SKETCHING WORKSHOP

LIVING CREATURES

• SERIES •

Sketching Workshop Education Series
The Living Creatures Project

With so many talented artists in the Sketchbook Workshop group, we thought it would be a great idea to tap into the expertise of those who spend many hours of their sketching time focused on capturing animals, insects, aquatic life, flying creatures, predators and pets. Through our discovery conversations, we thought there might also be some great perspectives of how some of them approach drawing people, whether from everyday observations or to augment architectural renderings.

The intent of this project is to have as many of them write about it in a "how-to" type paper and include some of their sketches as examples to help clarify the detail that is outlined in their article. A great first example of this kind of collaboration exists in the recently released "Pen & Ink" collection, available on the Sketching Workshop Facebook page.

To get the artists' minds started on this topic of sketching living creatures, here are some thought starters: (Note: We will use the terms "creatures" and "subjects" to mean humans, dogs, cats, wild animals, farm life, birds of all kinds, sea creatures, insects, etc.) The really crazy thing is that none of these artists have ever met in person except through dialogue in the Sketching Workshop Facebook Group.

"What kinds of living creatures do you like to draw most often? Why did you choose this? How did you become interested in this subject matter? What is your background?"

"What is your sketching process? How do you prepare for sketching in general and how do you prepare to sketch your creatures? Are there times that are better for sketching these creatures than others?"

"What were your biggest lessons when you first learned to draw these creatures?"

"What are the common traps about drawing this? Are there any dangers to be aware of when drawing these creatures? What precautions do you take?"

"How important is anatomy for these creatures? How did you learn about anatomy for this? What are the best resources you have found for learning about anatomy for these creatures?"

"Where is the best place to study up on these creatures? Do you ask experts for their advice (such as zoologists, bird experts, entomologists, etc.?) How often do you need a refresher on these creatures?"

"For these creatures, which technique for shading and coloring do you find most appropriate? Are there particular challenges to coloring and shading these creatures?"

"Do you work from live subjects, use photo references, or draw from memory? Or do you use a combination of all of these?"

"Are there classes that you take to keep up to date on sketching these creatures? What do you find is most valuable about them?"

"Which sketching tools have you found to work the best when drawing these creatures? Why?"

"Which style of sketching do you find to be most effective when capturing these creatures and why?"
- fast lines, quick, loose control, gestural, thicker lines, sketchy, suggestive shapes?
- slower line, wiggly line, tighter control detailed, deliberate focus, intentional lines, finer lines?

"If this creature is mostly black or very dark tones, how have you managed to add interest to their coat or their skin?" (Examples: black bears, seals, black cats, weasels, sloths, black horses...)

"Is there a pose that you find to work best for capturing these creatures? What kind of personality of this creature do you hope to convey through your sketch?"

Many thanks to these contributing authors:

"Painting Animal Portraits from Photographs"	**Stacy Egan, Tucson, AZ (USA)**
"Sketching Animals in Africa"	**Barbara Moore, White River & Cape Town, South Africa**
"Sketching Living Animals"	**Inge Leonora Den Ouden, The Netherlands**
"Painting Humans and Animals with Blobs"	**Suzie Althens, Alaska (USA)**
"Drawing People"	**Amanda Lee Condict, Barto, PA (USA)**
"Birds and Bugs"	**Jane Pereira Siebert, Cape Town, South Africa**
"Armored Sketches"	**Wesley E. Douglas, Chicago, IL (USA)**
"Drawing Marine Life"	**Laura Vasquez (Sfiat), Boston, MA (USA)**

A little bit about the Sketching Workshop Group:

We are a collection of 150 artists of varying degrees of skill level and we meet in the Facebook community to share sketches and discussions about how to improve our skills and building friendships across the globe. The artists in this group range from amateur hobbyists, architects, designers, graphic designers and contract artists, all of them active in this group as contributing sketchers and offering dialogue. If you would like to learn more about the Sketching Workshop group, the Facebook page is open to the public at:
https://www.facebook.com/groups/sketching.workshop/

Stacy Egan

TUCSON, ARIZONA (USA)
"PAINTING ANIMAL PORTRAITS FROM PHOTOGRAPHS"

Painting Animal Portraits from Photographs
Stacy Egan

I shall discuss here the process I have used to paint animal portraits for myself and to give away to friends. As my drawing skills have been very limited until recently, what you will see here is more an emphasis on taking and selecting photographs for reference paintings, then the process I use to paint these portraits in watercolors.

My Background

I come into art late in life, only after having nurtured a career in science and engineering, and hobbies such as music, sports, knitting, traveling, and photography. After moving to Tucson to take a new job, I also thought a new start in hobbies was called for, so I took a beginning watercolor through our local community college in 2003. I fell in love with it! I took the next class, then one more after that, then decided to learn on my own. In 2004 I painted my first animal portrait, that of my beloved Great Dane:

As you can see, I took a bit of artistic license to straighten out his left ear. I was just reviewing my notes from when I was painting this portrait, and I wrote about how stressful and difficult it was to paint my baby—the marks had to be so precise to create the likeness I knew so well!

Maybe because of how difficult it was, I did not attempt any portraits after this one for awhile. But it was also at that time I began to get deeply into photography. Watercolor was partially responsible for this because I need a collection of quality reference photos to paint from; the other reason is that affordable digital SLR cameras hit the market at about that time. I bought myself a Canon 20D in 2005, and fell in love with photography for awhile.

As my interest in photography began to wane a bit in 2010, my interest in watercolor painting came back with a vengeance. On a whim I painted a portrait of a friend's miniature burro that she posted on Facebook, posted an image of the painting in response, and she gave me such glowing reviews about it I felt my confidence in painting animal portraits rise. I found myself doing a series of pet portraits for friends—they'd post an attractive photo of their pet (or I'd photograph their pet myself) and I would surprise them with a painting in the mail. I usually got a sense that they appreciated these portraits very much.

But here is confession time! What will all this focus on painting and photography, I never really learned how to draw! I relied totally on tracing the photographs onto watercolor paper before painting, and for this article I only have this method to share with you. It is only in the last year and a half that I've re-focused my efforts on learning how to draw and sketch freehand. I am now able to draw animals freehand into my sketchbook (from a photograph), but for watercolor portraits I plan to give to someone, I still trace. It is important to me to get the rendering as accurate as possible.

However, I do have a goal to be able to sketch live animals on-site. I have recently purchased *The Weatherly Guide to Drawing Animals*, and it looks like a great book for learning to draw live and imaginary animals. The author encourages the student to spend a lot of time studying live animals to understand how they are formed and how they move. Rather than drawing the subject using contour lines, one learns the basic construction of an animal (you are even encouraged to study animal skeletons), and constructs a drawing based first on an action line, then on basic 3-dimensional geometrical forms (boxes, ellipses, cylinders, etc.). Another book I recently purchased, that I hope will help me sketch live animals on-site is David Rankin's book *Fast Sketching Techniques*, which again focuses on sketching basic forms first.

The Photograph
Since the photograph is so critical to my method of painting animal portraits, a good photograph of the animal is a must. Below is a montage of the kinds of photographs I like to use for portrait painting.

The first thing you may notice in the example montage is that in each photograph the animal almost completely fills the frame. This allows for a good clear view, especially of the face, which is so important in portraiture. It is important for me to see the eyes (or at least one eye) clearly, and it's a very nice bonus if there is a "catch light" (or highlight from the sun's natural light) in an eye, to add sparkle. For domestic animals you can get close enough to the animal to fill the frame with even a point-and-shoot camera;

however, with wild and zoo animals I find a 300mm lens is often required (and sometimes still not enough).

The next thing we are looking for in a good photo is the body language the animal is conveying during the moment the photo was taken. What is communicated with the pose or expression? Does it convey what you would like to replicate in a painted portrait? Does the image tell a story?

Lighting is critical too, and this touches on one of the main limiting factors of using a photograph as a reference for painting. The dynamic range of camera sensors (digital and film) is much more limited than our human eye, so in bright sunlight your photograph will likely suffer from either blown-out highlights or completely black shadows. This makes it difficult to see what is going on when you are trying to paint it (forcing you to use your imagination). Most of the example photos I provide here were taken in flat light, which allows you to see the animal quite clearly. But sunlight is not always a bad thing—the shadows in that lab puppy in the lower left might be fun to play with in watercolor!

While we are on the subject of lighting, might I request that you turn off the flash on your camera? Animal eyes are very reflective, and use of flash would definitely force you to use your imagination when painting your subject's eyes, because in the resulting photograph you will be faced with glowing irises. The eyes are just too important to a

portrait to ruin your ability to see them due to camera flash. Adjust your f/number or ISO instead, if you are faced with low light conditions.

Another limitation of using photographs directly for your painting is the effect of lens distortion, that when tracing will translate directly into your painting. The photo of that lab puppy is a prime example of this kind of distortion (the head is way too big for its body!). But still, sometimes that is not a bad thing and the painting then becomes a kind of fun caricature. If that is what you would like to communicate in your painting, use it happily! I do.

I would be remiss in my responsibilities if I didn't mention the fact of copyright infringement when using someone else's photograph to paint your animal portrait from. I know it is very tempting to use all the beautiful photographs you find in books or online, but without getting the photographer's permission, you are infringing on their copyrights. However, there are online sources of free photos where photographers have already provided blanket permissions (there are varying types of permissions—check first before using): Wikimedia Commons, MorgueFile, and Paint My Photo are example sources. I admit that for painting pet portraits I have blatantly used photos my Facebook friends have posted online of their pets to paint portraits from. But then again, I am giving the painting away to the photographer in return—I've had no complaints yet!

Processing the Photograph

Most photos require some sort of processing. If you were not able to compose your subject in the frame very well during the picture-taking, you can crop for composition using photo processing software such as Photoshop Elements. Cropping is also useful if you were not able to get very close to the animal and you want make it larger in the frame.

Converting the image into black and white is very useful to both help you see the varying value tones on the animal's body, but it also will help in tracing too. When it comes time to print the photo for use, I will often print out both a color and a black and white version.

Black or dark brown animals are very common in nature, and oftentimes require significant lightening of the image in order to see the subtle variation of tone on its body. I will often lighten the black and white version of the image of a black animal before printing to help me when it comes time to paint. Conversely, a white animal may need a bit of darkening to help you see the subtle tone variations on its body. I use the Levels function in Photoshop Elements to do these operations, but it can be done with general brightness adjustment.

Printing and Tracing the Photograph

Since I am tracing the photo directly onto watercolor paper, I need to decide what size I want the watercolor painting to be, then print the photograph to that size. Most of my experience is painting 5x7" size, so I will set up the printer to ensure the image is 5x7". Since I can print two 5x7" images on one sheet of paper, I will print out the color and black and white version of the image onto one sheet of paper. If I am painting to 11x14",

I can set up the printer to print onto two sheets of paper that can be taped together to form that size.

Now that I am getting better at drawing free-hand, I now freehand draw the animal first onto a piece of sketch paper before tracing onto watercolor paper. I have found this is useful in two ways. First, the process of drawing itself informs me of the lines and shapes I should expect while tracing. Second, the sketch itself serves as a reference when I am actually doing the tracing (because sometimes it is difficult to see all the lines and shapes while doing the tracing).

There are two basic ways you can trace the photo onto watercolor paper. The first is to illuminate the photographic printout from behind, and with the watercolor paper on top, trace the contours of the animal. You can use a light table or a window with bright light streaming through. It helps to tape your watercolor paper to the photographic printout. If it is too difficult to see the contours of the animal's image using this method, I will perform an intermediary step. I take perfectly clear plastic (you can use tracing paper, but I like to use clear plastic sheet protectors, cut to a single layer), lay it over the photographic printout, and trace the contours using a black Sharpie marker. I then place the watercolor paper over the new contour line drawing and illuminate that from behind. Ah, now I can see the contours!

The second method of tracing is to use a sheet of transfer paper (Saral is a brand I have used). In this method, you place the transfer paper (graphite side down) on top of the watercolor paper, your photographic print-out on top of that, and use a ball-point pen and draw over all the contours of the animal you see in the image. Like with the light table method, it helps to tape your photograph and watercolor paper together. I believe it is possible to make your own transfer paper by scribbling with a pencil or graphite stick over a piece of paper (I'd try tracing paper because it's thinner) to make a solid block of graphite.

Some painters use a projector to help them trace images onto watercolor paper. This is especially useful if you are working in a large size. I have no experience with this, but I thought I'd mention it for completeness.

Preparation for Painting

It's almost time to paint! But first you need to decide what palette to use (and I mean what specific paints will be used in the painting). In general I believe in the virtues of a limited palette (3-5 paints), especially for animal portraits. It keeps things simple and encourages color harmony in your painting. I highly recommend you keep a color journal where you test your various mixes and record for yourself what palette you used for each particular painting so you can refer to later. Doing so has certainly helped me in writing this article!

First study the colors in your animal. Unless you are painting a reptile, insect, bird, or tropical fish, I'll bet you are faced with fairly neutral colors, like black, brown, tan, or

white. Let's start with a discussion of black first, as this is maybe the most commonly seen somewhere on the body of most animals.

