SKETCH NOW THINK LATER

Jump into Urban Sketching with Limited Time, Tools, and Techniques

Mike Yoshiaki Daikubara

miked

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MIKE YOSHIAKI DAIKUBARA





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Dedication

I would like to give a special thanks to my wife, Kana, who has supported me throughout my entire urban sketching journey, ever since I first started carrying a sketchbook back in 2000.

This book also would not have happened without her. Because she's a nonsketcher, I wanted to sketch faster so I could spend more time with her and our other non-sketching friends. I developed all of the techniques on the following pages to be able to sketch faster, which eventually lead to the development of the contents of this book. Now I can enjoy sketching (my passion) while not missing a moment spending time with my wife and friends. I believe you do not need to sacrifice one thing for another and can enjoy it all. At least that's my goal!

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Introduction

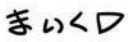
- Have you ever wanted to sketch but gave up a sketching situation since you felt you didn't know where to start or have enough time to start?
- Have you ever passed up an opportunity to sketch because you were around family/friends who are nonsketchers and didn't want to make them wait for you?
- Have you ever wanted to start sketching or incorporate more sketching time into your daily life but couldn't find the time to do so?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, this book is for YOU!

Perhaps you are already a sketcher, enjoying the activities of drawing on location from direct observation and you picked up this book because you want to do more of it. Or maybe you want to start sketching, but have a hard time figuring out where to start or finding the time to do it in your already busy schedule. Regardless of your skill set or level of sketching experience, the purpose of this book is to bring more sketching time into the lives of those who want to sketch.

We all have limited time in a day, but by using the tools, techniques, and tips mentioned throughout this book, I believe anyone can create memorable, great-looking, and fun sketches.

The act of sketching is a very rewarding activity. I'm here to help you start to incorporate more of it into your daily life!



In the Beginning

Every sketch starts with the personal evaluation of Time and Energy level. Time is the physical time you have available and Energy is the personal energy level, which can be defined as the level of focus or concentration level you have.

When starting a sketch, ask yourself the following three questions:

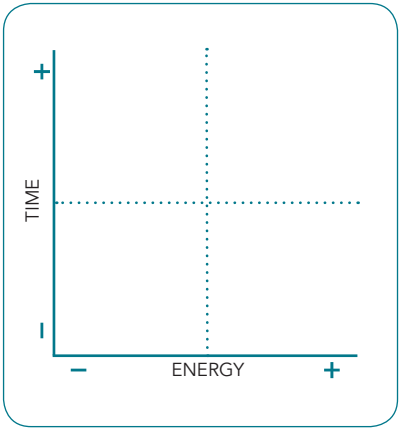
1. How much time do I have?

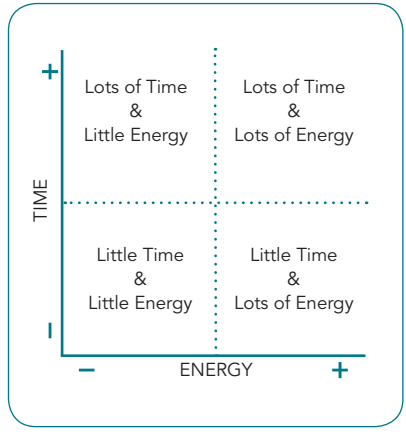
2. How much energy (concentration level) do I have?

3. If you are with people, ask yourself: How much time are my friends/ family willing to wait for me while I sketch?

When visually represented, it would look like the chart shown below (bottom left). The chart can then be broken up into four quadrants based on Time/Energy makeup (bottom right).

The following pages show the detailed explanation for each of the four quadrants.

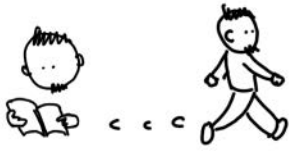




Time/Energy Chart → Quadrant Explanation

Quadrant 2

"Do something else"



Lots of Time & Little Energy

You may have lots of time, but it's not fun to sketch when you have little energy. I would use this time to do other tasks that don't require much energy, such as casual reading or taking a walk, which might change your mood about wanting to start sketching later on.

Quadrant 3

"Great but rare"

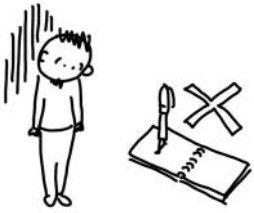


Lots of Time & Lots of Energy

For most people, this is a dream place to be—having endless time with an endless level of concentration! This state is extremely rare for me, and even when I recognize I am in this quadrant, I find myself not being able to sketch since I feel I have too much time, which leads me to contemplate too much.

Little Time & Little Energy

Having no time and no energy level makes it very difficult to do anything, including sketching.



Little Time & Lots of Energy

I find myself in this state the majority of the time, and it can be a fun place to be. This book will focus specifically on what can be done when you have a little time, but lots of energy.



TIME

\+

\-

ENERGY

\-

\+

"Take a rest"

"I'm here 90%"

Quadrant 1

Quadrant 4

Learning Goals of This Book

In this book, we will focus on the bottom right quadrant 4: Little Time & Lots of Energy. I will demonstrate what can be achieved even when one has little time, but lots of energy.

Some of my most favorite and personally rewarding sketches were created in this quadrant, and I'll prove to you that having little time is actually not a bad thing.

Limited Tools



Sketching with limited tools allows you to quickly approach sketching situations with ease. Keep the following in mind when selecting which tools to keep on hand:

- Know what you carry and where
- Use minimal yet portable tools
- Become comfortable using every tool

Limited Techniques



Sketching with limited techniques allows you to capture the moment faster. Remember to:

- Jump right into sketching
- Capture what you see and what you feel automatically
- Don't overthink; you know what to do

Limited Time



Sketching with limited time produces better-looking work, since it pushes you to concentrate harder in the time you have.

- Allows for more focus and concentration
- Friends and family do not have to wait for you
- Fits into a busy schedule

01 Tools Overview

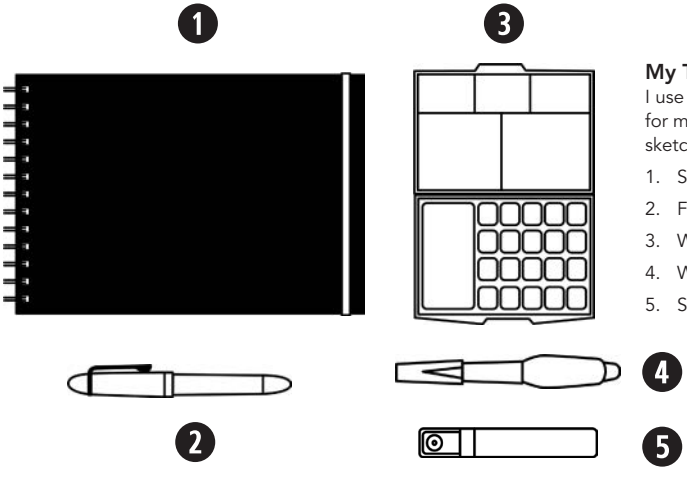
I used the following five tools to create most of the sketches shown in this book. All of the tools fit inside a small bag that I carry with me all the time, allowing me to never miss a sketching opportunity.

On the following pages, I will explain why these tools have worked for me. While they may not work for everyone, I believe these tools have elements that will help you in your sketching activity.

The goal is to stick to a basic set of tools that you can use daily and carry with you at all times. Establishing this tool set will also allow you to focus on the "sketching" portion rather than spending time selecting tools or setting up. Within a moment's notice, you'll be able to sketch NOW!

There might be times you may want to "experiment" with various tools and techniques, and that's great, but in this book we'll be focusing on capturing the NOW.





My Tool Kit
I use these five items for most of my sketches.

1. Sketchbook
2. Fountain pen
3. Watercolor kit
4. Water brush
5. Spray mister

Sketchbook



A sketchbook is one of the most important art supplies you will be carrying with you on your sketching journey.

Here are couple important points to think about when picking out a sketchbook:

1. **Size:** It should be small enough to easily carry around, yet large enough to capture your desired image.
2. **Format**: Sketchbooks come in landscape, portrait, and square.
3. **Binding type:** bounded book, spiral bound, accordion, and loose paper.
4. **Paper type:** coarse, medium, smooth, vellum. Try experimenting to see which types work best with your art medium of choice.
5. **Price:** The sketchbook shouldn't be so expensive that you are intimidated about the idea of making a mistake on the pages.

A sketchbook is where you are free to do anything you'd like, and it should feel that way. It should feel comfortable in your hands, and most of all you should enjoy every moment spent putting down marks in your book.

Over the years I have tested numerous types of sketchbooks. My current favorite is the Alpha Series, manufactured by Stillman & Birn, 10" × 7" (25.4 cm × 17.8 cm) wire-bound landscape format. There are many decisions to make in terms of paper type, size, and spine/no spine, etc. Experiment and pick one that best works for you, then stick to using that size for some time.

To make the sketchbook fully work for me, here are the few things I do to it.

Tips

When you find a sketchbook you like, stick to using it. Don't switch between multiple sketchbooks; instead, finish using the entire book before moving onto a new type.

It's tempting to try all sorts of paper types, but to fully understand the pros and cons of what you're using, the only way to learn is by using it diligently to the end.

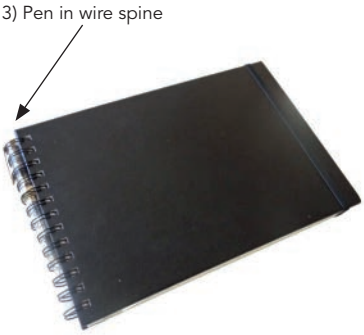


1) Reward Stamp

I start every new sketchbook by imprinting my "Reward" stamp on the inside cover. (More details on page 70.)

2) Elastic Band

I customize my sketchbook to add an elastic band on the back cover (similar to Moleskine sketchbooks). The elastic keeps the pages open on windy days, reducing the need to carry around an additional clip.



3) Pen in Wire Spine

The wire spine is the perfect spot to carry my trusty fountain pen, allowing me to take it out quickly and begin sketching. My fountain pen lives inside the wire spine the majority of the time.



4) Divider

In order to fully maximize every page of the sketchbook, I sketch on both sides of the paper and use a watercolor paper divider to keep the ink from spreading to the next page. I've used this same handmade divider for years.

Fude Fountain Pen

The drawing medium recommended for this book is a fountain pen, specifically a fountain pen called the "Fude" pen. The name "Fude" derives from a Japanese word meaning "brush," and the unusual feature about this pen is that the tip of the nib is bent and at first glance almost seems broken. But after using the pen for even a short time, you will learn that there is a reason why the pen is called a Fude pen, since it responds very much like a brush, allowing you to create thin to thick lines with one fluid motion. Since the Fude pen makes it possible to achieve all the needed lines in a sketch, this one pen is all you need to carry.

My personal favorite fude pen is made by Sailor, but other manufacturers such as Duke and Hero also make this style of pen, too. They're reasonably priced as well, so try out a few to see which brand and style best suits you.



Fude Fountain Pen
At first glance, the bent nib almost seems broken. It's quite surprising how this small bend allows the pen to create brushlike lines, but with more control than a regular brush.



Standard fountain pen tip
(nib end is straight)

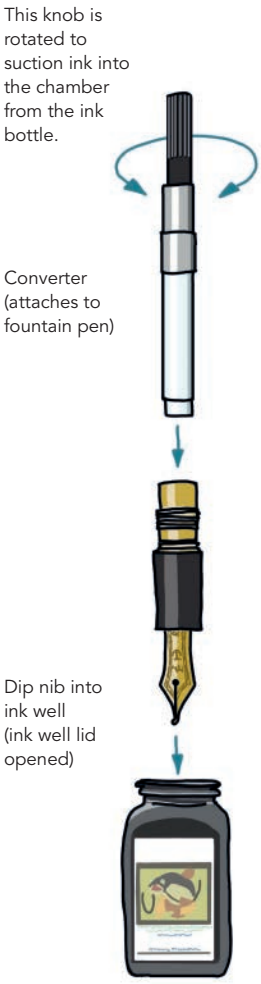


Fude fountain pen tip
(nib end is bent)

Ink

Various fountain pen manufacturers typically produce disposable ink cartridges that are already preloaded with ink and can be easily attached and safely transported. Cartridges are convenient, but the negative aspect about most cartridge inks is that they are typically not waterproof, even after they have dried. This book will focus on adding watercolor to pen sketches so it is important that the ink is waterproof and does not dissolve with water.

For this reason, I recommend using a dedicated fountain pen converter that allows the use of any desired ink to be added over and over. I like three types of ink that are quite waterproof when dry: Noodler's Black Ink, Noodler's Lexington Gray Ink, and Platinum Carbon Ink.





Alternative Pens
Lamy Safari and Pigma Micron

Alternative pens

A nice introductory alternative fountain pen is the Lamy Safari. Or, if you're not interested in using a fountain pen at this time, the Pigma Micron disposable pens (01 and 05) are nice pens that dry fully waterproof.

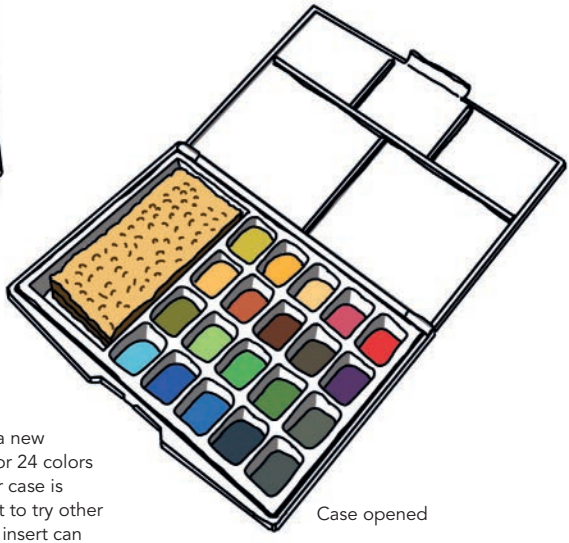
Watercolor Kit

Watercolor kits have numerous advantages over other portable coloring materials: They are small yet provide infinite colors, they are not messy (as in they're easy to clean), and they will provide you with many years of usage with little maintenance. All of these aspects are great, but what makes watercolor particularly well suited for the purposes discussed in this book is the speed of usage. It's a very fast medium with which to add color and interest to your sketches.

Any portable watercolor kit you own works well for this book, but for those looking into buying a new set, a nice introductory kit is made by Sakura called Koi. The 18 or 24 color works well and comes with a sponge, eliminating the need to carry along an extra tissue/rag for cleaning the brush tip. For years I used the Sakura Koi colors as is but then recently switched to colors made by Holbein. I still use the Koi outer case, but I've added these new colors from Holbein into my custom 3-D printed palette.*



Case closed



Case opened

Sakura Koi Case
If you are looking into investing in a new watercolor kit, the Koi series in 18 or 24 colors is a nice introductory set. The outer case is really nice too, and if you ever want to try other color brands, the original Koi color insert can be easily removed to add your own colors.

