



## Making Expressive Pen and Ink Drawings On Location

Marc Taro Holmes | Author of *The Urban Sketcher: Techniques for Seeing and Drawing on Location*

This mini workshop is for anyone who wants to learn to sketch faster, draw with confidence in pen and ink, or record personal impressions on location.

Contains **FIVE** exercises:

- **PLAN FOR SPONTANEITY:** Scribble and Refine
- **DIRECT TO INK:**  
SINGLE LINE SKETCHING and,  
CINQ-à-SEPT SKETCHES: 5-7 Lines
- **TONE SHAPES:** Drawing with Value
- Bonus Exercise:  
**PANORAMA SKETCHING:** Post and Rail



I've made these instructional worksheets available free for personal use. Please download and share with your drawing group :) but don't try to sell this free educational content! :( Feel free to repost on your sites or re-distribute online, but remember to credit me ~thanks! Marc Taro Holmes | [www.citizensketcher.com](http://www.citizensketcher.com)



# PLAN FOR SPONTANEITY

## Exercise: **SCRIBBLE AND REFINE:** Pencil > Pen > Brush



### **Work larger-to-smaller:**

Sketch a box for an entire building. Divide that into smaller boxes for floors.

Leave out chimneys, TV dishes, most windows etc. Just the structure, not the detail.

If there is some key focal point, such as pillars around a door, or an arched window, indicate it, but keep to simple shapes.

### **Measure Height vs. Width:**

Is the subject taller than it is wide? How many pencil-lengths?

### **Use Angle Checks:**

Hold your pencil at arm's length, elbow locked, and rotate your wrist to align to angles. Compare reality against your drawing and fix as necessary. This is good for checking roof and ground lines.

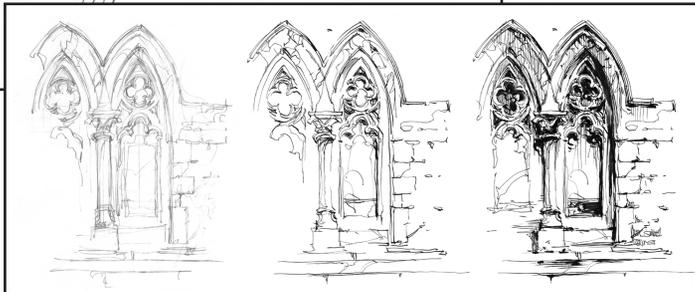
### **Use the POV check:**

Hold up your drawing directly in front of the subject to compare. Does it 'fit well' over top of the real object? Is it too tall, or too wide?

Make any important changes now, before committing to ink.