Mixing Blacks
Color theory and experience has taught me that there are generally four options for mixing blacks: 1) blue + orange, 2) green + red, 3) red + blue + yellow, and 4) black or near-black + "qualifier" (the qualifier is often a rose or blue to add interest or move it to warm or cool tones). After some experience, I have come to prefer as a general rule blue + orange for live subjects, green + red for man-made subjects, and black/near black + qualifier for when I need a really deep or near-neutral black. Regarding mixing the three primaries, I find it difficult to get the proper balance of paints to get the blacks I am looking for. It's much easier to use two paints!

Blue + orange yields a plethora of possible paint combinations. Here is a general rule I have found: *The closer the blue is to green, the closer the orange has to get to red (in order to achieve a neutral black), and the more intense and cooler the blacks tend to be.* Let me provide a list of blue + orange mixes, and my comments about them, in order of reddish-blue to greenish-blue:

1. French Ultramarine (PB29) + Burnt Sienna (PBr7) – this is a tried and true standard for mixing natural-looking warm and cool blacks and grays.
2. French Ultramarine (PB29) + Quinacridone Burnt Orange (PO48) – some people prefer substituting burnt sienna with quinacridone burnt orange on their palette to lend a greater transparency in their mix and a bit more vibrancy of color.
3. French Ultramarine (PB29) + Quinacridone Sienna (PO49 + PR209) – I have used this mix a lot; the quinacridone sienna provides a nice punch of color.
4. Phthalo Blue Red Shade (PB15:1) + Burnt Sienna/Q. Sienna – This mix tends to be closer to cooler tones than using the ultramarine. Careful not to get a yucky greenish black though!
5. Phthalo Blue Red Shade (PB15:1) + Quinacridone Burnt Scarlet (PR206) – I like this combo for cooler blacks. It is used in the example dog portrait at right.
6. Phthalo Blue Green Shade (PB:15:3) + Organic Vermillion (PR188) – I've

gotten some of my most intense blacks from this mix, but it's sometimes hard to find the right balance to get it right.

7. Phthalo Blue Green Shade (PB15:3) + Quinacridone Burnt Scarlet (PR206) – Not as intense as with organic vermillion, a more neutralized version of an intense cool black.

Mixing browns and tans

If I am dealing with a dark brown animal, I will stick with the same mixes I use for black (blue + orange), but will make sure the mixes keep towards the warmer brown tones (with cooler tones in the shadow areas of the animal). If it is a light brown or tan animal, I will start looking at using more warm yellows in the mix (combined with violets mixed from rose and blue). My favorite warm yellow to use for mixing tans is Quinacridone Gold (PO49), though I have also used New Gamboge (PY153).

While we are on the subject of tans and browns, many animal eyes are a yellow to dark brown color. My favorite mix for these irises is again Quinacridone Gold + violet (mixed or Dioxazine Violet (PV23)). I find that often the eye has more yellow or sienna hues closest to the pupil and becomes more dark brown as you get the rim of the iris.

White on an animal

For white on an animal, it is time to look very closely at the photograph and detect all the very subtle shadows and tonal variations on that part of the body. They are usually there if you look close! Like I said, it sometimes helps to darken the image to bring them out more. I usually use the same palette as I would choose for blacks, but with of course more water in the mix to make the washes lighter (in the Kookaburra portrait below). But then again, this may be an opportunity to begin to play with mixing your three primaries for some interesting and colorful effects! If most of the animal is white, I would probably change my blue to the softer Cobalt Blue (PB28) and use either Quinacridone Rose (PV19) + Hansa Yellow (PY97) or Permanent Orange (PO62) to get some nice soft colorful grays.

Speaking of white on an animal, there are times when you might want to preserve the white of your paper for the tiny white areas on your animal. These often include features that are difficult to

paint around, like the "catch-light" (or highlight) in the eye, the teeth, and the whiskers. To do this, I use masking fluid on those areas before I start painting. My favorite tools for this are Pebeo Drawing Gum and a ruling pen. However, if you are not a fan of masking fluid, you can always go in after the painting is finished with white gouache and paint these areas with a fine brush.

Painting the Portrait

So you've got your photograph, it's traced onto watercolor paper, you've saved your tiny whites with masking fluid, and you've done some color mixing tests to determine your palette. It's finally time to start painting! But uh oh, what first? Some times I go right in and paint the eyes first. I often regard the eyes as the most critical aspect of the portrait and if I goof that up, I can start over with a new sheet of watercolor paper without having invested too much of my time on the rest of the painting.

For the rest of the body, sometimes it helps to do an underpainting first, as a road map of tonal values. It is especially helpful for the solid-color portions of the animal's body. Below is an example showing the intermediate step in underpainting a golden lab puppy. Underpainting is usually done with violet, and you can use Dioxazine Violet or mix your violets from red and blue. I prefer doing the latter, mixing my violets, because that way I can adjust the mix to warm (redder) or cool (bluer) depending on if I want to violet to come forward (warm) or recede (cool). You can see in my example that I have made the interior part of each of the foot pads on the puppy to have redder tones, to really highlight them in the final painting and bring them forward.

The actual painting of an animal subject is pretty much like painting anything else. The style you bring to urban, floral, or other subjects can be the style you bring to animal subjects. Do you like to paint realistically or impressionistically? Do you like to paint wet-into-wet or paint in layers and thin glazes? Do you paint the lights first then work your way to the darks, or paint the darks first?

I have tried a variety of approaches myself, and have not really settled on a routine.

Each painting is a learning experience for me, and I find that my style is evolving with time and experience, and exposure to other artist's styles. I think this is natural. My native approach is more towards realistic, though I do try to punch the color a bit where I can (often when painting the backgrounds). Many of my pet portraits have a more realistically-painted animal, but the background can sometimes be somewhat wild in color (as I have been a touch influenced by the art of Sinclair Stratton). I still cannot seem to bring myself to paint the animal itself with unrealistic (or surrealistic) colors like John Nieto did. Jo Lynch also paints animals with unrealistic colors, and I absolutely love her work, too, but my brain is still not able to translate tonal values into wild color choices.

The easiest approach I find is to do the underpainting in violet tones first, then paint the overall local color (dropping in some paints wet-into-wet as I feel is needed), then add layers and glazes to deepen values and color.

When I am deciding on what to paint for the background, I have to decide on how many elements in the background to keep (to show the animal "in-situ") and how much to discard. In the portrait of the four German Shorthair Pointers, I felt it necessary to keep the bed and pillows in the painting to give a frame of reference, and to explain why the darker dog is positioned more highly than the two in front of her. In the case of the black dog portrait earlier in this article, I suggested the grass with a loose green wash, but did not bother with very many actual blades of grass. In the case of the sleeping golden lab puppy, I needed to de-mark the floor and the wall, but took artistic license of their actual colors. When deciding background colors, if I am to diverge from the photograph, I take into consideration colors that would complement the color of the animal, and try to use pigments I have already used in the painting. Since I am painting portraits, I include just enough of the background to explain their pose, but not so much as to detract from the animal.

When I paint a portrait from a photo I try to "bring something to the table", something that is unique to the nature of watercolor itself, or an artistic interpretation of the photo ("artistic license"). Oftentimes it is an opportunity to correct failures in the photograph (such as distracting backgrounds or flash-illuminated eyes, such as in the portrait of the four German Shorthair Pointers).

Want to get really loose and crazy, try Yupo!

One day when I was perusing other watercolor artist's work in animal portrait painting I came across the art of Rachael Rossman, who paints her pet portraits on Yupo. Wow! I thought it was amazing and ordered myself a pad of Yupo paper. Yupo is a synthetic (plastic) paper that is super smooth—like hot press paper on steroids. Paint is not absorbed into the paper at all, so colors are extra bright and vibrant. This lack of absorption can be a source of delight or frustration. It can be delightful because of the way paint moves on the paper (or if your painting is not going well, you can just hold it under a faucet and wash all the paint off!). However it can be a source of frustration because paint behaves so differently than cold press watercolor paper and is more difficult to control.

The lack of absorption is also an opportunity to create some interesting textures. One tip I learned from Rachael Rossman is to spritz a still-damp wash with rubbing alcohol and watch the interesting textures form. Another tip I learned is to spray a couple coats of clear acrylic coating (I use Krylon Matte Clear UV-protector) once the painting is complete to preserve it. Remember how easily paint washes off Yupo?

Here are some portraits I have done using Yupo paper:

Conclusion

In this article I have shared with you my approach for painting animal portraits from photographs. As a good quality photograph is critical to the process, I have spent a bit of time focusing on that aspect of the creation process. I have also tried to share with you the kinds of decisions I make in color palette selection, paper, and painting style whenever I have endeavored to paint an animal portrait. I hope this article has been informative!

Barbara Moore

WHITE RIVER & CAPE TOWN
SOUTH AFRICA
"SKETCHING ANIMALS
IN AFRICA"

Living Creatures Project
Sketching Animals in Africa

Barbara Moore
White River & Cape Town, South Africa

If you're looking for an untrained, often confused, doodler to write something on the bumpy ride of sketching living creatures, you've come to the right place. For me, sketching wild animals is more a spiritual than a technical exercise.

The act of intensely observing and sketching these magnificent creatures in their own habitat engages all one's senses totally and touches the soul. Unlike photographs, sketches from life record and recall these moments and sensory experiences with vivid clarity.

We live near Kruger National Park in South Africa. Kruger is Big Five country. It's an area about the size of Wales or Belgium, rich in African flora and fauna, and visual inspiration. We have a great many game and nature reserves in South Africa, and I am fortunate in being able to spend time in most of them, from bushveld to desert, and Karoo to coastal reserves.

I should mention that I tend to be rather undisciplined in addition to being untutored in drawing, so I'm not strong in matters of drawing materials and technique. I place a lot of emphasis on watercolour, which is the ideal medium for sketching wildlife.

Sketched on back of a photocopy — to test hatching :-- ...baby steps!

My sketching is more about attempting expressive line and descriptive/emotive watercolour and has little or no cross-hatching, flexible nibs or special inks.

Not yet, anyway, but I shall work on it, as in this giraffe portrait.

For me, sketching wildlife is mostly about seeing shapes and recognizing tonal values.

When one is sketching animals or birds in a game reserve, there is no time to fiddle about with lots of different materials, and I am often sitting in a car on a lonely road with little space for a lot of stuff.

What I use

I mostly use a small A5 size Seawhite acid-free 140 gsm, extra wet strength sketchbook, which is cheap and freely available in the UK. The pages open flat so I can use it in A4

size across the spine. I usually just draw in this sketchbook, or do line and wash (sometimes pretty wet).

I also like to have a small (about A4 size) watercolour sketchbook or pad with me for sketch-painting directly in watercolour with my sable brushes. I find sable holds a lot of water and has such a lovely point for fine work and shapes.

I rely on a small pan set of watercolours and one or two small tubes of colour, a small natural sponge, and Nos 2, 4 and 8 sable brushes. If doing line & wash I use an aquabrush.

I have three or four Pitt artist pens in a range of sizes (not water soluble) and a few Tombow soluble ink pens in neutral colours.

Sketching Wildlife

To avoid being gored, trampled, stung, mauled or eaten I am careful to sketch within the confines of a car, game vehicle or designated viewing site.

I start by simply sitting quietly and observing closely for a time before attempting a sketch. Composition is important so I visualize how I will present the animal/s in my head and perhaps do a couple of thumbnails and quick line doodles to loosen up while I watch. Zoos are also a great place to observe animals,.
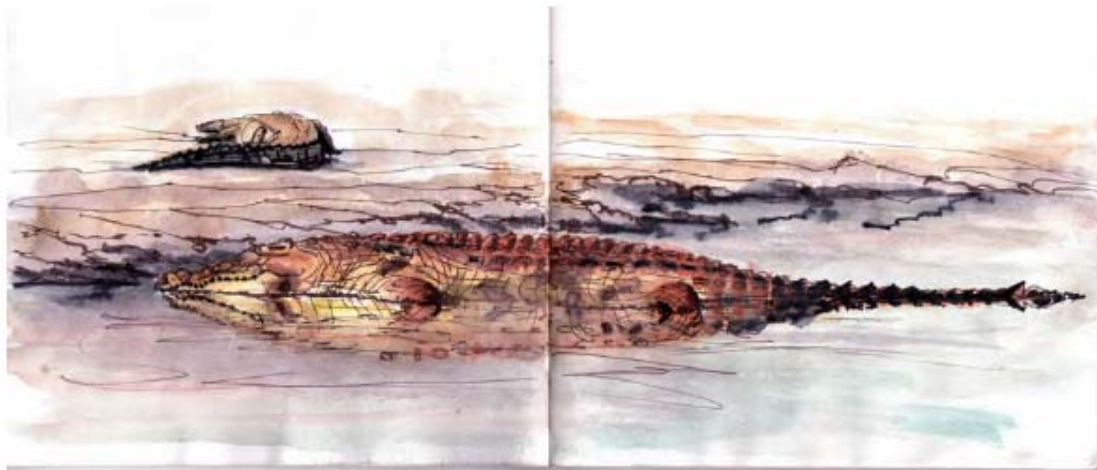
Some animals are ideal to sketch because they simply hardly ever move – like crocodiles at a waterhole.

