

## THE SITE SKETCHING DECK: A Team Sketching Game for Site Specific Documentary Drawing

This team drawing project is developed by Marc Taro Holmes of CitizenSketcher.com for the Urban Sketchers 2016 international symposium in Manchester UK.

This thing is a work in progress, and we welcome any feedback or suggestions at:  
marc(taroholmes(at)gmail(dot)com).

This file contains printable artwork for the deck of cards, formatted for US Letter sized paper. We recommend printing on a slightly heavier card stock. You will need to trim the cards by hand with a craft knife and metal ruler.

This file was originally posted on from <https://citizensketcher.com/downloads/>



### The Concept:

Artists who self-identify as Urban Sketchers share an interest in drawing from first-hand observation.

It is not uncommon for groups of sketchers to gather at pre-arranged locations with the intent of collaborative art-making. We often seek to record a factual time-and-place impression, presented through the filter of each artist's personal style.

A unique aspect of sketching, as opposed to plein air painting or studio work, is the reasonable expectation that artists might finish a large number of sketches in a session.

This suggests that, with proper planning, Urban Sketchers have a unique opportunity to make an artistic documentary of a large scale landmark, heritage site, or temporary event, ***in a single drawing session.***

## The Problem - and a Solution:

Typically, at an un-guided sketchcrawl each artist wants to maximize their time drawing, so they sit right down and immediately begin drawing the ‘best view’.

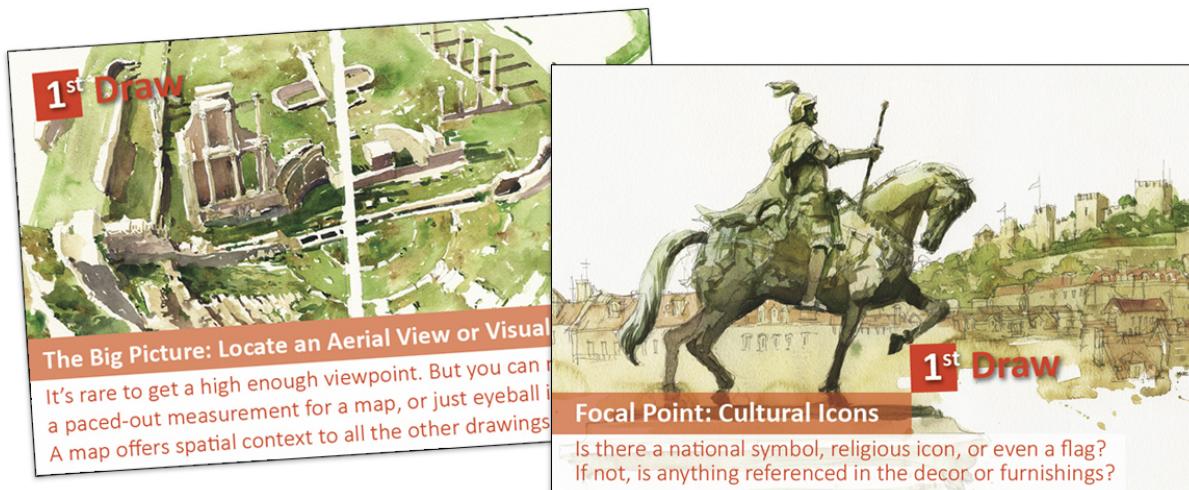
An unfortunate side effect is that we often end the day with many renditions of the same drawing. Admittedly different styles – but often of the same subject matter.

If instead, artists were to be given \*assignments\* – specific tasks of what to draw, which are pre-planned to avoid overlap with the work of other artists, the group could insure complete coverage of a site.

Naturally, this is a compromise for the individual artists. We give up complete freedom of choice, in return for participating in the production of a larger work. But I feel this is a small price to pay for the return.

To recognize the natural tendency for collaborating artists to resist outside direction (herding cats?) – I propose an automated system of choosing drawing assignments. No single person will be ‘in charge’ of the project plan – but rather, topics can be assigned by random chance.

In short: **a deck of cards**.