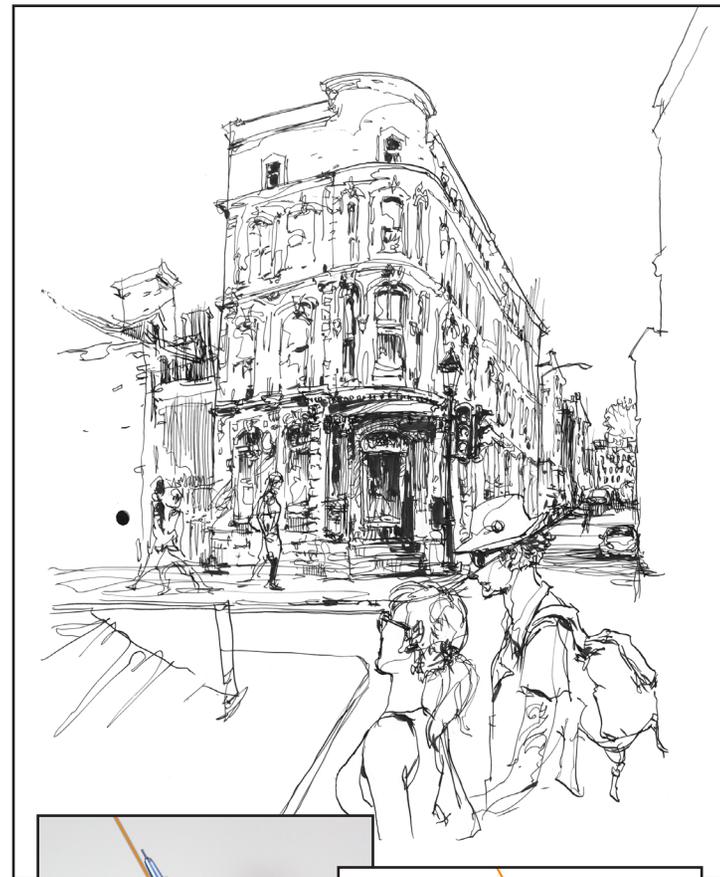


**Supplies:** I like Lamy fountain pens in fine or extra fine, but a rolling ball or pigment marker will work fine. You'll also need a brush pen. The Pentel Pocket Brush is a good starter choice.

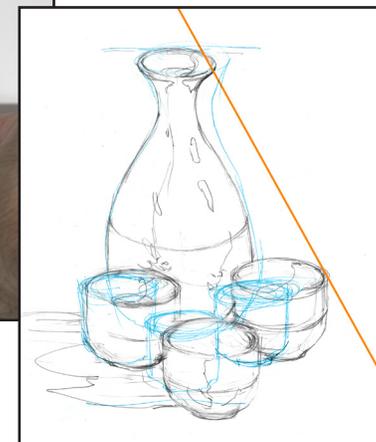


**Draw in Three Passes: Pencil > Pen > Brush Pen**

If you solve the design thinking in pencil, the final ink drawing can be more relaxed.



**Angle Checking**



## PLAN FOR SPONTANEITY

Exercise: **SCRIBBLE AND REFINE:** Pencil > Pen > Brush



**Watercolor pairs well with ink drawing. Capture small detail in ink, big shapes in color.**

**This should not feel like tracing.**  
If the ink drawing seems repetitive, you overdid the pencil scribble.

When inking, strive for a clean line. Don't overwork contours with 'furry' searching lines. Rely on your pencil guide to make confident strokes.

Don't seal ink outlines like a cartoon. Let the line break open where light strikes. Leave some areas unfinished. Let the viewer's imagination complete the drawing.

Use flowing continuous lines that cross the contours of the form.

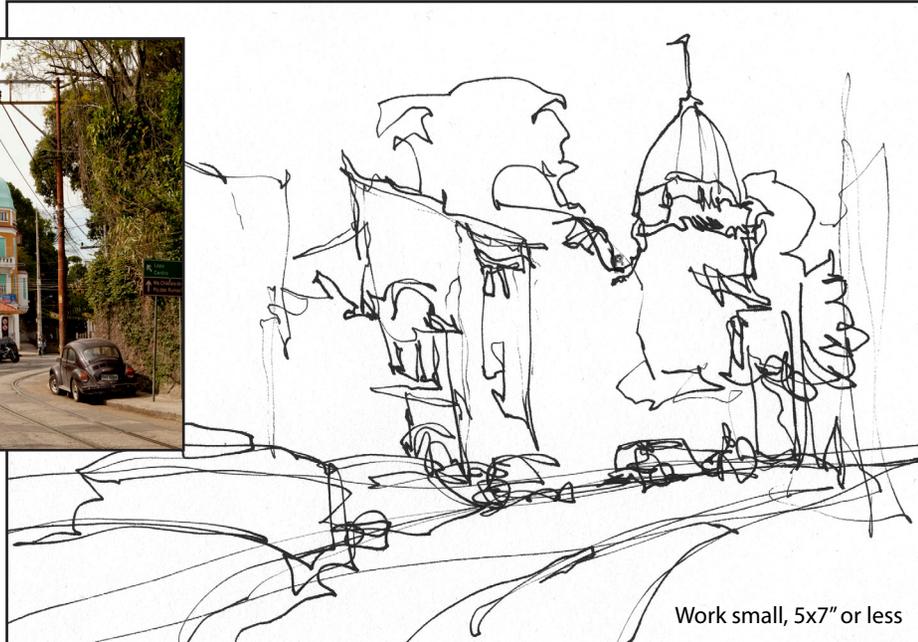
Look for shapes of shadow areas to draw – I make outlines of tone changes as if the line were describing color washes.