This was done in a Seawhite sketchbook...pen and wash.

I carry a piece of red acetate and look through it to see the tonal patterns more clearly. Polaroid sunglasses are also great for tonal values and "seeing" colour.

Using my red acetate, a Tombow soluble ink pen and an aquabrush, I was able to enjoy doing a value sketch of this sleeping rhino.

The acetate (red or green cellophane also works) really helps one see the tonal values.

Animals move around a lot but I observed that they adopt the same pose regularly, so when one animal moves, it - or another one - will soon adopt the same posture.

At first my sketching attempts were rather disappointing, so I decided on a simple, more focused, approach to build skill and experience – a sort of self training programme.

- Instead of trying to sketch the whole (moving) animal, I would select bits of the animal to study and sketch – head, ears, horns, legs, etc.
  An elephant's eye is a beautiful thing, but if it's fully open he is on full alert and so should you be!

- Then I started connecting things – the horns to the head, the head to the neck and so on. This way I started noticing proportions.

- I took videos of moving animals and watched these, studying the animals and sketching larger and larger bits of them to learn their observed anatomy, or doing gesture sketches.
  Photos were valuable in learning quick gestures by copying photos or videos on pause.

KRUGER PARK
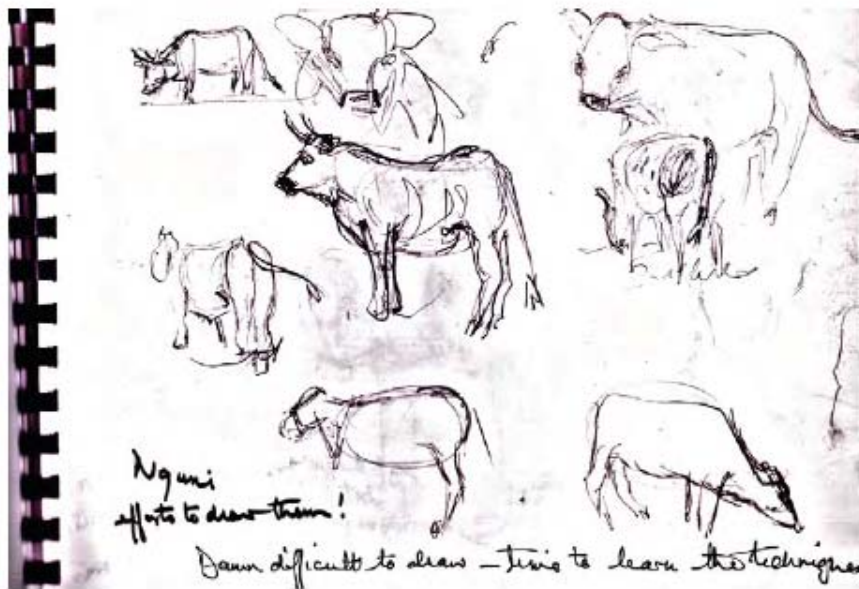
In addition to line drawings of the animal, I do scribble drawings, often pencil swirling lines to capture shapes, which I then connect up. This helps me to get a feeling for their shape and habitual movement and resting postures.

Here is an example of a swirling line sketch to capture the shapes of a young zebra.
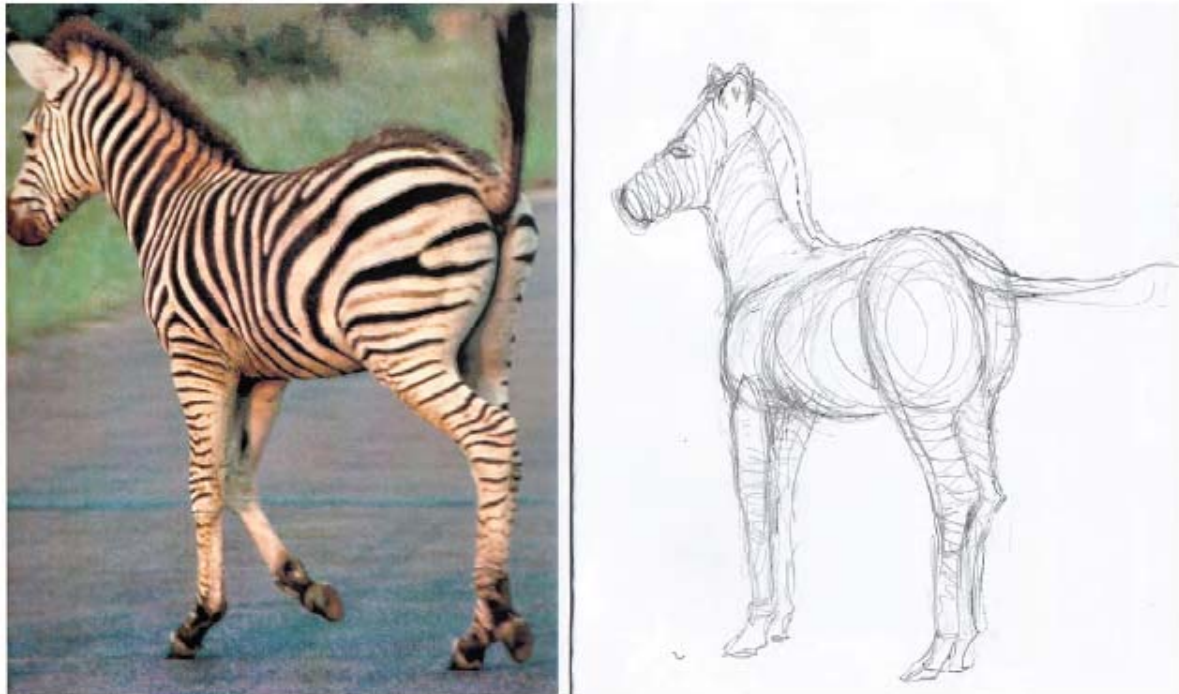
Without erasing pencil lines, I simply drew in the stripes using a black Pitt artist pen (Brush type), and the same pen in light brown to do the in between stripes – see image below.

Note how the stripes describe the body shape and no outline is needed.

I can now complete the sketch by doing a quick wash of burnt sienna where relevant, and finish the detail. Then I can erase pencil lines. Any background colour would create the animal's outline.

Done as a quickie on photocopy paper.

I find that nature has given animals useful proportions. For instance look at the elephant proportions below. Observation taught me to do a rough positioning of circles to guide me, and then fill in the outline and detail.
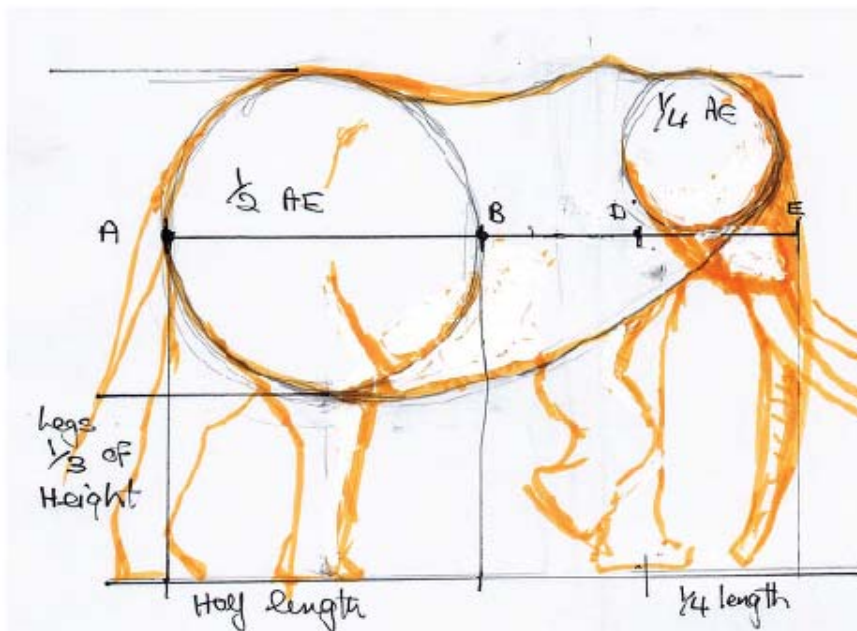
I divide the elephant's body length in half horizontally, and roughly draw a rear body circle as shown over half the length. A smaller circle is drawn above the line over the front quarter length.

The back legs are one third of the back height of the elephant.

The yellow lines show how I connect the circles, and use the front circle to shape the head, etc. (no ears have been added in yet).

At the end of the day it is all about seeing shapes, learning proportions and practice.

The sketch below is of an old bull elephant with his back legs on the causeway at Shingwedzi in Kruger Park. His front legs are in the river, but using my proportions I found it easy to do a watercolor sketch, brush only. He was there for so long that I worked into it perhaps a bit too much, and landed up adding line right at the end.
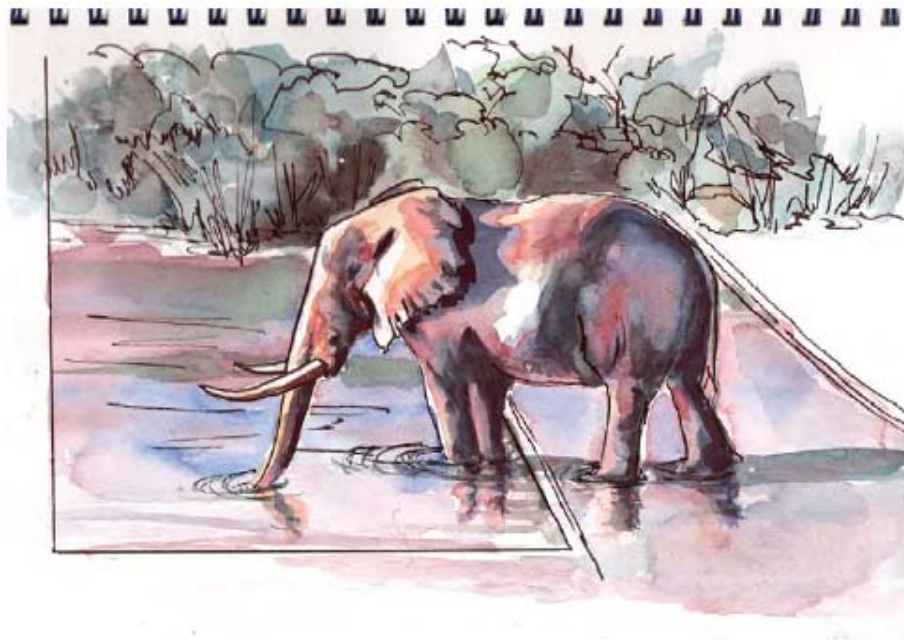
Sketching with Brush & Watercolour

Sometimes I elect to sketch directly with a pure sable brush and watercolour onto watercolour paper, as with the elephant above and the one to the right. This is fast and fun. No preliminary drawing is done, so one has to be very observant and focused.

I choose three colours, and paint from light to dark, wet in wet.

In this elephant brush-sketch, I did a wash of yellow ochre, followed by one into the medium and dark tone areas, of scarlet lake, followed by a wash of ultramarine blue in the dark areas. Then I mixed Ultramarine blue with burnt sienna for the darkest darks. All done for speed and working wet in wet.

Colours:

My staple colours used are yellow ochre, burnt sienna, sepia, ultramarine blue, cobalt blue and Prussian Blue, as well as scarlet lake and Alizarin crimson.
I like to mix strong darks using Prussian or ultramarine blue and either burnt sienna or sepia.

To avoid pollution of the bush I paint using a small plastic tub with clean water from a 500 ml bottle, and the dirty water gets poured into an empty container for later disposal

In this study of white backed vultures sunning themselves, I did a wash of yellow ochre, drawing the shapes with my brush.

Finally, still working fast and very wet in wet, I used a wash of burnt sienna and then a mixture of Prussian blue and burnt sienna for the very dark areas, and drew in the dead tree branch with the brush too.

I used a slightly dry brush to get some feathery texturing into the wings.

Sketching from Photos

About sketching from photos – I mostly use them for practice, and I only use my own videos and photos, as a method of studying the body shape angles, and proportions of a particular animal. This builds confidence. I often find that an animal moves off before I can get the sketch done, so I take a couple of snaps and I can then finish off my sketch from the photos later.

Wildlife photographers spend days and weeks waiting patiently in the bush for the perfect shot. I respect and admire that and would never sketch or paint from such photos, except to practice a particular posture as a quick line doodle. There are free photos on the internet but once you've sketched an animal you have observed from life, sketching from a random photo is pretty flat and lifeless, no matter how exquisite the image.

My sketchbooks are often also a journal. I do like to write about the animals that I sketch. Here are examples from my sketchbooks, and the notes that I jot down.

I like sketching elephants. They are intelligent and amazing animals. In this sketch I have tried to focus a little more on drawing and pen work.

We were on the dirt road north of Lower Sabie when these elephants crossed the road and started feeding — the area is very dry and scrubby. The larger, probably mother(?) elephant had most unusual tusks. The left one is very long and curves upward and slightly over the trunk. The right one grows down and away from the body and is in fact very long.

We heard a lot of rumbling and eventually a third elephant, a couple of years older than the calf, emerged, and crossed the road to join them.