## Methodology / Rules of the Game:

The deck as it stands today (a work in progress) contains 16 base sketching assignment cards, and 32 optional exercises.

It’s designed for five to seven artists to make between two and five 30 minute drawing rounds.

To participate, each artist simply selects a random card from the deck, and follows the topic or exercise suggested. They remain open to interpret their individual assignments in their own artistic style. But ultimately, no two artists will be drawing the same viewpoint.

Groups of larger sizes can build a correspondingly larger deck by increasing the number of cards, (doubling up), adding in the optional card sets, drawing faster (more people = fewer rounds) or, writing in their own custom cards. If there are a sufficient number of artists a complete site-record could be made in a single 30 min session.

All that matters is the general rule: *At least 1 potential card per artist, per round, no (unintentionally) repeated cards.*

During the drawing event, cards are NOT to be returned to the deck between draws, ensuring that there will be no duplication of drawing assignments.

Organizers may allow artists to swap cards at the start of a draw. However any bartering will eat up drawing time, so this is not recommended.

The cards have been prioritized by importance into sets of **First Draw** and **Second Draw** documentary drawings. If you have less time, or fewer artists, start by randomly dealing out First Draw cards.

Optional card sets are organized by: **Interior Access** (if allowed to draw inside a site), **People Sketching** (if there are staff or guests on site), and **Exercise** cards offering suggested ‘drawing practice’. (These are only recommended in the case of groups of students or beginners).

Finally, there is a set labeled **Reference Images**, which are useful if someone wishes to research historic imagery in advance. (And bring printouts to draw from!) These cards may considerably enrich the documentation process with added historical context, however, this is not expected to be part of a typical Site Sketching Project, nor would it be considered ‘true’ reportage.

## **Project Notes:**

In many sites (art museums, protected historic buildings) it is more responsible to sketch in pencil, and revisit the sketches off-site to add ink, or color. (Paint at a café after the drawing rounds!)

If the goal is a booklet, poster or website, drawing teams may wish to deliver sketches to a volunteer organizer for scanning or photography.

Some teams may choose to announce a pre-determined size for drawings (e.g. 8x10”, 9x12”), or (if there are funds available) provide pre-cut multimedia drawing paper in order to make a uniform presentation.

Typical applications for the Site Sketching Deck might include: museums, historic houses and heritage sites, civic buildings, universities, or religious landmarks. Sites such as these make for receptive partners when organizing an event. It will also work with commercial spaces, workshops, or private residences.

Exceptional situations might include open ended topics such as a neighborhood or district, or in theory, an entire city – but this would call for significant planning towards communication and transportation. (Unless everything could be handled by email and phone?)

Naturally, the more official your access (paid admission, backstage passes, pre-arranged private tours, etc.), the easier it will be. However, ‘guerilla sketching missions’ can work just as well.

We cannot recommend trespassing, but neither do we feel that artists need to seek permission to make non-commercial artworks. No more than you would need permission to use a notebook or type a memo on your phone.

However, when asked to stop drawing by an official representative, while you are on private property, you should comply promptly. Or at least move outside the edge of the property to continue sketching.

If you intend to print and sell artwork, further research might be required into your local laws governing usage of individual's recognizable likenesses (i.e.: "Personality Rights"), and the commercial use of landmarks. (Some locations require a permit for professional art practice on site).

However, most sketching projects do not result in infringing likenesses. There are often regulatory exemptions for fine art, for the degree of representational accuracy, and/or a requirement for the infringed to prove a loss of income or damages. So generally – you're OK – (but check your local laws).

**Exercise: Three Times Different**

Make three fast drawings of the same subject (10 mins each). Emphasize different parts each time. Direct our focus to detail and darks. Leave different areas unfinished.

