

FEBRUARY 2015

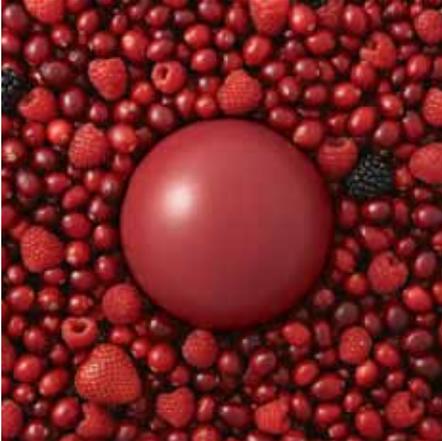
SITELINES

Landscape Architecture in British Columbia

DRAWING FROM TRAVEL

To Draw is to See, to See is to Understand | Anonymous in Dubrovnik | Five Travel Sketches | Drawing Inspiration and Learning Compassion | Line and Fog | Magic Things | An Artist Gets Shanghai'd | The Essence of Drawing | Oh to be a Traveler at Home | Jottings | Digital Hand | Drawing on People

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The purpose of Sitelines is to provide an open forum for the exchange of ideas and information pertaining to the profession of landscape architecture. Individual opinions expressed are those of the writers and not necessarily of those of the BCSLA.

DRAWING from Travel

By Jane Durante BCSLA, ASLA, FCSLA, RCA

It is safe to say we all carry digital cameras with us when we travel and take far too many shots a day of the places we explore. Then there is the culling of the collection down to something manageable for filing or showing to friends and colleagues. Sometimes it is hard to remember why we took a number of photos and worse where we were when the image was taken. Too fast, too little thought, too little immersion in time and place...

Initially, drawing takes looking and seeing. Then, immersion in a subject, a consideration of view point, an answer to the question why this, not that...

For many, the practice of drawing is to keep an illustrated journal using written word and sketches to document a happening, shape, detail, or the colour of a memorable time and place. Intensity and immersion bring the subject and experience alive.

There may be many reasons for one to draw... it may be the thrill of an entirely new cultural experience, it may be to document a spectacular hike through the desert, it may be the need for a catharsis after a family tragedy—there are hundreds of reasons why one would choose to write and sketch.

Travel is a means to refresh and provoke the creative spirit with new and inspiring images, insights, and energy. Each observer of a particular building, plaza, experience, or topography with a pen in hand will create their own personal interpretation of the visual story in front of them. This is the joy of both the creator and the viewer of the work.

An exploration of this personal view in line and letter of a place in the world is my request to the contributors to this issue of SITELINES.

I wish to thank DKL for their support in helping to put this issue of SITELINES together.

I would also strongly suggest having a look at www.sitelines.org for the coloured online edition of the magazine. **SL**



Zanzibar, Tanzania, East Africa. Image courtesy of Henry Hawthorn.

“They don’t teach drawing in art schools any more. It’s criminal. Teaching drawing teaches people to look.” — David Hockney



Cover Image: Chora Street, Kea, Greece.
Illustration by Douglas Paterson.

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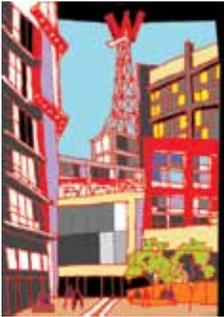
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TO DRAW is to See, TO SEE is to Understand

Article and Illustrations by Frank Ducote, Principal of Frank Ducote Urban Design



I draw because I must. It is almost like breathing, something both necessary and yet done without thought, and essential to my life. There is something almost magical about the way a pencil, pen or brush engages the paper and leaves permanent traces. In our too-hectic world, to draw is to slow things down and allow your senses to connect to the physical world.

One very obvious advantage that drawing from life has over photography is the simple element of time: a photograph takes much less than a second, while even the most basic observation drawn by hand takes a few minutes. The eye, the hand and the mind all have time to absorb the scene, how light and shadow interplay, to begin to understand the very materiality of buildings and public spaces.

The architect Charles Moore once said the biggest technological revolution in (architectural) practice in the 20th century was not the computer, but the move from Chinese ink to India ink. He may or may not have been right about that, but I believe the loss of hand drawing—and drafting—has created many problems for design pedagogy and how we learn. We are being told that the brains of Millennials are differently wired now from those of previous



generations, with a result that the world itself is perceived differently.

Be that as it may, I find a great hunger for developing freehand drawing skills among younger and mid-career students in my classes at the SFU City Program—a very hopeful sign.

Last, I have two suggestions for those wanting to develop their observational and drawing skills: act like a wide-eyed traveler—not a tourist—in your own town. Draw what

Far Left: Woodward's. Vancouver, Canada.

Left Centre: San Miguel de Allende. Mexico.

Right Centre: Vendor in Zocalo. Ciudad de Oaxaca, Mexico. **Far Right:** Dominion Building. Vancouver, Canada. **Bottom:** Ghost Ranch. New Mexico, USA.

is around you every day. Maybe even learn to love it. Second, draw with others; it helps build relationships, and the gentle criticism is as valuable a learning experience as any the classroom or textbook has to offer. **SL**

Anonymous IN DUBROVNIK

Article and Illustrations
by Michael Enns, MBCSLA

Dubrovnik, Croatia—June 29TH, 2003

“I loved everything about this little square: the thickness in places that needed to be thick, the small gardens between buildings, the wonderful mature pines and plane trees keeping the granular plaza firm and immovable, the great promenade, the wind, the warm wooden benches where we ate lunch and talked about travels and life’s stories”.

