



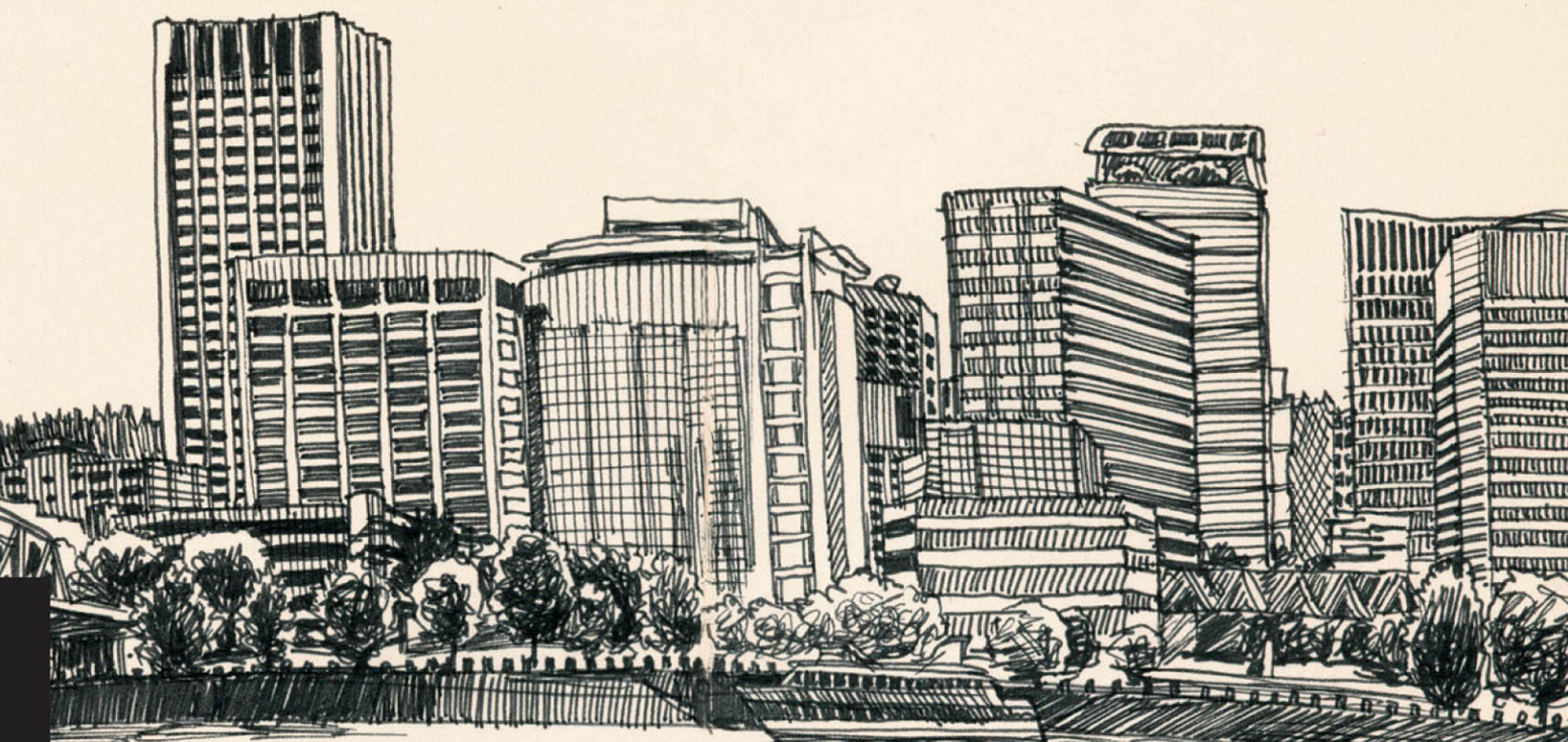
# THE ART OF **URBAN** SKETCHING

GABRIEL  
CAMPANARIO

Drawing on location around the world

See  
the world  
one drawing  
at a time

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THE ART OF  
**URBAN**  
SKETCHING