Your reward is to erase the rough pencil drawing, leaving only your clean lines behind. Make sure the ink is dry before erasing or adding color.

Enjoy the loose feeling of the sketch. Don't pursue unnecessary perfection. If you want it perfect, why would you be drawing on location? You could work in the studio for that.

## DIRECT TO INK

### Exercise: **SINGLE LINE SKETCHING**



Work small, 5x7" or less



#### **THE GOAL:**

To help you develop fluidity and confidence with spontaneous pen-and-ink sketching.

Try to make a conscious decision that you will not be self-critical. There are no mistakes! This is just a quick exercise to loosen up your line.

#### **THE EXERCISE:**

In this exercise we'll be sketching with a continuous line.

Try to experience what it's like to draw rapidly with confidence.

**We'll do five sketches in 20 minutes.**

**When you start drawing, don't allow yourself to pick up the pen point. Make the sketch in a single, uninterrupted line.**

Keep the pen moving, letting the line flow between objects, cross forms, and break out of shapes.

Finish the line drawing with the brush pen, placing darks in trees, windows, and cast shadows.

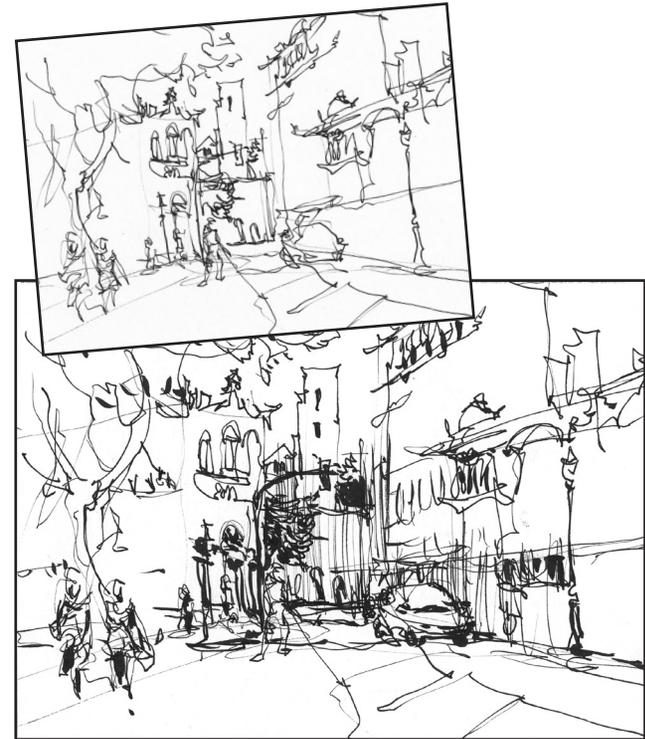
It's best to work on location, but if you want to draw from photos, you'll need plenty of subjects. Google Street View or Image Search are good resources.

This probably won't be easy at first - but that's ok! You are learning with every sketch. The more you do, the faster you learn.

**The Exercise: 1 Line | 5 Sketches | 20 Minutes**

## DIRECT TO INK

### Exercise: **SINGLE LINE SKETCHING**



#### **Tips and Tricks:**

See how far you can get with one uninterrupted line.

Feel free to leave things out - edit reality.

You can pause your pen and study what's going on before continuing.

If you accidentally lift - just keep going where you left off. Don't be too strict.