**1st Draw**

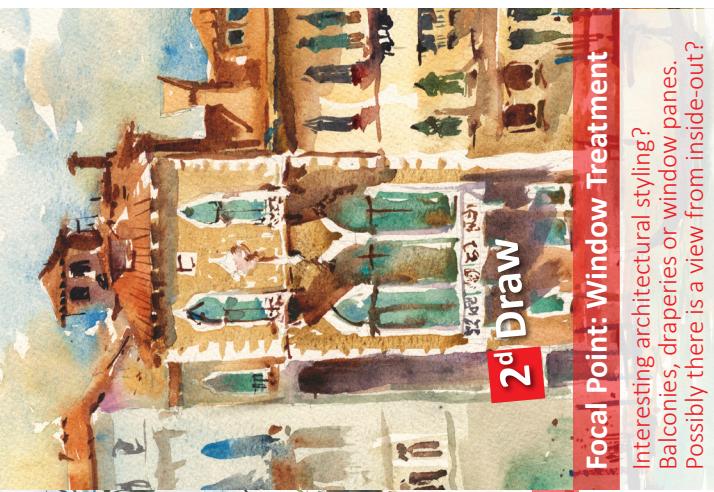
**Zoom in and sketch SMALL details**

This might be decorative mouldings, iron work, carved keystones or gargoyles. The little things that add character and are fun to discover.



### Focal Point: Alternate Exits

Is there a back door, a side gate, or a servants' entrance?  
Maybe the main entrance has smaller portals?  
All entrances and exits to a site are interesting focal points.



**Focal Point: Window Treatment**  
Interesting architectural styling?  
Balconies, draperies or window panes.  
Possibly there is a view from inside-out?



### Focus on: Pattern & Decoration

Zoom in and sketch a tile pattern,  
rugs or fabric design, or a relief carving.  
These are cultural details that add  
to the bigger picture.



### Focal Point: Lawn Ornament

Any interesting objects on the grounds?  
Fountain, gazebo, gate, water feature?  
Even a focal point in the landscaping or  
an attractive planting.



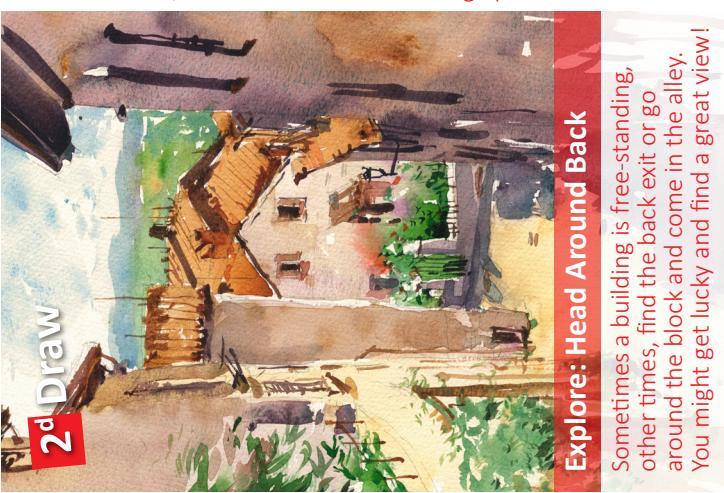
### Explore: Room with a view

Can you get roof access, or is there a unique window view?  
What can you see looking outward from your site.  
Ask the locals/staff what's the best vantage point.



### Explore: Down the Right Side

Is there an alley or a service entrance?  
See what you can discover by snooping!  
If there's no access, maybe you can see  
from a tall building nearby? Worst case,  
draw from a widow looking out.



### Explore: Head Around Back

Sometimes a building is free-standing,  
other times, find the back exit or go  
around the block and come in the alley.  
You might get lucky and find a great view!



### Explore: Down the Left Side

Is there an alley or a service entrance?  
See what you can discover by snooping!  
If there's no access, maybe you can see  
from a tall building nearby? Worst case,  
draw from a widow looking out.

INTERIOR cards are OPTIONAL. You will not have free access to every site. However if it is possible to go inside, they are well worth adding to the deck.

If it is feasible to plan ahead, consider labeling the back of the cards with specific locations, such as 'Foyer', 'Stairwell', etc. to avoid duplication.