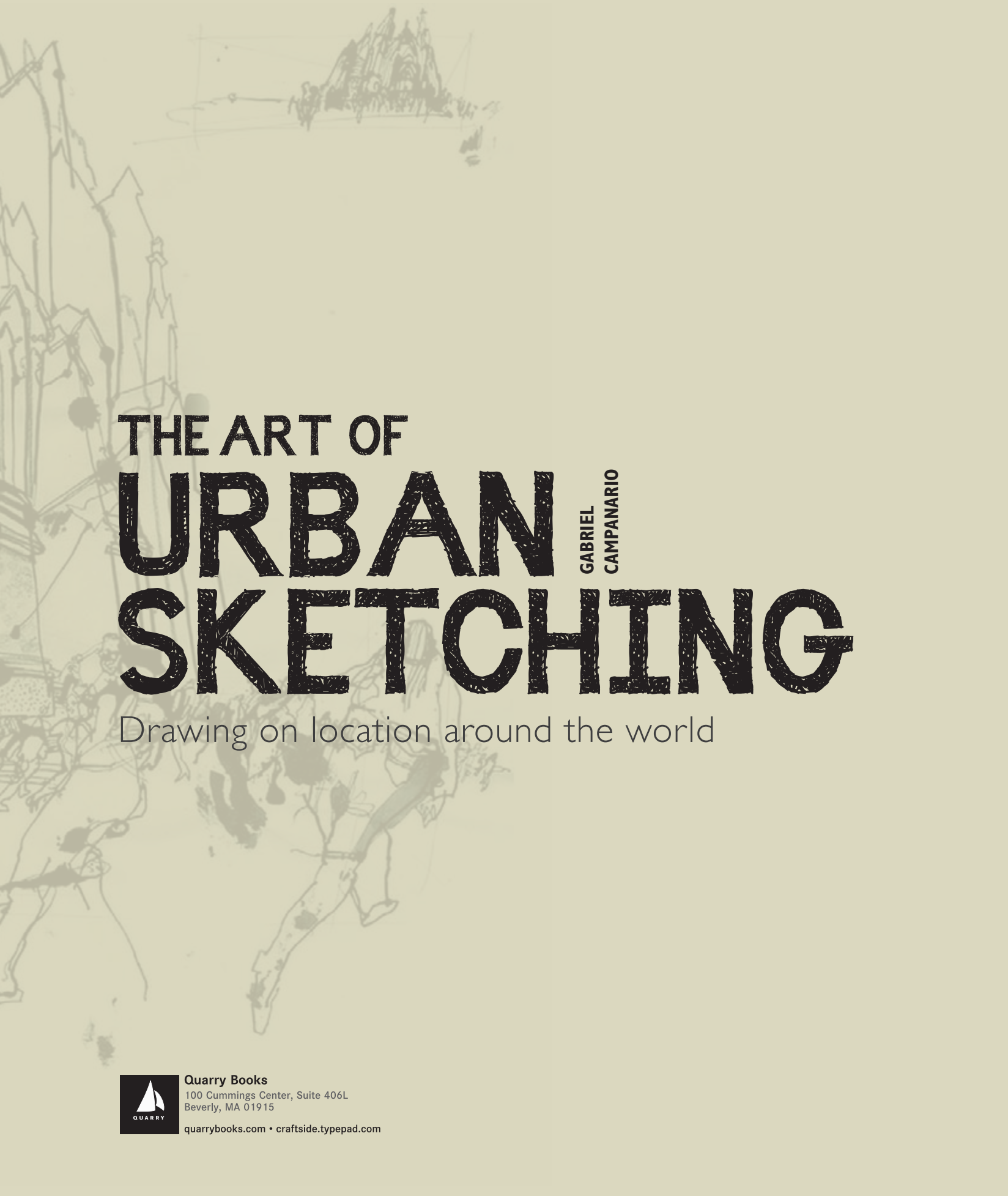
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See the world, one drawing at a time...



# THE ART OF **URBAN** SKETCHING

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To my family, Michelle, Alex, and Olivia, and to all my fellow urban sketchers



— Danielle McManus

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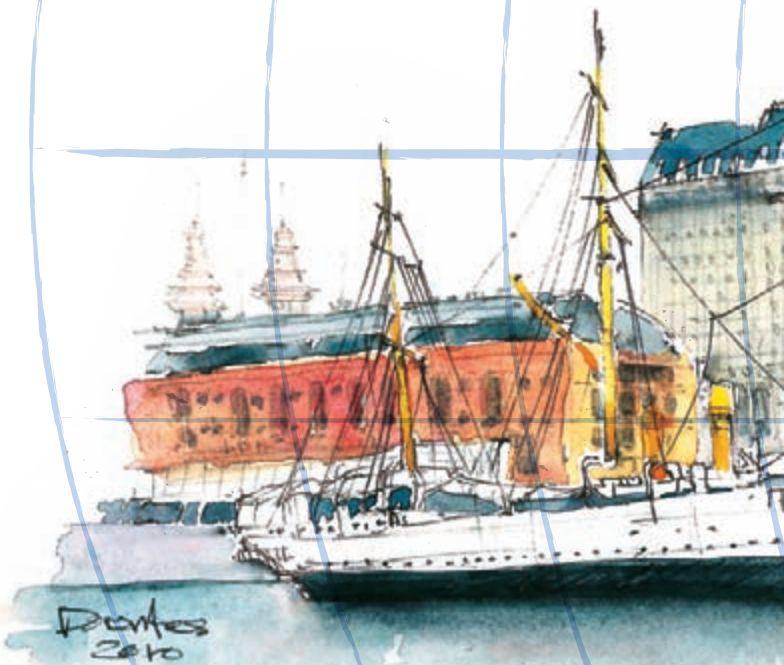
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– Gary Amaro



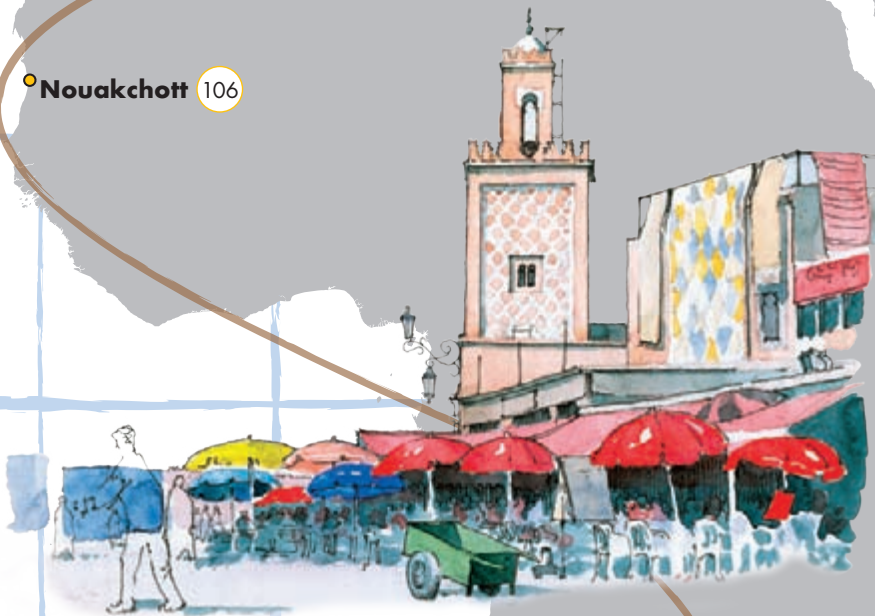
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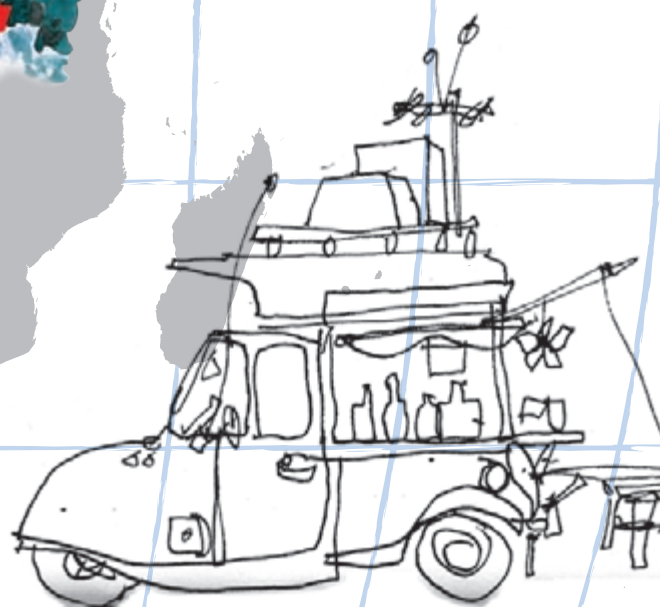
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I got hooked on urban sketching when I started drawing during my bus commute.