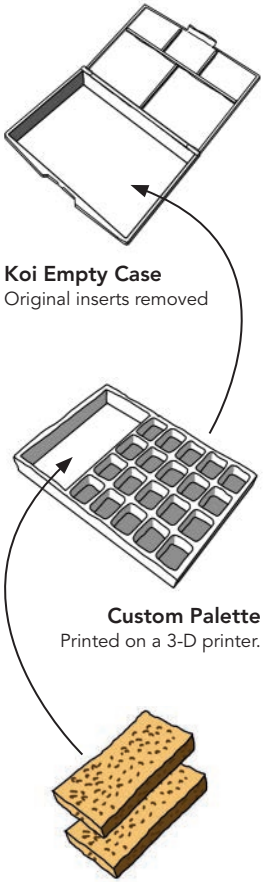
My Customized Watercolor Kit

For the first couple of years, I used the Koi kit as is with joy. Then I gradually started wanting to use different colors not found in the Koi kit. I tried a handful of watercolor kits manufactured by different companies and eventually landed on a manufacturer called Holbein; I find their colors to be very vibrant and nice to use. The only problem was that I was not happy with any of the mass-produced watercolor cases, so I customized my own.

The outer Koi case is used as is. It's built like a tank and fits well in my hands.

The plastic insert is a custom part I designed in CAD and had printed out on a 3-D printer. It fits perfectly inside the Koi case, providing space for 20 colors and room to hold my sponges as well. With the uses of sponges, there is no need to carry around extra rags or tissues.

If you are interested in this palette insert, check out page 110 for instructions on how to download the file from my website to have a 3-D part printed for yourself.



Koi Empty Case
Original inserts removed

Custom Palette
Printed on a 3-D printer.

Sponge
Two thin layers of sponges

Tip

Another easier option for customizing an existing case is to glue in the individual color pans. A drop of glue and four rows of various manufacturer half pans fit perfectly into the Koi case.

Water Brush

A water brush is a simple invention, yet I believe it has changed the lives of thousands of artists who are now able to easily work on watercolor drawings outside their studios. A water brush consists of three components: a water reservoir, a screw-on brush tip, and a cap to protect the brush while in transport.

A water brush is used just like a regular brush, but instead of dipping it into a container of water, you squeeze the water reservoir chamber when water is needed. At first it takes a little bit of time to get used to the amount of pressure needed to squeeze out the right amount of water, but soon it becomes second nature.

Water brushes are made by numerous manufacturers and they're all quite similar, with slight variations in the brush size and water chamber size. They're quite inexpensive, so you can easily experiment with a few brands to see what works best for you.





Water brush

Water Spray Mister

A mister is optional, but it's small and extremely handy to have around, especially in the summertime.

It's basically a small spray bottle filled with water that's used to spray water onto the color paints to rewet them.

In the summer heat, the watercolor paints dry up quickly. With two or three spritzes with water, they once again become easily usable. Painting with the water brush alone is possible, too, but it takes extra work and time to rewet the paint pans when they have fully dried out. When I run out of water in the water brushes, I can use the mister water as back up as well.



Water spray mister



Spraying water onto open watercolor kit

Daily Sketch Bag

I love bags, and over the years I've tried dozens of types for carrying all of my daily sketching tools. I'm still in search of my dream bag, but here are a few key requirements I look for in a sketch bag:

- ☑ **Use one sketch bag for every occasion.** I used to have different bags for different sketching occasions, and it actually started becoming a hassle to have to transfer content from one bag to another. Now I stick to using just one bag, knowing that it contains everything I need to carry with me at all times.

- ☑ **The bag should be small and light.** The advantage of a small, light bag is that you can carry it with you everywhere and not strain your body. My bag is so small that I sometimes even forget that I have it with me. A size that works well for me is a bag in the range of 8 to 10 liters. This size is also small enough that I can take it into facilities that typically restrict bags. The bag shown in the photo is allowed in most places that allow women's purses.

- ☑ **Quiet.** This is something most of us do not think about when selecting a bag, but do make sure the bag makes little noise when opening/closing or when carrying it around. I once had a bag with a very loud Velcro closure, and it was hard to use in a very quiet setting.

- ☑ **Security.** The bag should be zipper based or have a locking mechanism to make it harder to open the bag. When sketching, it's easy to get lost in the drawing. Having these features will reduce the need to worry about safety and content theft, allowing you to better concentrate on the sketch.

- ☑ **Water resistant.** Sketchbooks do not do very well with water, so you will definitely want to protect them from rain.

- ☑ **Divided up spaces for pens, palettes, etc.** Bags with separate pockets/dividers help to organize your content without having to



carry around a separate case. It also makes it easier to access the tools with ease.

- [x] **Dark colored bags.** I like colorful clothing, but when choosing a bag that fits any occasion and outfit, black works best. It also hides dirt and accidental ink/paint spills on the bag.

Ultimately, the key to a small sketching bag is that you'll always have it with you and will never miss that sketching opportunity when it arises! Make it a habit to carry this bag with you at all times.



SUE (T-Rex)
The world's largest most complete and preserved Tyrannosaurus Rex.

The Field Museum
Chicago, IL

02 Line Techniques



The first step in the Sketch NOW approach is to be able to jump right into capturing the scene with lines. It's drawing directly in ink with no pencil underlines or erasing. This can be intimidating for people who are used to doing preliminary pencil drawings, but within a short time you will begin to notice something quite wonderful. The sketch you produce may not be as accurate a representation of what is being seen, but in contrast, drawings done without underlines tend to have:

- Spontaneity
- Energy
- Dynamics

All these qualities more than compensate for any lack of accuracy. Documenting a scene exactly down to the last detail can be easily be achieved by taking a photo.

There is something wonderful about a sketch that a photograph cannot capture, and that is the main goal of Sketch NOW.

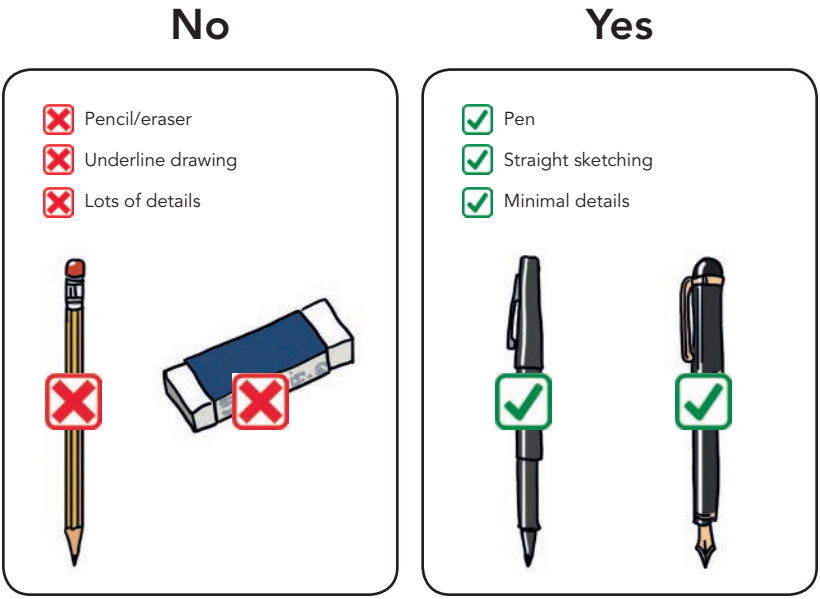
Pen to Paper

When starting out a sketch, simply begin drawing what you want to draw with a pen. No pencil underlays, just straight drawing with a pen. Any pen is fine (although I prefer the Fude fountain pen) as long as it's a medium you cannot erase. You might be tempted to use an eraser if you draw with a pencil, but using a pen will eliminate this temptation.

This approach is:

- fast and forces you to focus hard since you can't erase.
- The more you do it, the better you get.
- I see sketching as similar to any sport—it's hand-eye coordination, which means the more you do it, the better you will get.

You'll soon discover that this approach is really fun!



Tools/techniques *not* to use

Tools/techniques to use

Fude Fountain Pen

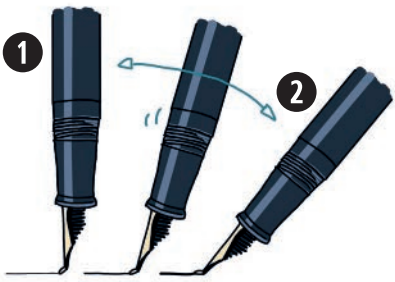
Over the past ten years I have gone through dozens of pens and fountain pens looking for the ultimate sketching pen. I'm still searching, but the Fude fountain pen currently meets most of my sketching needs and desires.

What's great about this pen is that it gives me the ability to draw very thin to very thick lines and everything in between with this one pen, eliminating the need to carry various pens in my sketch bag.

There are three ways I use this pen:

Positions 1 to 2: thin to thick lines.

Vertically upright for the thinnest line, laid down so the bent nib is horizontal to the paper for the thickest line. All angles in between for various thickness. There are slight differences in drawing the lines moving up/down and left/right too, so try experimenting.



Position 3: thin, consistent lines.

Flipping the pen upside down creates stable thin lines. I use this position mainly for writing words and for small details.



THIN (Consistent)

Basic Perspective

Perspective can be confusing, but I do believe that simply understanding a few basic principles will go a long way in creating a quick, convincing sketch.

These are the few points I keep in mind when sketching:

- When you look straight at something in direct relationship to the earth level, it is called the horizon line. The example below shows two identical subjects drawn at different horizon lines. To make it easier, I usually start a sketch by drawing a faint horizon line.
- Things closer to you are larger than things that are far away. Start drawing from the things that are closest to you, working backward toward things that are farther away. This allows you to figure out the sizes of the subjects in relationship to each other.
- The point where angles of objects all meet is called the vanishing point. There are one-, two-, and three-point perspectives. Fully understanding perspective can be complex, but understanding this concept of points converging can be helpful.

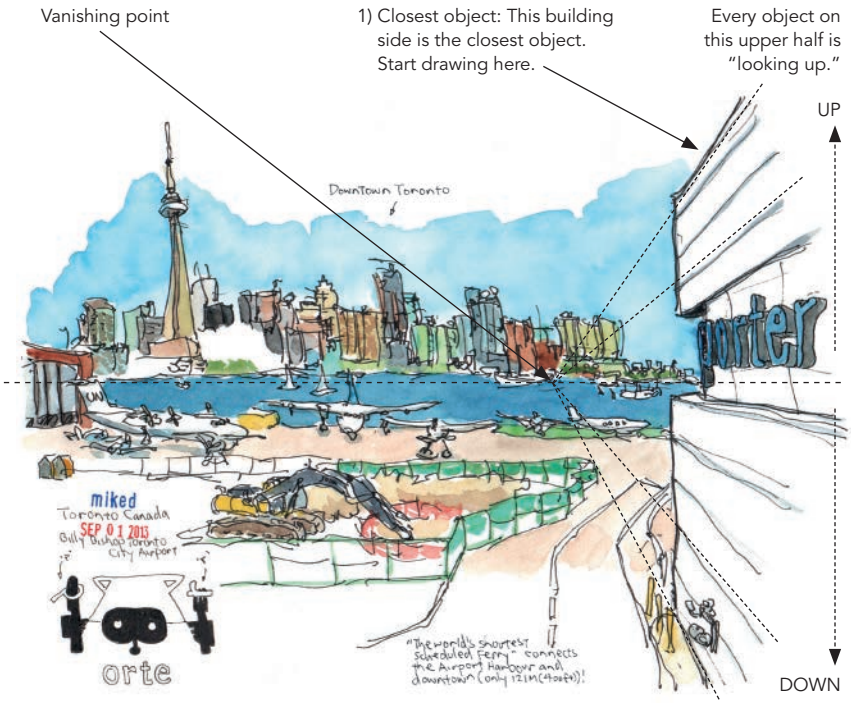


Horizon Line



Horizon Line

Anatomy of a Basic Perspective



Billy Bishop Airport
Toronto, Canada

2) Looking straight: This is the horizon line. Based on this line, you are either looking up or looking down at the subject.

Every object on this bottom half is "looking down."

St. Mary's Roman Catholic Basilica
Phoenix, AZ

Horizon line example. I usually start out a sketch with a faint horizon line, especially when drawing buildings.

Left: Drawn at street level.

Right: Drawn from across the street on the fifth floor.

Don't go crazy with perspective accuracy

If you're new to perspective, getting too caught up on the details can really slow you down. In the beginning, don't go too crazy trying to figure everything out. With time you'll begin to understand these principles as reference lines to help you sketch faster.

Sketch What's of Interest First

After choosing a subject to sketch, it can be difficult to figure out what angle to sketch from with which tools. With the Sketch NOW technique, you can forget about all of those concerns and just follow your heart. If you find something that attracts you, start drawing it. If you have more time on your hands, then start filling in more surrounding details. No matter what, follow these points:

- Don't draw everything.
- Negative space (blank space) on the page is good since it can be used for annotation/graphics and adding dates/stamps later on.

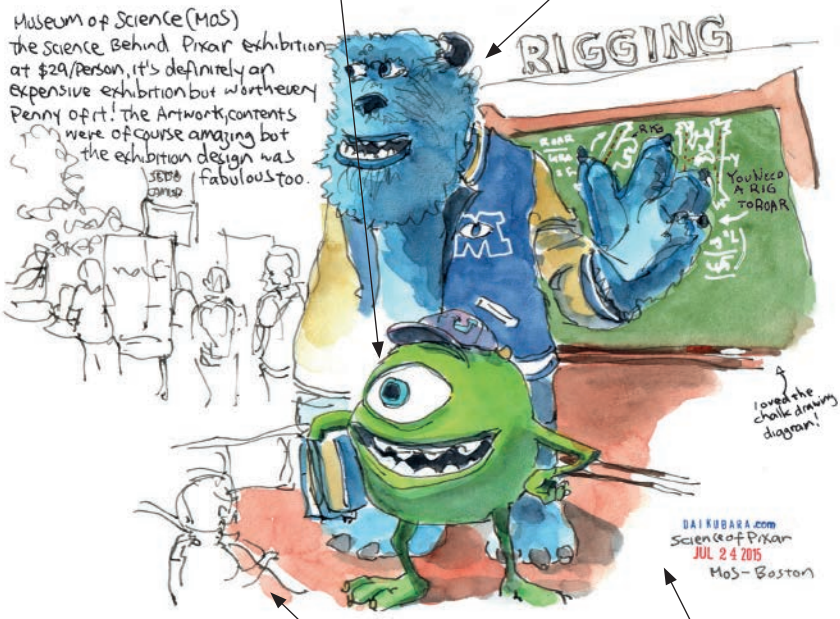


Breakfast Club Cityscape
Phoenix, AZ

Food sketching is a great way to practice this technique. Order your food, then start sketching as soon as it arrives. Once I've drawn the food lines, I like to slowly eat them while I continue to draw the background subjects.

1) In this sketch my focus was Mike and Sulley. I started the sketch drawing Mike's eyes, since this subject was the closest to me.

2) Next, I drew Sulley and the backboard.



Museum of Science
Cambridge, MA

3) The little boy and background figures were added at the end to capture the atmosphere of the location.

4) Color, graphics, and annotation were added later.

Follow your heart, but be safe

When you find a subject that piques your interest, just start sketching! But do pay attention to where you sit or stand, making sure you are out of traffic and in a safe place!

Contour Lines and Minimal Shading

Basically, contour lines are outlines that are used to capture the overall subject of the sketch. Details are kept to a minimum, and the focus is on only drawing areas that will be colored in later.



The darker shadow areas can easily be captured using watercolor, so do not spend time crosshatching or adding other line details.

I do pay attention to the line weights at this stage, using thin and thick lines where appropriate. A thicker line is used for the lamppost and other elements that are closer in the scene.



