

OTTAWA SCHOOL OF ART
INTRODUCTION TO URBAN SKETCHING

Course Description: Urban sketching is becoming a trend all around the world. Although it shares some superficial resemblances to other forms of drawing practice, the particularities that define it and make it relevant for our contemporary culture are unique. Urban sketching can be defined as "observational drawings done on location in urban environments such as cafes, parks, on busses, in movie theatres, etc." These drawings may or may not feature people.

The artist and journalist Gabriel Campanario, who began the Urban Sketches Collective on Flickr in 2008 and recently compiled "The Art of Urban Sketching," the first book dedicated to showcasing the work of Urban Sketchers around the world, writes the following about urban sketchers in his "Urban Sketchers Manifesto" (available online at www.urbansketchers.org):

1. We draw on location, indoors or out, capturing what we see from direct observation.
2. Our drawings tell the story of our surroundings, the places we live and where we travel.
3. Our drawings are a record of time and place.
4. We are truthful to the scenes we witness.
5. We use any kind of media and cherish our individual styles.
6. We support each other and draw together.
7. We share our drawings online.
8. We show the world, one drawing at a time.

This class will cover the fundamentals of sketching in an urban environment, from composing and sizing a drawing on the relatively small surface of a sketchbook page to the selective use of elements from the observed environment to communicate a mood or vision. Along the way we will also cover:

- how observational sketching differs from sketching as process (design sketching)
- how to let the sketch "happen" by being an observer of the scene
- drawing techniques for quickly laying down the basics of human gestures as well as the forms and spaces of urban environments
- how to choose angles and topics of visual interest in order to get the most from your subject matter (hint: avoid sketching something simply because its scenic!)
- how to notice details you wouldn't have noticed before (such as the way buildings and people interact in a scene)

- how to tweak the "truth" of a scene so as to artfully emphasize certain elements over others (this distinguishes urban sketching from visual journalism)
- how to have fun in a supportive group setting by constantly being surprised and delighted by the things you see around you

Whenever possible, we will also touch on the history of the plein air sketch, looking at examples from art history including the sketches of Durer, Rembrandt and Watteau through to some examples of urban sketches today. The emphasis, however, will be on urban sketching practice in real locations around Ottawa.

Prerequisite: an introduction to drawing course

***Required:* portable sketchbook no larger than 8 x 10 (Smaller is preferred. Ideal size is between 2x3 and 7x9). Portable drawing media (pen, pencil, brushpen or pencil crayon preferred. Avoid overly messy or smudgy media such as charcoal, chalk and paint. Watercolour may be acceptable if it is compact and tidy (for example, watercolour pencils or watercolour pens, or a small watercolour box).**

How the classes will work:

Every day we will go to a new location close to the school to sketch (both indoor and outdoor locations). Homework each week will be to create 3 to 5 more sketches from the same place or a different place. Be as creative as possible! At the beginning of each class, students will show their favourite sketch from the past week and the class will appreciatively critique it based on the practical and theoretical points we have so far covered.