

# The Red Bucket

## Overview

I saw this little girl on a beach in Cornwall a few years ago. She was lost in her work, which I suspect was looking for molluscs in the sand.

## Other information:

Completion date: April 2010. Painting reference: 151

## What I used

### Support

Canvas board (10" x 12")

### Brushes

No. 2, 4, & 10 rounds

No. 14 flat

### Other materials

- White ceramic tile (I use this as a palette, rather than a stay-wet system; it keeps the paint wet, makes it easy to see colour tones and is easy to clean up under the tap)
- Old towel (12" x 8" for wiping off washes)
- Water spray bottle (used mainly for keeping my paint moist on the palette).

### Colours

Beach:

- Light grey
- Titanium white
- Titanium buff
- Unbleached titanium light
- Cerulean blue
- Raw umber
- Burnt sienna

Flesh tones:

- Titanium white + Titanium buff + Cadmium red (light tones)
- Titanium buff + raw umber + Cadmium red + Neutral dark (darker tones)

Swimsuit:

- Crimson
- Titanium white
- Neutral dark
- Various colours for the flowers

Hair:

- Burnt umber
- Yellow ochre
- Neutral dark

Bucket:

- Cadmium red
- Cadmium orange
- Neutral dark

Highlights: Titanium white or unbleached titanium.

Shadows: Neutral dark (home made, 50/50 ultramarine and raw umber)

## The Painting Process

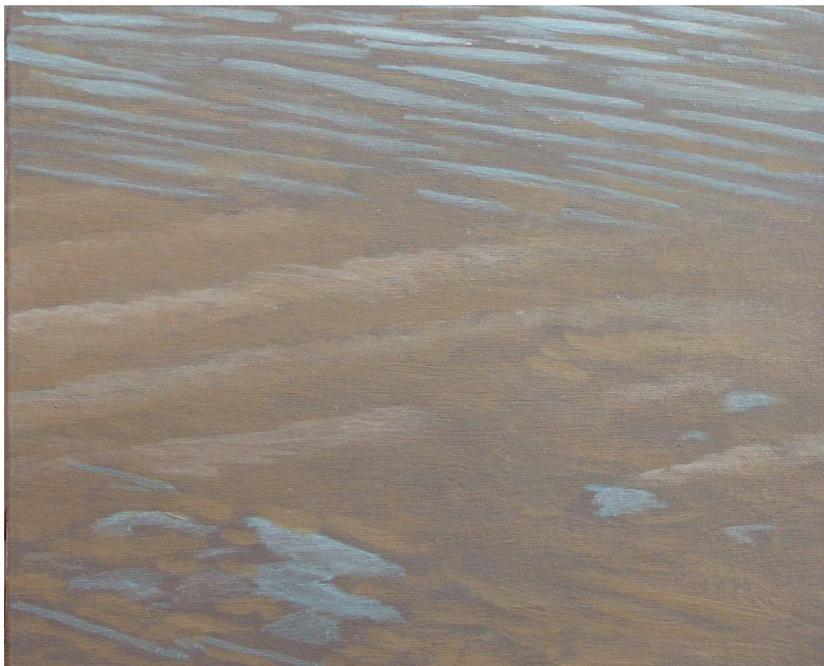
### 1. My reference photograph

This photograph was from my large collection of children shots, most taken some years ago, before it became “politically incorrect” to snap kids on beaches. I did not need to change much from the original and because her face is largely covered by her cap, this could be any little girl.