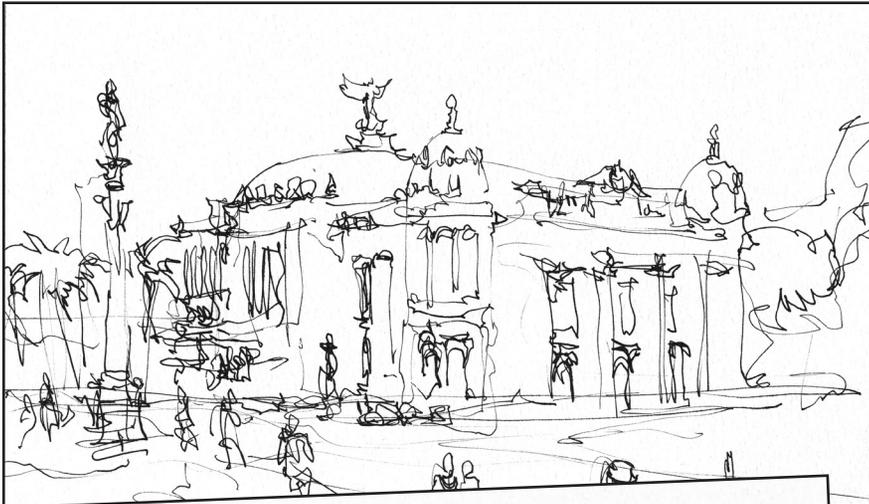
Work left to right, leave negative shapes, break forms, join shapes, connect objects to the ground.

Use overlapping objects to move the line back and forth in space.

Have FUN with it!

## DIRECT TO INK

### Exercise: **CINQ-à-SEPT SKETCHES**: 5-7 Lines



After a few rounds of Single Line Sketches, your drawing hand should feel more relaxed.

Now try a slightly larger drawing with more detail. Not more than 8x10".

**Aim to get three drawings in 45 minutes.**

Don't lose the feeling of flowing lines and rapid observation.

**This time: allow yourself 5 to 7 continuous lines. One line for each major object or passage in your drawing.**

The limit is meant to keep the drawing fresh. Don't worry too much about the exact count.

Establish a central shape in a few lines, then do the background with another line or two. Save a couple of lines for people, cars, and small objects in the foreground.

Remember to weld shapes when possible, to reduce the number of objects. Feel free to leave out detail in areas away from the focus.

Reduce distant figures and street clutter to brush marks and floating squiggles.

Save some time to go back and add darks with the brush pen.

These drawings will look great with color but don't stop sketching yet. Paint them after you get three in 45 minutes. Often I'll paint in a café when I'm taking a break to eat.

If you are spending a day on location, see if you can get 8-10 sketches in an afternoon of sight-seeing.

