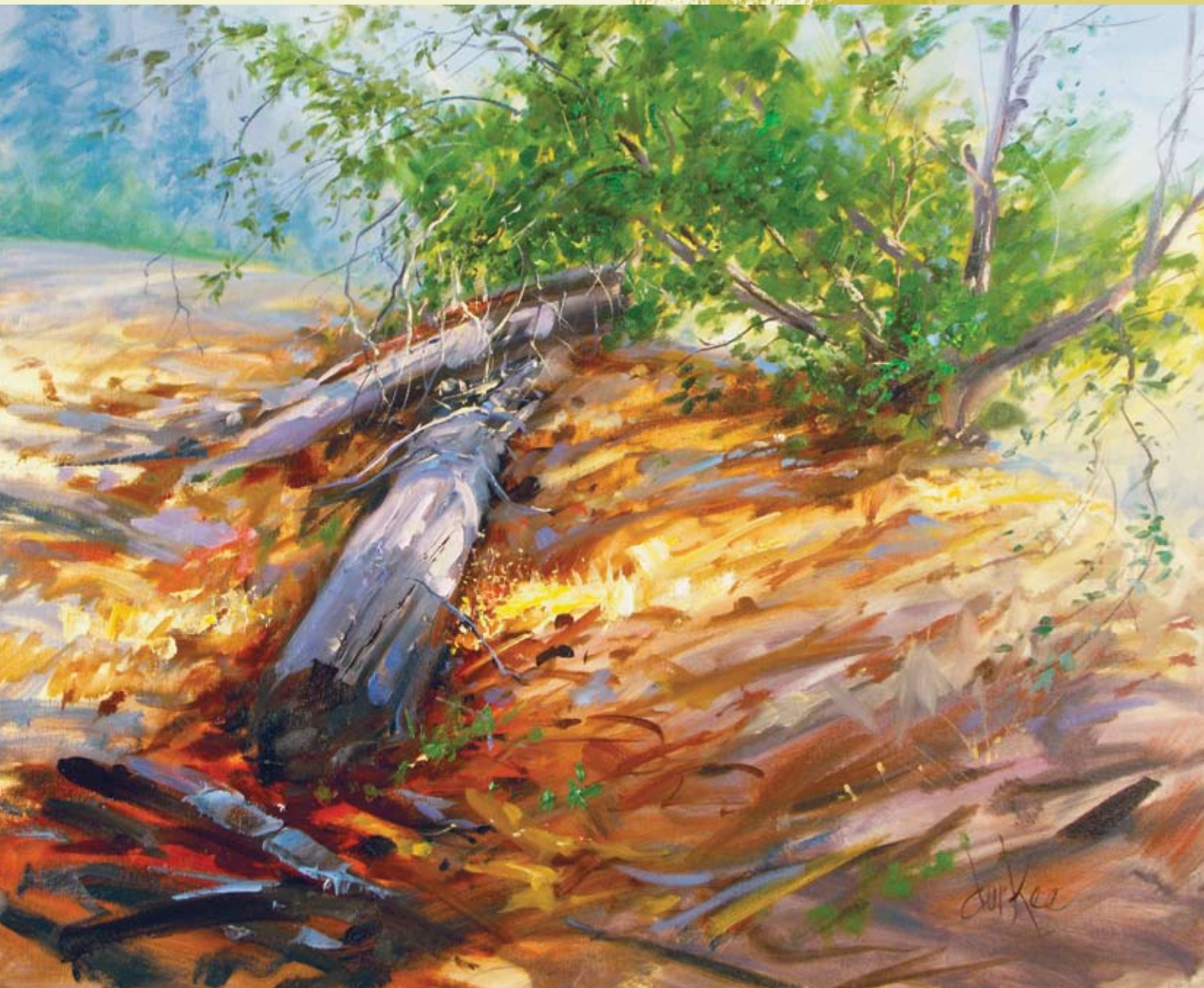
Build more leaf patterns into the tree with darker and lighter variations of green and some cool blue sky reflections, using the smaller bristle brushes and a small round sable brush. Paint the slightest limbs with the rigger brush, and tie the tree and distant log together with some fine sunlit limbs.

The composition can be improved by extending the tree farther to the left. The distant upper left needs more interest.

- 1 Cobalt Blue Light + white
- 2 Viridian + white

10 > ADD FINISHING DETAILS

For the upper left distance beyond the tree, use high-key values (see page 43) and keep the color cool. Be sure the horizon line is a soft edge. Suggest leaf patterns rather than painting each single leaf as you extend the tree. Now the composition works, so stop painting and sign your name.



Two Logs and a Bush
oil on canvas
24" × 30" (61cm × 76cm)

Let's Review

You won't know what the final painting will look like until you paint it. Your plan, or intention, is simply a place to begin. As you develop your painting, strike a balance between conscious reasoning and instinct. There may be stages when you don't know whether the painting is working or not, but keep going. Trust the process.