As poor Master’s students taking a break from our studies at UBC, my girlfriend (and future wife) and I were taking two months to wind our way up the Dalmatian Coast, zigzagging from Greece to Sweden, when we stopped off in the Croatian coastal town of Dubrovnik. We took the advice of some travelling companions and set up camp just outside the Old Town, in an abandoned Hotel Libertas that had been shelled in the Siege of Dubrovnik 10 years earlier. Here we were, living in tents on the one of the “luxurious” balconies, overlooking the azure waters of the Adriatic, where we would get up each morning, step over crumpled concrete and around blast holes, and descend the rocky cliffs to start the day with a float in the warm and buoyant waters of the Adriatic. We’d then head out to explore, sometimes with a group, sometimes just the two of us, and sometimes alone. We’d walk, climb, run, wander, stroll, and sit almost anywhere, taking pictures, sketching places, discussing details, and watching people, eating and drinking. We soaked it all in.

“It is shady, small, but full of life, functions very well on a bend in the main street promenade: a drop off for buses; a shady enclave; a meeting place; a node; a place to refresh; a place to discover local music, dance, theatre, arts, food—a snapshot of community life—a place to watch”.

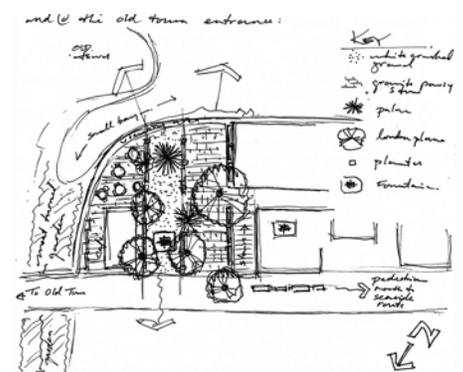
One thing I love about travelling is the experience of being anonymous, of being truly alone in a very peaceful way—no one knows you, you know no one, the sounds and smells are different, even the sun casts different shadows. You can simply just observe, record, listen, smell—simply *immerse* yourself in a place and begin to understand what makes the place special.

“Brsalje has an ‘effortlessness’ to it that reveals a very natural human use—it has a wonderful balance between formal design and experiential relevance, further enriched by various polarities (sun/shade, here/there, public/private, passive/active) that allows it to gracefully ‘accept’ the bend in the road—it absorbs a vast range of activity, movement, and use. It has become what it should be, and you can’t imagine anything else there in its place”.

When I think about it, it often seems great public spaces have that anonymous aura to them: that people are just there; they always go there; and it seems like they’ve always been there. Great public spaces, I think, let people do what they do, whether by choice or habit or impulse—at anytime of the day.

And in such a way, that one can sit for hours watching, listening, observing, and some-times recording, without anyone knowing you are there. I love those places of anonymity.

One such place was Brsalje Square, just outside the Old Town of Dubrovnik. **SL**



Above: Brsalje Square, Croatia—Sketch Plan.
Top: Brsalje Square, Croatia—Sketch Perspective.
Left: Dubrovnik Old Town thick wall, Croatia.

Five Travel Sketches

Article and Illustrations by
John Perkins, FRAIC Retired

When traveling, I bring along a compact camera and materials for sketching. My favorite setup is an indelible ink drawing pen, a box of water soluble colored pencils, and a classic Moleskine notebook with smooth heavy paper just right for water based sketching.

The advantages for this choice are mobility and easy access to public places such as a café or plaza where one can observe, contemplate and draw. I sometimes draw right on the spot, sometimes do colouring later, and sometimes work directly from the camera's LCD screen. Sketches are often worked on later and finished by the evening of the same day. Sketches are kept for a final record of the travel experience and occasionally are used to prepare a larger painting. I usually share these travel experiences with a digital slide show and email.