Elephant ears have lots of blood vessels, and they flap their ears to cool their blood — not an aggressive sign.

With tusks like these its hard to tell if the elephant is left- or right-handed. Usually the more worn tusk tells which.

Teeth: Six sets during their life. Each new set pushes out the old one.

Trunk: ± 40,000 Muscles.

Klipspringers
(Rock jumpers)
Mvundla
• Up to ± 12 kgs
• have life-long monogamous relationships

Klipspringers
are tiny antelope that only live in rocky habitats. They are amazingly agile over rocky outcrops, and are usually very well camouflaged. They are browsers, but do occasionally eat grasses.
    They stand very still for quite a while, making it difficult to spot them, but great for sketching. They stand and jump right up on the tips of their hooves, which are able to absorb shock due to their consistency

I also draw birds whenever I can, and small creatures such as mongoose, chameleons, water monitors, etc. Cats are wonderful to sketch direct into watercolour.

I hope that you found this article interesting and that you will also find joy in sketching living creatures.

Inge Leonora-den Ouden

THE NETHERLANDS
"SKETCHING LIVING ANIMALS"

Sketching Living Animals
By Inge Leonora-den Ouden

About me

Hello, my name is Inge. I live in the Netherlands (I am Dutch, English is not my first language, sorry for my mistakes). I have drawn and painted since my youth. I partly followed an education for becoming an art teacher. Later I learned a lot from books, and since some years from tutorials and tips on the internet (i.e. http://www.fivepencilmethod.com/ and http://www.cathyjohnson.info/tips.html).

I make sketches of everyday subjects in small sketchbooks. These sketches serve as a combination of 'artist's journal' and daily practice. I take my sketchbook, pencils and pens with me every day, so I can make a sketch whenever I want (when I have some time). I just sketch what I see. This daily practice teaches me to "see better" and improves my "hand-eye coordination."

Sketching living animals.

I like drawing portraits of pets. For such a portrait I use a reference photo. It takes me many hours to finish it (some took me months, doing 1 or 2 hours a day only on the weekends). So those drawings are not sketches (if you'd like to see them, look at this Facebook Album: **https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.481418285285743.1073741832.480476818713223&type=3**).

Now I am going to tell you about the sketches.

The problem sketching living animals is *they never stand still!* The pose they have when I start the sketch won't last as long as the time needed for the sketch so I have to use my memory. But I have some 'tricks' too.
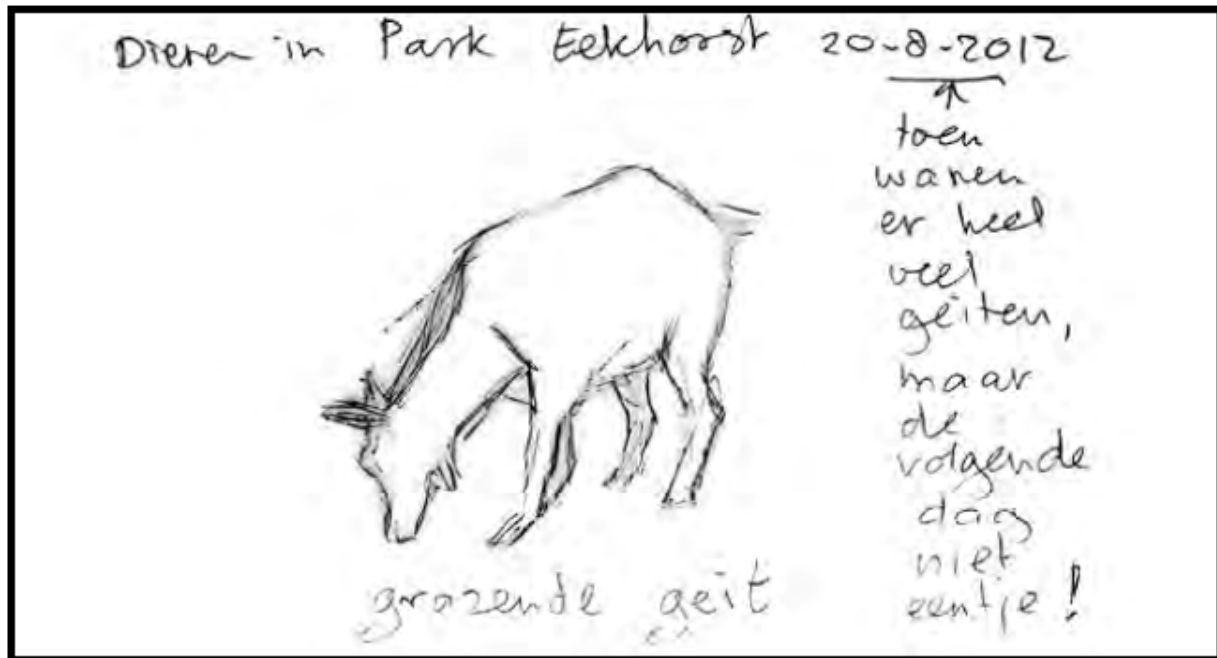
Trick 1:

There are more than one animal of the same species (i.e. a herd of goats) a litter of puppies. The one I started sketching has changed its pose, but another one now has that pose.

Trick 2:

The animal moves, but every now and then it returns to the same pose. I wait until it has the same pose I started with on my sketch and then I continue.

Trick 3: When the animal sleeps, it doesn't move all the time.

Dieren in Park Eelchoost 20-8-2012
↑
toen
waren
er heel
veel
geiten,
maar
de
volgende
dag
niet
eentje!

grazende geit

A herd of goats

I often pass by this park in Zwolle on my way to work. There is a mini zoo with small farm animals and plenty of goats. I have about 10 minutes to sit there on a bench and sketch a goat. For such a sketch I use a combination of **Tricks 1 and 2**. I am showing you one of these sketches (above).

It is made in a small sketchbook (4" x 6") with fairly smooth paper. I used a black BIC ballpoint. This is a very nice tool for sketches. You can use it in the same way as a pencil, but the lines are clearer and they don't smear. You can see I changed the line of the neck several times. I don't mind this "double line." In my opinion it adds to the 'live' feeling of the sketch.

My dog Toetie

Toetie (pronounce like "tutti" in "tutti frutti") is a 'mix Jack Russel terrier. For sketching her I always use **Trick 3**. She is a happy and active dog, so she sometimes needs to take a nap. When she is sleeping on the couch or on the seat next to me, I can sketch her.

This was the first of many sketches I made of Toetie. She sleeps in a funny, sitting position. The sketch is made in the small sketchbook (4" x 6") with black BIC ballpoint. Here you see how I use lines (hatches) in the direction of the fur. This hatching is different from the cross-hatching in the seat. The "negative shape" shows the contrast between the dark shadow on the seat and Toetie's white and tan fur.

zondag 17 juli 2011
ik wou Toetie tekenen.
Eerst zat ze niet lang genoeg in de
zelfde houding. Pas toen ze sliep in
haar typische zithouding
lukte het.

Toetie zit niet stil - Toch wel!

This sketch shows Toetie lying on top of the back of the couch. I sketched on a piece of drawing paper with a Lamy fountain pen with black ink. I don't use special nibs or special ink, it's only a cheap Lamy for schoolchildren and the normal ink cartridges made for writing. For thinner lines I use the pen with its nib upside down. To be fast, I did not often lift my pen, so the 'hairs' and the hatching go in zigzag lines.

Only pen, or pencil first

In 2011 and 2012 I did the challenge "75 sketches in 75 days." One of the rules of this challenge was "use only pen." So I had to sketch directly in pen, no pencil lines first. The three sketches I showed are made in that way.

Now my sketches are not under that rule anymore, I start with some pencil lines before I take my pen. These pencil lines are only the main lines. When the shape of the subject is there, I start with my pen (or ballpoint). I am not "going over the pencil lines," but I use them as the guidelines for the sketch in pen. When the sketch is finished you can often still see some of the pencil lines. I don't care about that and I don't erase them.

To finish this story I show you a recent sketch of sleeping Toetie.

More sketches and other work you can see at:
https://www.facebook.com/IngeLeonoraDenOuden

Suzie Althens

CHICKALOON, ALASKA
"PAINTING PEOPLE AND ANIMALS WITH BLOBS"

Painting Humans and Animals with Blobs
(or Using People in a Good Way) By Suzie Althens

If you are uncomfortable including people in your sketches or paintings, you are not alone. I used to be afraid to add them because my attempts consistently resembled monsters or aliens. If they accidentally looked human they appeared to have a severe back ailment or leg injury. It made the sketch painful even to look at. It is discouraging to sketch a sunny beach scene with a weird creature crawling out of the waves unless you are aiming at sci-fi. Although I've not reached status as an authority on sketching people, I've found using blobs for people is an option. Let me share how you can use people (in a good way) and why I'm now an advocate of blob people.

I took two workshops from amazing artists that gave me courage. One from Don Andrews and the other from Joseph Zbukvic. Don paints people beginning with blobs of bright watercolor and Joseph's people and animals just barely have legs, yet they add so much life to their paintings. It is important to know that close up, their people don't look like people or animals, but blobs. I found this quite motivating because I know how to make blobs. What separates their blobs from the rest is their somewhat human shape. Joseph said repeatedly, "Don't state-indicate." In other words, the people and animals they put in their paintings aren't complete with details, but suggested to the viewer.

Both artists said the goal is to make believable shapes, so what you are aiming for isn't ten fingers and facial features, but a suggestion of a human or animal. The blobs just can't resemble monsters or people who just fell off a ladder. You aren't creating a portrait, but an impression. Sketched people don't have names; they are just shapes to be used. There is a lot of freedom and resource for the artist in that. This is one time when you can use people without gaining a reputation for being wicked.

Remember when placing people in a sketch you aren't simply populating the piece, but adding elements. A person shape contributes color, shape (such as a vertical or horizontal), space, light and movement. In the sketch below, place your finger over the person wearing red and this image isn't near as interesting because the red spot against the green creates a vibrant color element. The people on the right have more subdued color, but I used them to show two sides of the street. The two sets of people are like bookends creating a space. Because of their placement, you know the width of the street.

Here is a sketch of a garden. In the closeup, you see the shape of the gardener is simple, but believable. His back and head is light against dark, red against green, and his placement makes him a focal point so the viewer is looking through the flowers and into the garden. His color and placement demand your attention. The bend of his body adds to the statement of "garden".

The couple in the middle don't stand out as much because they aren't as important to the garden theme. If I had made the couple red and had the gardener yellow or blue and lifting weights, he wouldn't fit in or be as noticeable. He would just be odd. Notice that he has white on his back and hat (light against dark element) with light red and light blue for his

clothes with dark red and blue for a shadow. No details. No face. Just shape and color.

How did I learn how to sketch blob people? Practice. It was actually lots of fun and challenging. I found a website called posemaniacs.com. On this site you set poses of people to change every few seconds or longer. I began to sketch people over and over until in just a few strokes of a pen, the marks began to look human. This was just a start, but it gave me some confidence in the basics of proportion, shape and movement. Then I started painting watercolor blobs and making them look like people. I started with a rectangle, then added legs, a head and hair. I made them walk, run, throw balls, carry groceries and fishing poles, hold hands, walk dogs. I also looked at lots of photos of crowds in magazines and newspapers. While practicing, I learned that it is easy to make a dog look like a cat. Without even trying, one of my people was carrying a chainsaw. This is unsettling to see in a group of people.

I tried to make these blobs an inch high or less and blended the colors while they were wet. None of them have feet or hands. I practiced painting people shapes positively and negatively. Positively is painting a shape directly on light or white paper with paint. Negatively is leaving white space of the paper and using the white shape as a body shape. Almost always the people/ animals in my sketches have white paper on their head or shoulders. It makes them more inter-

esting and they stand out. If the background is mid-tone or dark, I leave little white bits where I want to place a person.

For the lady walking in the painting above, I used the white of the paper for her blouse. The shadow is gray and dark blue for her skirt. Her arms and legs are skin color, usually a mix of new gamboge or yellow ochre and quinacridone rose. The bicyclist has a dark body against light pavement with a blob of gouache for his helmet for light against dark of the background. The bicyclist shape doesn't use any white of the paper. He isn't as important as the lady but he creates space and gives movement. His placement also relieves the viewer of him running her down because she is on the sidewalk and he is in the road. An observant viewer will note that traffic drives on the left in Hobart.

Notice these cows don't have feet or
eyes. Not great traits for breeding stock,
but just fine for a painting or sketch.

Below, these horses' legs and tails are made with a dry brush and thick pigment. Because one of
the heads looks like a horse, the blob of the body and legs can be suggested. The other horse is a
mere blob with a tail using dry brush with thick pigment.

In the image above a family of blobs walk together. The lady's hat makes all the rest of the bodies believable. The man's head is slightly defined, but her hat pulls the whole thing off. Only a piece of believability causes the eye to fill in the rest. The other family members are just blobs with very few details.

Below is a sketch I did while on a beach in Hawaii. I didn't take a long time to paint these people, but they resemble some of the people we saw.

Charley Young Beach

A beautiful crescent of a beach with lava rocks on either end. Children screaming, old people walking slowly by, turtles finning just outside the surf in clear, warm water...