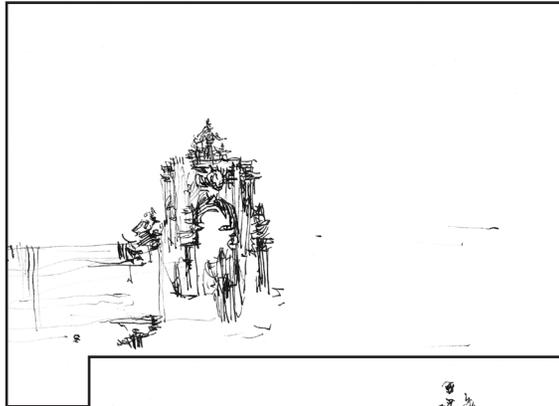


**The Exercise: 5-7 Lines | 3 Sketches | 45 Minutes**



# DIRECT TO INK

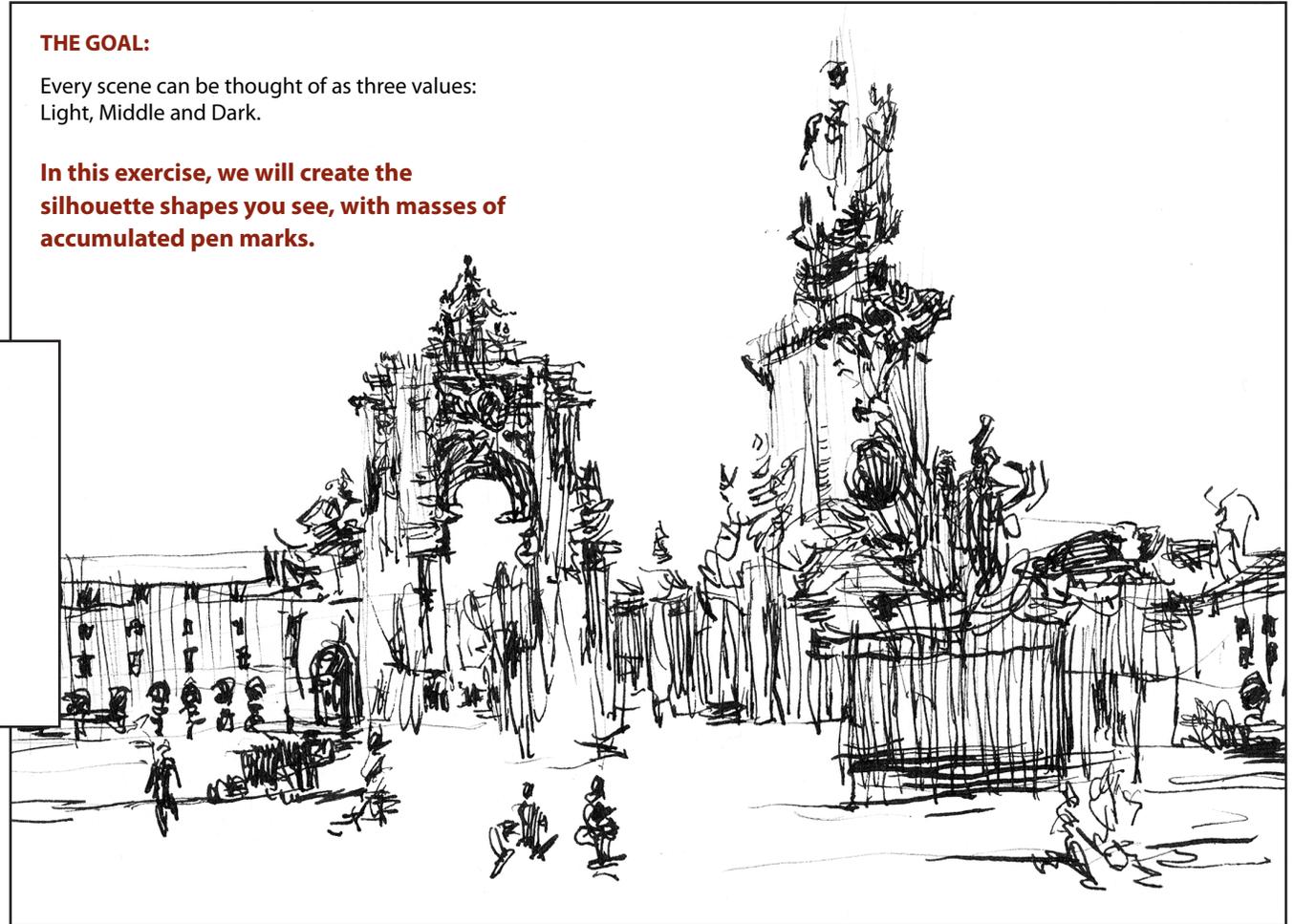
## Exercise: **TONE SHAPES:** Drawing with Value



### THE GOAL:

Every scene can be thought of as three values:  
Light, Middle and Dark.

**In this exercise, we will create the silhouette shapes you see, with masses of accumulated pen marks.**



This exercise will develop your ability to see big shapes in the composition.

You'll find this skill invaluable as a painter. But even if you stay with drawing, you'll benefit from more expressive mark making in pen and ink, and a better sense of mass and volume.

**This time, do not outline. Instead, build values shapes from the inside out with passages of pen hatching.**

Merge the shape of cast shadows into connected mid-tone shapes. High key passages can be left as negative space. Foliage and trees, or dark rooftops can be seen as solid dark shapes.

