

Tip #106

Organizing a Sketchcrawl



If you don't know what a sketchcrawl is, you might want to go to <http://www.sketchcrawl.com/> and read all about how it got started and how to take part in an international crawl if you wish! Enrico Casarosa started the idea, a few years back, and it's caught on like a house afire. The Flickr Sketchcrawl site, <http://www.flickr.com/groups/sketchcrawl/>, can give you an idea of what people are doing. There's even a Facebook group, <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=2204425203>.

Basically, it's a group of artists getting together at an agreed-upon location and sketching! Some do it all day, as Casarosa originally planned, some for only a few hours. Some sketchcrawls are HUGE, and some may be just one person, if no one else is available. Often, artists spread out to sketch whatever interests them at the location, then come back together to share – what they've drawn, a drink, a meal, and the fun of being with others who love the same things.

A terrific group of sketches from a recent crawl! (Thanks, all...)

Soooo...if there's not a sketchcrawl in your area, how do you get one going? Here's how I did it!

First, I contacted the artists I knew locally – we didn't have an artists' association at the time, but I did know a few others who might be interested (and two of them have become regulars.)



You can leave postcards or small fliers at a gallery, museum, library, or school to find other interested participants, if you like. I did that initially, too—though you may prefer to keep the numbers smaller and more controllable, especially if you don't have a large meet-up-after site available.

I have an email mailing list I used, too, and I've developed a small one just of crawl participants past and present. That's a great way to get the word out about when and where. At events, art shows, and meetings, I'll often ask people if they'd like to be put on the list – it's surprising how many people say yes!

If you *can*, pick a regular date so people can plan their schedules. Ours is supposed to be the Saturday after the 2nd Friday of the month, since that's our normal Artcrawl night. I'll admit it's not been that regular this year—crazy times, for me! (That's when the email list comes in *really handy*, to let people know where and when and if there are any last-minute changes!)

Make it clear what you're doing – you're not teaching or judging, just getting out to sketch together. That's a misconception I dealt with, early on, because I **DO** teach. Just not at sketchcrawls, that's a time to kick back and have fun. No pressure!



By the way, remember that this IS sketching – keep it simple, as far as supplies go. There’s no need to drag an outdoor easel, pochade box or huge set of watercolors, folding stool and umbrella unless you just want to. A sketchpad and a pen or pencil are all you REALLY need. Most of us seem to like a couple of pens, a pencil, and a small set of watercolors for on the spot work.

Pick interesting sites, if you can, and vary them – architecture, historic sites, museums, nature, landscapes, places where people gather – we’ve done them all, and they’ve all been fun. Take the weather into consideration, and have a backup plan. (If it rains, then ... what? No need to cancel if you have an alternate indoor venue.) You may want to let a site know, or ask permission, if you don’t know if your group would be welcome. A bit of warning is appreciated, especially if it’s a place like an historic hotel (we love The Elms) or a public building. One of our future venues will be at a local country winery that serves food – they’ll be prepared for us, and we’ll benefit with plenty of goodies as well as a lovely place to sketch.

We usually work indoors when it’s horribly hot or below freezing, too ... but not necessarily! Hardy souls can choose where and what they want to sketch.

We've had artists join us from as far away as 300 miles, and from 3 states. But remember it's not a numbers game. The success of your sketchcrawl isn't in how many artists can make it, it's in how much you enjoy the experience. Sometimes, it's just me and one other local artist, and we have a great time.

Please drop by my artists blog, <http://katequicksilvr.livejournal.com/>, my fine arts gallery blog, located at <http://cathyjohnsonart.blogspot.com/>, where I often offer mini-demos, my CafePress store, located at http://www.cafepress.com/cathy_johnson, where you can find instructional CDs for artists, or drop by for a visit on Facebook, <http://www.facebook.com/cathy.johnson1>!

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