

## ASSIGNMENT 3: GETTING OUT OF YOUR COMFORT ZONE – SKETCHING IN PUBLIC

## INTRODUCTION

Sketching in public is a big “No No” for many people. The logistics of organising yourself to sketch in public and dealing with the weather are as nothing compared to the fears of what might happen to you! People might talk to you; make rude or silly comment remarks; laugh at your sketches; ask you to do their portrait – you name it, I’ve heard it.

However, the reality for many artists is that many do sketch on a regular basis and positively enjoy what they do – and keep doing it. “[Do you ever sketch in public](#)” is a poll of people visiting the About.com Painting website, which has been running since 2006. Of some 776 respondents to date, some 60% sketch in public at least sometimes and 30% sketch anywhere and everywhere.

People sometimes make completely inane comments but YOU WILL COPE. I guarantee that it won’t be a tenth as frightening as you think it will be. You just need to develop some strategies for coping with your anxieties.

For example, try thinking about sketching from a different perspective. I sketch in restaurants and cafes on a regular basis. As soon as I start to sketch I always get excellent service from the waiting staff (who always want to know if they’re in the picture). 100% of the comments I get are from people who are genuinely interested and tend to admire your skills (no matter what the calibre of drawing). However, they might also want to tell you about a child prodigy of their acquaintance or tell you how they have never been able to draw<sup>1</sup>. You can handle this!

## THINGS TO THINK ABOUT – WHAT NEEDS TO BE ACCOMMODATED

- All the things from assignment 2 concerning weather and light

## THINGS TO THINK ABOUT – THAT YOU CAN CONTROL

- Always pick a view which speaks to you at a personal level and that you’ll enjoy doing – I guarantee that it’s the one that stays in your brain as you walk around looking at options
- Practice identifying views to sketch when you have no kit with you. You’ll end up with a list of views you want to do and you’ll never have a problem about what to do next!
- Don’t plonk yourself down in a place with foot traffic – you’ll just get bumped and jostled and find the whole experience thoroughly unpleasant.
- Try and find a spot which means nobody can come up behind you. Having your back to a wall or sitting in a corner are both good options.

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1 When people tell me they’ve never been able to draw but wish they could I always tell them about Betty Edwards’s book “Drawing on the Right Side of your Brain” which is very accessible and teaches people how to see.

- If you're female and on your own be very, very sensible about picking isolated spots and let people know where you've gone. The general principle is 'see and be seen'.
- If you climb down (or up) to something with all your kit, do make sure you are capable of climbing back up (or down) with all your kit! Or even without it?
- Work out where "the facilities" are before you need them! Believe me, you'll be amazed at how engrossed you can get in your sketching.....
- Don't be afraid of choosing something small or doing several small sketches of small details – you don't have to do everything!
- If the drawing challenge just swamps you, take photos and then just try doing colour swatches and a value scale – makes note of which colour / value relates to which bit of the image in question.

### ASSIGNMENT 3: WHAT YOU HAVE TO DO

**Your third assignment is to spend as much time as you have available sketching in public. That's it!**

**This is the "getting out of the comfort zone" "feel the fear and do it anyway" assignment!**

You can do as many or as few sketches as you like – but they have to be in a public place. This can be inside if weather is not great for sketching outdoors.

Before you go on your "field trip" for real you will need to:

- Identify potentially suitable locations
- Think about how you can make time (remembering that you're doing sketches and have practised drawing for short intervals) e.g. is this something you can do during your lunch break at work?
- Practice drawing quickly (Assignment 1)
- Find a folding chair (Assignment 2) or locate somewhere with seats to sketch
- Assemble an easily portable sketching kit (see Assignment 2)

If you're feeling nervous or uncertain, I suggest you try the following first:

- Sketch an interior
  - No light or weather issues to deal with
  - Try a café or coffee shop or similar where the basic structure stays the same but people tend to come and go
  - Practice drawing people from a distance. See how much (or rather how little) detail is needed to represent a person. Skip the details you don't need
- Sketch outside and see how you cope with choosing a view, finding somewhere to locate yourself, dealing with the changing light and the weather. Don't worry about how the sketch comes out, get comfortable with the process first.

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**When you have completed your assignment**

- Post your completed sketches on your blog or website – and give it a title if you think it deserves one
- State how long the sketches took you and what media you used
- Identify what you learned, what went well and what you still need to work on
- Invite comments and criticisms (which might be less than totally complimentary) only if you wish to receive them. Be specific as to any query you have.

Many of the people who participated in the original class that I taught in 2006 have gone on to carry sketchbooks with them on a regular basis and to enjoy sketching in public. I hope that will be your experience too.

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