Finessing Color and Value

ABOVE: When setting up what would become the painting **Undersea** (oil, 15¾x20), I grouped objects with a variety of edges and textures: Some waxed paper edges nearly disappear into the shadowy background while the spiny contours of the crab claw strike a dramatic silhouette. The soft highlights of the tall, smooth bottle compete with the sharp whites of the barnacles. To learn more about my process, go to page ••.

RENDERING THE DIFFERENT TYPES of edges and textures in *Undersea* required subtleties of color and value.

A I don't use black because it desaturates chroma. So for the darkest areas of the background, I mixed ultramarine blue and burnt umber, which would let me re-introduce saturated color, if necessary.

B I never "blur" an edge by swiping a brush across it. Instead I paint what I see: close values. Hence, making the values of the wax paper's shadows similar to the values of the background gave their shared edges a blurred effect.

C Painting the crab claw with just white would have resulted in a blue ridge where the edge transitions to the dark background, giving the whole claw a blue tint. So first, I painted the claw in deep orange-pink hues. Later I layered warm whites over the rosy layers, leaving a thin warm border at the transition to the background. This way the crab claw reads as sharp and crisp but not cold.

D On the tall bottle, I kept the reflective highlight a bright white but added tints of color on the edges to visually "stain" the entire highlight. I tinted the bottom of the highlight toward cobalt blue to reflect the sky color. Painting the highlight as blue as I saw it in life would have made it too dark.