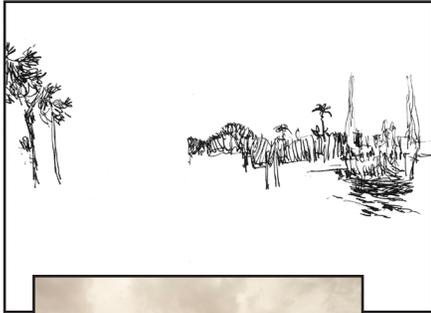
Try to imply internal structure by varying your mark making.

It's ok to 'color outside the lines.' Just approximate what you see - try to interpret reality into simple shapes.

Dark masses (windows, contact shadows) can be done with the brush pen.

## DIRECT TO INK

### Exercise: **TONE SHAPES:** Drawing with Value



These tonal drawings should have more solidity and sense of three dimensions than the previous line drawings.

Compare your linear sketches vs. your tonal ones at a distance. Stand back a few feet. See how the big tone shapes hold up?

This is why paintings work on the wall, and drawings work in a book. You read a drawing, you view a painting.

### When you've done a few with only Tone Shapes, bring back in the Single Line Drawing



## BONUS EXERCISE: PANORAMA SKETCHING: Post and Rail



Decide how wide you want to go. The wider the field of view, the 'shorter' your drawing will be compared to its length.

In a small book, this can make your drawing little more than bumps-on-a-horizon-line.

Choose how many pages in your drawing. Will you work across a double page spread? Or keep going as you flip the page? There are also accordion fold sketch-books that offer plenty of length.

I prefer loose sheets as I like to start in the center, and work outward in both directions.

To begin, choose a landmark that is the most important thing in your view. Something highly distinctive, a recognizable part of the skyline.

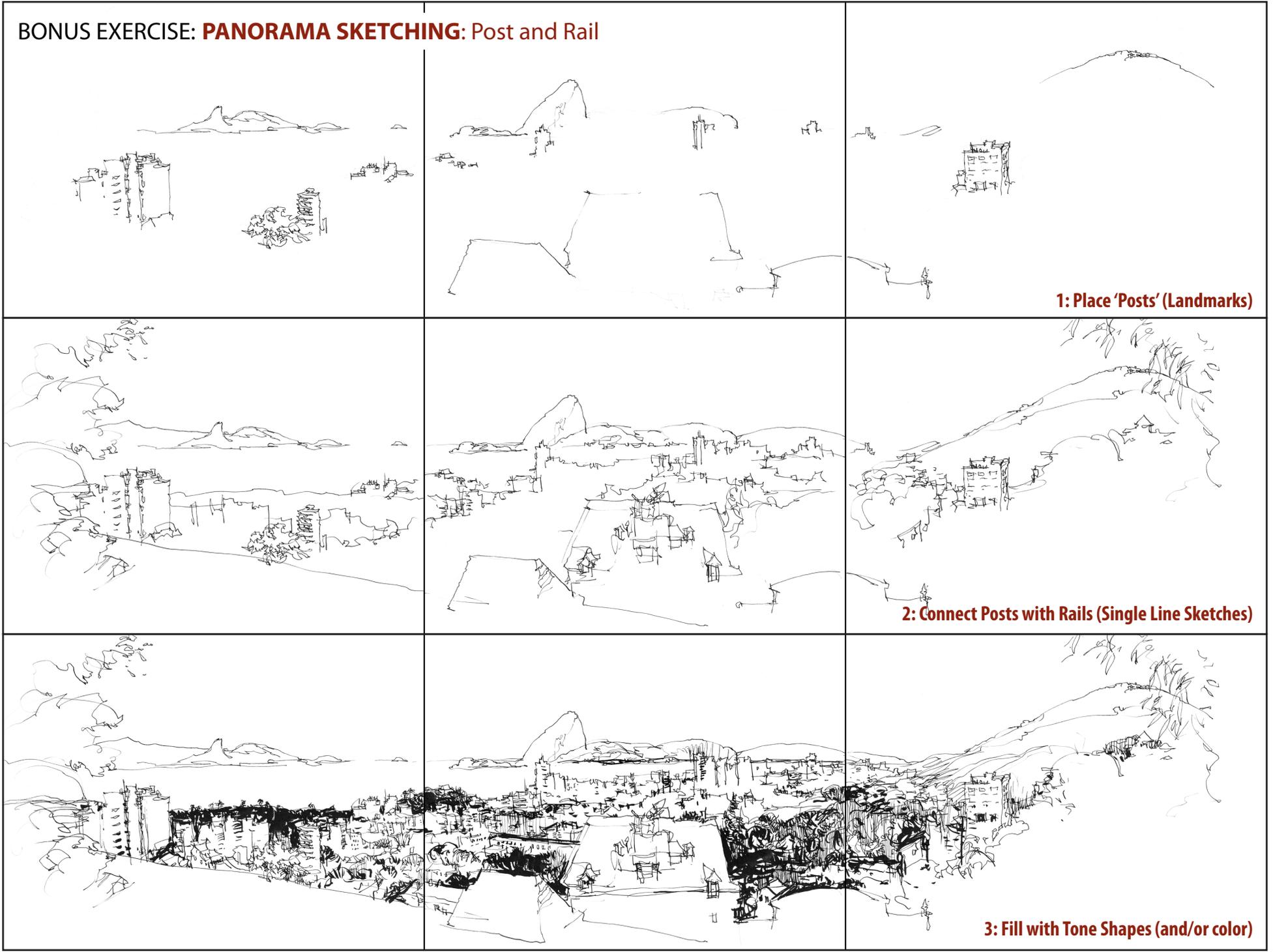
This is your first 'post'.