### Interiors: Ultra Wide Angle Rooms

By sketching an exaggerated wide angle view - a flattened 'X' shape - you can get everything in without worrying about perspective. Draw objects that interest you and edit out boring



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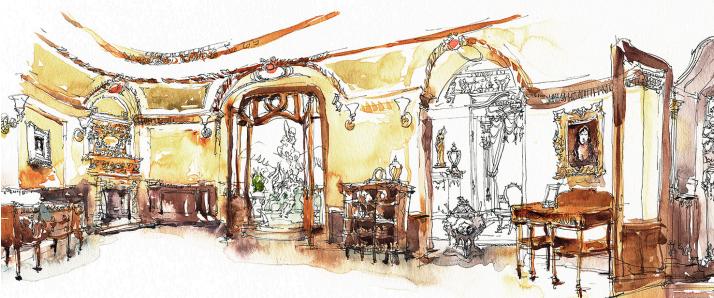
### Interiors: Isometric Still Life Collections

In an Isometric perspective, each object is sketched from an imaginary overhead 'corner view' - no matter how they really appear to you. This can make a collection of stray objects more consistent.



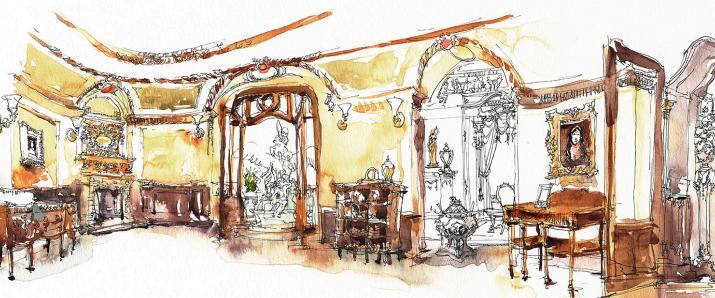
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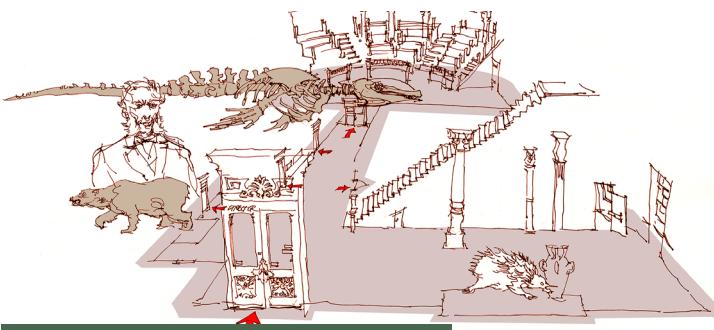
### Interiors: Rotating Viewpoint Panorama

Capture an entire room with a panoramic sketch. Stand near the center, pick a starting wall. Rotate your view, adding to the drawing until you get back to the start. Larger, cluttered spaces might need extra sheets.



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### Interiors: Annotated Floorplan

Sketchbook drawing collections can be better understood when seen in the context of a sketched map. Approximate measurements can be estimated by eye or 'paced-out'. Small drawings of key objects assist our understanding of a space.



### Interiors: Still Life Speed Collage

Sketch objects, people or small details. Work directly, as fast as you can draw without losing control. Placing sketches on top of each other instinctively. Strive to make interesting page designs without planning. See how many objects you can successfully overlap on a page.



### First Things First: The Front View

Get far enough back to see the whole place. Simplify details. Capture the silhouette. This can be the lynch-pin of a montage. Always put this card in the first round! It's the only MUST have.



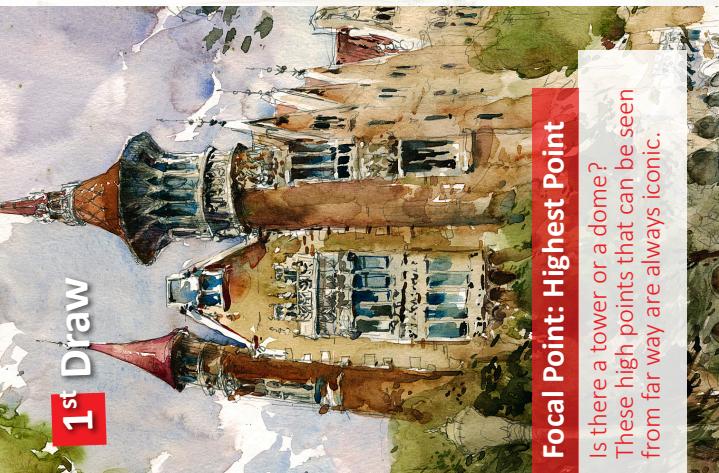
### Focal Point: Cultural Icons

Is there a national symbol, religious icon, or even a flag? If not, is anything referenced in the decor or furnishings?