## PREFACE

Moving to a new city can be intimidating. I have done it many times since I left my hometown of Barcelona in 1987 to attend college in Pamplona. I've also called Reno, Palm Springs, and Washington D.C. home, but it was only when I settled in Seattle in 2006 that I discovered a new way to deal with the stress of landing in unknown territory. I picked up a notebook and started drawing what I saw.

I sketched my new street and marveled at the height of the fir trees up the hill. I drew bus commuters lost in their own thoughts, bent over their laptops, working on a crossword puzzle, or sipping tall cups of coffee. I sketched the snowcapped mountains around Puget Sound as my kids played on the beach.

Most days, you can still find me drawing around Seattle, gaining new appreciation for the city with every sketch I make, no matter how fast or accurately rendered. With every piece, my skills are sharpened and my connection with the community becomes stronger.

I wish my pen and sketchbook had been my companions more often, as I was growing up in Barcelona. Sketching such a beautiful place might have kept me grounded. But you never know—without leaving, I might never have encountered the art of urban sketching.

—*Gabriel Campanario*

Seattle, March 31, 2011

# INTRODUCTION

You might have seen us at the coffee shop, on the subway, or in the park. Pen and paper in hand, we are drawing the world around us. Our open sketchbooks show lively streetscapes, soaring architecture, and intriguing faces, all quickly rendered on the spot—sometimes furtively, sometimes before a gathering crowd. In watercolor, ink, or graphite, urban sketchers draw scenes from their daily lives on location or on vacation, in cities around the globe.

In London, the shadows cast by a sunlit tree on Abbey Street stop Adebani Alade in his tracks, and he sits on the curb to draw.

In a neighborhood of São Paulo in Brazil, João Pinheiro draws a skyline of new apartment buildings rising where older houses used to be.

In Stockholm, Nina Johansson enjoys a sunny summer day sketching boats by the water. “Drawing a city is not just capturing it on paper,” she says. “It’s about getting to know it, to feel it, to make it your own.”

Sketching is our way of discovering our communities. We are tourists in our own cities, replicating in our own personal styles awe-inspiring landmarks or just the mundane moments of our commute. We are historians who document the changing

urban landscape—like Cathy Johnson, who draws the demolition of a historic bridge.

We are also reporters, telling the stories of our travels. In Marrakech, Stuart Kerr squats drawing in the street, having conversations in bad French with cigarette vendors, while Moroccan kids lean up against him. “Sketching was an effective way to meet locals properly,” he says.

In Paris, Julien Fassel, a.k.a. Lapin, braves freezing temperatures to do a sketch of Notre Dame Cathedral. It is so cold his watercolors freeze.

In Venice, Veronica Lawlor sketches a view of the Grand Canal from the Rialto bridge, Florian Afflerbach draws at San





➔ London Adebani  
Alade sits on a sack of  
cement to draw.

Giorgio Maggiore, and Tia Boon Sim inks a view of Piazza San Marco. The American, German, and Singaporean sketchers each visited the city of canals on different trips and are discovering each other—and each other’s unique point of view—at Urban Sketchers, a site I launched with fellow sketchers in 2008 as a global sketching showcase. One hundred correspondents from five continents post their vivid sketches on the website, often adding equally colorful stories from behind the scenes. The site serves as the inspiration for this book and has launched an urban-sketching movement and created a supportive sketching community.

But the Web is a fast-paced environment, and there’s little time to relish a sketch. That’s why I’m really excited about *The Art of Urban Sketching*, the first compilation of our work in book