Insurance Agency Building
Dedham, MA


view from my hotel room on the 14th floor was quite stunning. There was an Electronic Music festival taking place for 3days and my
Shaky Beats Music Festival
miked



Shaky Beats Music Festival
Atlanta, GA

This is a complicated-looking drawing done from the view out my hotel room window. But if you take a close look at the line drawing in progress, it's completely made up from contour lines with a few lines to define the shape of the subject. All the other details were added later with watercolor.

Reinstate

Say you're drawing a subject and your line is really off-scale and off-balance. Draw another line on top of it to find the correct line. I tend to do this more often when drawing people since it can be hard to get the scale correct. In the beginning of your sketching journey, you'll be making lots of "reinstated" lines, but soon you'll be making less.

I continue to have lots of reinstated lines in my drawings, but they add interest and give life to sketches, too.

Later on, they can be minimized and covered up by coloring in only the correct areas.

The woman in the kimono sat close to me, so I started the sketch with her head (the closest element). Setting the initial proportion/scale is difficult, so I had to draw a few reinstated lines to get it right.

Children's Museum
Boston, MA

Watching the Japanese tea ceremony





When I draw vehicles, I start from the closest object, which is often the wheel. After drawing the rough proportions, I go into the details. As you can see here, my initial lines are wrong in scale, but I don't worry about it and draw another line on top of it. Wheel proportions are hard to get correct in the first try.

Deere Truck
Braintree, MA



P.F. Chang's
Dedham, MA

Immediately after I started the sketch, the man in the red hung up the phone and moved around a lot.

Don't stop, finish the sketch

When you make a mistake, you may be tempted to start over on a new page, but don't. Force yourself to finish a sketch you started, even if it has lots of reinstated lines. You'll be surprised by how nice it will look once colored in. You'll also get better with more practice and time.

Repetition and Pattern

For items that repeat, such as building slats, bricks, roofing, and fences, only sketch a small portion and leave the other areas blank. This can be a time-saver, since the viewer's brain automatically fills in the missing areas to complete the full picture.

Later on the spaces that are left blank can be filled in with stamps, annotation, and graphics to add more interest to the sketch.

Graphics add story to the sketch too.

Building slats: Few lines and only in a few locations to indicate material.

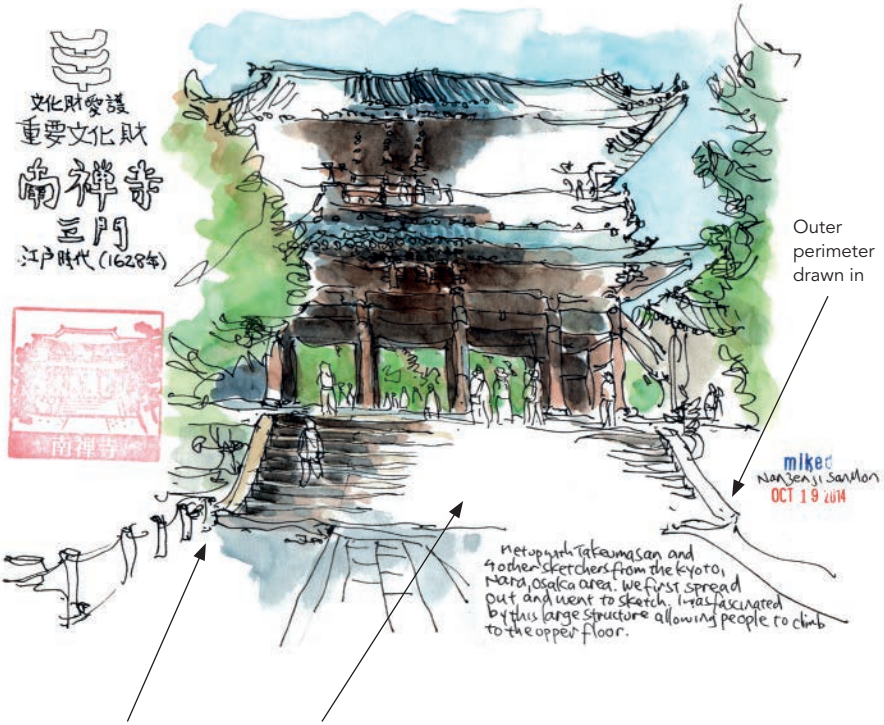


Blank space for stamps/annotation

For the fences, draw the main posts first, adding only a few posts in between with simplified lines.

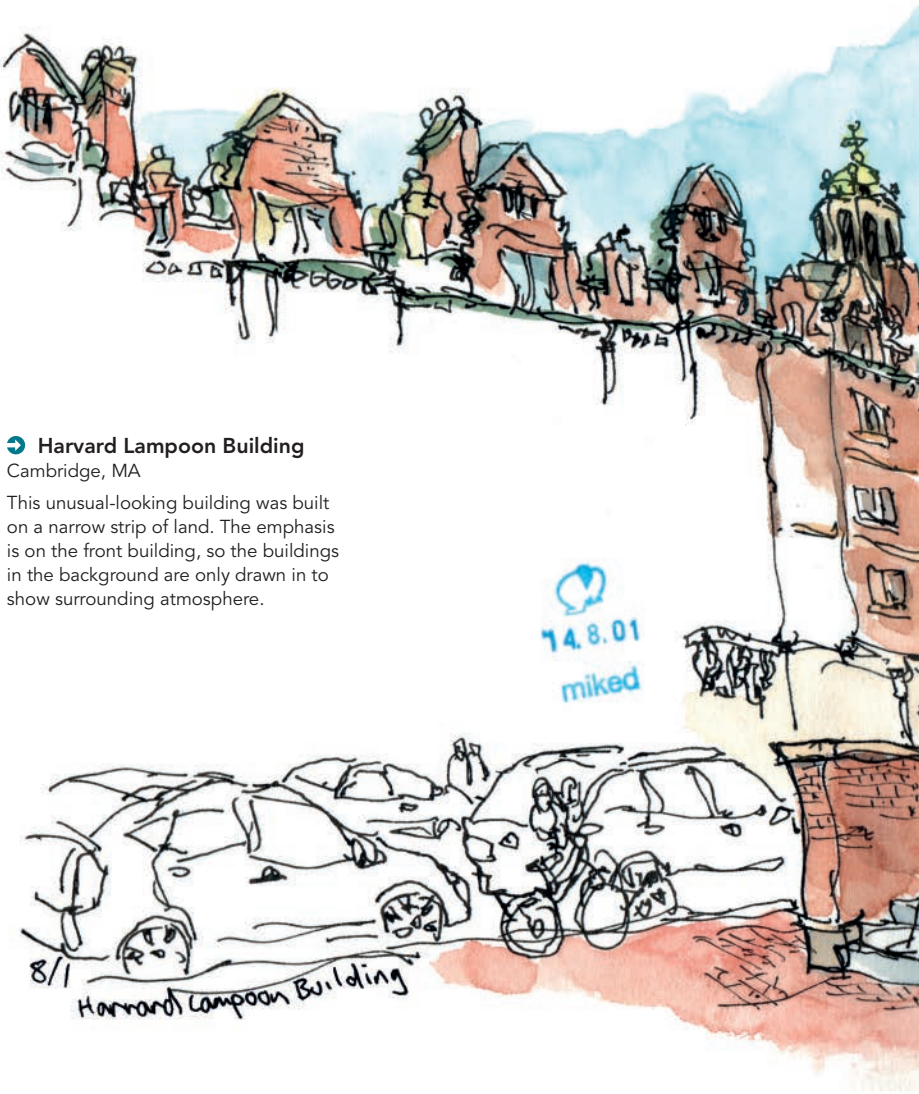
Residential Housing
Norwood, MA

Quick sketch done on Halloween night.



Nanzen-Ji Temple
Kyoto, Japan

Beautiful, historic temple near my sister-in-law's house.



Harvard Lampoon Building
Cambridge, MA

This unusual-looking building was built on a narrow strip of land. The emphasis is on the front building, so the buildings in the background are only drawn in to show surrounding atmosphere.



Draw the perimeters

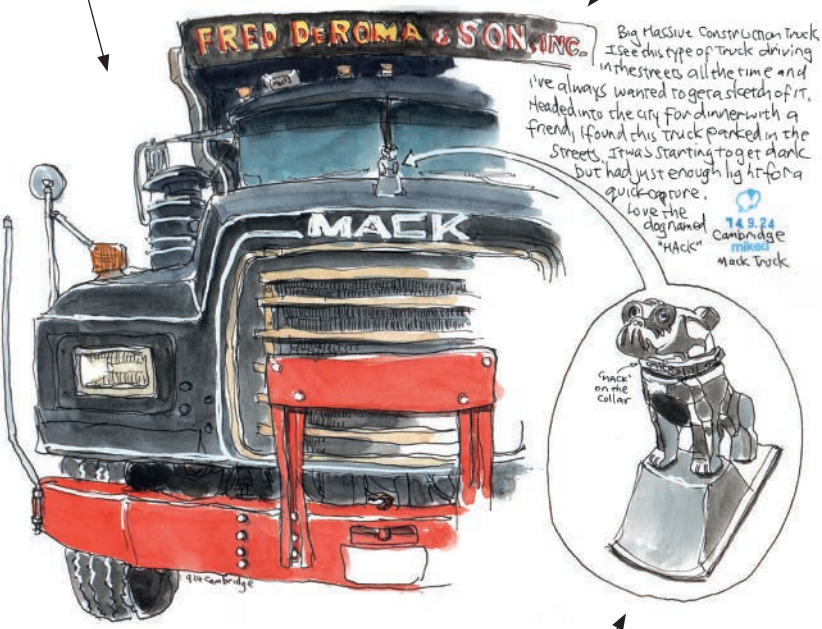
When abbreviating repeating elements, be sure to draw the outer perimeters to define the overall shape. This makes it easier for viewers to fill in the missing details in their mind.

Symmetry

For a symmetrical subject, such as a truck or building, draw only half of the subject, since the human mind can fill in the other half. This approach not only saves time, but can also add more interest.

Left side: Drawn in detail

Right side: It is left uncompleted. Space is used for additional images and info.



Highlighted detail sketched larger.

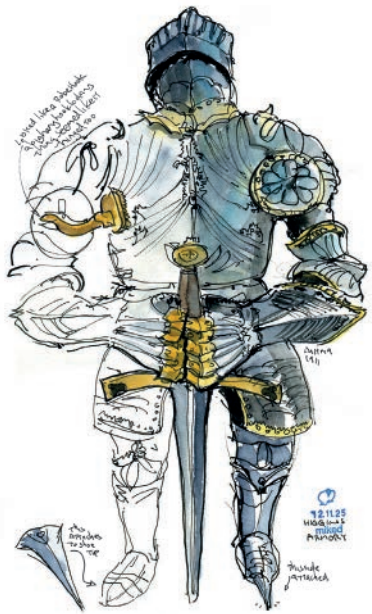
Mack Truck
Cambridge, MA

I loved the bulldog emblem.



Duke of Wellington Statue
Glasgow, Scotland

To draw the famous statue with the safety cones, I did an overview sketch with close-up details all in one pass.



Higgins Armory Museum
Worcester, MA

Only half of this sketch is colored in. The hooklike element on the left is colored since it's a nonsymmetrical piece.

Add annotation and detailed views

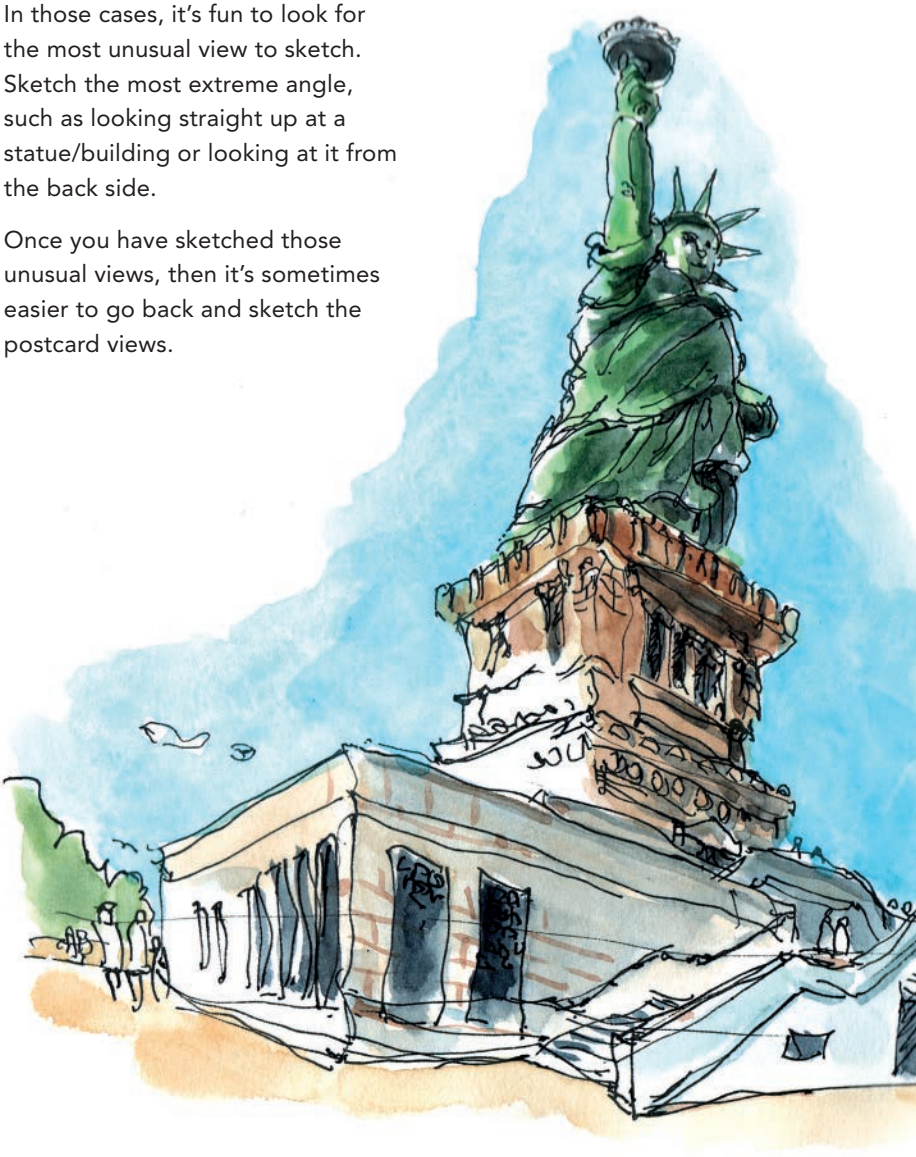
The half page that is left unused is a great spot to add missing views or something that really captures your interest. This overview/close-up view drawn in one sketch adds lots of depth to the story that is being told.

Angle/Composition

When sketching very famous landmarks, sometimes focusing on the well-known postcard view can be boring, too much of a cliché, or just difficult since you have seen it too many times.

In those cases, it's fun to look for the most unusual view to sketch. Sketch the most extreme angle, such as looking straight up at a statue/building or looking at it from the back side.

Once you have sketched those unusual views, then it's sometimes easier to go back and sketch the postcard views.



Statue of Liberty
New York City

I was attracted to the idea of looking up at the statue, as it was an angle I had never seen before. I also liked being able to fit in the Manhattan skyscrapers in the background. There are two faint, horizontal lines, one of which was a mistake horizon reference line.