### The Big Picture: Locate an Aerial View or Visualize a Map

It's rare to get a high enough viewpoint. But you can make a paced-out measurement for a map, or just eyeball it! A map offers spatial context to all the other drawings to follow.



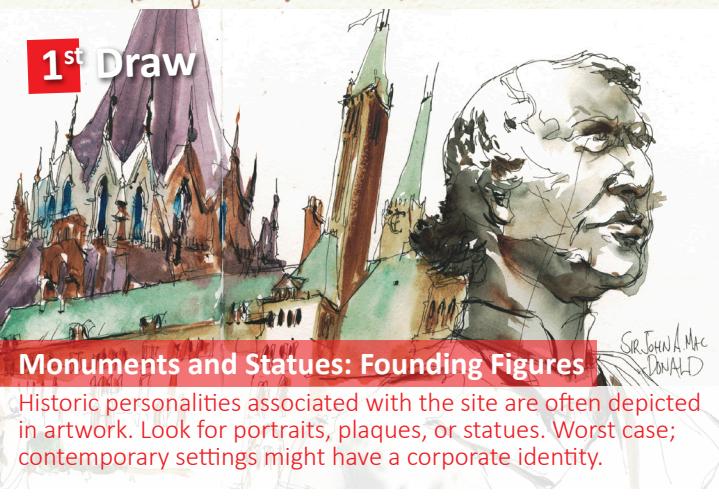
### Human Element: Street Life

If possible, stand across the road and sketch pedestrians with the front entrance as background. Leave plenty of foreground in your sketch for passers-by!



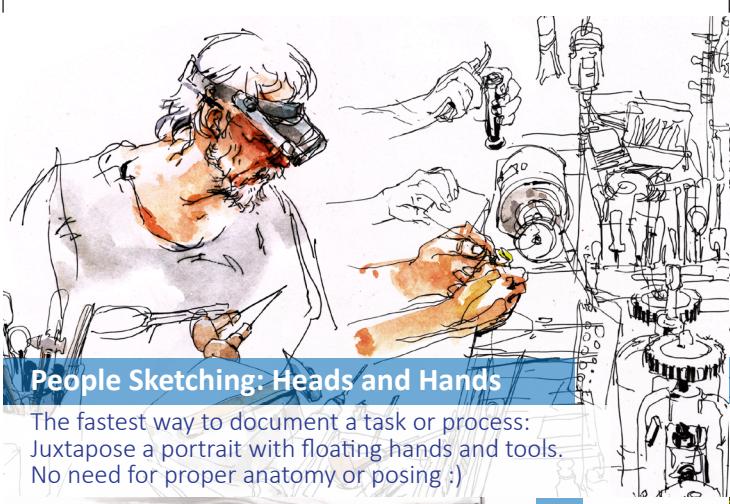
### Zoom in and sketch SMALL details

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### Monuments and Statues: Founding Figures

Historic personalities associated with the site are often depicted in artwork. Look for portraits, plaques, or statues. Worst case; contemporary settings might have a corporate identity.