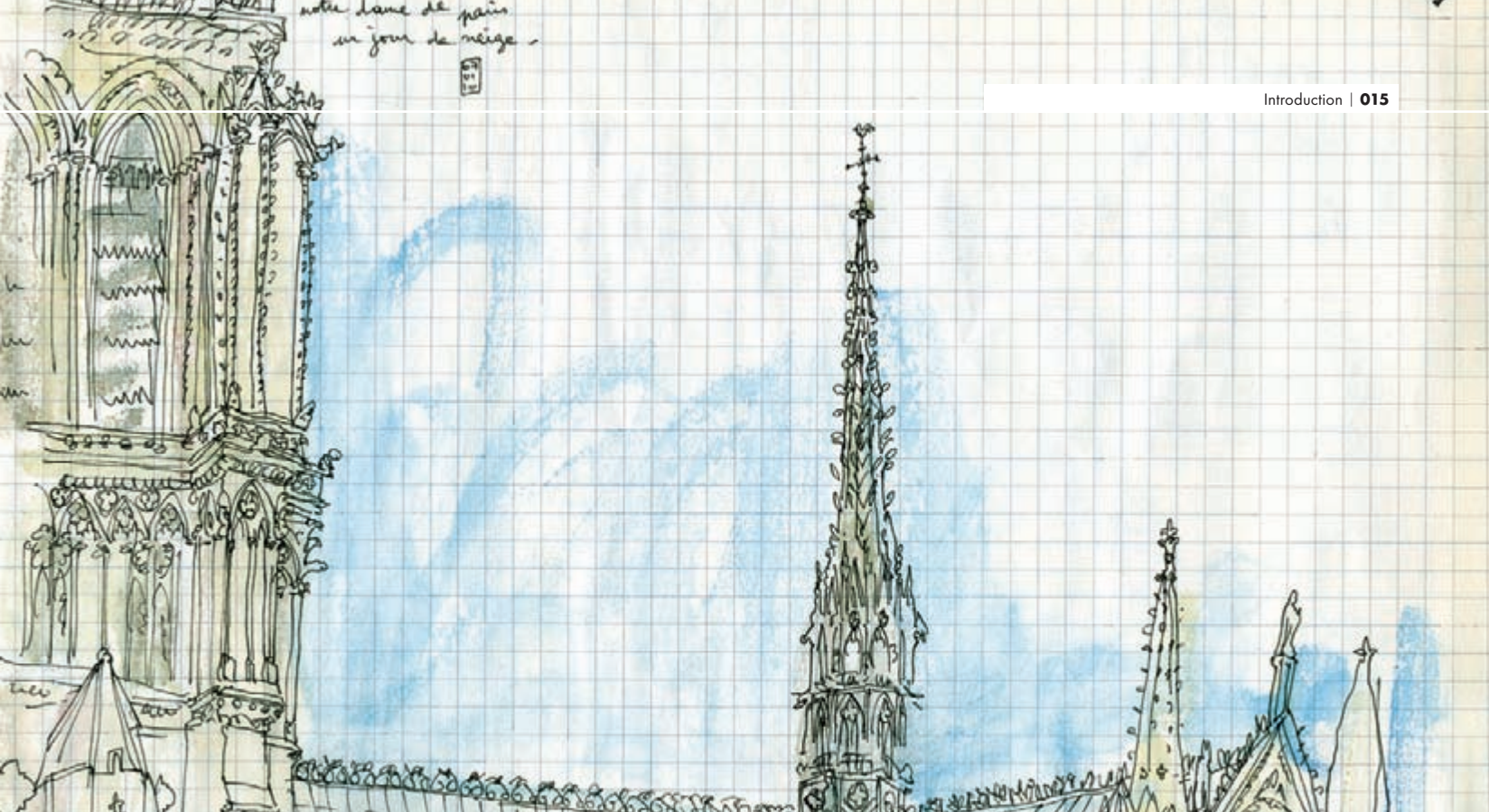
form. Now, to travel vicariously through more than 500 urban sketches, you can stop clicking and start leisurely browsing. Admire a view of Manhattan’s skyline drawn from a roof in Brooklyn. Take in a driver’s view of Bangkok traffic or the atmosphere of a flea market in Mauritania. Sketches of crowded streets, quiet parks, and lively performances show the world, one drawing at a time. We share what it was like to capture these views and what we learned with each stroke.

We hope you’ll join us with your sketchbook the next time you see us.

➡ **Paris** Lapin’s watercolors froze in Paris during a winter outing.

📍 **São Paulo** João Pinheiro’s skyline sketched from a window.







– Cathy Johnson

# 1

## BECOMING AN URBAN SKETCHER

*No extravagant tools or formal artistic training is needed to draw on location. Let your hand interpret what your eyes see, as you explore your city, making marks on paper.*

# WHAT IS URBAN SKETCHING?

As hobbies go, urban sketching gives you a lot of bang for your buck. With nothing more than a piece of paper and a pencil, you are equipped to start drawing your city or village, the people who live there, and the things that are happening in it.

The beauty of sketching is that, almost by definition, a sketch can be completed as simply and quickly as you like. It can involve making a fifteen-minute sketch of the view from your window or whipping out a collapsible sketching stool and spending an hour or two capturing the way the light hits that beautiful old church. In either case, sketching stops the clock and lets your mind turn off all the noise.

Although many creative professionals use field sketching in their work, urban sketching is purely for fun—a chance to step away from the computer and just draw for the sheer joy of it, without deadlines or objectives. It has the power to turn a moment of boredom into a creative pastime. In a sense, urban sketching can be more about the experience than the result.

If you make urban sketching part of your routine and continue with it in your travels, you not only end up with a work of art in your hands, you create a *de facto* journal of your life—from the mundane (fellow bus commuters, the view from your office window) to the exciting (a day at a ballgame or a once-in-a-lifetime overseas trip). The sketches bring back memories in a way photos don't, evoking the sounds, smells, and recollections of the places in which you created them.

You'll notice, too, that your skills will be sharper, and you'll gain a new appreciation for your surroundings. Drawing something forces you to look at it, really look at it. When sketching far from home, you are immersed in the local culture, your sketchbook sparking interactions when it draws curiosity.

Although sketching is a solitary activity, it becomes social when you share your drawings online and meet other people to draw together. The Urban Sketchers website has connected a truly global web of sketching enthusiasts. A site correspondent from the United States travels to Barcelona for the first time and has a built-in sketching companion and guide—how cool is that?



## THE URBAN SKETCHERS' MANIFESTO

**1.** We draw on location, indoors or outdoors, capturing what we see from direct observation.

Urban sketching is a raw and pure form of art that requires drawing from life, rather than from photographs or the imagination. In most cases, urban sketching is practiced on the street. Some sketchers lean up against a tree or the corner of a building or sit on a stair or bench. Others bring along a folding stool. In daylight or at night, whether it's hot or cold, in rain or sunshine, urban sketchers draw what they witness.

**2.** Our drawings tell the story of our surroundings, the places we live, and where we travel.

Sketching the urban environment produces more than a hand-drawn representation of a given place. Behind each drawing is a story of what was happening before our eyes: a building being torn down, a business closing its doors, or an encounter with a stranger in the subway. Sketches become first-person accounts of life as it happens.