Here are the steps to make Blob People:

1) Decide where you want your people. You might decide to add people near the end of your painting or sketch, but it is easier to know at the beginning. I draw a line at head level and the majority of people's heads will rest on that. Children or people bending over and people on an incline would be the exception. Make rough rectangles to suggest a person's upper body. It will be about half of the person's height. If it is a couple, allow the colors to mingle on the paper.
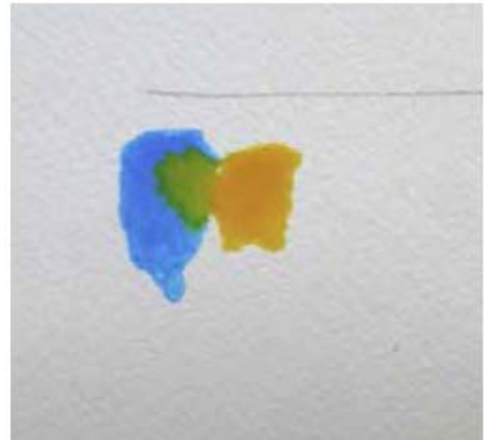
2) Add slacks or jeans with a fairly dry brush and thick pigment, but allow the colors to blend. Usually the ankles meet at ground level with space between the legs.

3) Add a small roundish head shape with a flesh color of new gamboge or yellow ocher and a pink or red. I use quinacridone rose. Anything that resembles skin will work.

Here are the steps to make Blob People: (cont.)

4) When it begins to dry (or you could also wait until it is dry if you prefer), add a darker shadow color, hair, and add a ground shadow connecting the feet to it. Notice that the heads are all at about the same level, except for the child.

5) Keep adding people, using pleasant color combinations. This is where a color wheel is handy. Add legs in the same manner as slacks, but make them thinner. When your blob people get further away, they will become even more shapeless with fewer human features until they become dots without limbs or color.

I went through a phase when all my people ended up wearing coats because I was making their bodies too big. It is easy to fatten up blob people so err on the side of thin, but not short.

A benefit of painting people with this method is the variety and spontaneity of the people shapes. Use people to give your sketches color, space, life and light.

Suzie Althens

Amanda Lee Condict

BARTO, PENNSYLVANIA (USA)
"DRAWING PEOPLE"

Drawing People

Amanda Lee Condict

I have always drawn people, almost to the point of obsession. The paintings and drawings I exhibit are most often of people and relationships. Even in the few instances where I have removed the person from the canvas (as in my garden icons series of paintings), I have replaced the living person with an inanimate representation of a human form.

Angel in the Iris, from the Garden Icon Series, acrylic on canvas
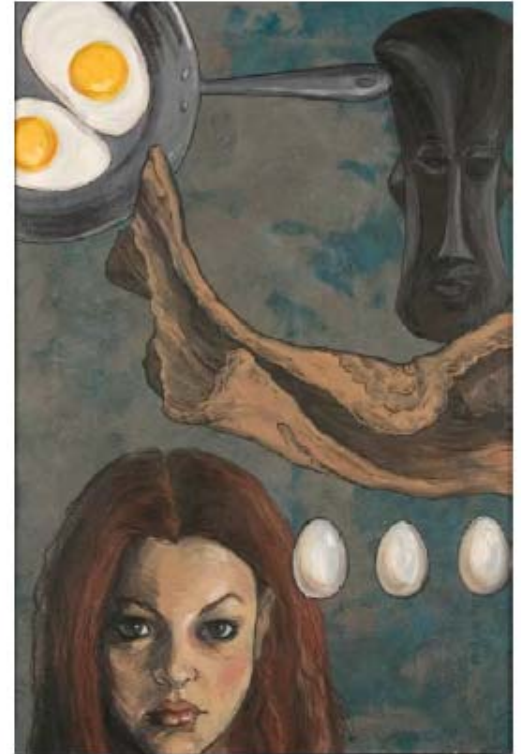
Samantha's Eggs, oil on canvas

Self Portrait in Second Hand Clothes, from the Paper Doll Series, watercolor

I doodle incessantly, mostly faces, hands, and feet. When one of my friends suggested that my doodles were interesting enough to do something with, I began saving them and made some collages that I then painted on. This led to my habit of using old children's books with collaged pages as sketchbooks. I find these sketchbooks much more interesting than my first attempts at using doodles in my art.

Pages from my collaged sketchbooks

Doodles, collage and mixed media

Feet, collage and gouache

I have worked as a graphic designer and illustrator for 40 years, mostly in the fashion, beauty, and medical industries. This has allowed me to draw people for many of my clients, using traditional media and also using Adobe Illustrator and Photoshop.

Fantasy is in the eye of the Beholder
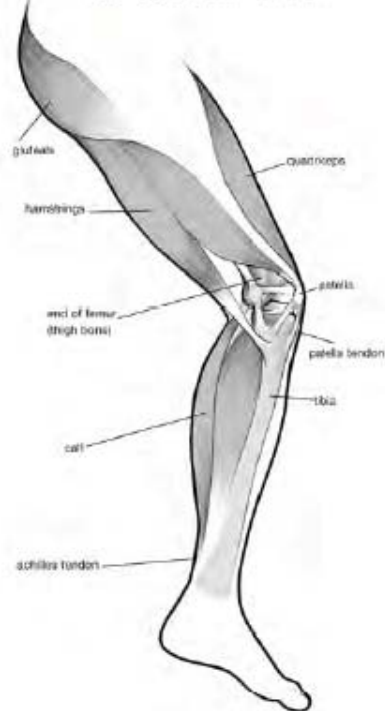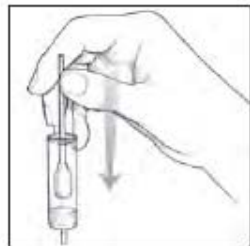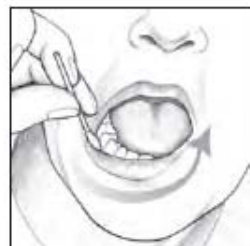
I have also been fortunate enough to be comissioned for portrait work and for murals in recent years, both of which I love to do because I get to paint people— you must be seeing a recurring theme in my work by now— *I just love to draw and paint people.*

Owen, acrylic on canvas

Literacy mural, Spring-Ford 9th Grade Center, acrylic on polyester panels adhered to brick

Jesse Ruben, watercolor

I have been drawing and painting people for so long that it is instinctive for me, but since I teach illustration and painting at a private college and a local art center, I have had to analyze the process for my students.

Careful observation is the first and most important step in drawing people. It is critical to understand anatomy– how the skeletal structure defines the basic proportion and movement of the figure and how the muscle structure defines the unique shape of the various parts of the body. The best way to learn this is to draw from live, unclothed models and to do it as often as you can. Many art associations and schools have life drawing sessions, where there is no instructor but the artists all share the modeling fees. Most groups will start with a series of quick poses to warm up and then have the model do a few longer poses. I live in a very rural area of Pennsylvania midway between two small cities and yet there are five or six groups within an hour of my studio that hold regular sessions. If I don't get to one of them for a few

Sleeping Nude, pastel

Waiting, graphite

Watching, charcoal

Seated Nude, watercolor

months I am out of practice when I start to draw again; it takes longer to get a good drawing started.

In my fashion illustration class, I have my students work from photos and start drawing the models by sketching in a simplified framework of the skeleton first, starting with the head and spine to establish the gesture, then filling in the shapes of the limbs and torso according to the muscle groupings before they start to clothe the figure. In the fashion industry, we work with a figure that is anywhere from 9 to 12 heads tall, but this technique will work just as well with the standard 7 to 8 head tall figure.

Once the basic proportion and pose is established, I work on the shadows and highlights to bring out the form. I find that squinting at the model (or the photo if you are not working from a live model) helps me to see the values more easily because the less light that reaches the rods and cones of your eyes, the less you are able to distinguish color. I try to see the general shapes of the shadow areas and build up the values in stages, starting first with the broadest lightest shades and darkening smaller and deeper areas as I work, reserving the darkest shades as an accent. If I am working on colored paper, that becomes the middle value and I use white and very light colors to establish the highlight areas.

Richard Sleeping, pastel on colored paper

When I sketch on location, I most often work fairly small— most of my sketchbooks are 9" by 12" or less. I like to sketch people when they are unaware of me doing it and I find it is easier to sketch unnoticed in public places when I work small. I have some sketchbooks that are small enough to fit in my back pocket.

I often use the figures I have sketched in public places or in life drawing sessions as the basis for figures in my paintings. This means that I have to fill in the details from memory or, since my memory is not as good as it used to be, from my knowledge of the human figure and how clothing drapes on it. If I really like the composition of a group of figures or a particular

Broken Arm, dry and liquid graphite on paper, 5 feet tall—one of the largest drawings I have ever attempted

pose that I have sketched and want to do a more finished painting from the scene, I sometimes take photo reference with my iPhone so I can refer to it later. The iPhone is great because it is usually in my pocket or purse but also because the flash rarely fires so it records the shadows and highlights quite naturally. Using a photo flash pretty much wipes out any shadows and really flattens the form. I don't ever take photos in a life drawing session; most groups (and models) frown on that. Short poses when I don't have time to capture the values most often end up as line drawings when I reuse them in my work.

Spring Goddess, monotype, collage, drawing; and the sketch I used as reference

Middle Age Marriage, woodcut, monotype, toner transfer, collage; and the original sketches. I sometimes flip the sketches to suit my composition.

I sometimes take photos of scenery to use as backgrounds and insert the models into these scenes. This can be tricky since you need to match the lighting situations. If the sunset is casting long shadows and your model was sitting in the sunshine at high noon, the finished work will look patched together and amateurish.

A few tips to make your portraits more realistic:

Detail of Portrait of Bonnie, watercolor; notice the blues and yellows in the skin tones

When you are painting (or coloring with any media) a person's skin, don't mix one hue and merely darken and lighten it. Besides the usual counsel to look for cool colors in the shadows and warm colors in the highlights— if you observe carefully, people's skin tones vary greatly from one area to another. Around the eyes and other places where the skin is very thin you will often find a bluish cast. In fleshy areas you might see the most "normal" skin tones. Some areas of skin will be rosier, some more yellow or brown based. Take the time to really observe the skin tones before painting them.

When painting (or drawing) hair, don't think of it as individual strands of hair and draw them all in. Look instead for general shapes and masses of the hairstyle and
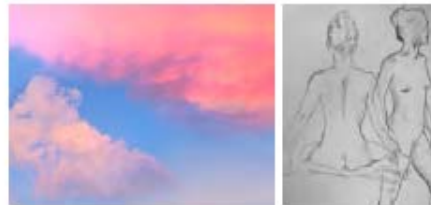
Solitude, egg tempera; the original sketch that inspired it and one of the background reference photos

Lena, watercolor; hair is painted as broad masses first, then broken up into several chunks of hair and a few loose hairs added as a finishing touch

use shadows and highlights to develop the form of the masses. When they start to look like 3-D shapes you can go back in and indicate the direction the hair is laying lightly on top of the shapes but don't overdo it; think more of planes— hair clumps or chunks.

Foreshortened limbs can be awkward looking, even when they are drawn correctly. When we are looking at a photo that has oddly foreshortened angles, our brain will accept it because we know that a photo is real. However, when a drawing has awkward foreshortening, our brain does not want to believe it and it just looks wrong. I try to avoid foreshortened poses for formal portraits because the client will often be critical of it no matter how correct the proportions are. When I am drawing or painting for my own pleasure, I love foreshortened poses. Extreme foreshortening, when done well, can be dynamic.

Nude sketch, charcoal and white chalk

The very best advice I can give you for drawing people is to just do it as often as you can. Sketching people from life when you are on the train or waiting at the doctor's office or watching a soccer game will give you the practice you need to develop the observation skills and the ability to capture the pose and make it look natural. So go out and draw people!

Page from sketchbook, graphite and watercolor

Janie Pereira Siebert

CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA
"BIRDS AND BUGS"

Birds and Bugs

By Janie Pereira Siebert

I have always been drawn to smaller creatures, birds, beasties and bugs--possibly due to my being small-ish in stature. "All things bright and beautiful, all creatures great and small," always resonated with me when I was very young. I would lie in the grass watching insects and the birds, as they swooped down to eat them. When one lives in South Africa one has to make peace with a multitude of remarkable insects and birds.

I grew up in the city, where I was charmed by my dear Father's favourite house-sparrows, nesting under the house eaves, we swam with the frogs in my Great Aunt's farm dam, we traipsed through the vine-yards watching the Guinea Fowl scratching for bugs and the Kingfishers fishing in the river glades. I then lived for 18 years in isolated rural lands before returning to live in the city. I have been blessed with great times of "beastie observations," birds in their endemic flora, sharing the yet-to-ripen-on-the-tree bananas with the reserve's marauding hungry bull, embracing the vegetable patch lore:
"grow 5: One for the bugs, one for the blight, one for the birds, one for the kitchen and one to share."