The idea is to build your drawing like a fence. Placing posts, and joining them with rails.

If you place all your posts in pencil (re: the exercise Scribble and Refine) you have a chance to do some sight measuring before you dive into ink.

Personally, I try not to be obsessive about accuracy, and often enjoy going straight to ink (or watercolor).

**BONUS EXERCISE: PANORAMA SKETCHING: Post and Rail**



**1: Place 'Posts' (Landmarks)**

**2: Connect Posts with Rails (Single Line Sketches)**

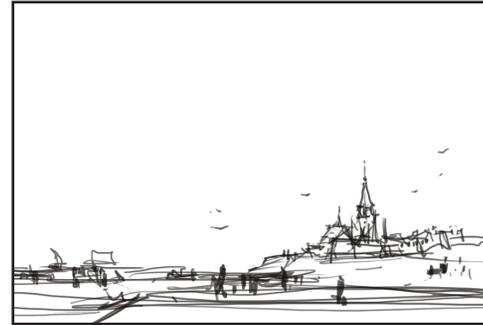
**3: Fill with Tone Shapes (and/or color)**

## WORKSHEET: Pictorial Composition



### Rule of Thirds:

A fountain, a statue, a house. Any object can be isolated against a simplified environment and given priority by placement at the intersection of thirds.



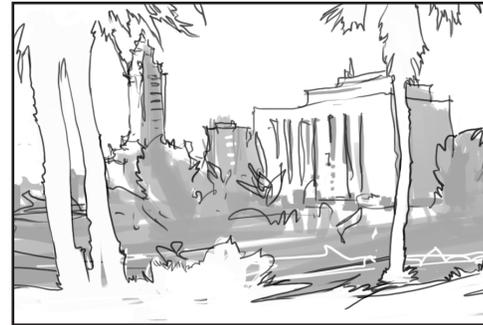
### Low Horizon:

Remove all the distractions and sketch a skyline with plenty of headroom. Works with cityscapes, interesting roof lines, and distant views.



### Deep Foreground:

Lead the eye toward a distant subject. Ideal for featuring people and street life in front of a landmark.



### Screening Element:

Use objects in the environment - fences, trees, lamp posts to create a screening device. Leave these as negative space, or make silhouettes, establishing a strong foreground.



### Unequal Balance:

A large mass weighted to one side, with a balancing shape on the other. Often works at a street corner. Works when foregrounding a detail and pushing back a distant point of interest.



**Odd Formats:** It can be interesting to work with a different shape. Try a Square or Panorama and see what you can do with it.