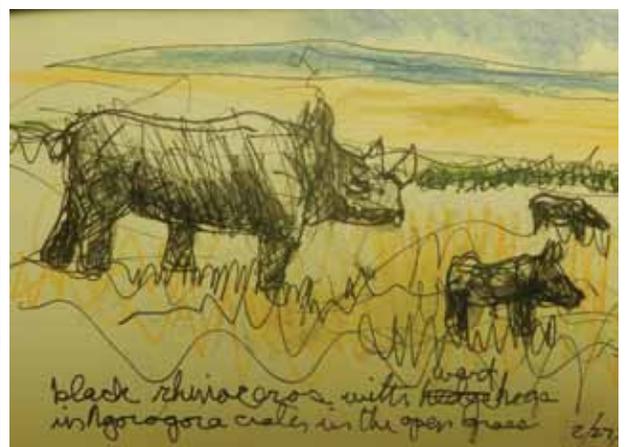
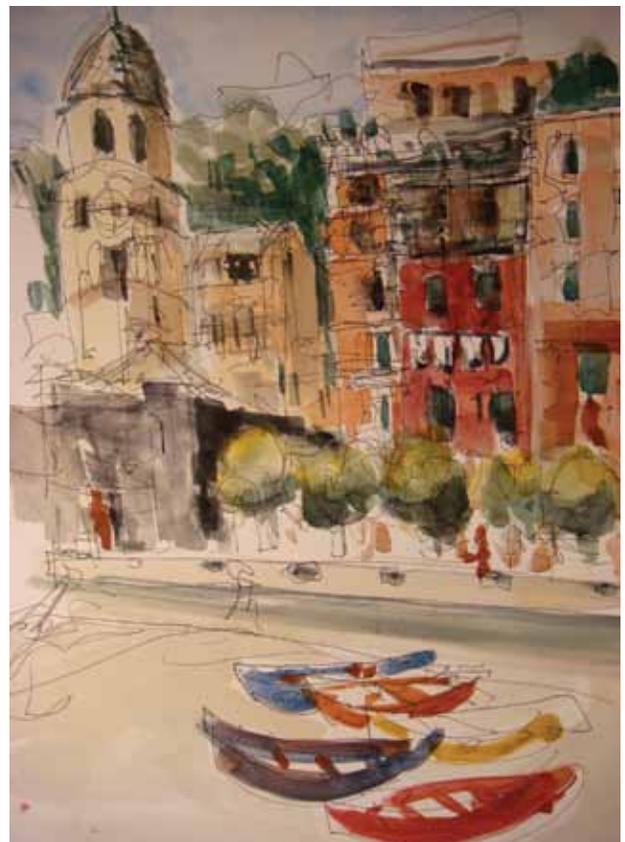
I am attracted to sketchable subjects that are visually arresting and that present a unique perspective. A decision to sketch is often spontaneous and the sketch is done quite rapidly. This creative act is very brief but the memories can be a valuable and indelible record. **SL**



Above: This beautiful bird was one of my first sittings on our photographic and sketching safari near Lake Manyara, Tanzania. Later on the same safari we visited Ngorogoro Crater. It was teeming with wildlife in total isolation from the world. **Top Right:** This rooftop vista opened after climbing thru the main Kasbah in old Rabat, Morocco.

Right: This sketch of the Vernazza waterfront town centre was done during our stay in the Cinque Terre, Italy. **Below Right:** The sketch is of a rare black rhino feeding along with a family of wart hogs.

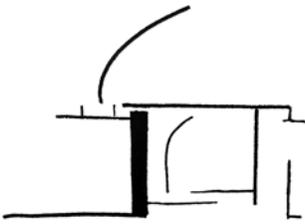
Below: When wandering in the main souk, I came upon this carpet auction area in Casablanca, Morocco.



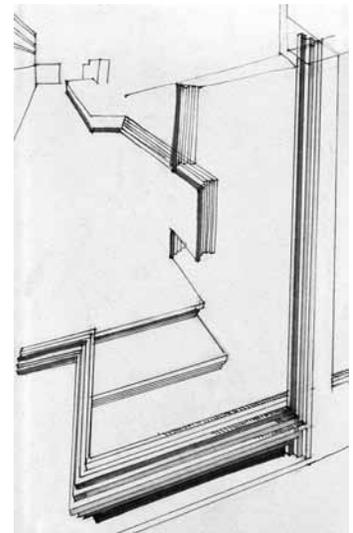
DRAWING Inspiration and Learning Compassion

Article and Illustrations by Sara Kasaei, BCSLA Intern, AIBC Intern Architect

Travel and sketching brings inspiration and fun for me. In both my design and personal life, I have realized drawing in travel and recording experiences as seen has a way of stretching the mind. Alongside all the countless immediate rewards, you will remember the experience of where you are and what you see for life time. In photography, experiences might get forgotten after a while, whereas in sketching, they become enriched, and you will learn a lot about yourself and what inspires you. It is a uniquely personal and visual experience. It feels as you explore undiscovered territories as an adventurer when drawing. Through travel sketches, I have gained a better understanding of history, diverse cultures, their built environments, and most importantly notion of place making.



Above: Iran Isfahan Sheikh Loftfollah Mosque. **Top Right:** Italy Treviso Brion Tomb by Scarpa. **Middle Right:** Italy Verona Castlevicchio Exhibition Box by Scarpa. **Bottom Right :** Iran Kashan Fin Garden. **Bottom Left:** Iran on the Road.



For me it all started with sketching trips as a student which educated me on how to observe, study, and draw. Further along the way it liberated me to express myself and explore creative ideas while traveling. I have traveled around Iran, Turkey, Italy, France, Netherlands, British Columbia, and the United States. During these times, the habit of sketching has given me an appreciation for how buildings sit in the urban landscape, and the beauty of form and composition, and how people interact with nature and built environments. It has revealed my tendency and interest in the travel sketches as a simplification exercise. It has been an effective and inspiring tool to communicate and share travel experiences with others. Particularly in group sketching trips, you experience the wonder of seeing similar things differently and learn from it. Sketching makes every scene and experience unique to you. A photo can be reproduced and common among many people, but your sketch is your interpretation of every memory.

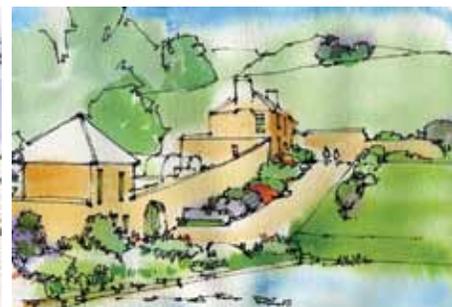
Lastly, in my experience, sketching in travel as a means of connecting with the new lands, people, and cultures has given me a sense of compassion. It allows me to see and analyze things differently and feel more connected to the world. **SL**

LINE and Fog

Article and Illustrations by Cameron Murray, MBCSLA



To draw is to pull a line, as a sailor might, with a rigging of slack and taut rope. Arms stretch and bend natural curves, in arcs from the shoulder. And lines provide a sense of direction to indicate velocity, as well as places of hesitation.