Cape Robin-Chat Sketch Workings

Our small suburban garden in the city of Cape Town, South Africa, is enchanted to have a visiting pair of Cape Robin-Chats. My day is complete when I hear their clever, impetuous, mimicking song and can spot them flitting from branch to branch, flipping and jerking their gingery orange tails up and down. They mostly nest, to raise their young of two to three chicks from June to November, foraging for invertebrates, small lizards, frogs and fruit. As I go about my daily chores of work, family and home, I am tickled by the parallel busyness of one of my favorite birds, this Cape Robin, watching them fend for the sustenance and well being of their young.

I have portrayed this bird, as well as many others, in my regular ceramic work. This includes crockery, tile and hand-formed clay work. For the simplified breakdown of work explanation, I decided to sketch a paper story of the Cape Robin-Chats.

Additional Work Examples

From tilling a fairly vast veggie patch in an isolated rural home, to working in a small city garden, I have become accustomed to being close to the beasties and birds that naturally share these spaces with me. This has lead to very pleasant, profitable sketching subjects, besides a few "eek" moments amongst the sweet ones. Raising a son who loved his magnifying bug box, certainly brought many times of raising lost birds and feeding it captured insects. Thus a lot of my inspiration themes in my artwork are tweaked from these basic parts of life...growing our own foods, plus seeing all that forage for their own sustenance.

From keen observations, I find I enjoy expressing the shapes and forms of birds. In the other paper-based sketches, I have used light, quick strokes of markers, inks, washes of watercolor and/or inks, with finishing lines of pens and acrylic inks.

The sketch in the lower right was worked on Kraft card, which gave a good backing for the homely House Sparrow's white underbelly feathers and the page on which it is perched. I worked in Aquarelle crayons, wet and dry with numerous strokes and layers to create for the feathery and papered textures.

More Additional Work Examples

These are quick study sketches on watercolor and pastel paper
created for gaining further knowledge of some birds.

The African Black Oystercatcher, sketched using Derwent Inktense crayons. I began with light blue for the under layer, including the shadow area. A layer of indigo and black was added. I then used a No. 4 paintbrush, wet with just water to add washes to move the paint with Inktense crayons. The final touches are with a Uni-pin Fine Line pen.

The African Harrier-Hawk, a bird of prey (measuring 63cm tall) which roosts amazingly in tall trees in our suburb. This sketch is created on a Fabriano Venetian red pastel paper. I used Cotman's Chinese white watercolor to create a base, with gaps to allow the paper color to show through, over the red paper color, allowed this to dry and then added more layers of white, grey, pale blue and yellow Faber-Castell Aquarelle crayons, wet and dry. The final pen details are worked with a Uni-ball micro black pen or a Uni-ball Fine Line pen.

The Cape Robin-Chat here was created in a similar way, other than using brown, black, yellow and orange Inktense crayons. Washes of water were worked into small areas to intensify the colors. The final touches are in the black pens, plus a white Uni-ball Signo gel pen.

Different Artwork Examples

The following pictures show examples of my hand-formed tiles and slump-moulded platters, where I have pressed into the clay (with wooden tools/lace/fabric) to create some edges, details or textures and have then completed the painted areas using stains and glazes.

I work on differing stoneware clays, giving my paintings another form of "canvas." I painted with the stains and glazes to build up artworks on the bisque platters and plaque tiles. Once sufficiently worked they are fired in a kiln at over 1000° Celsius.
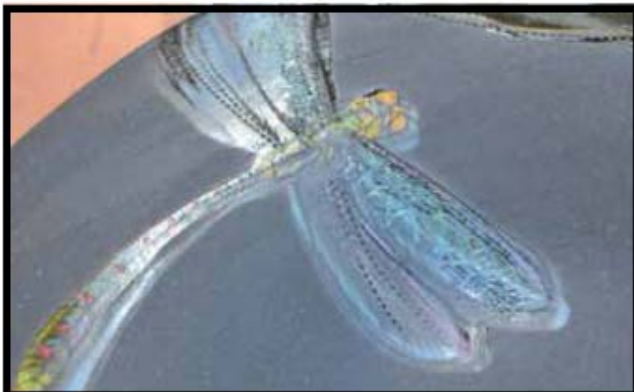
Wesley E. Douglas

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS (USA)
"ARMOURED SKETCHES"

Armoured Sketches

by Wesley E. Douglas

My relationship with bugs: I don't really like bugs crawling around my house, in my kitchen, across my food, inside my cupboards, across my floor, up through my shower drain, anywhere near my toilet seat, and definitely, definitely NOT in my bed.

It still amazes me that a tiny little creature measuring somewhere between ½-inch to 2 inches can strike such fear in a human that weighs 160 pounds and measures 5.5 feet tall but it happens all of the time.

If, however, I need to design the most awesome, competitive, and fearsome war machine I can dream up, I will turn immediately to the microscopic world of the insects for my inspiration. There is a host of beetles, grasshoppers, ants, wasps, and bugs that swim. There are bugs that dig, bite, fly, sting, and can disguise themselves or eat a whole wooden tree. The part I find so fascinating is when you grab a magnifying glass or the camera's macro zoom lens and convert their world to a human scale I can see their delicate little legs and the iridescent exoskeletons, transparent wings, antennae, and tiny little eye systems that impress even the most innovative technology companies.

As a young boy fishing on the shores of my Midwestern ponds and lakes, I would see a dragonfly pass by with a remarkable resemblance to helicopters made by Sikorsky or Bell Huey. Even their big bulging eyes looked like the cockpits where the pilots operated these mini flying machines. The large flat wings spanned perpendicular to the length of its body in a twirling fashion of the helicopter props. I am distracted by this insect as it transports me to another world of miniature air flight.
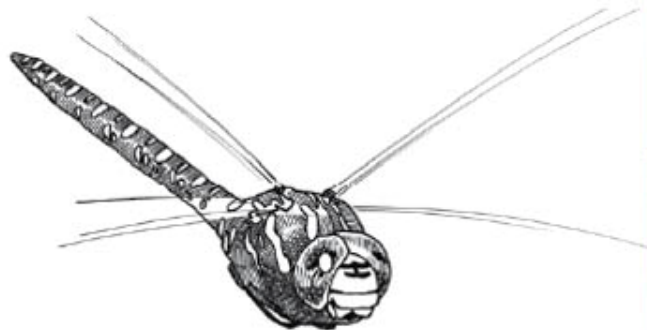
I also loved to fish and my other fascination was the underworld of creatures living in the weed beds, algae, and currents of freshwater lakes and streams. Fish, frogs, snakes, insects, and plants created their own futuristic world that has remained unchanged allegedly since the time of primeval ooze. It wouldn't be long before my mind would wander off down the lakes and streams towards the outlets leading into the larger lakes, bays, deltas and oceans of the world.

I also have a salty tooth, or at least a fondness for the taste of shellfish and crustaceans found at the bottom of some cold ocean floors around the world. Crabs, oysters, scallops, shrimp, crawfish and lobsters are my weakness. Not only do I love the white meat found inside each of these critters, but I have also been known to play around with the articulated appendages and tail structures of each after I have had my meal to see how they work.

And then it hit me. Shellfish and crustaceans are very much like larger versions of those fabulous insects with the awesome battle armor. I seem to like all of that hard shell anatomy as a singular defense system Mother Nature had given them. I am also lumping turtles into my little group of crustaceans because they also have that awesome battle shell (although I don't eat turtle).

Basically, I like to sketch things that look like they are built as tough as tanks.
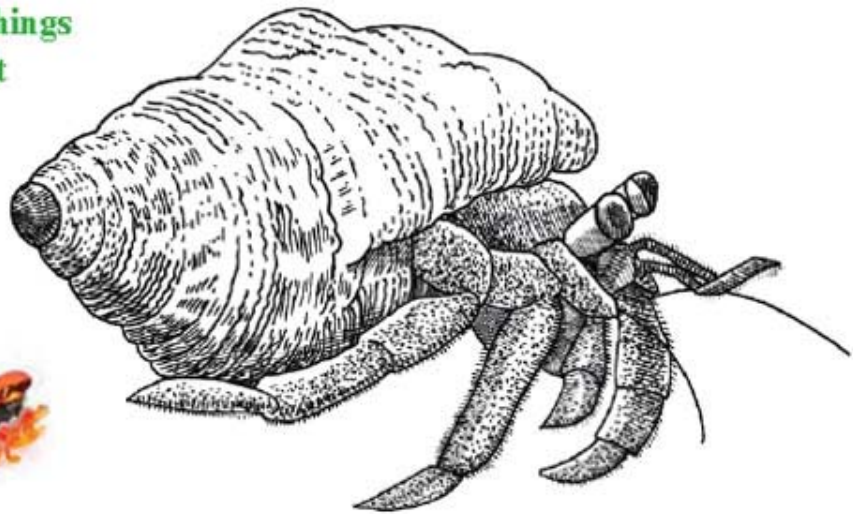
WHAT IS "BIOMIMICRY?"

There is a term known as "biomimicry." This is the imitation of models, systems and elements of nature for the purpose of solving complex human problems. Very often, man-made products will contain textures, chemical compounds, protective coatings, and hinging or movement mechanisms that are modeled after the mechanisms of those tiny wings, abdomens, legs or compound eyes found in insects.
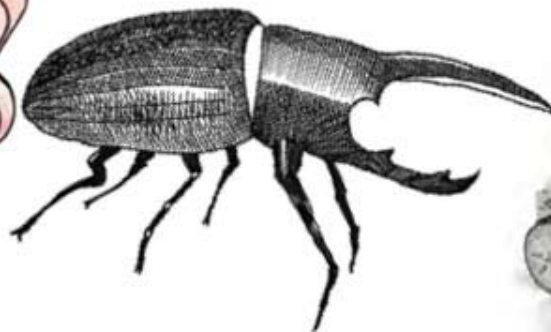
Whenever I set out to sketch one of these insects, I must admit that I have to go through a process in order to know what it is I am looking at. A very long time ago a scientist collected, measured, notated, categorized and finally gave each species the most complicated Latin name he could find. I don't profess to know any of that nor do I even know the special names given to each part of these insects.

Here is my more simplified breakdown of my sketching process for sketching anything, but especially insects and shellfish:

1. **Observation & Awareness:**
   Spot the insect in its natural habitat. Begin preliminary fast sketches in order to quickly identify key parts of the insect and to facilitate proper identification. I try to think about the basic shapes that make up this insect. My first marks on the page will often be the circles, squares and triangles that make up this insect shape.

2. **Research:** Go online to do some research. I try to understand why Mother Nature made this particular species to look this way versus another type of insect.

3. **Play:** I try to understand the nuances of its anatomy, what purpose does this anatomy serve, what are the defense mechanisms, and how does it survive. Not recommended with predatory animals.

4. **Sketch:** Ink over the pencil lines with my Uni-ball Vision Gel Pen, Sharpie Fine Point or Hi-Tec C fine liner pens, ballpoints, paintbrushes or whatever else I have available to me.

5. **Color:** Color will be added after the line work has been allowed to dry. I will often use Prismacolor permanent markers because I like how they dry almost instantaneously and do not dissolve or smear the existing ink. Other times I may choose between pastel chalks or watercolor in place of Prismacolor markers depending on the mood and appropriateness for the subject matter.

6. **Archive & Share**
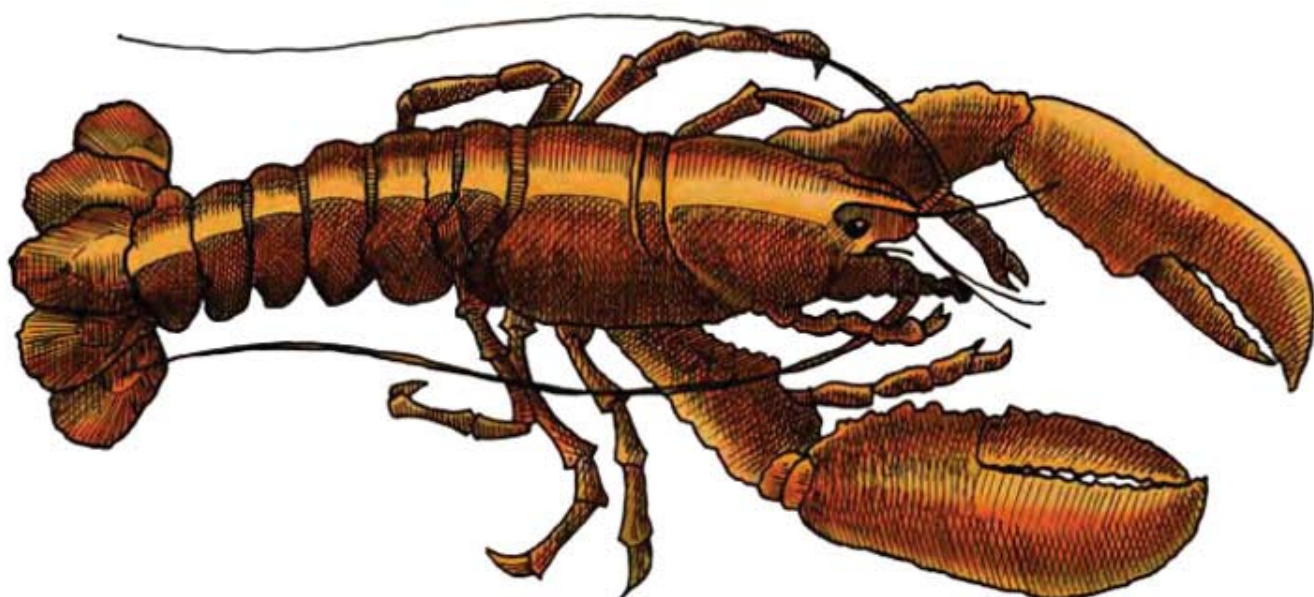
OBSERVATION AND AWARENESS