**i** Laura Frankstone is oblivious to passersby as she sketches in downtown Portland, Oregon.

**➡** Kansas City's Cathy Johnson documents the demolition of a historic bridge.





### 3. Our drawings are a record of a time and place.

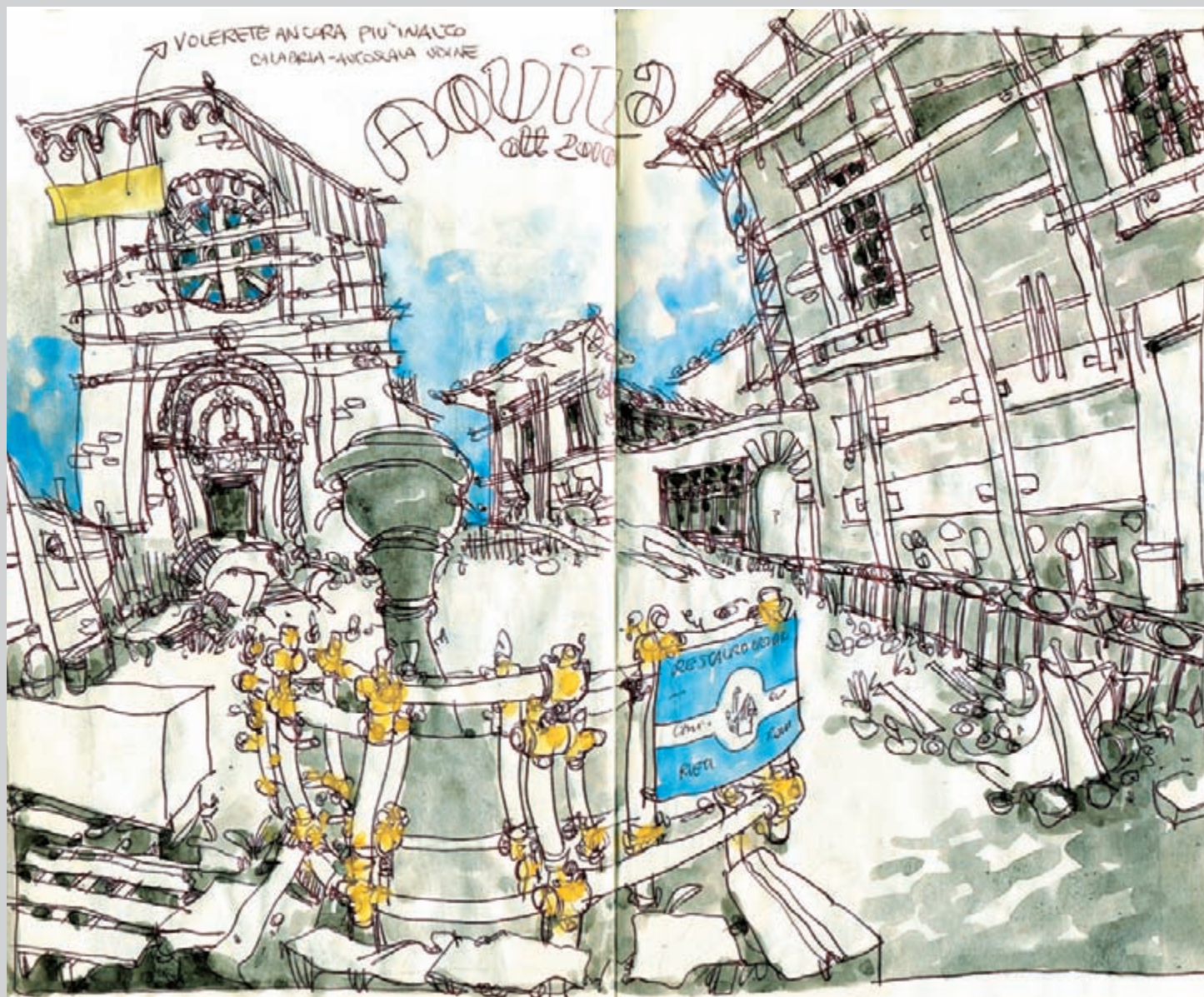
In the same way a diarist dates a journal entry, urban sketchers often date their drawings, sometimes going as far as to write down the exact hour and minute at which they were completed. It's a way to prove that we've "been there, drawn that."

A sketch captures a moment, a unique experience that can't be repeated. And because we took the time to create it, instead of snapping a photo in an instant, the sketch has the power to bring back much sharper memories.

📍 Danish sketcher Ea Ejersbo sketches Rome during a summer vacation.

📍 Benedetta Dossi sketches the aftermath of a powerful earthquake in the central Italian village of L'Aquila.





#### 4. We are truthful to the scenes we witness.

Artists who practice urban sketching interpret the reality before them through their own points of view. Being truthful doesn't mean drawing every window in a building or keeping lines straight. Each artist is free to infuse each sketch with his or her personality, while keeping the essence of what he or she sees. Some sketchers like detailed work, spending hours in front of their subjects; others synthesize the essence of a streetscape in a few simple strokes.



📍 Singapore art educator Tia Boon Sim encourages her students to pour coffee on their sketches as an exercise to draw without fear.

📍 Kumi Matsukawa draws her sketch pals during a sketchcrawl in Tokyo.



## 5. We use any kind of media and cherish our individual styles.

Pencils, pens, fountain pens, markers, colored pencils, crayons: the media urban sketchers use are endless, as are the possibilities, when you combine them to draw on any kind of paper, whether bound in sketchbooks or in single sheets. But the media doesn't define the art. All that urban sketching requires is making marks on paper to draw what we see.

## 6. We support each other and draw together.

The Internet has helped urban sketchers find each other; as a result, more meet to draw together than ever in the past.