See with “fresh eyes”, as Emily Carr would say. A tree is neither a cartoon, an archetype, nor a rubber stamp, but a unique living entity. Consider the balance of branches, leaf clusters, wind forms, and sun angles. Trees are excellent models, in their ability to hold a pose.

Life drawing is a practice of direct observation, without prior assumptions. Drawing practice requires patience and a “suspension of disbelief”, as Marshall McLuhan would say. Save criticism until the completion of a whole cycle of drawings.

Everyone can draw. Handwriting is a form of drawing. And Japanese poets may choose to either write ideograms or draw birds with the same brush. Contour drawing follows silhouettes or edges. And here is a juxtaposition of space and form, where skyline meets mountain, sea meets shoreline, or an ecotone shapes a line between two ecosystems.

Drawing is a slow way of observing landscape. Imagine walking up the West Ridge of Crown Mountain and stopping for a picnic at the summit, before following the East Ridge to return to treeline. While a photograph may be recorded in a thousandth of a second; with the slow process of drawing, we may observe bumps, shoulders, and cornices as they appear, by following an imaginary path along the skyline.

Leave perfectionism to photographers. Typos enliven an otherwise ordinary drawing, like a hat tilted rakishly askew. Stretch one clear line, even if it is away off course, rather than make thirty accurate marks. “Do more with less”, as Buckminster Fuller advises. And five minutes is plenty of time for a study, while waiting for a ferry.

Currently, I draw with a felt pen, which leaves an impression of swiftness and hesitation inscribed on the page. Waterproof pens also enable the addition of a light wash



Top Left: Dancing Man Petroglyph, Gabriola Island, BC. **Top Right:** Shoreline at Kilt Rock, Isle of Skye, Scotland. **Middle Left:** Roof Garden View, Loreto, Mexico. **Middle Right:** Walled Gardens and Orchards, Blair Atholl, Scotland. **Bottom Right:** David Hume Lectures the Old Cathedral, Edinburgh, Scotland.

of colour. And here, line and colour take complementary journeys across the page. Yin and yang elements are present. A line drawing provides a still anchor to the floating coloured fog of the watercolours. **SL**

Magic Things

Article and Illustrations by
Emily Nixon, BCSLA Intern

I wasn't at first sure what I had to contribute to this project. A lot of my drawings are back in Ontario or lost forever. I was lucky to spend time drawing in Europe and all sorts of museums as an art student. I have great memories of a summer in Paris, drawing stone statues in the Louvre, and I was terribly sad when I lost that sketchbook. But I'm reminded of what my Dad said on more than one occasion, when he gave a special artwork of his away, and I was sad to see it go: "Don't worry Em, we can always make more".

I like the idea that drawings are disposable. They are part of a thought process and a conversation with one's self, which gives them a temporal mojo particular to ephemera—they are small records of gesture and thought and a particular moment in time. Digging through a disorganized portfolio of drawings and watercolors from the last 10 years, I found collection of notes to myself. Little memories of places I've haunted, no less special than a first rate art museum, they tell stories of what I've been appreciating as compositions in the landscape.

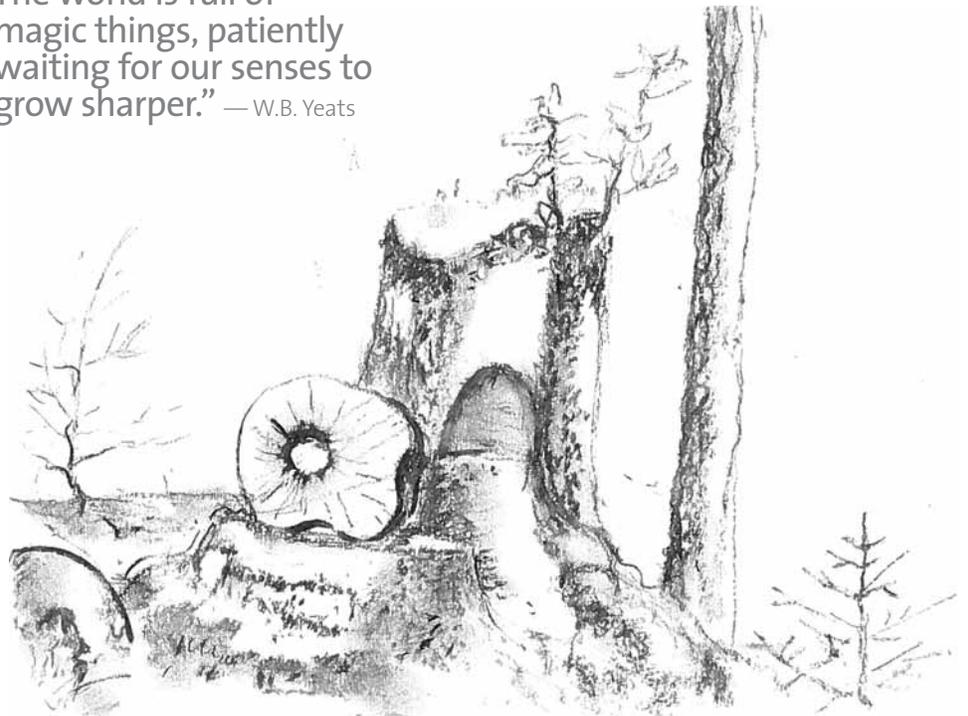
The drawings I've included are sketches of subjects I've found interesting—the result of exploring the unoccupied or abandoned edges of cities where I've lived. Some live on in more finished paintings. They are of accidental forms, fractal patterns of light and foliage, or precarious constructions in places where our ordered world tips off balance into the abstract and the imagined. Subjects like these lose intrigue as photographs.