At first I may spot an interesting looking bug and observe it for a while in a feeble attempt to commit it to memory. Sometimes I may cheat and just grab my camera and snap a few photos of it, hoping that I paid some attention to focus and framing. If the insect looks like it will be hanging around for a while, say, feasting on a big piece of decomposing fruit, I think I will have enough time to capture my specimen in a sketch form with notations of my own. Years ago I watched the Disney movie entitled "Honey I Shrunk The Kids" where the premise was if a crazy inventor had invented a special machine that could take large objects and shrink them to a manageable size for, say, his kids' show and tell at school. During the testing phase of the new machine, the inventor inadvertently shrinks himself and his neighbors to a size smaller than the ants and bugs crawling in their yard. It sure is a fantastic thing to consider and to see it imagined through the eyes of Disney made it even more attractive. Another animated movie that made an impression on me about a bug's life was "James and the Giant Peach," adapted from the Roahl Dahl book by the same name.
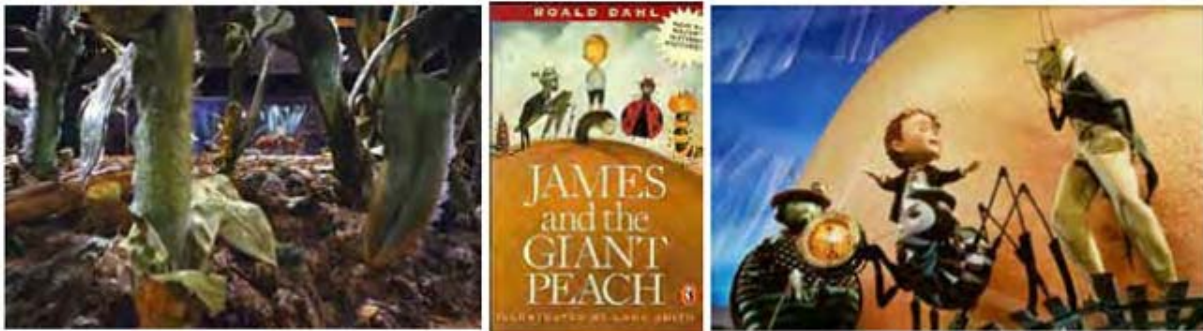
Scenes from the motion picture "Honey I Shrunk The Kids" and "James and the Giant Peach"

RESEARCH

Then I might run to the computer and do some quick searching to properly identify the insect and perhaps augment my sketch with some interesting facts about the specimen. I may also find some additional photos that will help me accurately represent the camouflage painted on its shell.
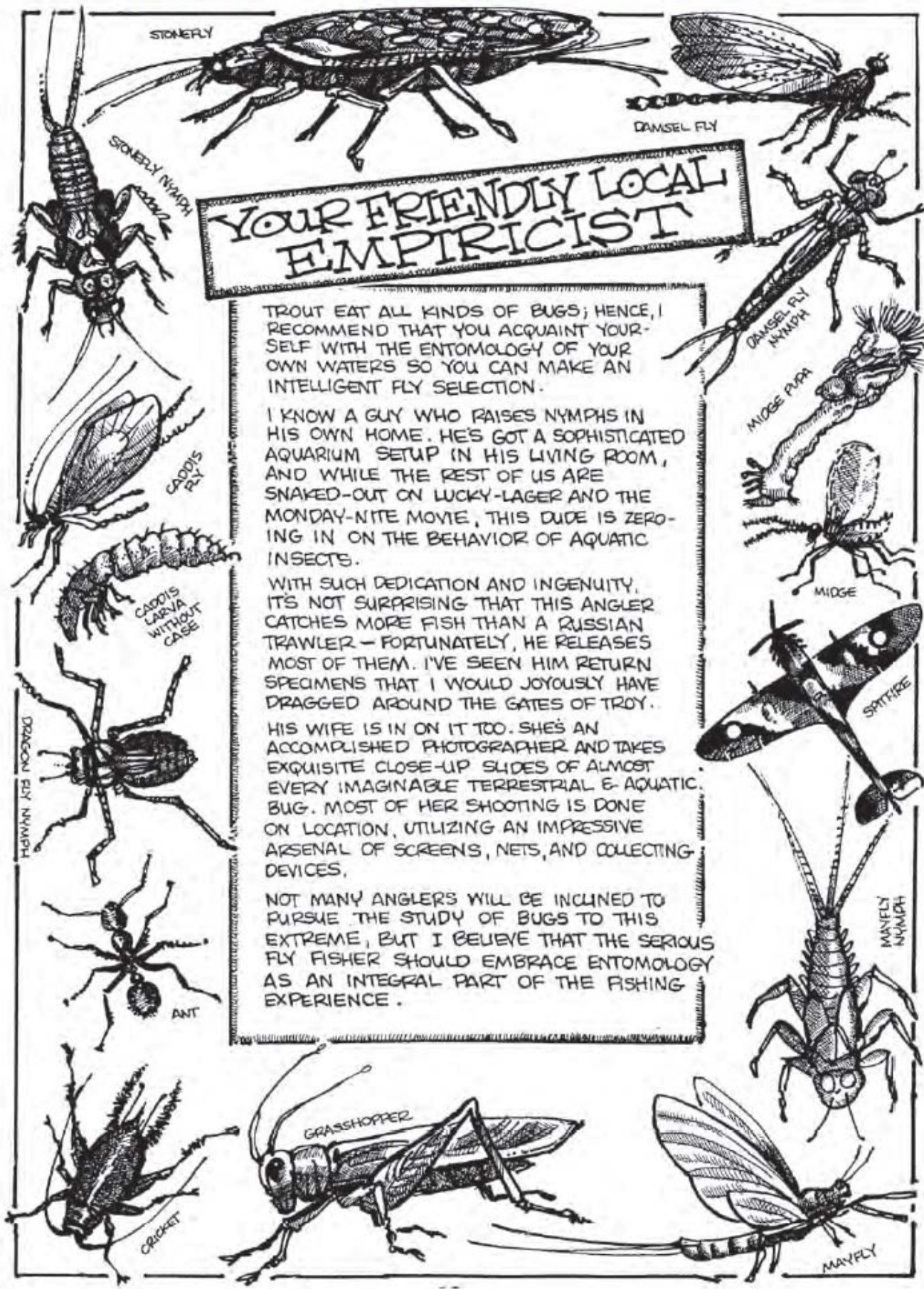
PLAY

If possible, as with the lobsters and crabs, I might play around with my subject if it is not alive. This is a really good way to understand how their shell remains flexible and resistant at the same time.

STONEFLY

DAMSEL FLY

STONEFLY NYMPH

DAMSEL FLY NYMPH

MIDGE PUPA

YOUR FRIENDLY LOCAL EMPIRICIST

TROUT EAT ALL KINDS OF BUGS; HENCE, I RECOMMEND THAT YOU ACQUAINT YOUR-SELF WITH THE ENTOMOLOGY OF YOUR OWN WATERS SO YOU CAN MAKE AN INTELLIGENT FLY SELECTION.

I KNOW A GUY WHO RAISES NYMPHS IN HIS OWN HOME. HE'S GOT A SOPHISTICATED AQUARIUM SETUP IN HIS LIVING ROOM, AND WHILE THE REST OF US ARE SNAKED-OUT ON LUCKY-LAGER AND THE MONDAY-NITE MOVIE, THIS DUDE IS ZERO-ING IN ON THE BEHAVIOR OF AQUATIC INSECTS.

WITH SUCH DEDICATION AND INGENUITY, IT'S NOT SURPRISING THAT THIS ANGLER CATCHES MORE FISH THAN A RUSSIAN TRAWLER — FORTUNATELY, HE RELEASES MOST OF THEM. I'VE SEEN HIM RETURN SPECIMENS THAT I WOULD JOYOUSLY HAVE DRAGGED AROUND THE GATES OF TROY.

HIS WIFE IS IN ON IT TOO. SHE'S AN ACCOMPLISHED PHOTOGRAPHER AND TAKES EXQUISITE CLOSE-UP SLIDES OF ALMOST EVERY IMAGINABLE TERRESTRIAL & AQUATIC BUG. MOST OF HER SHOOTING IS DONE ON LOCATION, UTILIZING AN IMPRESSIVE ARSENAL OF SCREENS, NETS, AND COLLECTING DEVICES.

NOT MANY ANGLERS WILL BE INCLINED TO PURSUE THE STUDY OF BUGS TO THIS EXTREME, BUT I BELIEVE THAT THE SERIOUS FLY FISHER SHOULD EMBRACE ENTOMOLOGY AS AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE FISHING EXPERIENCE.

CADDIS FLY

CADDIS LARVA WITHOUT CASE

DRAGON FLY NYMPH

ANT

MIDGE

SPITFIRE

MAYFLY NYMPH

CRICKET

GRASSHOPPER

MAYFLY

SKETCHING

Then the question might be "How do I approach the actual sketch?" or "What materials might I use in order to properly capture this critter in its natural habitat?" Very often, I find that I am never fully prepared to start sketching a found insect at a moment's notice. Those surprise sketching moments can often be met with sub-par materials such a drawing with a worn pencil on a piece of torn-off cardboard or kraft paper/grocery bag. That is fine since I often consider these initial sketches roughs and for purposes of note taking. I can always clean the sketch up or re-sketch it once I have the essential information in tact.

I always like to sketch first in pencil. This allows for quick adjustments to the sketch while the specimen is still in front of me. If I am able to sketch directly into the sketchbook, I might take the time to lightly pencil a frame around the sketch. Then if I have enough room next to the sketch or on the facing page, I will lightly box off an area reserved for adding text later.

Here are some of my favorite artist's tools to bring on location. A portable collection of Prismacolor Markers (top) gives me a pretty decent range of basic colors plus two sizes of tips. The front row are some standard colors and the back row is a full range of warm greys.

Prismacolor Permanent Color Markers

I will often bring along my Pentel Hybrid Technica gel pens (bottom). They are durable, write smoothly on most surfaces and come in very small sizes. Perhaps my most trusted tools I like to bring on most any sketching occasions would be my mechanical pencil, my Uniball Vision Micro Gel Pen, and my iPhone. My iPhone is particularly useful because I can research on the spot and it has a camera in it (shown at right).
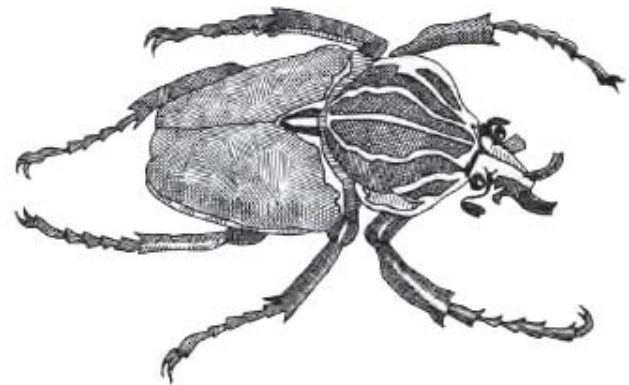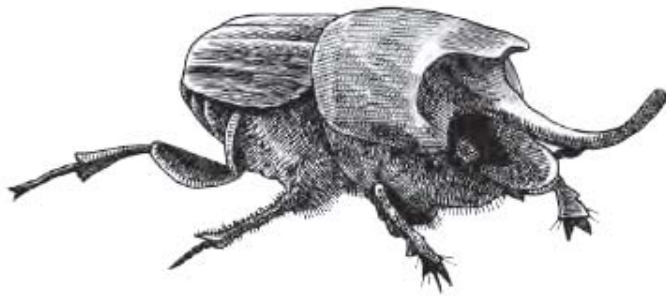

Mechanical Drawing Pencil

Uniball Vision Micro Gel Pen

My iPhone which is critical for researching in the field


Pentel Hybrid Technica Gel Pens

INK & COLOR:

I love to do my inking first, before color. While most artists may say that it is a disaster to lay down the color first over the pencil, then add the ink later, I personally do not have a problem adding ink over the color so long as the color has been given ample time to fully dry. But sometimes I like to lay down my ink line work first because I like to see the sketch first. Then the color can fill in underneath the black lines of the sketch. Another reason I like to do the ink first is because I might scan the black & white lines first and make multiple copies to play around with options for color schemes before coloring my final sketch. Besides, it is always good to have a backup plan just in case your color rendering goes a little too muddy.

Another tip: If you can, work at a larger size. This will make it easier to get detailed with the fine structures and cross-hatching (as shown in the photos below). If you are not able to work large, then your next option is to work with very fine tip pens and brushes. If your eyesight isn't what it used to be, don't be afraid to invest in a magnifying glass to help you see.