Taking inspiration from pub crawls, in which friends travel from bar to bar, Italian artist Enrico Casarosa started inviting people in San Francisco to meet for a sketchcrawl, a day of communal sketching around the city. World Wide Sketchcrawl days, announced on Casarosa's SketchCrawl website, have been adopted by urban sketchers as drawing holidays. The term is also commonly used to refer to any kind of group sketch outing.

For people too nervous to draw alone or who want to overcome a fear of drawing in public, getting together with like-minded artists provides a supportive network and endless motivation. After a few hours of drawing, passing around the results from the session over a meal or drink is an extra payoff.

## 7. We share our drawings online.

If not for the Internet, the global urban sketching community would remain a disconnected group of artists. Using blogs and image-sharing sites, like-minded artists are calling attention to the benefits of sketching on location, opening a window onto the world, and motivating each other to draw.

📍 James Hobbs sketches while waiting to pick up his child from a friend's house.



© Belgian architect Gérard Michel has shared more than 4,000 sketches from his finished sketchbooks online.



## 8. We show the world, one drawing at a time.

The urban sketcher's quest to draw the world is not limited to city landmarks or historic locations. Any scene, no matter how mundane, is worth drawing. A sketch has the ability to elevate the least picturesque location into something worth looking at and reflecting upon.

# TOOLS FOR YOUR PORTABLE STUDIO

Urban sketching in public might require some courage, but it doesn't require sophisticated tools. The complexity of your urban sketching kit depends on the situations in which you like to draw and the type of sketches you want to make. A small notebook and a pencil are enough to draw quick portraits of commuters on the subway, but if you're going to spend a couple of hours drawing at your neighborhood park, you might need a bigger sketchbook and some colors. Whatever way you go, you'll want to keep your kit as portable as possible.

## Paul Heaston's Sketching Tools

San Antonio artist Paul Heaston keeps a portable, yet fully loaded, sketching bag. He also brings a folding stool on long sketch outings, when he can spend one or two hours on a single drawing.

- **Pens and pencils:** waterproof pigment liners will not smear when you add watercolor
- **Sketchbooks:** landscape formats are fun to work with for panoramic drawings, a pocket sketchbook is handy for quick sketches
- **Drawing pads:** they are good if you plan to tear the sketch out
- **Mechanical pencils:** you don't have to sharpen them
- **Clips:** handy to keep sketchbook pages from flipping
- **Waterbrushes:** they can be refilled with water for easy use of watercolors on the go
- **Watercolor kit:** a limited color palette is better for quick sketches



📍 São Paulo illustrator João Pinheiro says even a cocktail napkin sketch can be full of expression.

### Roger O'Reilly's Sketching Tools

Irish illustrator Roger O'Reilly's tools of choice are a brush pen, a small selection of pencils, and a much-used traveling watercolor set. Also in his bag:

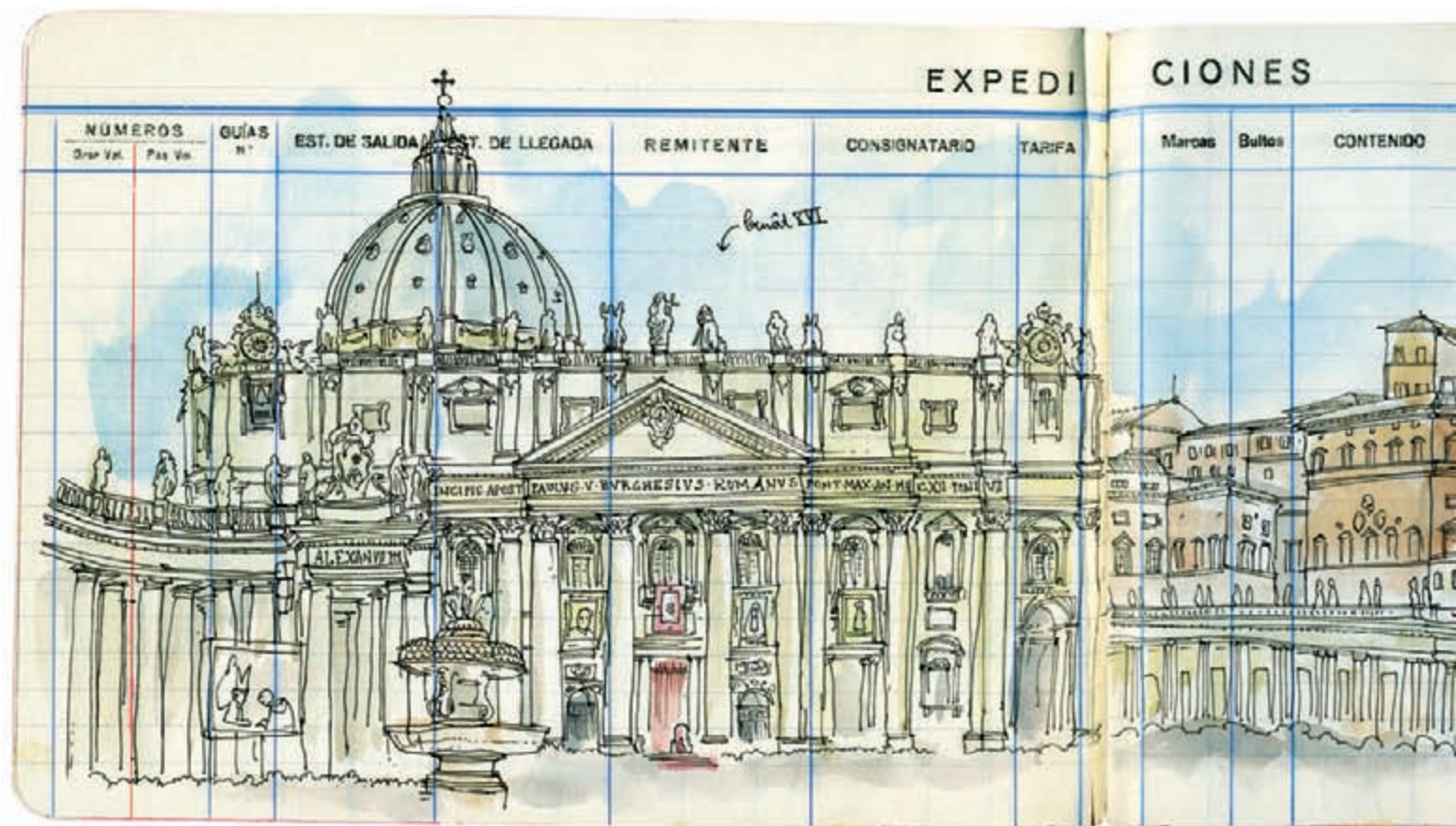
- **Pentel brush pen with cartridges:** instant dense blacks. This is still the best cartridge-based brush pen I've come across, O'Reilly says. Behaves exactly like a brush, though it can lay too much ink on the paper if you're not careful.
- **Staedtler liner pens:** ideal for laying down quick lines. With four sizes (01–07), you can vary line thicknesses easily, though I tend to mostly use the 03 and just go back and forth over the line.
- **Various pencils:** well-worn 2Bs and 3Bs and a mechanical pencil (2B, No. 5), which is good for occasions when you want to ghost in pencil lines and don't want them to be too visible in the finished drawing