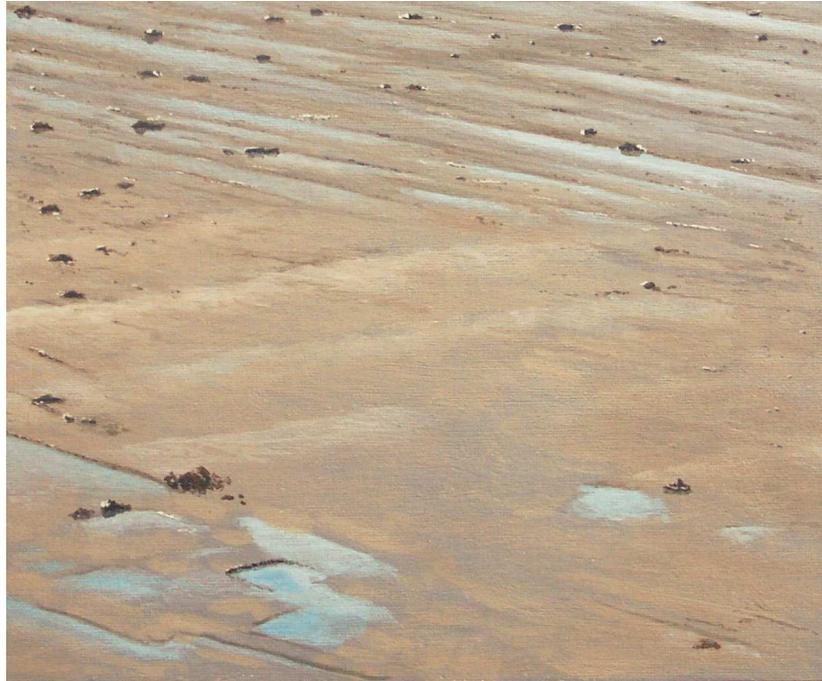
### 2. The beach – stage one

As usual, I applied two layers of acrylic gesso primer to a 10” x 12” canvas board, creating a random texture and then sanding lightly when dry. This is one of the few paintings where I did not do an initial drawing on the canvas; it was unnecessary but would be required later. I blocked in the whole beach in light grey and dried this before over-painting with the main colours, including the ridges of water, which I painted in a lightened cerulean blue.



### 3. The beach – stage two

I was not happy with the way the beach looked, especially in the background, so I virtually started again, over-painting what was there. When I was happy with the result, I put in the finer details, including the tops of mollusc burrows, which were reflecting the sun and also casting small shadows or reflections in the thin pools of water.



### 4. The drawing

Using a grid, I then did a drawing of the girl on paper, sizing it exactly to how I wanted it to look on the painting. This showed only the main outlines. I then cut out the drawing and positioned it on the beach where I wanted it. Using a HB pencil, I drew round the cut-out on the canvas.



## 5. Painting the figure

When painting in figures, I usually block them in first with at least one layer of titanium buff. This is nice and opaque, giving a good base for the next layers of paint. I then drew in the main outlines and painted in the lighter flesh tones, using a mixture of white, titanium buff and a tiny amount of cadmium red. The darker flesh tones were much more of a challenge. I mixed up a several batches of differing tones using a mixture of titanium buff, raw umber and Cadmium red. Some batches were darkened with neutral dark. I then applied these in several coats, blending them into the lighter tones. I added red on the cheeks and ears. I used a base of burnt umber of the hair, adding highlights and darks, where necessary.



## 6. Adding further beach details



While I was painting the girl, I took breaks by painting the red bucket and more of the beach details around her hands and feet, including the reflections and shadows. For the

swimsuit and hat I used crimson as the base colour, mixing with white or neutral dark to achieve the highlights and shadows. I then painted on the flowers. I added a glaze of pink on the girl's right arm and chest to show the reflected colour from the swimsuit.

When the painting was largely complete, my wife commented that the background looked rather "boring" and suggested that I should paint in some sea. This seemed like a good idea, so I tentatively over-painted the top of the beach with a thin glaze of cerulean blue and white and decided that this would work. The froth was then added in white, along with some reflections of clouds. This was entirely from my imagination but based upon my experience painting other beach scenes.

I then added the green spade and re-worked the highlights and shadows.

**7. The finished work – *The Red Bucket* - acrylic on canvas board, 10 x 12" (25 x 30 cm)**