SPHYNX
Remorse
Sphynx

Great Sphinx of Giza
Giza, Egypt

In Egypt, I sketched the famous sculpture from a view I had never seen before—the rear end! This was not only a fun sketch, but it was also easy to make, as the area at the back of the sculpture was not nearly as crowded as the front.





Giza Pyramid
Giza, Egypt

Photo of me sketching the rear end of the Sphinx. Pyramid seen in the background.

Pick a view based on where to stand/sit

Sometimes choosing where to stand/sit to capture the subject can be the best place to sketch, too. I commonly pick a location based on safety, looking for a place where I will not get in the way of people.

03 Color Techniques

In the Sketch NOW technique, watercolor is used for its portability, versatility, compactness, and speed. There is a good reason why so many on-location sketchers use watercolor as their preferred color medium.

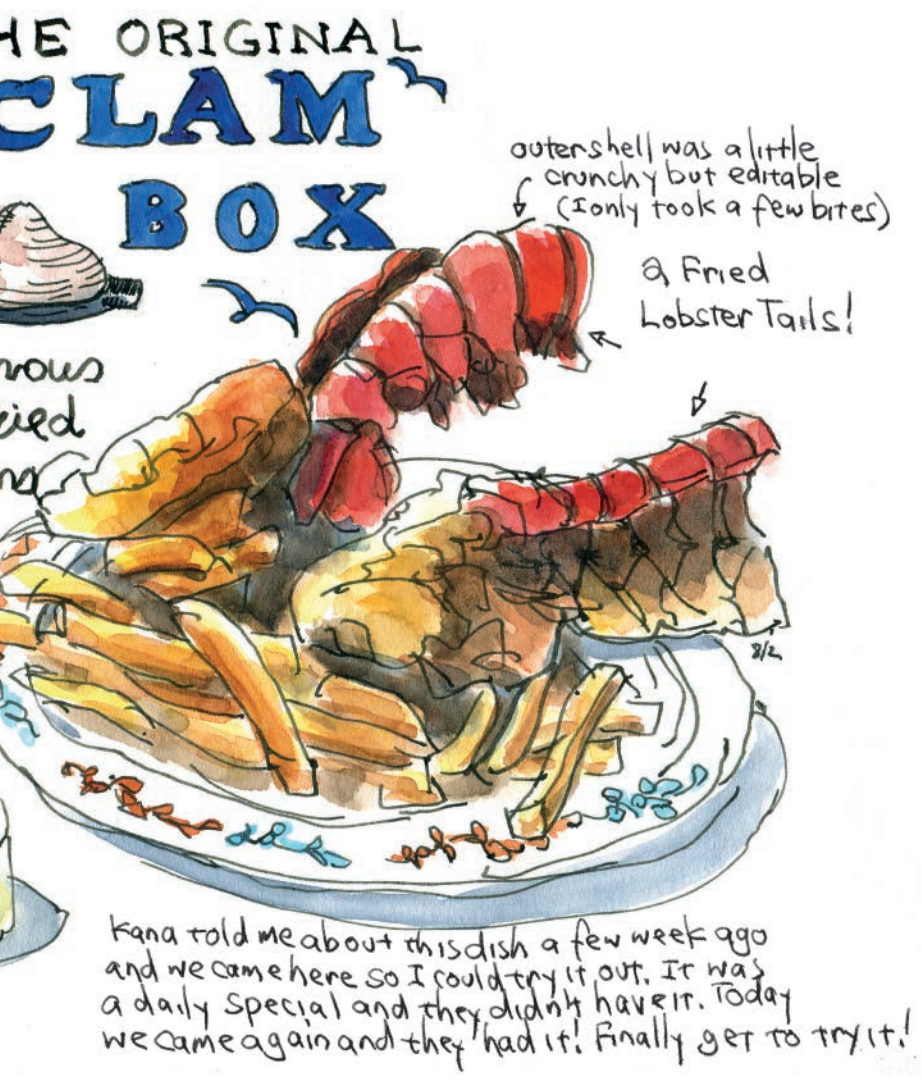
In the Sketch NOW technique, the main idea is to add pure color to the sketchbook without pre-mixing in the well.

This technique works well, since it allows you to quickly apply color to complete the sketch.



Deep-Fried Lobster Tails
Clam Box, Quincy, MA

This was my first time ever having this dish and it was excellent!



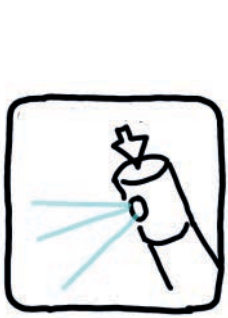
Color

I used to take my time mixing the perfect matching color on the palette, and testing how the color mix looked on the corner of the sketch paper before applying it onto the sketch. While I personally find joy and relaxation in mixing paint, I find more joy in quickly being able to capture a scene.

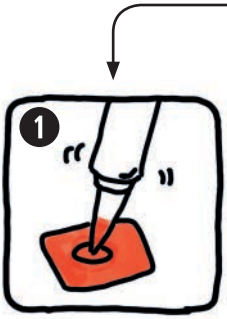


The Sketch NOW coloring approach is simple: Pick up paint from the palette and add color directly onto the sketch, mixing on the page until you find the color you're looking for.

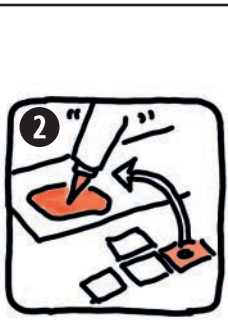
The coloring steps are as follows:



(Optional)
Use spray mist to slightly wet the paint.

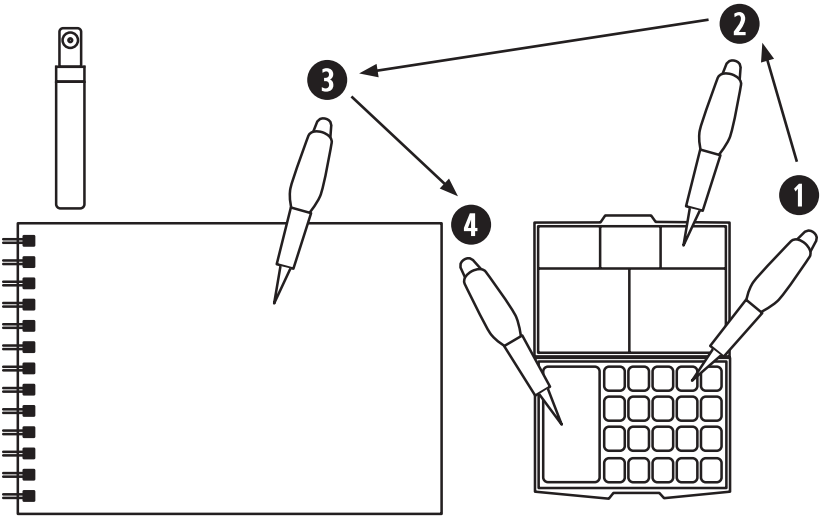


STEP 1
Slightly squeeze water from the water brush and pick up desired paint on tip.

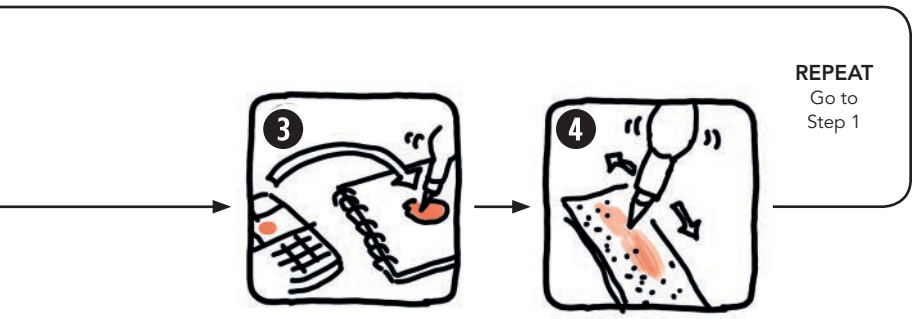


STEP 2
Drop paint on palette surface to check paint color and amount of water.

Coloring Steps



Coloring step brush location



STEP 3
Apply color to the sketch. Create a new color by blending on the paper.

STEP 4
Clean brush on sponge by squeezing out water. Repeat Step 1.

Coloring Tips

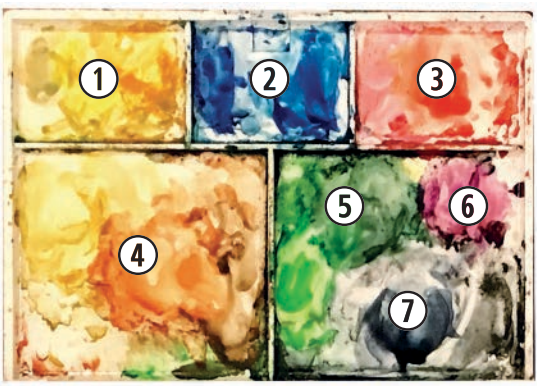
Here are some points I keep in mind when painting with this technique:

- Paint from light to dark. In my case the sketch mostly starts off with yellow and ends in black. To represent white, leave areas unpainted.
- Use the palette to check the cleanliness of brush, water level, and color intensity. I have specific areas dedicated to certain colors; basically, colors of similar intensity sit near each other (see diagram at right). This keeps the colors clean and even works when there's some accidental mixing.
- Mix colors on paper.



Color sample sheet

When starting out with watercolor, any basic watercolor kit will meet most of your needs. After a while, you will likely want to try out different colors, and the best way to do that is by buying a sample test sheet—a sheet with lots of small dots of dried colors to try out. Various manufacturers make sample sheets, so give them a try.



My Palette
Here is my current palette. These are the areas where I would put down the colors initially before applying them to the sketch. Similar colors are clustered together and there is no need to worry about accidental mixing.

1
- Permanent Yellow Lemon
- Cadmium Yellow Orange
- Jaune Brilliant No.2

3
- Rose Madder
- Cadmium Red Deep

4
- Yellow Ochre
- Light Red
- Burnt Umber
- Sepia

6
- Mineral Violet

5
- Olive Green
- Permanent Green No.1
- Hooker's Green
- Terre Verte
- Shadow Green

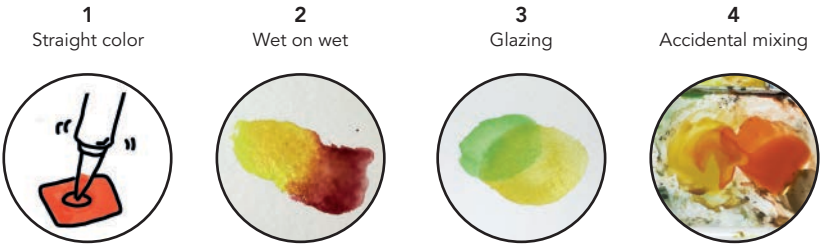
2
- Horizon Blue
- Royal Blue
- Prussian Blue

7
- Payne's Grey
- Lamp Black

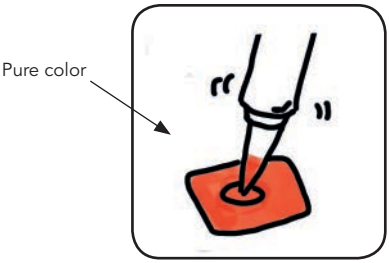
Color Mixing and Usage

When it comes to color mixing to create the perfect matching color, there are four methods that are used:

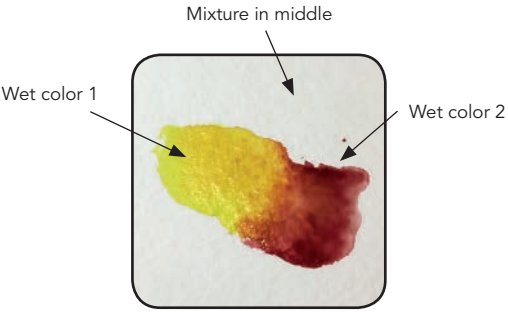
1. Straight color on paper
2. Wet on wet
3. Glazing
4. Accidental mixing



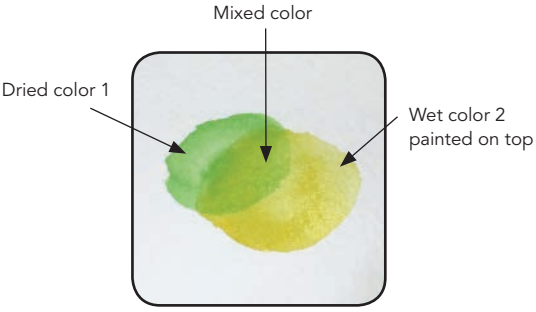
Color Mixing
Four methods of creating color



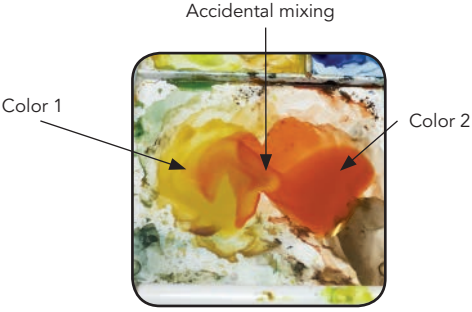
1) Straight color
Straight tube color is used on the sketch, but the majority of the time color is created on the sketch page using Wet on Wet or Glazing. Occasionally the pure nonmixed color is used, especially when coloring 2-D graphic elements.



2) Wet on wet
The majority of the time, this is the technique I rely on to produce a color I am looking for. Place one color next to another while wet on paper and slightly mix.



3) Glazing
This is color applied over another color after the first color has fully dried. This technique achieves color depth and richness, but is kept to a minum since it's time-consuming.



4) Accidental mixing
The colors dropped onto the palette occasionally mix with neighboring colors. This sense of surprise is quite nice, so I end up using those colors too.

Don’t Color Everything

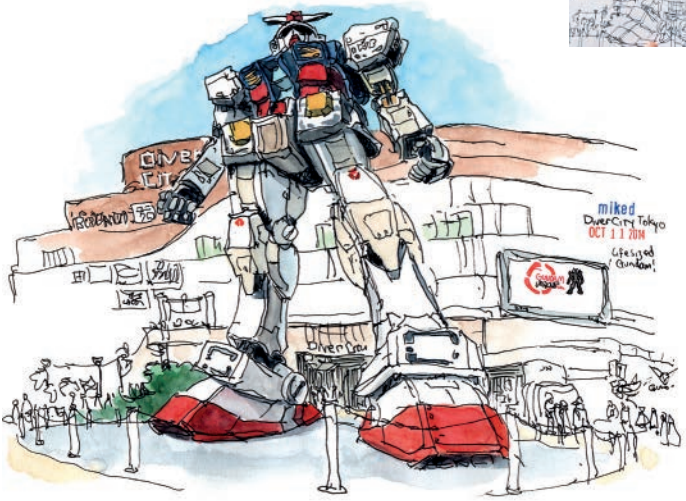
When starting to color, keep these points in mind:

- Start coloring the subject of interest first.
- Don’t color everything or every single object.
- Don’t color off the page edge. This makes the sketch look more deliberate on the page and also makes the image easier to cut out to be digitally scanned.
- Continue coloring depending on how you’re feeling and how much time you have.
- Uncolored extra white space is actually good; the space can be used later for annotation (story), date, stamp, etc.

Gundam
Diver City Tokyo, Japan

In this life-size robot sculpture, I added the strong primary colors of the robot first. Then a little bit of the ground and the back-building colors were added. The sky was only colored in around the head of the robot to make it pop. The photo shown on the right was taken before the sketch was colored in.