### Murray Dewhurst's Sketching Tools

New Zealander Murray Dewhurst carries A6 and A5 Hahnemühle sketchbooks, which he uses depending on how much time he has to sketch. His drawing tools include the following:

- **Winsor & Newton Cotman Sketchers' Pocket Box:** small, easy to carry—the easiest way to get color into your work onsite
- **Kuretake waterbrushes:** fantastic for getting color down quickly
- **Pens:** Rotring Tikky Graphic pens or Staedtler pigment liners, .3 and .5: both brands are good and are permanent, to help avoid bleeding when watercolor is added
- **Pencils:** Faber-Castell 2 mm clutch pencil: this old mechanical pencil doubles as a sharpener, which saves packing a separate one



### Recycled Notebooks

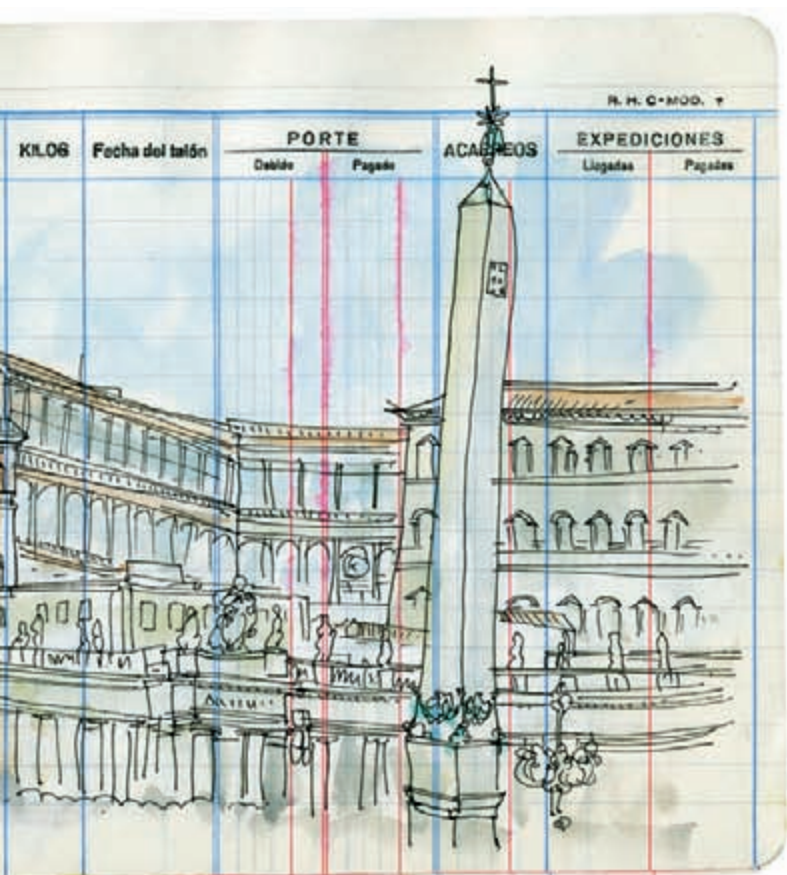
French illustrator Lapin draws on old accounting ledgers he finds at flea markets. "I like the layering that this lined paper gives; it adds something that goes well with my washed watercolors," Lapin says. "I'm confused only when I want to sketch an oblique element in all those vertical lines, but what I especially like about these old papers is the quality. Even though the sheets are very fine, ink pen and watercolors do not bleed through."

It seems that after the '80s, the quality of the paper turned poor, and nowadays it's expensive to buy sketchbooks of that quality."



### HOW TO BECOME PART OF THE ONLINE SKETCHING COMMUNITY

1. **Convert your sketches into digital files.** Take a photo of your sketch with your digital camera, or use a flatbed scanner to digitize your drawing. Scan it at full resolution (300 dots per inch), in case you'll want to print it, and then save a smaller, web-friendly low-resolution version (72 dots per inch.)
2. **Share the sketches online.** Many sketchers use blogs to share their sketches. Blogger and Wordpress are two popular platforms. Or you can share your drawings on image-sharing sites like Flickr, social-networking sites like Facebook, or post your sketches on the Urban Sketchers Facebook page.
3. **Have fun interacting with fellow artists.** Once you have shared your drawings online, you'll start attracting feedback from visitors to your blog or the social-media outlet where you shared the sketch. Their comments will be encouraging and will motivate you to keep drawing.



### Customized Kit

Cathy Johnson devised a minimal sketching kit out of a candy tin. "I cleaned it out well and let it dry thoroughly then painted the inside white with spray paint and the outside with shiny black . . . I really don't need more than this," she says. It includes cadmium yellow medium, quinacridone red, phthalo blue, burnt sienna, and Payne's Gray watercolors, a Derwent Graphitint Steel Blue watercolor pencil, and a Pentel Aquash waterbrush.