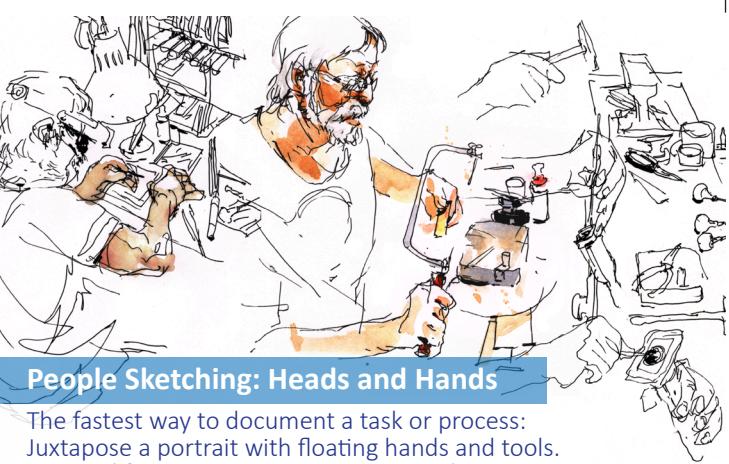
### People Sketching: Heads and Hands

The fastest way to document a task or process:  
Juxtapose a portrait with floating hands and tools.  
No need for proper anatomy or posing :)



### People Sketching: An Interview

Can you talk to someone who works  
at the site? Make a quick sketch and  
get a quote about their job, or the  
history of the place.



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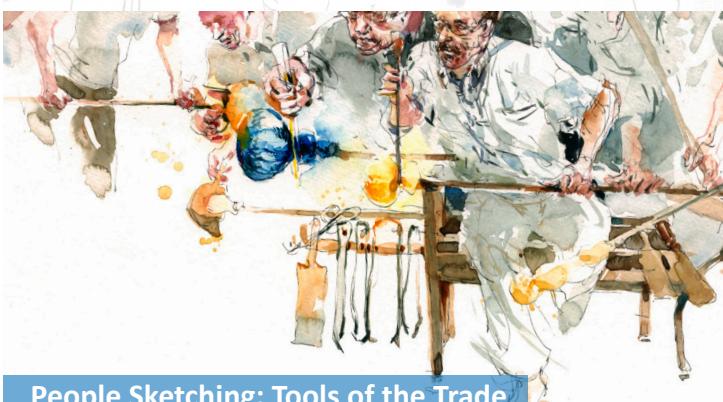
### People Sketching: Key Frames

Can you get 3-5 sketches of people doing something active?  
Look for repeating actions. Animators call them Key Frames.  
These are poses that, seen in sequence, tell a story.



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### People Sketching: Tools of the Trade

Focus on the hardware - tools, uniforms, equipment.  
Sketch like you're shooting a documentary film.



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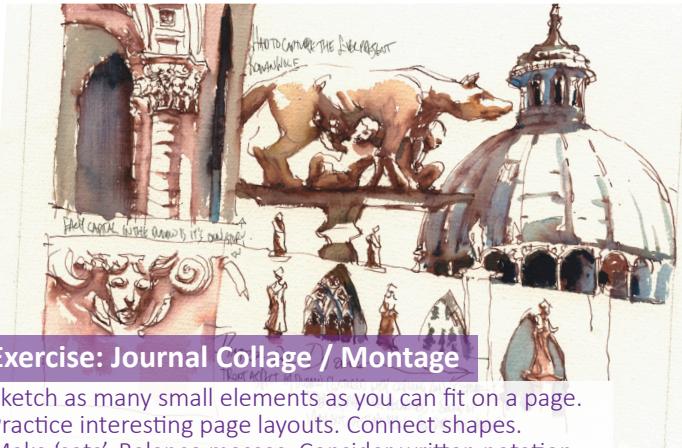
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Sketch like you're shooting a documentary film.

EXERCISE cards are OPTIONAL. I would only add them if you have a lot of beginners who want a skill development aspect to the project.



### Exercise: Sketching Thin to Thick

Start with your finest nib and make a fast sketch. Don't try for perfection! Switch to a bolder pen to clean up details. Finish with solid darks using a brush pen or flat nib. See how your rough sketch is refined?