Drawings animate their subjects through gesture and create tension through flatness and perspective, articulated and implied form. You can't have drama without tension (another Dad quote there). While photos are often still and complete, drawings are dynamic because they demand imagination to be looked at. **SL**

Top Right: Pile of Wood at Leslie Spit, Toronto, 2007. **Middle Right:** Mausoleum, Mount Pleasant Cemetery, Toronto, 2005. **Bottom Right:** That Arbutus Tree Was Really Old, Galiano Island 2012 **Below Left:** House of Driftwood at Long Beach, Tofino, 2010. **Bottom Left:** Rainforest, Tofino, 2011.



"The world is full of magic things, patiently waiting for our senses to grow sharper." — W.B. Yeats



An Artist gets Shanghai'd

Article and Illustrations by Margot Paris, BArch

It is rare that someone wrestles a paintbrush out of my hand. Such is the unpredictable nature of plein air painting in China.

In the ancient Zhujiyajiao water village near Shanghai, a perfect subject caught my eye: a pancake shop door, flanked by vertical red banners which were emblazoned with large Chinese characters. A young woman made pancakes on a charcoal brazier in the doorway. The mottled stone wall offered challenging textures and a subtle palette, in contrast to that glorious red.

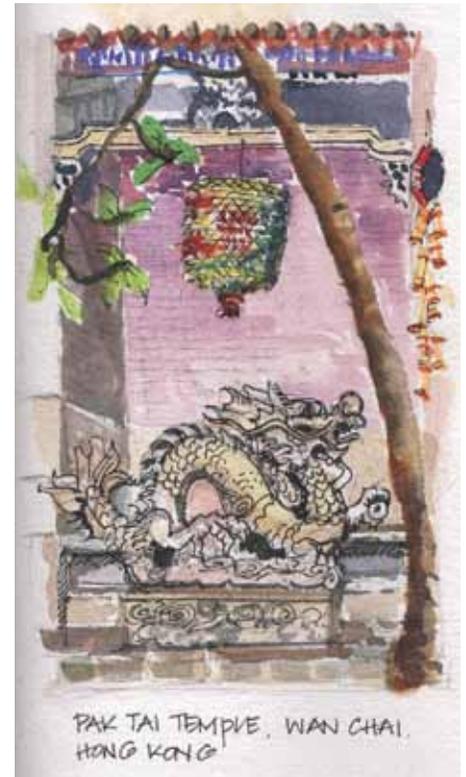
The shop owner watched as I worked, perched on a stone slab, across from his doorway. Sketching the façade was straightforward, but I was challenged by the Chinese script. I cannot write Chinese characters, so I penciled in a faithful reproduction of the complex forms. Or so I thought.

Next, I painted the two vivid panels of red...then started to ink in the Chinese characters. The shopkeeper edged closer, unable to contain himself. He insisted I hand over my brush. Turns out he is an expert calligrapher, taking great care in completing the panels, wielding my brush with an elegant flourish. My halting brush strokes could never match the mastery of his technique.

We were both delighted with the results. In honour of our artistic collaboration,

he presented me with a pancake. Such is the charm, and searing memory of plein air painting in China.

On my travels around the world I have filled a half-dozen travel journals with hundreds of pencil, ink, and watercolour studies. Whether painting trash cans in Mexico, or Garnier's opera house in Paris, painting and drawing plein air demands a slower, deeper gaze. Using leather, good paper and thread, I make my own travel journals, hosting workshops to share my love of journal making and composition. The journey continues, pencil and paintbrush in hand. **SL**



Middle Left: Zhujiyajiao pancake shop owner finishes my painting with expert calligraphy. **Bottom Left:** Handmade leather-bound watercolour journal accompanies me whenever I travel. Excerpts from my China Travel Journal: Chinese Village (Left); Pavilion (Above); Temple (Bottom Right).



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The Essence of Drawing

Article and Illustrations
by Colette Parsons,
MBCSLA, MCIP



Why draw?

In my fourth year university at Cal Poly, I studied architecture in Florence, Italy.

One of my architecture professors would draw every student's final design project into a sketchbook during critiques. I asked him why he did this and his response was, "to truly understand something one must draw it first." The thought resonated with me. Hand to gesture coordination imprints the essence of an object—a building or a landscape—into one's consciousness and makes it more indelibly memorable. While I love photography for its ability to chronicle an event or a journey, a sketch imparts a depth of understanding that comes from sitting still and looking, really looking, at something and attempting to recreate it on a page. As a designer, drawing also betters my understanding of spatial relationships and scale.



What to draw?