For papers, Johnson likes to combine different colored papers in her own handmade sketchbooks. "It challenges me to try different approaches and mediums," she says.

### Train Sketching Kit

Sheffield illustrator Lynne Chapman has a specific set of tools to sketch during her train commute. "Traveling light means I can be ready to draw at a moment's notice, pretty much anywhere," she says. In her kit:

- **A6 or A5 hardback sketchbook:** durable and small enough to hold in one hand, plus easier to conceal if I'm trying not to be spotted
- **Pencil case:** with approximately ten presharpener 3B pencils
- **Craft knife:** for emergency sharpening.
- **Mini-hairspray:** for fixing pencil (especially handy when I've drawn across both sides of the spread)



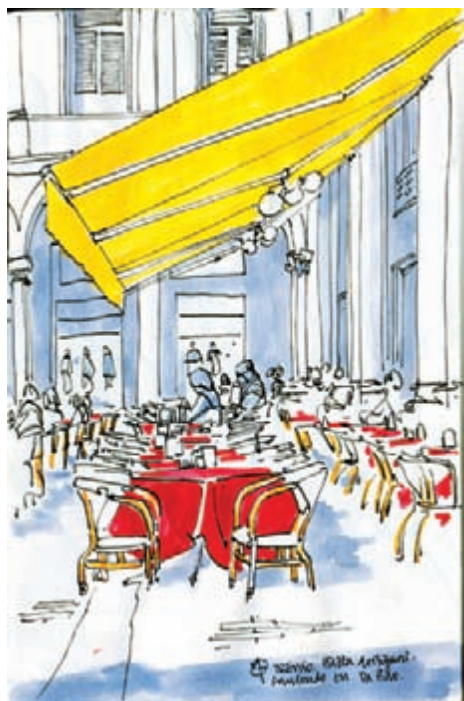
# STYLE AND TECHNIQUE

There are many ways to sketch. Which one is yours? Finding the tools that are right for you is the first step toward developing your own style.

Some sketchers are loyal to a single type of pen. Others change tools according to the situation. Graphite works well with quick, gestural drawings. Watercolor applied methodically in layers can add depth to a sketch. The methods and processes used vary as well. Some compose a sketch with light pencil lines before applying ink; others swear by direct-to-paper ink sketching to create vivid, lively images. Some never go back to the sketch after leaving the spot; others add touches of color later.

Whatever tools and techniques you use, your personality will come through in your sketches and a style will develop over time.

☞ "I mostly start with a very loose pencil outline to establish overall shapes, size, and composition on the page. With complicated buildings, I also setup grid lines for the major architectural elements. Then I start sketching with ink, without worrying too much about my initial pencil outline—this allows my ink lines to still be loose." — *Liz Steel (Sydney)*



☞ "I always draw straight with ink. I only use the pencil for pencil sketches, not as a basis for an ink sketch. I start always from the point that catches my attention and try to draw as slowly as I can. I always do all the linework from life. The only postproduction I allow myself is coloring (when I can't do it from life) and writing. I never design a layout in advance for the pages." — *Miguel Herranz (Barcelona)*



☞ "I like to draw directly in ink, because that makes me look harder and concentrate more on placing my lines on the paper. I don't mind mistakes; I just draw over them and try to incorporate them into the drawing. Then I either color my drawings with watercolors or use crosshatching to get some shading and texture." — *Nina Johansson (Stockholm)*



👉 My technique is to experiment and mix all my materials together when I draw. I would say pastels are my favorite things to use—the softness of them, the intense colors, and the ability to blend colors. Yes, it is messy, but that is part of the fun. The best thing to do is to go out and try something different each time.” — *Danielle C. McManus (New York City)*



👉 “I start all my sketches the same way, with a light gestural drawing in pencil, making every effort to create with a mood, impression, or story in my head. Next come details, again in pencil, with more attention to specifics. Finally, I lay in ink washes, working from broad areas to specific details. Layers upon layers of ink lead to rich darks, which I feel add depth to my drawings. Of utmost importance to me is finishing the drawing without losing that crucial first impression—the point of the drawing.”

— *Fred Lynch (Boston)*



“First, I choose a place to sit. I need shade, and I need to be sure that a car isn’t going to park in front of me five minutes into the sketch. I usually make a few faint guide-lines in H2 pencil to work out composition then do all the hard work in black pen, usually a Micron Pigma 0.1. I color onsite, using watercolors. I usually take as much time as I have—such as my lunch hour—and if there are details to fill in later, I will write notes on the sketch. I often draw a frame around my sketches to limit my composition but rather enjoy letting objects pop out of the frame.”  
— Pete Scully (Davis, California)

“I used to do a lot of black-and-white, quick, double-spread sketches in Moleskine pocket sketchbooks. However, I find myself creating more and more ink and watercolor sketches in a bigger format. This allows me to experiment with different techniques. I find splashing the sky with blue, red, orange, and purple before adding salt for special effect a very liberating process. I am not restricting myself to a coloring exercise; I am experimenting and have no fear in seeing splashes of colors all over the paper. Depending on the splashes, I will work around them, so some of the lines and shapes are distorted or exaggerated. It provides an interesting dimension to the final product.” — Tia Boon Sim (Singapore)



Street concert in Cremona by Miguel Herranz



Renaissance guitar concert in Berlin by Rolf Schroeter



Jazz at the Set, Kilkenny by Roger O'Reilly, Ireland

#### STYLE AND TECHNIQUE

##### A Brush with Music

Even using the same tool, a Pentel brush pen, the individual style of these artists comes through in these sketches of similar subject matter. Miguel Herranz's street concert has a calligraphic quality; Roger O'Reilly's jazz quartet is bold with contrast; and Rolf Schroeter's guitar player has sensuous linework.