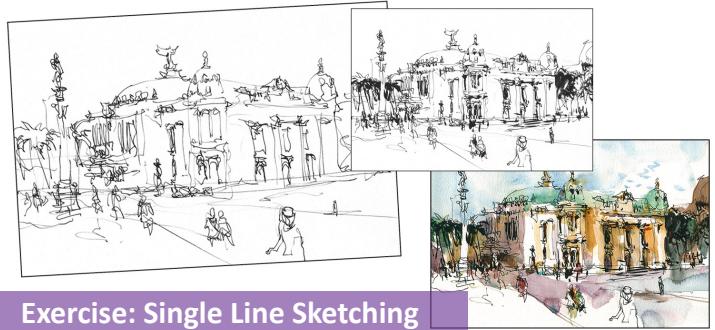
### Exercise: Journal Collage / Montage

Sketch as many small elements as you can fit on a page. Practice interesting page layouts. Connect shapes. Make 'sets'. Balance masses. Consider written notation.



### Exercise: Massing In Shadows

Start scribbling shadow shapes with pen hatching. Can you draw the scene with ONLY a textured silhouette? Try this with a brush or marker for faster work. This is drawing like a painter!



### Exercise: Single Line Sketching

Sketch your subject without lifting the pen from the paper. This forces simplification of unimportant details. Consider allowing additional Single Lines for people or cars. Use dark brushwork and color to pull it together later.



### Exercise: Sky Line and Ground Line

With a fine pen swiftly sketch in a Sky Line and a Ground Line. Fill in descriptive details between the lines. It doesn't matter how correct your lines were - just work within them!



### Exercise: Three Times Different

Make three fast drawings of the same subject (10 min each). Emphasize different parts each time. Direct our focus with detail and darks. Leave different areas unfinished each time.



### Exercise: Three Times Fast

Develop a sketch with an ITERATIVE approach. Draw the same subject Three Times Fast. Work Direct-to-Ink, no erasing. Sketch 2/5/10 min - each repetition you learn more.



### Exercise: Dot Plot

Use tiny dots and 'plot' the structure. Mark corners, high and low points. As you connect the dots, stray points will vanish under the line work or color.



**REFERENCE IMAGE** cards are **VERY MUCH OPTIONAL**. They require an organizer to find and print archive photos, and provide them to sketchers on location.



### Reference Image: The Architect

Can you find a portrait of the architect? Or another famous project of theirs? If not, refer to the leaders of the time period, or the regional style.

The combination of reference images and real life may be of interest to some groups, this is not a required aspect of a documentary sketching project.



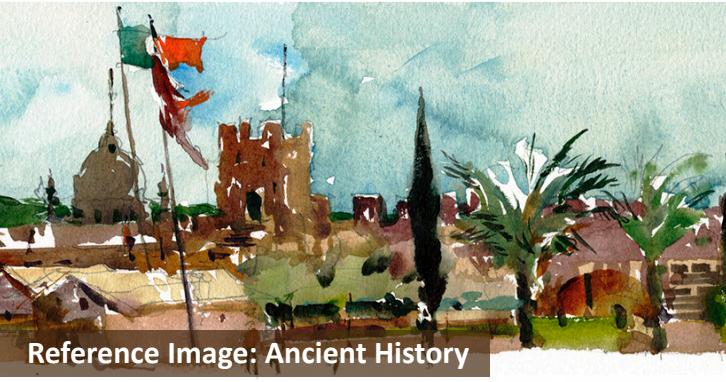
### Reference Image: Civic Leaders

What can you find out about the time period of the site? Who were the movers and shakers in the city, or the country?



### Reference Image: Renovations and Expansions

Over the history of the site, have there been any significant renovations? Many places look different today. Sketching a site while looking at archival photos can be revealing.



### Reference Image: Ancient History

Research the history of the location. What was here before whatever we see today? Does the site have a colorful past, possibly even pre-dating the city surrounding it?



### Reference Image: Follow the Money

Every landmark is part of the economic patterns of the city. Did the site have an important owner or investor? What kind of connections can you reveal by following the money.



### Reference Image: Famous Visitors

Any site with a lengthy history has housed some famous visitors. What characters from local history are associated with the site?



### Reference Image: Back in the Day

Can you locate any historical reference (photography, or art) which documents daily life at the time of the site's original construction? Even something only a few years old might have funny old cars or vintage clothing.



### Reference Image: Material Culture

Often there's a story behind the construction of a place. Are there any unusual technologies or techniques involved in building the site? Or any cultural connections or influences found in the design?