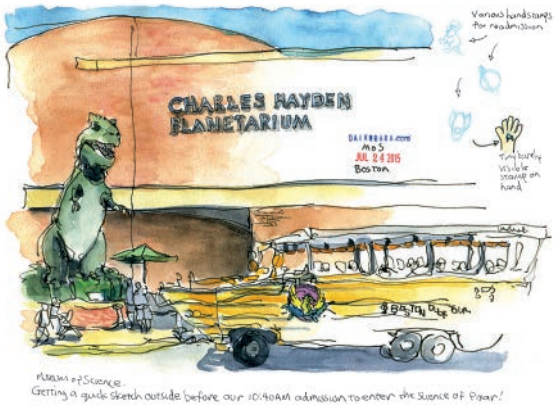




T-Rex Replica
Springfield Museum, MA

In this sketch of a dinosaur during the holiday season, color emphasis was placed on the scarf, gloves, and the top portion of the dinosaur. The ground and a little bit of the background were colored to make the subject pop.

Museum of Science Building
Blue is used to suggest sky.



Sky color

Adding sky is great, but it can be difficult with just a water brush since it requires lots of water and layers. In this case, I paint the sky in small chunks around the building edges. This is a great time-saver, too.



The English Beat
Boston, MA

My favorite music band is one of the hardest subjects for me to draw. I pretty much knew every single song, making me want to sing along instead of sketching! While I was there, I did manage to draw in the basic lines, beginning with the sax player. Then I added the details and color later, after the concert.

04 Finishing

If there is one thing I always keep in mind when sketching, it is to always finish a sketch that I start.

You can finish it all on location, or finish the details later. At least try to finish all the line drawings on location. But whatever you do, finish a sketch that you start later on.



Always Finish a Sketch

Why should you always finish a sketch? Here are a few reasons:

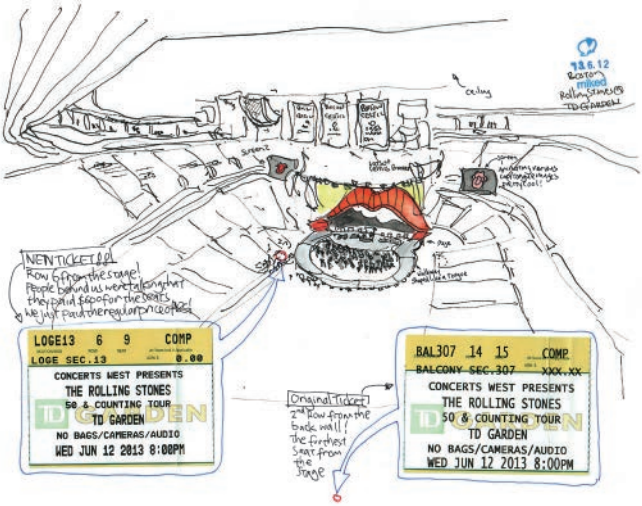
- Giving up means you're not allowing the sketch an opportunity to become something.
- We all make bad sketches, but sometimes a sketch that looks bad in the beginning might surprise you and turn out nice in the end.
- Looking for perfection when sketching is not good. It means you will not experiment or try something new because you are afraid of making mistakes. Some of the best sketches actually result from being fully relaxed and not worrying about making mistakes. Don't try to complete a masterpiece.
- It might be the only opportunity you'll have to sketch that particular subject, so put your heart into it!

Either the sketch turns out well and it makes you happy, or it doesn't turn out as you wanted, but you learn from it by being able to apply your new knowledge to your next sketch. In either case, the outcome is positive!

There will be times when you don't have enough time on location to finish a sketch, or you're just not happy with what you started. Either way, finish it later!

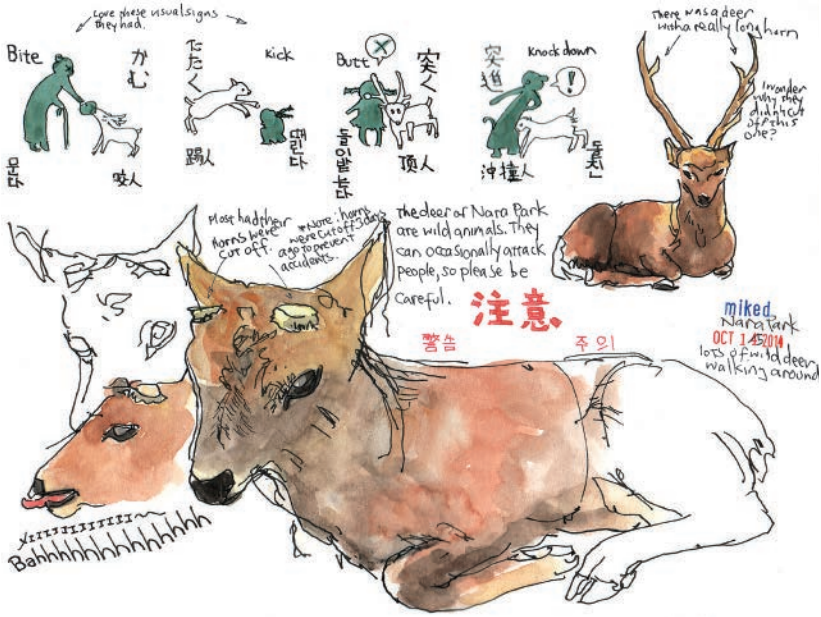
Deer
Nara, Japan

Nara Park is famously known for the thousands of wild deer that have been roaming freely around the park for more than 1,300 years. I loved the comical signs with warnings in four languages, but I especially wanted to see the deer antlers close up to get a sketch. Three days before our arrival, however, all of the deer antlers were cut off as part of a 300-year annual tradition designed to keep people and deer coexisting safely.



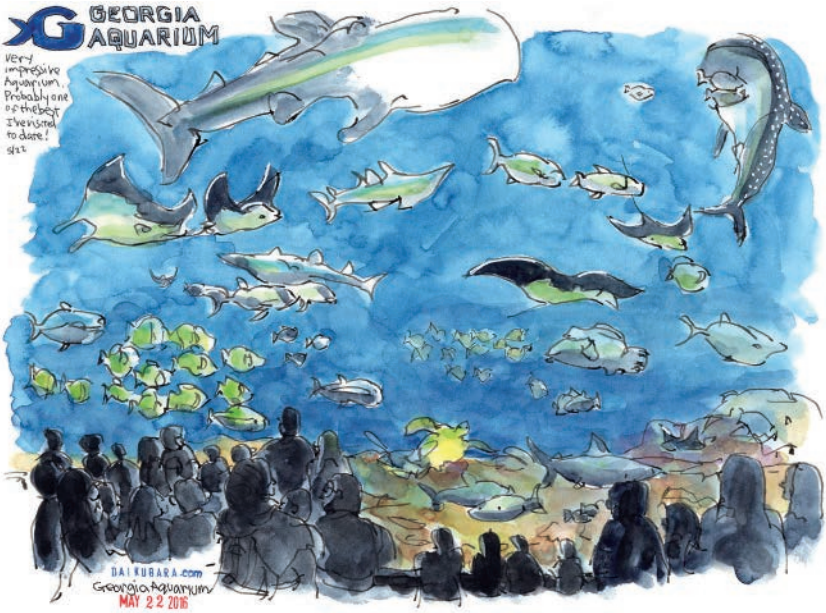
Rolling Stones Concert
Boston, MA

My wife and I were randomly given upgrade tickets to move from the worst seats in the arena to seats only six rows back from the stage. I couldn't finish the sketch on location due to this excitement, but I added tickets and annotation later to capture the moment.



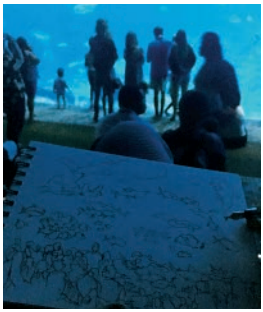
Finishing Later

The goal is to try to finish everything on location, but we do not always have the time to make this happen. At the very least, finish all line drawings on location and take many pictures that you can use later for color reference. I have a built-in stand on my iPhone case to prop up the angle of the screen. This is great for getting the perfect viewing angle when finishing the sketch at a nice coffee shop!



Georgia Aquarium
Atlanta, GA

The aquarium in downtown Atlanta was impressive and I had to get a sketch. The line drawings were done on location, but it was way too dark to see to apply color on location. Colors were added later at a nearby Starbucks.



Georgia Aquarium
It was very dark and moving subjects are tricky to sketch, but I managed to get all the line drawings done.





Police Hummer
Gloucester, MA

I spotted a police Hummer with lots of emblems and stickers and just had to get a sketch! The graphics details and color were added immediately afterward at a Dunkin' Donuts just down the street.

Police Hummer
Gloucester, MA

I'm standing in the entranceway to the police station to get the perfect sketch. Every time a police car came in, I had to move out of the way.



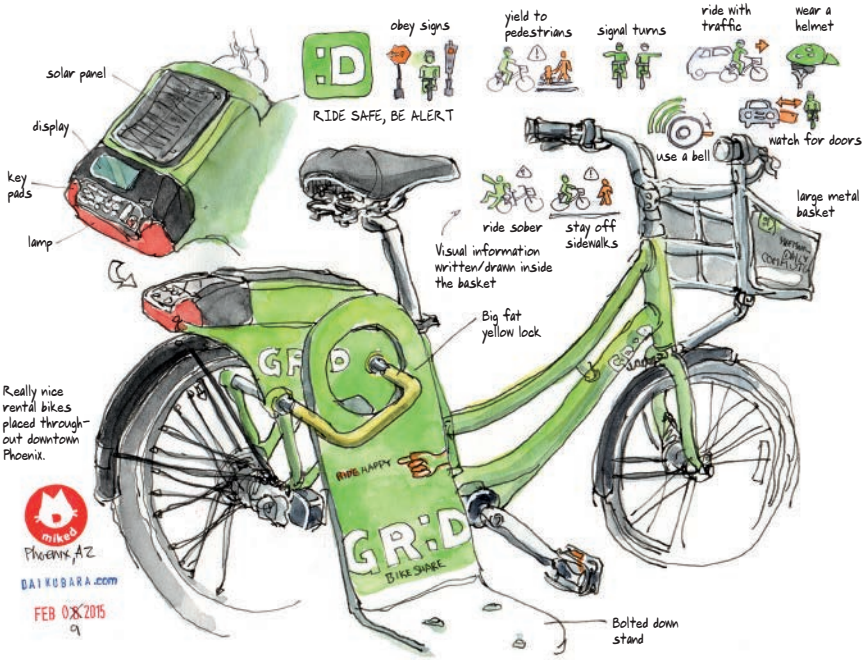
Annotation and Graphics

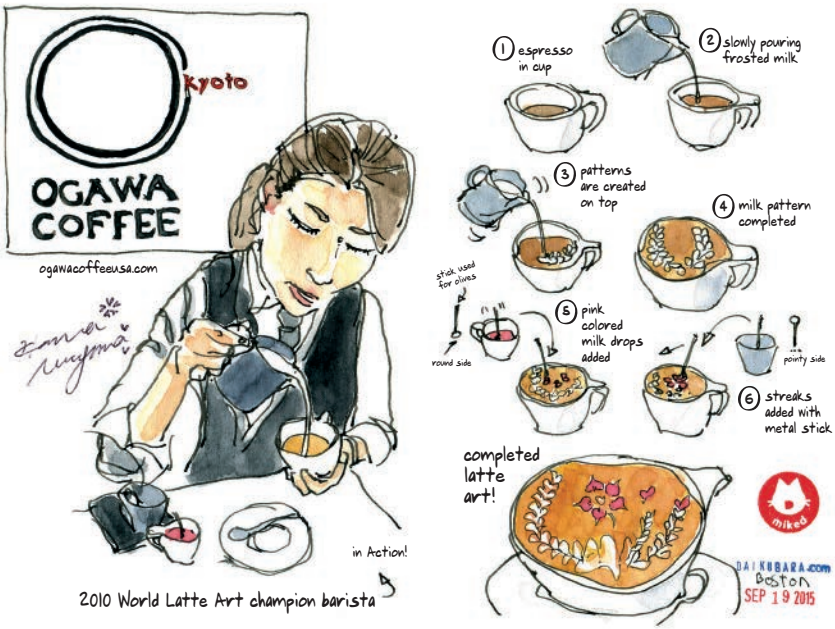
Annotation (notes) and graphics are great ways to bring more life to your sketch. Annotation could be detailed notes about what you just sketched, how you felt while sketching the subject, an overheard conversation while you were sketching, or other notes about anything else.

Adding graphic elements adds much more interest too. This could be a logo of the location, details of the subject, cartoons/diagrams describing the subject, or a map of the location. I sometimes glue on maps, tickets, and other elements as well.

Whenever I have extra space on the page, I tend to fill it up with these. It's also a great way to "design" the page, making it look fun in the end.

GRID Bicycle
Phoenix, AZ
I saw these colorful green rental bicycles throughout the city of Phoenix.







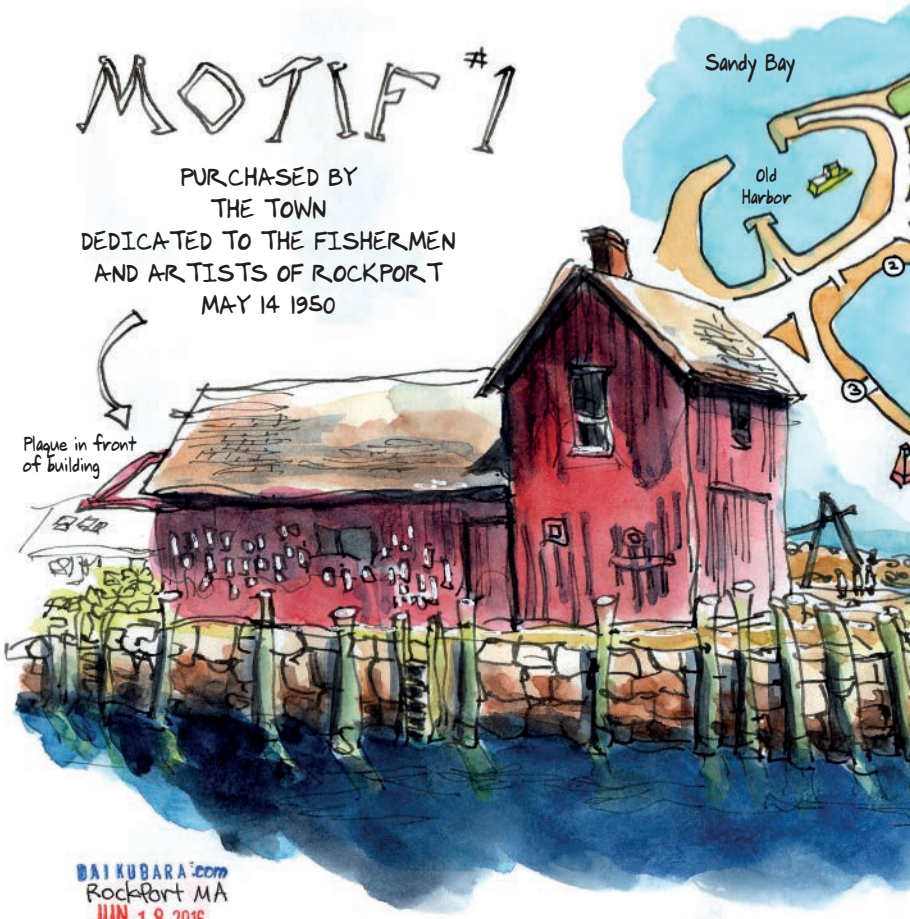
Latte Art
Boston, MA

Watching Haruna, the 2010 World Latte Art Champion Barista, make café latte was impressive, and I sketched her in action. I was able to add the latte-making steps from the pictures I took on my phone while enjoying my latte. Later on, I also like to get signatures of the people I draw, too.