I draw in situ or from photos—buildings, landscapes, and details. I enjoy the Zen-like state that comes with immersing oneself in doing just one thing at a time. I like honing elements down to their simplest forms or their "essence". To tell a story or depict a scene with the minimal use of line work can be challenging yet something to aspire to. Sometimes the drawing just seems to flow. Other times, it can be a struggle. That, in part, is what keeps me drawing—the challenge of looking, seeing, and creating.

How to draw?

I often rough in the outline of something in a light pencil—verticals and horizontals first, followed by a few sketchy details. Once the basic structure is outlined, I shift to a black ink pen to develop the sketch in greater detail. I always take a photo of the scene I am drawing so if I do not have time to finish the sketch in situ I can go back to it later to complete. Sometimes I take a photo of a scene with the express intent of drawing it later.

Over the last number of years, my drawing has led me into doing more graphic note taking and facilitation. Words and thoughts are transcribed onto large-scale paper and augmented with graphics to capture insights and decisions at workshops. This creative method helps people see their contributions captured in real time. Through this work I have had to develop drawing techniques that simplify the essence of a thought—sustainability, leadership, culture. This work has loosened up my drawing technique, lessened drawing inhibitions, increased my speed, and has been fun. With a circle, square, or triangle, one can draw almost anything. **SL**



Top: Middle Beach Lodge, Tofino—Sketched in situ. **Left:** McMullin Islet, Hakai Recreation Area—On kayaking trips I always take a little sketchbook. This thumbnail was done in situ.

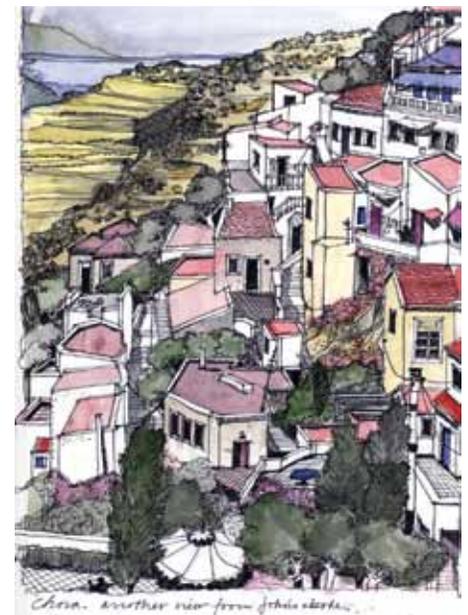
Bottom Left: Graphic example of graphic note taking and facilitation I now use in my work.

Right: Pool vignette from the Pensione Korokia, Palm Springs—drawn from photo.

Bottom Right: Gordes, France—We cycled through the Luberon Valley last fall.

Having time to draw while on a month long cycling trip was challenging at times. I took photos so that I could draw the vignette later.





Oh To Be a Traveller at Home

Article and Illustrations by Douglas Paterson, LMBCSLA, FCSLA, FCELA

I love to draw. When my mind is able to still sufficiently enter that wonderful zone of being when one is in the moment, when it has a single purpose focus on the task at hand. But it doesn't happen nearly enough. For the most part, as such, I also hate to draw and I don't like my drawings! They are invariably stiff, predictable, technique bound.

My drawing mind is, first and foremost, too much of a designer's mind, a mind where I project onto the scene rather than allow the scene to come to presence, as it is felt. I almost always see any scene in terms of plans, diagrams, and section-elevation, in

terms of what is wrong and what is right in the scene and how it might be made to be "better" or how, at the very least, I can "learn" from the place for future design activity. Even when I'm charmed by the abstract beauty of the moment—the exquisite way frost emphasizes edges and patterns in a dead bracken fern on a cold winter's morning—I wonder how such emphases might add a layer of delight to a paving pattern, a wall, or plaza at night. As a consequence, I am an image junkie, more for what the images suggest or "teach" than for what they are—and I have thousands of images that inspire.

Top Left: Chora Street, Kea, Greece. **Top Centre:** Someo, Valle Maggia, Switzerland. **Left:** The Acropolis, Chora, Kea, Greece. **Top Right:** Someo, Valle Maggia, Switzerland. **Above:** Chora Town Square, Kea, Greece.

Except when I travel far afield, I become less judgmental. Perhaps now that I am truly "retired", I will become inspired to connect my mind and hands in a different way and, as travelling is the one time when I do manage to get in the zone, perhaps I should also be travelling more at home. **SL**

Jottings

Article and Illustrations by
Henry Hawthorn, Retired Architect

There are a number of reasons why I draw when I travel.

At the simplest level, a drawing is the ultimate souvenir, it is a record that says “I was there”, not dissimilar to private, portable graffiti. For this purpose I have a small, easily carried sketchbook which has lasted me for over fifteen years—a lengthy witness.

I also just draw for the simple visceral pleasure of seeing an intentional line imposed on a blank sheet of paper. There is a delight in making a graphic that captures the spirit of place. This is “making” in a way that is close to our desire to make plans, buildings, landscapes, and is satisfying in a fulfilling way.