Prismacolor Grey 20%
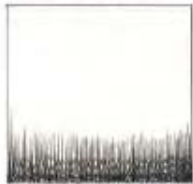
Uniball Vision Micro Gel Pen

Prismacolor Black Pencil

LIFTING MOTION

USE SMALLEST PART OF CHISEL TIP

CROSS HATCHING & LIFTING MOTION

Black Cat Silhouette
Made with a dry erase marker on a whiteboard and a silhouette stencil I cut out of card stock.

ARCHIVE & SHARE:

I use my sketches to capture, take notes and learn how to improve my craft. Unless I messed up a sketch in a manner that is unrecoverable, I will save everything in my sketchbooks. If the sketch has some good parts as well as some parts that did not go so well, that is good material for learning.

When you sketch, I recommend that you save everything you do even if you consider it a complete and utter failure. Sketching is a learning process and a journey with the most amazing twists and turns and even a few detours. The old cliche of "practice, practice practice" is not just words but a discipline worth trying out. Whenever you finish a sketch, take a few moments and ask yourself "what worked?" and "what could I have done a little better?" If you want to jot those notes on the next page of your sketch, do so and you will always have those learnings in close proximity to your sketch. After you get in this habit (say, a year of consistent reviewing your work) you will start to just hold your reviews verbally.

Another thing I like to is post my sketches to share with my sketching group and ask them to give me feedback. This practice will show you things in your work that you could not see.

As a final thought, please find any excuse you can to sketch. You might be waiting for a plane, riding a train or bus, enjoying lunch in the courtyard, walking through a nature preserve, etc. Instead of giving a little part of yourself to your electronic devices somewhere out on the internet--never able to retrieve it again--as an artist you have the power to pour yourself into your work, keep a documentation of your progress with observation skills and also share with your friends.

More examples of art and products inspired by the insect world

Laura F. Vasquez (Sfiat)

BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS (USA)
"DRAWING MARINE LIFE"

Lion Fish

Drawing Marine Life

by Laura Sfiat

Ink has always been my favorite drawing medium, there is a certain sleek and crisp nature to the line of a pen that I enjoy very much. I have quite a collection of pens, yet I have my favorites. The Copic Multiliners are among my favorite because of the texture of the ink flow and permanence, they dry very fast and I am able to work very quickly through the drawings. For the samples in this article I used the Copic Brush, the .02 and the .07.

As support I like to use hot press watercolor paper, the texture is smooth and more suitable for pens. I could have use Bristol, my favorite paper, yet I want to leave the possibility open to apply watercolor. As you can see in my tools I also use a toothbrush for spatter effects, this comes handy when doing rocks or a rough surface. I use a technical pencil as well to do the initial sketch. I don't do much detail with in pencil, just massing the main forms and proportions.

When I decided to offer my contribu-tion for this compendium work on Living Creatures I initially thought on doing my favorite pet: cats, yet, on a second thought it occurred to me that I find marine life quite fascinating. The abstract shapes and forms of different types of fish are a delight for rendering. As it is quite impos-sible to have paper and pen at hand to sketch marine life from "life" I selected some images from the Wikimedia Com-mons for this practice.

Fish come in different colors and are quite striking and beautiful, however I was more interested in the texture and form for the purpose of this article. I work on watercol-ors extensively; doing black and white il-lustrations are also very beneficial in terms of practicing values and contrast.

To draw marine life it was important to me to create an environment for the fish as well. I did not follow the original photo in all cases on regard to the background because for me it was more important to

create a pleasant composition and ele-ments of interest that could add to the fish and not detract from the main subject due to the complexity. A detailed fish and a suggested environment, simple and just the right amount of contrast for the subject of interest.

The image above is a Lion Fish. They are a delight in patterns and shapes to draw!

1
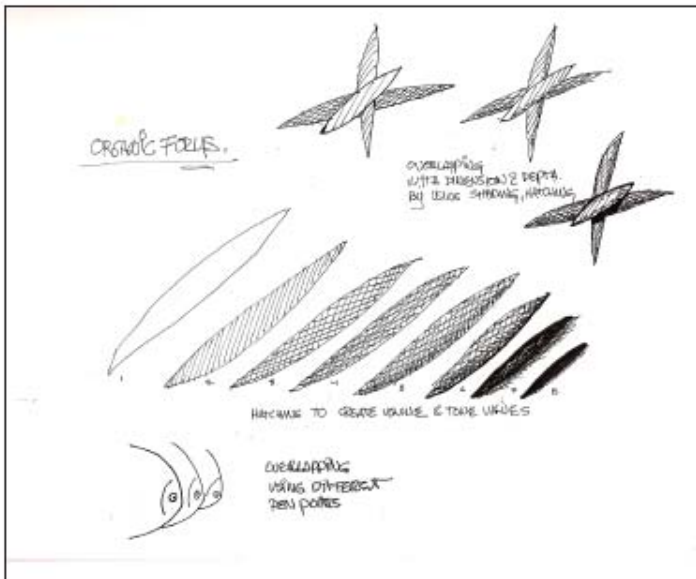
The figure on the right shows the type of hashing that was used in the process of drawing the Lion fish. Notice how a flat form evolves into a volumetric form by applying layers of hatching (Hatching is a pattern used in drawing to build up values, it is done by drawing parallel lines across the surface of the subject in different directions in every "pass" until the value reaches the degree of darkness needed (figures 1-8 in the illustration on the left)

The textures and forms that we find in marine life often show some of the following variations:
1- patterns
2- symmetric forms
3- overlapping forms
4- flat forms
5- flat and volumetric forms combined in the same body
6- transparency
7- schools vs isolated fish
8- absence of skeletal structure (cartilagenous)

Depending on the species we are portraying, it is important to reflect this characteristics in the drawing or suggest them in some way through linework.

The figure on the right represents a school of fish. Their body structure is flat with a prominence in the belly area. These fish are quite transparent I suggested transparency by doing very little detail and no shading on the bodies. Even the most flat fish always has some degree of volume and this has to be noted through the edge of their bodies.

Drawing a school of fish requires to show depth in the waters, for this feature it is necessary to apply more detail to the fish in the foreground area (closer to the viewer) as the fish in the background get less and less detailed, almost like a flat and simple silhouette, more of a suggestion of shape. The water makes difficult to the viewer to have a full sense of dimension and form from far away as it is depicted in the drawing with a bit of exaggeration to emphasize this logic. The floor elements also help to create depth by suggesting a foreground. The water is suggested with very think linework across their bodies.

Since this drawing will be watercoloured, I need to keep clean images of just enough linework.
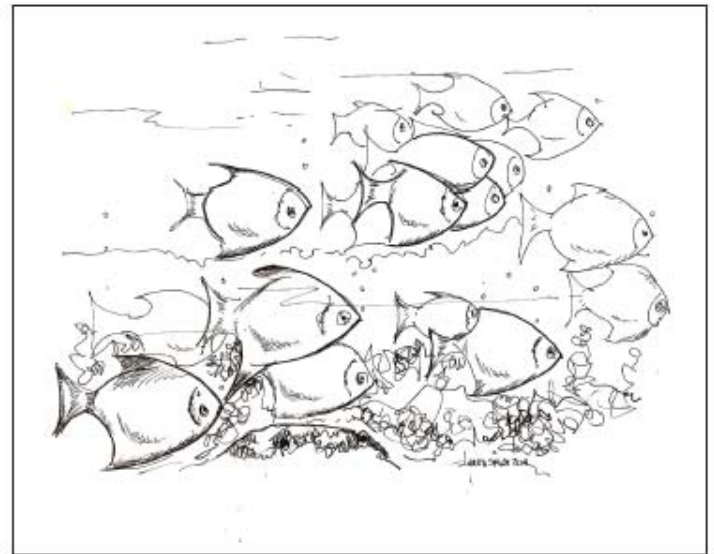

Image by Alforsin11 Via Wikimedia Commons

Step by step tutorial
Rendering sealife in watercolor

By Pseudopanax Via Wikimedia Commons

Starting with the initial black and white sketch, this Scorpion Fish who is a bottom dweller has a very interesting rough texture, so I decided to use a bit of scribbling to show that. Scribbling is done by swinging your hand creating random continuous lines. You go over some areas to show value difference to create contrast. Just enough to suggest shadow areas.

I wanted to show that it lives in the ocean bottom so I created a dark area as flooring.

Step-1

I use Koi watercolors by Sakura, even though they are fugitive (some colors don't last with time, they tend to faint) I like this brand because the pigment is vibrant and beautiful, and they have a wonderful skin tone that I use often in my portraits.

I used yellow to do an initial wash in the areas that have darker tone.

Step-2

I applied venetian red to highlight some areas. If you notice in the photo the colors are not that contrasty so I am making this watercolor more vivid. My intention is not to make a life like watercolor but to give the impression of life and texture. The body of the fish is a warm color yet it has some tints of orange tone, I am exaggerating the latter.
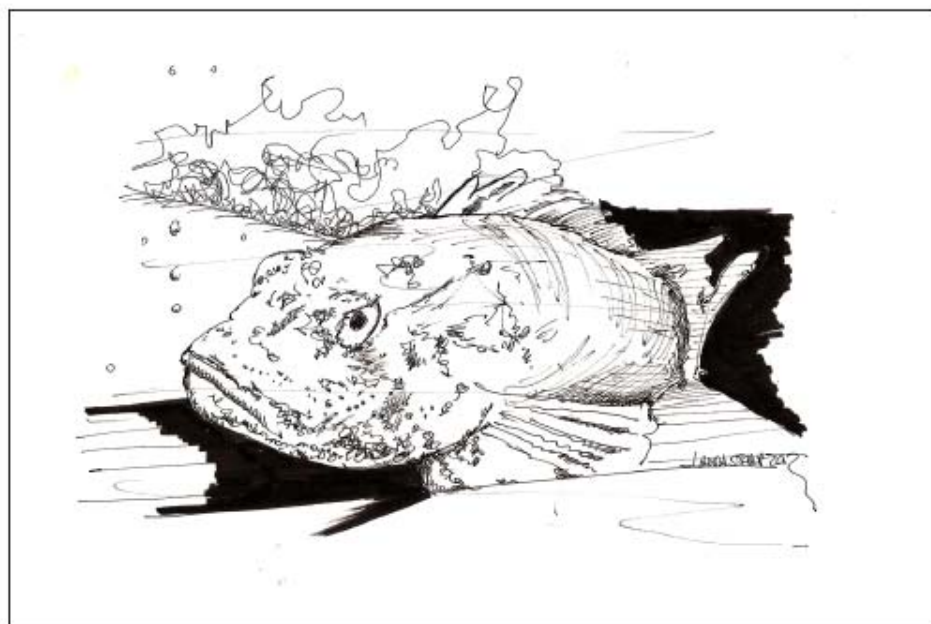
Step-3

I go over some areas to intensify color on a second pass.

Step-4

I use some skin tone that I see in the photo and I proceed to apply it as a single wash in Step-5

As I have mentioned. my intention is to create RELATIONSHIPS not a full color match. a good relationship between colors make a successful watercolor. Explaining this further I must add that you must think in terms of contrast and color harmony. I will not go into explanation of theory of color for this tutorial, as it is not the subject today.
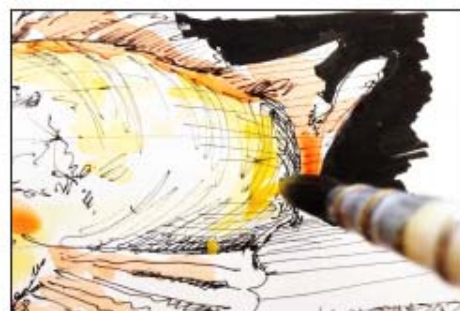

Step 1

Step 2

Step 3

Step 4

Black and white

Step 5

3

cont..Step by step tutorial

Step-6
Continuing with the background, the cool pink with balance out the warmth of the rest of the watercolor, so I will be generous with it.

Step-7
I applied a bit of vibrant yellow as the original image shows. This works well with the composition, so I will use it. In the image is not very evident but I often lay my pinky finger on the paper to give stability to the hand and more control on the stroke.

Step-8
Using more skin tone I will continue with the last big area to fill and balance the watercolor visually by echoing the same color on both sides of the subject.

Step-9
When you cover a wide area do not lose the tiny details that give credibility to the scene. Remember that layers of depth matter and the bubbles are in front of the background.

Step-10
Applying the last wash and after that this watercolor is done!

There are some things to remember from this process that I have not mentioned:

Tips
a) squint your eyes to see value and main forms.

b) if an 'accident' happens is not the end of the world. In this example below I had

used a toothbrush with ink for spattering and when I applied water, it ran and mixed with water. No problem! work with the flow and be creative, have fun, and use those mistakes to your advantage. That is the beauty of watercolors, the spontaneity and unpredictability sometimes . After all, the worst that can happen to you is making another one and losing the effects you achieve on the previous one, however, everything is a practice and learning process, and there is no time ever wasted on doing this.

c) holding the brush in different ways gives you different levels of control and variation in the stroke.

d) I recommend using natural hair brushes as they hold more fluid and render beautifully and continuously without losing strands of hair.

Have a great time!

Final

Step 6

Step 7

Step 8

Step 9

Step 10