Take pictures

I rarely take photos for final photo viewing, but I always take reference photos for sketching details later on.

Annotation and Graphics (continued)



After all these years, I finally got to sketch Motif #1. Rockport is a cute little place! Really sunny day, yet breezy and my hands were really cold. It's almost July and still this cold!?





Motif #1 (Finishing)
Drawing in the town map, annotation, and colors at a coffee shop, which also had a great view of Motif #1.

Motif #1
Rockport, MA

This red fishing shack is known to art students as "the most often-painted building in America." This is a fun structure to draw.


CARIBBEAN
Phoenicopterus ruber
GAA


FLAMINGO
GAA
GAA
GAA

Date and Stamp

I have three stamps that I always use in every sketchbook:

1. Reward Stamp: I add this to the inside cover. It has my name, email, phone number, and reward information. It's extra assurance in case I misplace my sketchbook.

2. Web/Date Stamp: This used to be a Date/Fax stamp. I removed the fax portion and glued in my web address. Dating every sketch is a great habit to get into since it makes scanning and naming the images much easier. I name every digital file starting with the date.

3. Logo Stamp: I love this logo that my wife helped me design.

Digital file naming

Over the years I have accumulated lots of scanned digital files on my computer, and sticking to a disciplined file-naming convention has made it easier for me to find files later on.

Name the files using this format:
Year (2 digit) Month (2 digit) Day (2 digit) _Brief Description.

Example: A sketch of the Peruvian Ceviche dish shown on the top right was made on February 16, 2016. So, the file name would be: 160216_PeruvianCeviche.jpg

I can go through thousands of images on my computer easily by listing them in chronological order because I have named the files according to this format.

1



1) Reward/contact information stamp



Stamp Location

1) Stamped on the inside sketchbook cover.

2 & 3) Typically stamped together but sometimes apart too.

Three Stamps

Shown are the three stamps I use for all of my sketchbooks.
The stamps below are shown in full 1:1 scale.



2) Web/date stamp



3) Miked logo stamp

05 Real-Life Examples

Is there enough time to do a sketch? Or will I run out of time before finishing? These are the thoughts that might go through one's mind when sketching in a non-ideal situation.

I say, "When in doubt, sketch anyway."

I always keep this in mind, since an ideal sketching situation is very rare and if you wait for it to happen, it will never happen. This is much more true when traveling, since a missed opportunity is an opportunity that you will most likely never have again.

The following are some examples that were all sketched in limited time.

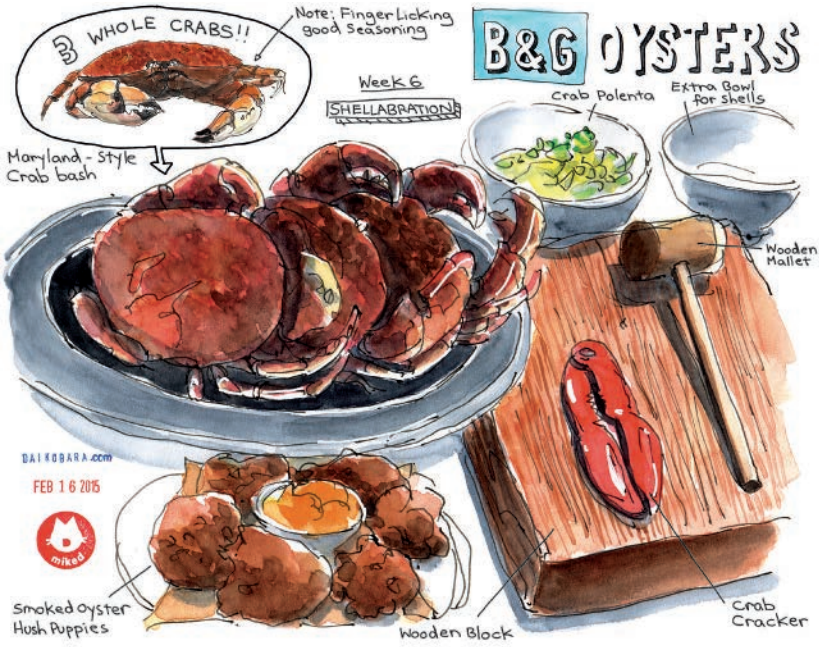




Tolland Campground
Otis, MA

When traveling with family and friends, waking up much earlier than everyone else is the key to completing sketches. I also use the time after people have gone to sleep to finish off the sketches. Basically, you'll have to get used to not having enough sleep when traveling.

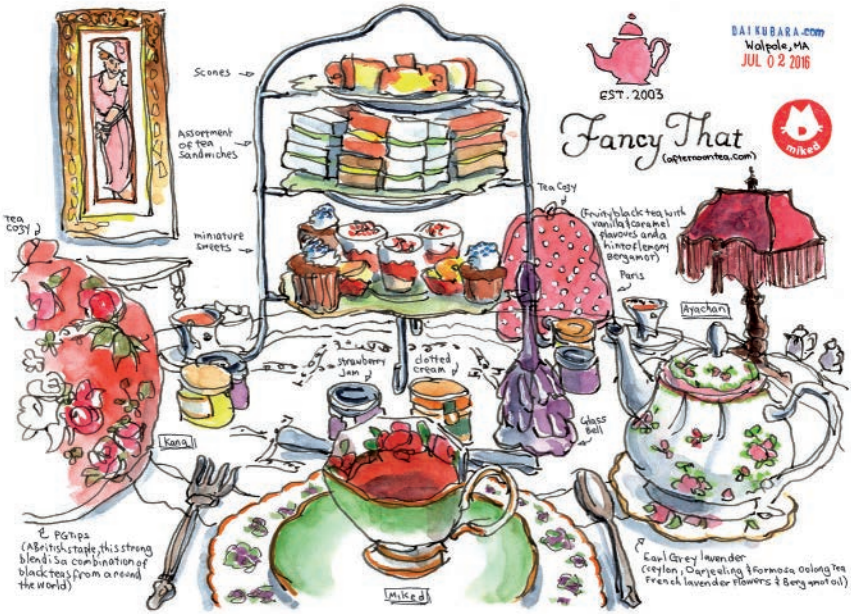
Food



B&G OYSTERS
Boston, MA

I feel I am able to concentrate best when drawing food. When I'm hungry, I want to be able to eat faster and I also don't want the food to get cold. All of these elements put together force me to really focus.





Fancy That
Walpole, MA

A relaxing afternoon teatime with my wife and friend. Well, actually it was not that relaxing for me in the beginning, since I needed to quickly sketch the food before they could start to eat.



Fancy That (Sketching Approach)
Walpole, MA

The tea arrived first, so I quickly started capturing the contour shapes of the front tea cup first, then the three-tiered dishes in the back.

Travel: Egypt

A trip to Egypt was unbelievable, but it was also a trip with lots of time restrictions since we went on a group tour with a jam-packed itinerary in a short timeframe.

This was also the first trip where I used the Fude fountain pen extensively. The pen ended up being the only one I used. I loved the speed of the Fude pen, and the lines it created seemed to match very well with the scenes we saw.







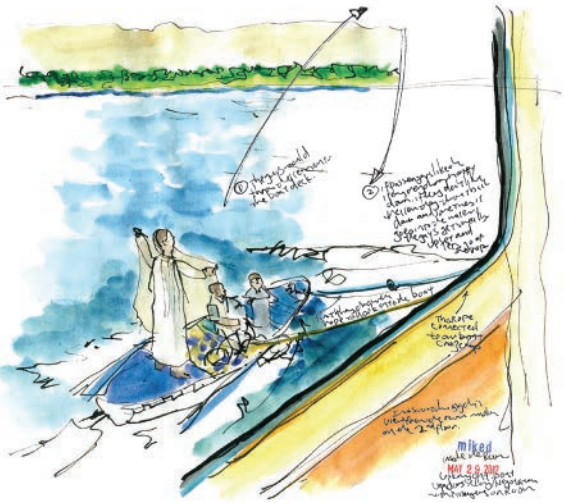
Horse Carriage
Edfu, Egypt

Riding in a horse carriage from our cruise ship to Edfu Temple was a fun experience. The ride was quite bumpy, making it really hard to sketch, but I did it anyway. The actual horse and carriage were sketched later on, too.



Abu Simbel (Inside)
Abu Simbel, Egypt

Inside the Abu Simbel Temple, photography was not allowed. It was dimly lit, but if I stood near the entrance of the temple, I had just enough light to be able to get a sketch of this amazing, grand-scale artifact.





Nile River Cruise Ship
Nile River, Egypt

During the tour in Egypt, we spent four nights on a cruise ship, traveling down the Nile River from Luxor to Aswan.

From our room window, we watched as vendors on a small boat tied a rope onto our moving cruise ship and began selling various items to the people on the roof of our ship. I had never seen anything like this and quickly captured it in my sketchbook.

Travel: England

Staying in London, we had one day to do some sightseeing outside of the city, so we signed up for a bus tour that took us around to the three famous designations: Windsor Castle, Bath, and Stonehenge.

Due to the limited time, sketching on a tour is a huge challenge, and there is no time to contemplate. You arrive at the destination, immediately look for a place you can stand/sit for a bit, and start sketching. All of the line works were done on location and colored on the bus ride or back at the hotel.

Stonehenge (Sketching time on location: 15 minutes)
Stonehenge, England

To reach Stonehenge from the main building, we needed to take a shuttle bus. Once arriving at the destination, I only had 15 minutes to quickly capture the overall scale on a two-page spread.





Windsor Castle (20 minutes)

Windsor Castle, England

I later ran into a sketcher from Hong Kong, and he too sketched from the exact same location as me. I guess it must have been the best location for a sketcher!



The Roman Baths (30 minutes)

Bath, England

Sometimes the hardest part about sketching in a limited time period is in getting to the sketching location. Here at the Roman Bath building, you need to walk through a large mazelike exhibition to get to this famous scene.

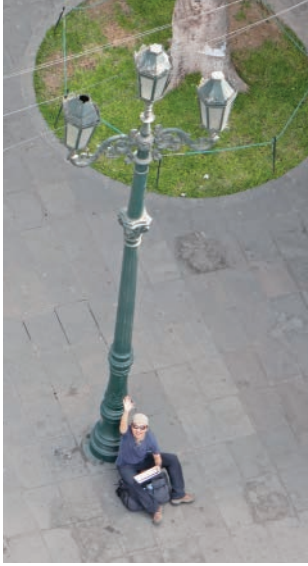


Travel: Peru

Machu Picchu was our ultimate destination when traveling to Peru, but the journey in between was just as exciting. Here are some of the in-between sketches, done with time restrictions, but I'm glad I was able to get them.







Basilica Rosario
Lima, Peru

My wife and friends entered the building to climb to the top, but I stayed on the ground to sketch this building—I had a fun conversation with a passerby, too. The photo above is a picture my wife took of me while she was looking down from the top of the building.


Lots of people selling various items on the street ground.
DAI KUBARA
Arco Santa Clara
APR 10 2015



Arco Santa Clara Gate
Cusco, Peru

The city center is a great place to sketch. I found a nice subject to sketch and told my wife that I'd stay put while they toured the area. They got some shopping done, and I got to do a fun sketch!

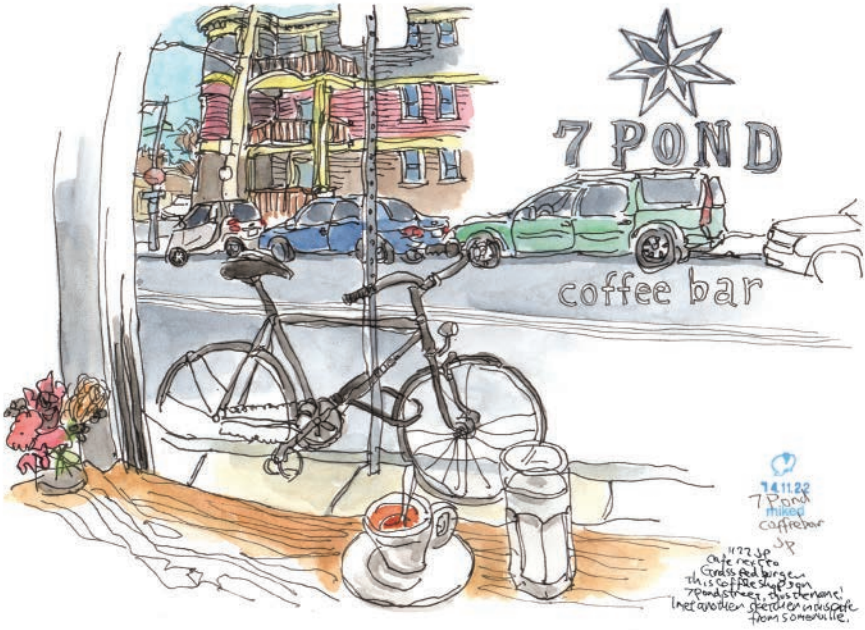
Coffee Shops

Coffee shop sketching takes me back to the roots of my urban sketching in 2000, when I first started learning to sketch on location. Coffee shops are an easy place to start getting used to sketching, since there are so many subjects to sketch, all in the comfort of sitting down with your favorite drink.



Country Kitchen Donuts & Coffee
Walpole, MA

This is a nice local shop that has been making great donuts for more than 50 years. The store was closing in an hour with only one customer remaining, who was sitting on the classic-looking bar stool. I tried to capture the quietness of the store and the feel of the interior.





7 Pond Coffee Bar
Jamaica Plain, MA

This place was a small but clean modern place that was quite cozy, too. I sat at the window, sipping my espresso, and started sketching in the order of closest subject (drinks) to the farthest (buildings). Not much thought goes into accuracy of scale or perspective when drawing static objects, since I'm just relaxed and having fun.







Clover Food Lab
Harvard Square, Cambridge, MA

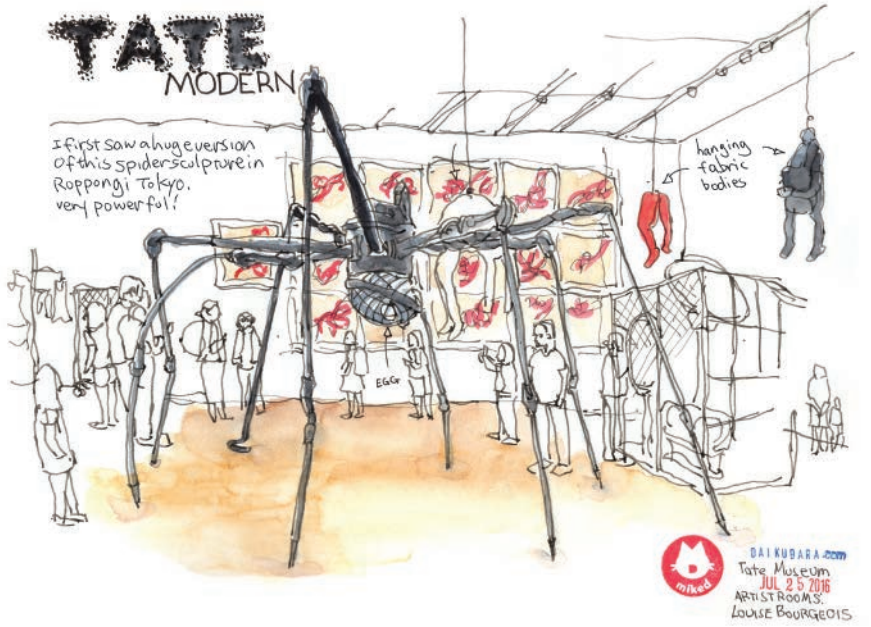
I sat on the second floor sketching the people below. I noticed that when sketching people from above, nobody seemed to notice that they were being sketched—this made sketching especially easy!