But, most importantly, making a drawing or a sketch is a way to thoroughly immerse yourself in the moment. A drawing is an experience of place and time. While a photograph is only an image, even perhaps a good one made with skill and a good eye, it can be nothing more. But, in contrast, as

Clockwise from Top Centre: Bumthang Dzong, Bhutan; Cartagena Cathedral, Colombia; Dobo Ter Eger, Hungary; Main Street Penarandade, Duero, Spain.



you sit and draw you become part of the world around you. Everything intensifies, not just form and colour, but sounds and smells, the temperature of the air. And a happy interaction almost invariably results with people. Perhaps they are flattered that their world is being appreciated by someone who wishes to draw it, or perhaps they are merely curious. Jane and I have been invited into a rabbit-warren home in Havana by a

boy who wanted to show us his teenage drawings of racing cars and fighter planes and to a roof top studio by an abstract painter. In France a small boy was sent across the town square with cups of cold water since his grandfather saw us drawing there and thought we might be thirsty. All these experiences become an integral part of the drawing and resonate off the page, for time to come. **SL**

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Digital Hand

Article and Illustrations
by Daniel Roehr, MBCSLA, AK-B

Hand drawing tools expanded the last 20 years from using pencil and paper to digital drawing pad and stylus, but the new technical innovations did not change the basic technics and skills for how to see and analyze the environment or create hand drawings. Students today and particularly graduates are required to exhibit excellent digital drafting skills as a prerequisite for employment over hand drawing skills. Is that not irresponsible from an educator's point of view? Yes, I think so, after leading three hand-sketching tours abroad as an Associate Professor with the University of British Columbia. Instead, shouldn't students first learn to "see" by exercising hand drawings on site, and then developing their ideas through hand drawing in the studio, before starting with digital drafting or a combination of both?

Design education today deals with the "digital" time sucker phenomenon where students are busy learning and keeping up to date with digital drafting programs focused solely working on screens before learning basic hand drawing skills in the environment.

Hand drawing is a visual tool that documents the thinking process of the brain. Designers use hand drawing their whole lives to train their "seeing" skills of an existing condition—referential drawing and "thinking" tools—design drawings.

Hand drawing created on paper or digital drawing pad is the fastest method to document an existing condition or design idea; it's the basis of design education.

There is however a third drawing type I highly recommend practicing, called memory sketching. These drawings are drawn from memory after a site visit. The reason to exercise those drawings is to encourage and practice the drawer's individual artistic reinterpretation of a site from memory. Memory drawings could be positioned between referential drawing and design drawings. Their learning objective combines training the "seeing" and forces the drawer to "edit" and create one's own loose drawing style instead of replicating a precise image.

For design schools, it is time for a revival of rigorous training in hand drawing skills. Students should learn the processes of seeing, editing, and documenting through hand drawing at the beginning of their design careers. Exercising the eye, brain, and hand to draw creates articulate designers. In the global world, hand drawings are a design language everyone understands. **SL**

Top Right: Memory Sketch, Digital, 2014, Skiing Whistler. **Middle Right:** Memory Sketch, Digital, 2014, Train View, Brandenburg, Germany. **Right:** Memory Sketch, Digital, 2014, Inspired by Lawren Harris Exhibition, Vancouver Art Gallery. **Bottom Left:** Memory Sketch, Digital, 2014, Vancouver Down Town. **Bottom Right:** Referential Sketch, Digital, 2014, Glienicke Park, Berlin, Germany.



Drawing ON People

Article and Illustrations by
Mariken van Nimwegen, MA,
Retired Editorial Illustrator,
The Vancouver Sun

Drawing on-location attracts an instant crowd, looking over your shoulder while offering plenty of unsolicited commentary. Clearly, the locals are the experts on the subject. To them, you're a different kind of tourist: not one who looks through a lens and keeps moving, but one that spends some time, shows an interest, and actually produces something. You enter their daily lives and they'll give you lots of advice about it—exactly what you seek to experience and the only good reason to visit faraway cultures. The language barrier can be overcome in so many creative ways. “Interactive” drawing is one of them.

The beauty of drawing is that you can: single out a specific action or tell its complete sequence; liven up architecture by “peopling” the streets; find surprising angles that may include humour and juxtaposition; leave out irrelevant background “noise”; and group various drawings on one, thematic page, or create text in and around them. My drawings are my ethnographic and journalistic field notes.

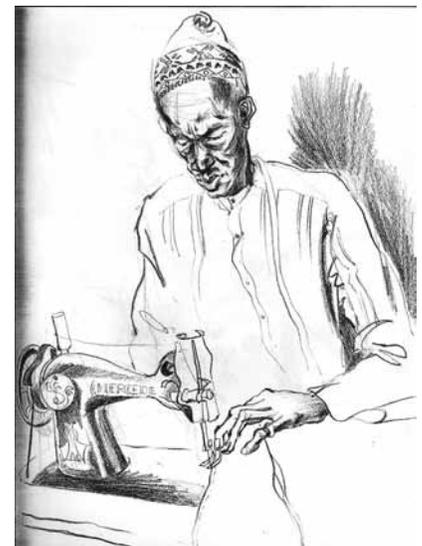
Sketching lacks photographic precision and thus it can provide a degree of anonymity when the subject requires it. In one such case though, this did not protect me from the fury of a Muslim market woman in India who came at me in dismay of the whole exercise—large raised stick in hand. The fact that she was only a small, distant figure in an overview drawing of the marketplace was no consolation to her.

It's the risk you run. Working alone in a studio, creating a fictitious illustration with its emphasis on style, technique, and concept, never generates, quite literally, the same degree of excitement for me. I have been an illustrator at many idea-gathering public city-planning charrettes and made a living as a newspaper editorial illustrator, but I discovered that I thrive on the plein air approach to illustration and find it essential to the authentic and vital portrayal of place and the “real” people who inhabit it.