Coffee shops are a great place to warm up

Grab yourself a favorite drink and just start sketching without putting much thought into it. If you get stuck on what to sketch, you can always just start sketching your drink and then the background view.

People

I first learned to add people into my sketches while drawing in coffee shops, and I was fascinated by how much more lively the sketches became by adding movement, scale, and emotion. Ever since then, I actively try to add people into my sketches, since it helps better tell the story of the sketch.

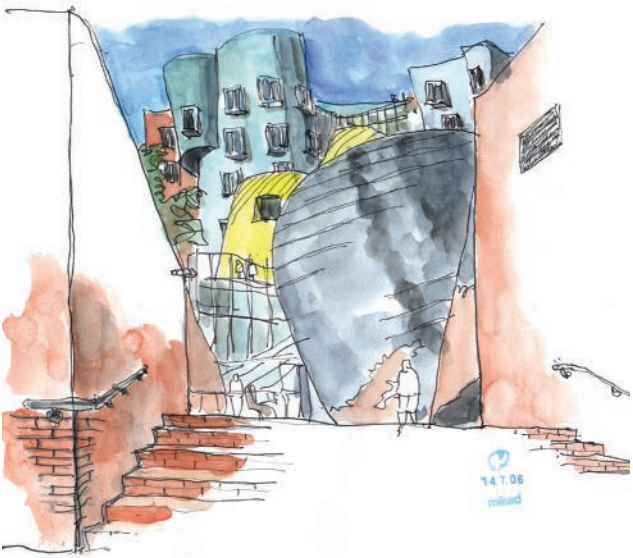


Museums
(Above) TATE Modern, London, UK
(Right) ICA Boston, MA

Three-dimensional art installations are fun to sketch, and I find spectators fun to sketch, too.







Fountain
Boston, MA

The 12 Zodiac head sculpture installation at a public park was impressive. It was a hot day and the parents watched their kids play inside the water fountain, which randomly shoots water up from the ground when you least expect it. The people were colored in monotone shades, adding a sense of cast shadows.

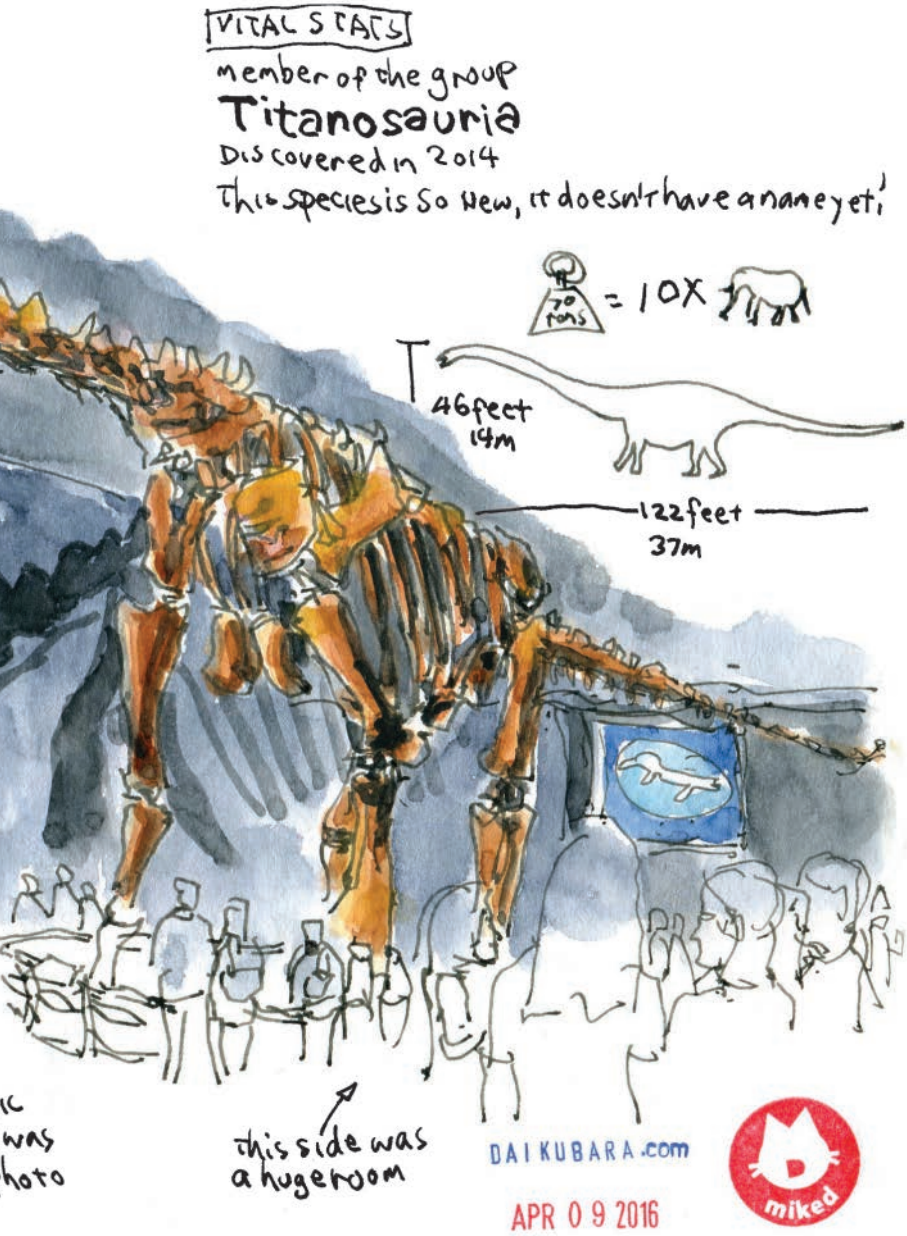
MIT Strata
Cambridge, MA

This unusual-looking building, designed by the world-renowned architect Frank Gehry, is wonderful to draw. Due to the interesting structure, scale is hard to understand, but having people in the sketch helps decipher it.



Titanosauria
New York, NY

This dinosaur, believed to be the largest in the world, could not even be contained in one room—its head is sticking out of the display room. I tried to capture the massiveness of this skeleton.


VITAL STATS
member of the group
Titanosauria
Discovered in 2014
This species is so new, it doesn't have a name yet!
70 tons
= 10X
46feet
14m
122feet
37m
this side was a huge room
DAI KUBARA.com
APR 09 2016
miked

Challenging Sketching Situations

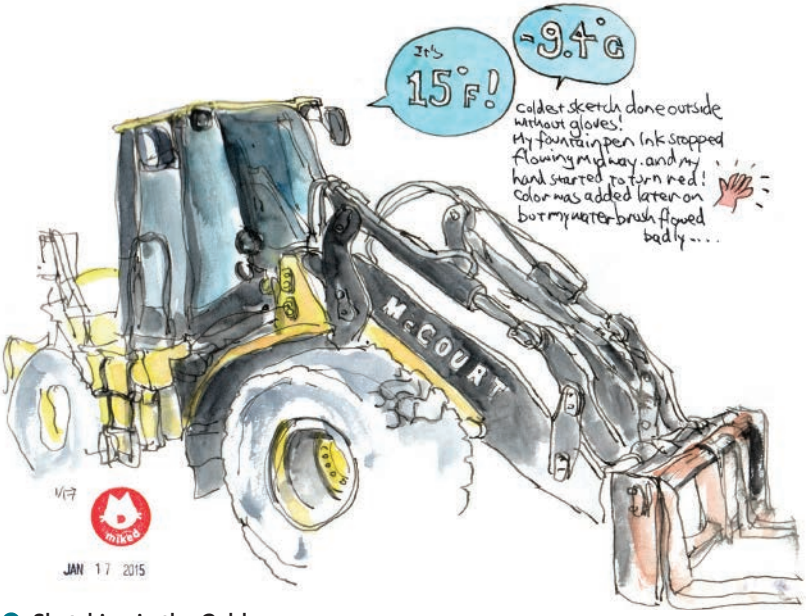
Over the years I have run into many challenging sketching situations, which are difficult but rewarding, since they make the sketches that much more memorable later on. Here are three sketches I have drawn in difficult situations. They are not my best sketches, but I'm glad I made them. I believe that when there is something you want to sketch, you have to capture it that moment, since a missed opportunity will never come around again!



Sketching in the Rain
Machu Picchu Village (Aguas Calientes), Peru

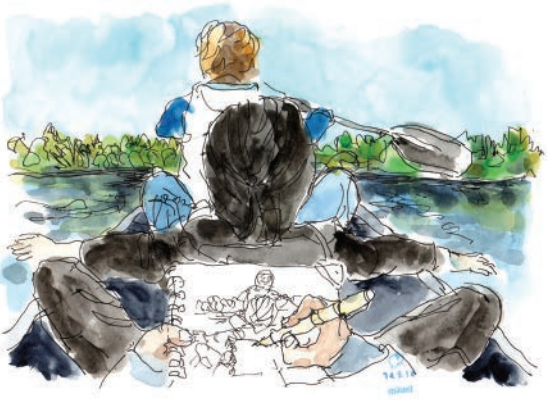
While waiting for our train to arrive, I had a few moments to sketch the colorful buildings built right next to the train tracks in Machu Picchu Village. It started to rain, but I was able to finish the sketch under my wife's umbrella.





Sketching in the Cold
Westwood, MA

I spotted a nice-looking construction vehicle that I just had to get a sketch of. The day was sunny and beautiful, but the only problem was that it was a little windy and only 15°F (-9°C)! Ten minutes into the sketch, my fountain pen ink stopped flowing and my hands started to turn bright red. That's when I stopped and finished coloring inside a warm coffee shop.





Sketching on Water
Pawtuckaway State Park, NH

I went camping with a few friends and we rented a boat. While I sketched on the boat, I worried that the boat would tip over and my sketchbook and tools would all fall into the water! Luckily it didn't happen.


Raising Cane's
25
Kiehl's



06 Thinking Later

After the sketching situation has passed, give some thought to what you did, how you think you did, what you could have done better, and how you might apply what you learned to the next sketch.

This chapter is dedicated to things I have done or learned from—I'm always looking for ways to improve so I can produce a better sketch the next time.

My Sketchbooks
Looking back at my sketchbooks allows me to see the sketches a little more objectively and evaluate what went well and what didn't go so well. This allows me to continue doing things that worked well and to change approaches that did not work.

Various Sketching Approaches

The following are some sketching approaches I have used during my sketching journey. Although I mostly use the approaches covered in the earlier chapters of this book, I still occasionally sketch in these styles too. Have a look—they may interest you.

Line-Only Sketching

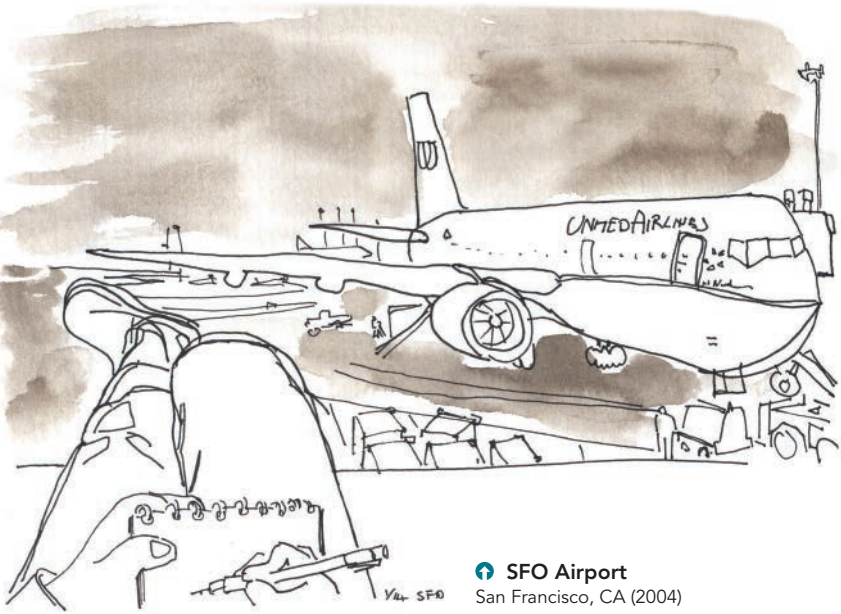
Try straight line drawing in ballpoint or a felt tip pen, using crosshatching to create shades. This technique is fun because you only need to carry around two items: your pen and your sketchbook. Making lots of lines is sometimes soothing, too.



Alterra Coffee
Milwaukee, WI (2003)

Library
Mountain View, CA (2001)





SFO Airport
San Francisco, CA (2004)



Lake Front
Milwaukee, WI (2005)

Sepia Wash Sketching

After the line drawing is completed, all of the water coloring is done with the use of one color: sepia. Sepia is a nice, warm color with a nostalgic feeling, and the results can be quite powerful. The time it takes to create one drawing is also much quicker when coloring in one shade, since there is less need to clean the brush. I used to carry one small sepia watercolor tube in my kit. When it came time to add color, I'd squeeze out a dab of sepia onto a small piece of paper and apply it to the sketch.

Watercolor Mixing Sketching

When I was first learning to use watercolors, I used to mix the perfect color on the palette, then do a test color painting on the edge of the sketch paper to see how it looked. This is a great way of learning how colors react when they are mixed together, but I found this approach to be too slow. I also found the colors to be much more vibrant and less muddy when applied with minimal mixing on the palette.

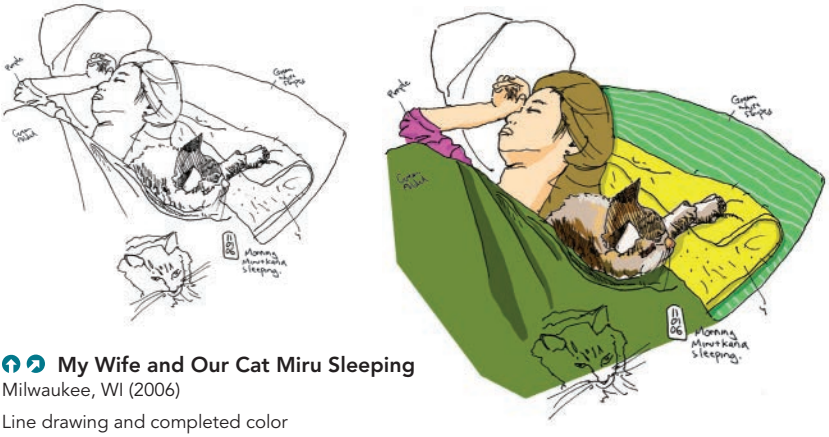


Four Seasons Coffee
Brookfield, WI (2005)

Computer Coloring Sketching

The line drawing is done on location. Later, I scan the image and color it with Adobe Photoshop using a pen tablet. I use only a few solid color fills, making this technique very fast to do.

The downside to this technique is I often get lazy and do not finish the coloring later. Also, the physical sketch remaining in the sketchbook is just line art and looks unfinished and boring without colors.



My Wife and Our Cat Miru Sleeping
Milwaukee, WI (2006)
Line drawing and completed color



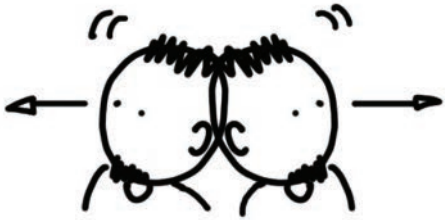
Cyclops Tattoo
Pittsburgh, PA (2006)

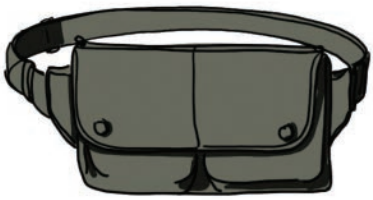
Safety

Once you start sketching, you will quickly become fully immersed into your sketch and will begin to lose track of everything else. This is why it's important to understand the environment of the place you are about to sketch before starting. These are the points I keep in mind:

Understand Your Surroundings

It's important to quickly gauge the environment where you are going to be sketching for some time. Make sure the place is out of the way of people/car traffic. Also, if it's around a famous landmark, make sure you're not blocking any sightseeing views.





Understand Your Belongings

I'm conscious of pickpockets/thefts, so I keep my bags closed and over my shoulder or strapped around my legs if I put it on the ground. If the place is really busy with people, I will bring the shoulder bag to the front of my body.



Bath
England

Here I'm sketching the scene shown on page 79. I'm sitting on a small stool with my back against the pillar and have my bag strapped around my legs for safety.

Don't Listen to Music (not just for safety reasons)



You may be tempted to listen to music while you sketch, but I encourage you to keep your headphones off and not listen to any music. Instead, listen to the surrounding ambient noises, the conversations taking place near you, the music running in the background, etc., and take it all in as you sketch. It's not only safer for you to be aware of your surroundings, but this will make your sketch much more memorable, since you'll be using all your senses. I even occasionally include small snippets of overheard conversations into my sketch.

Let people come talk to you

Having headphones off also allows spectators to come talk to you. In the beginning, this used to make me nervous, since I wasn't confident in my work. But over the years I've learned that most people who come to talk are genuinely interested and fascinated with what we are doing. Don't be shy, and let them see your sketch. I've also had a number of wonderful conversations with passing spectators.

Sketch Standing

This tip might not sound like much, but once you start getting into the habit of standing while sketching, you'll find that it brings a number of positive points to your work, including:

Finding the Perfect Angle



Once you sit down, the most you can do to adjust your viewpoint is to move your head slightly. But when you're standing, you can easily take a step to the left or right to find that exact viewpoint you were looking for in that sketch.

Some subjects could only be sketched standing, like the Tsutenkaku tower sketch shown on the opposite page.

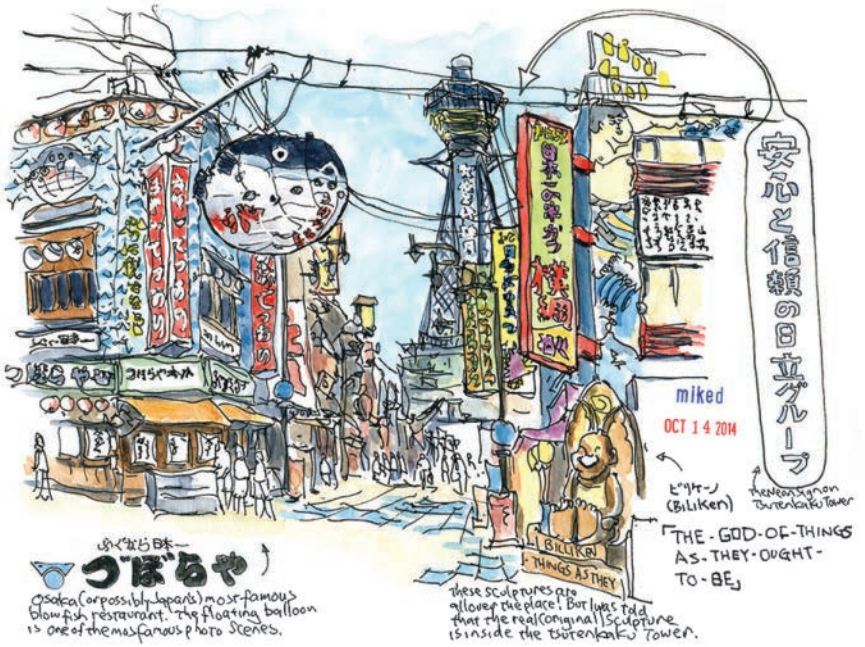
More Concentration

To no surprise, standing is more tiring than sitting. The discomfort level rises since you're not only standing, but also holding a sketchbook in your hand for an extended period of time. I believe this discomfort adds to a higher level of concentration, and pushes you to sketch faster, since you want to finish it quicker.

Safety

This also ties in with the previous section, but sketching while standing is actually safer, especially when sketching in a foreign environment where you do not understand the cultural norms as much as you would in your home country. In these situations, I like to sketch with a wall, pillar, or object behind me to feel more secure.

This being said, occasional sitting is nice. When I have extra time on my hands, I'm always ready to pull out my mini folding stool to sit while sketching.



Tsutenkaku
Osaka, Japan

This famous view of the Tsutenkaku Tower could only be sketched standing, since the only place to view it is in the middle of the road. This was early in the morning with very little traffic, so I would sketch and then get out of the way for occasional cars.

Making Sketching a Habit

Here are five points to keep in mind to help make sketching a daily activity.

1. Always carry a sketchbook with you.

Keep it light/low profile to make it hassle free. For me, carrying my sketchbook bag is such a routine that it feels awkward when I'm not carrying it.

2. When in doubt, just sketch.

I used to spend time looking for the perfect subject, angle, etc. But this takes too long and it's much better to just start sketching and to think about what you sketched later.

3. Sketch according to mood.

This could be 5 minutes or 45 minutes. Your mood is your concentration span.

4. Think of each sketch as practice.

When trying to create masterpieces, there is too much pressure and it never goes well. When you think of it as practice, you tend to be much more relaxed, which makes it fun and the results are much nicer as well.

5. Sketching 5 minutes a day is better than sketching for an hour once a week.

The main point of Sketch NOW is to be able to jump right into sketching in any situation. Sketching daily allows you to develop this skill set and mind-set.



Chicago-Style Hot Dog with Chicago Skyline
Kim and Carlo's Chicago Style Hot Dogs
Chicago, IL

Sketching what I eat has become such a habit that I have learned to sketch really fast to be able to eat my food while it's hot. This sketching topic and exact location were also used for my workshop at the Urban Sketchers Symposium in Chicago.

Quick Start Guide

Here are the steps to get you started. Basically follow your heart and sketch what intrigues you. Sketch for as much time and energy as you have and finish later if you run out of time.

1) Find a Subject

- Find a subject you really want to sketch.
- Roughly imagine how you'd like to fit the sketch on your page.
- Understand the theme/focus of your sketch (e.g., in this example I was attracted to the pigeon on the structure and the flock of birds on the ground).





2) Start Sketching

- Sketch mostly in contour. Keep the lines simple.
- Don't spend too much time looking for the perfect angle. Find a nice, safe spot and start sketching.
- Use thin/thick lines with a Fude pen.
- Add some surrounding details.
- Start sketching from the closest object, working backward. Don't overdo it.
- If the sketch doesn't match your original thinking on the page, don't worry about it. It happens all the time, so just keep on sketching.



3) Color

- Jump right into coloring.
- Use water brush only.
- Use straight color.
- Keep mixing of colors to a minimum.



4) Finish Later (optional)

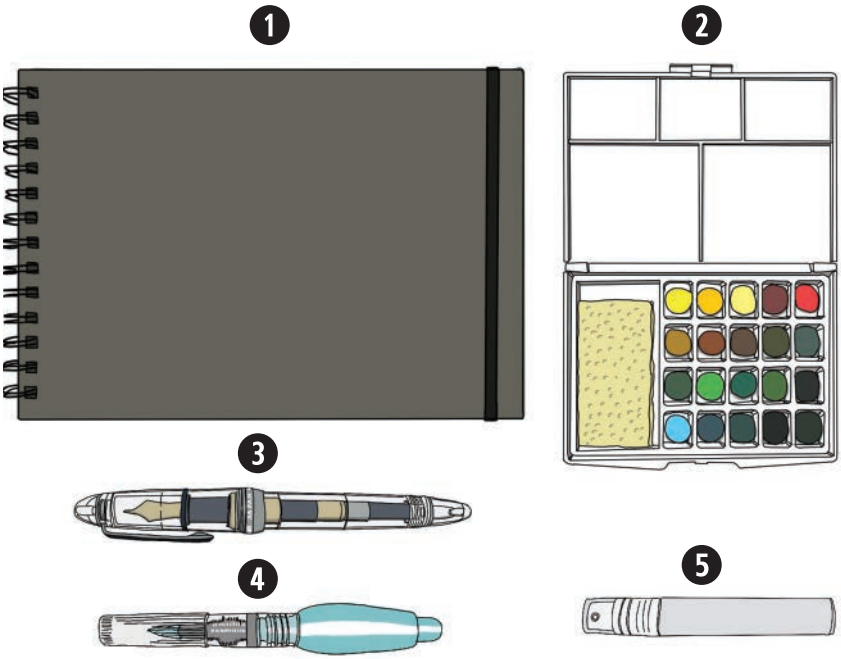
If you run out of time, take a photo of your scene and finish the sketch later. You can add:



All My Tools

Aside from my five main tools, I also carry around additional tools to make any sketching situation more convenient. These tools are constantly changing, depending on what is working for me at the time. But the majority of items shown are tools that have stood the test of time and all fit comfortably into my small daily sketch bag. Exact items may not be available for purchase in some regions, but I'm most positive a similar item is available.

Detailed descriptions of the individual items are listed on the following pages.




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All My Tools (References)

1. **Stillman & Birn Sketchbook (10" x 7" [25.4 cm x 17.8 cm] Alpha Series Sketchbook hardcover wire bound landscape).** The paper in this sketchbook is thick enough to take a few layers of watercolor washes, yet thin enough to not be afraid of a little experimenting. I also use the Beta Series for sketches done with the mop brush for more paint.

2. **Watercolor Kit (Sakura Koi Case with a custom 3-D printed insert plus twenty Holbein Colors).** If you're new to watercolor, the Sakura Koi brand is a great introductory set. This was my starter set, and I comfortably used it for many years. When I wanted to experiment with different types of brands/colors, I eventually settled on my current set. If you are interested in making the custom 3-D printed insert for yourself, please visit my web page, www.daikubara.com, for more info.

3. **Fude Fountain Pen.** I have a few Fude fountain pens, but the one I keep on using over and over is manufactured by Sailor.

4. **Water Brush.** Various manufacturers make water brushes, and they're all quite similar in construction and feel. The one I have used over the years is made by Pentel. I use the brush that has the smaller water chamber size with a medium-size bristle. This one brush will last for years.

5. **Water Mister.** This mini mister is sold through rangerink.com. I've had this same one for many years and it's a great small tool to quickly wet the watercolor pans when they have fully dried up. It also works great as backup water for the water brush.

6. **Wet Tissue.** These hand wipes are pre-moistened and are great for wiping off any spilled ink or colors. Portable hand wipes like these are typically sold in the baby aisles in stores.

7. **Tissues or Tissue Paper**

8. **Kneaded Eraser.** I keep this eraser inside a small plastic case so that it does not stick to other items in the bag. I rarely use it, but it's nice to have.

9. **Mop Brush with plastic brush protector.** Da Vinci Petit Gris Pur paintbrush, size #2. I only occasionally use this along with the small water container. The brush protector was custom made on a 3-D printer and it works great!

10. **Small Water Container.** 1 oz. Nalgene water container, which I use with the mop brush.

11. **Business Cards.** I always have a few Urban Sketching business cards with me made by moo.com.

12. **Batteries (extra batteries for the headlamp).**

13. **Headlamp.** This small headlamp made by PETZL has multiple brightness settings and angle adjustability. It seems like the older I get, the more I need to rely on this device to sketch in dark settings.

14. **Felt Tip Pen (thin).** Pigma Micron 01. This pen is fully waterproof when dry and even draws nicely over dried watercolor.

15. **Felt Tip Pen (thick).** Pigma Micron 05.

16. **Felt Tip Pen (thickest).** Mitsubishi Uni-ball Signo Pen.

17. **Ballpoint Pens (one black and one red).** Mitsubishi Uni-ball Signo 0.38. I use these two ballpoint pens when doing lots of annotation. This is one of the smoothest ballpoint pens I know of.

18. **Lamy Safari Fountain Pen (with 1.0 calligraphy nib).** I've recently become interested in calligraphy, and have started to add titles in sketch pages using this pen.

19. **Pencil with pencil sharpener cap.** Mitsubishi Hi-Uni and Faber-Castell Perfect Pencil cap.

20. **White Gel Pen (thin).** Sakura Gelly Roll 08.

21. **White Gel Pen (thick).** Pentel Hybrid Gel 1.0 mm ball Medium.

22. **Inkwell.** Visconti Universal Traveling inkwell filled with Noodler's Lexington Gray Ink.

23. **Small Ink.** Extra ink to add to the inkwell. These two inkwells will last me for two weeks of sketching.

24. **Ear Phones.** I don't use them while I sketch but carry them around just in case.

25. **Mini Stool.** This is the smallest and most portable stool I was able to find, and I have it with me at all times.



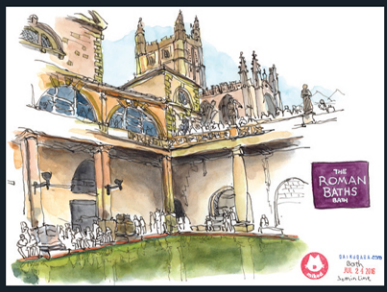
About the Author

Mike Daikubara of Boston began carrying a sketchbook in 2000 as a way to learn how to communicate faster and more effectively at his day job as a designer. Now he sketches daily to see, understand, and enjoy! A Japanese-American, Mike grew up in Tokyo and New York City. He attended an international school and was raised with kids from all over the world. He's currently the director of brand and design development responsible for industrial design and graphic design disciplines at a Boston-based kitchen and bath manufacturer. He is a correspondent for the Urban Sketchers International sketch blog and has self-published seven books to date. This is his first book distributed through a publisher.

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Sketching is more popular than ever,

but busy lives leave little time for sitting down with a pen and paper. Many people give up on their wonderful and fulfilling hobby (and artistic outlet) because they feel they just don't have the bandwidth to get started or stick with it. But here's the secret: you do have time each day to practice, you just need to learn to incorporate sketching into your daily life.

Sketch NOW, Think Later covers the tools, techniques, and tips to make daily sketching possible. Author and www.urbansketchers.org correspondent in Boston, Mike Daikubara, has developed a system in his more than fifteen years as a practicing artist that shows you how to fully dive into any sketching situation with limited time and tools, and be able to produce memorable, great looking, fun sketches!

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