The traveling artist-as-reporter continues to look for further adventures. **SL**



Top: South India at “feeding time”: focus on body language and spatial arrangement.
Above Right: Architecture shown by way of an event: New Year’s in Vancouver Chinatown.
Bottom Left: Example of a “theme page”, on hairdos encountered in China.
Below: San Francisco Chinatown: “peoplescape”. **Bottom Right:** Spending quiet time with an old tailor in The Gambia. Good excuse: he’s making my dress.



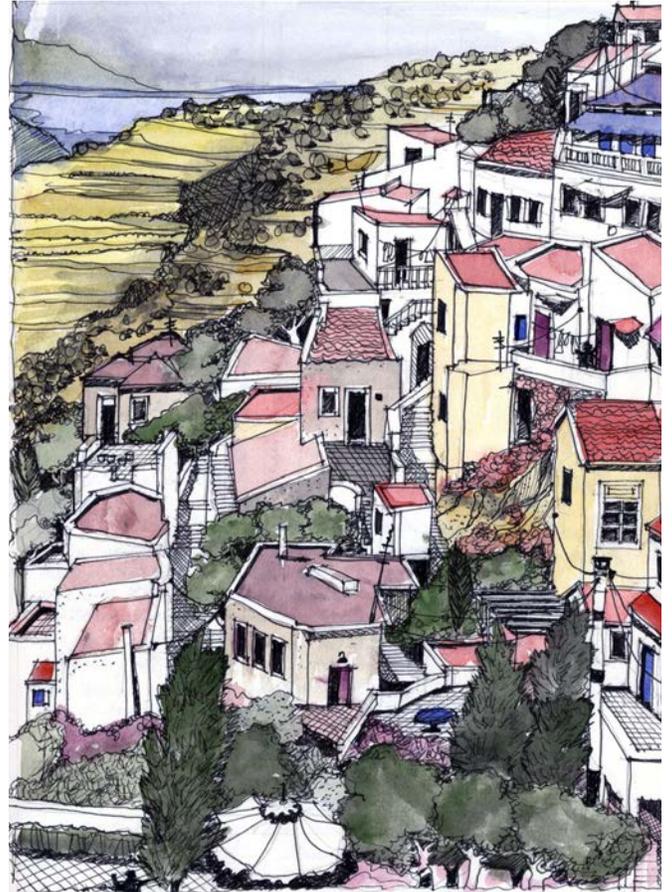
Drawing From Travel

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Needle Rock - ghost Ranch

Frank Ducote



Chora. another view from John's abode...

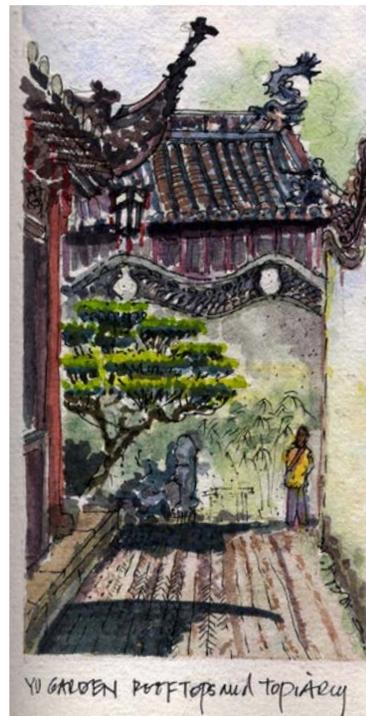
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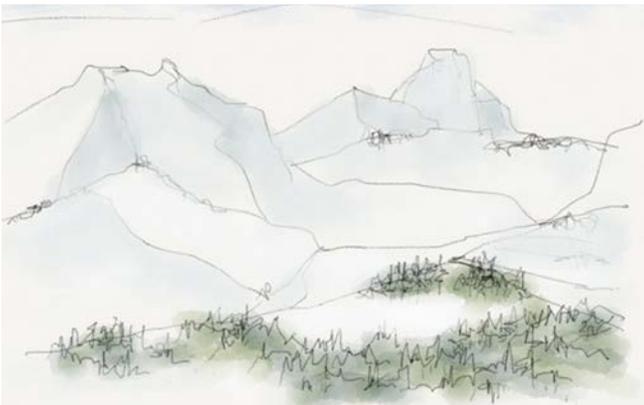
Henry Hawthorn



John Perkins



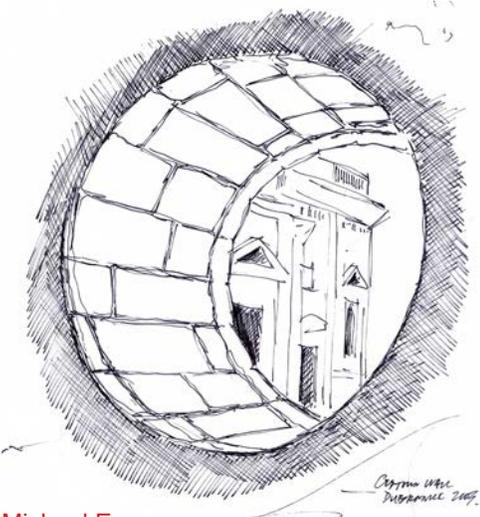
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