

Tip #123

Ink Pen Comparisons

Pen and ink is seeing a real renaissance, these days ... it's challenging, versatile, and can be as delicate or as bold as you like, as detailed or as simple.

Draw with pencil first and add ink, if you like, make only the most minimal guidelines or dots to place your lines, or jump right in with ink. You can even add color, if you want, with a splash of watercolor or squiggle of colored pencil.



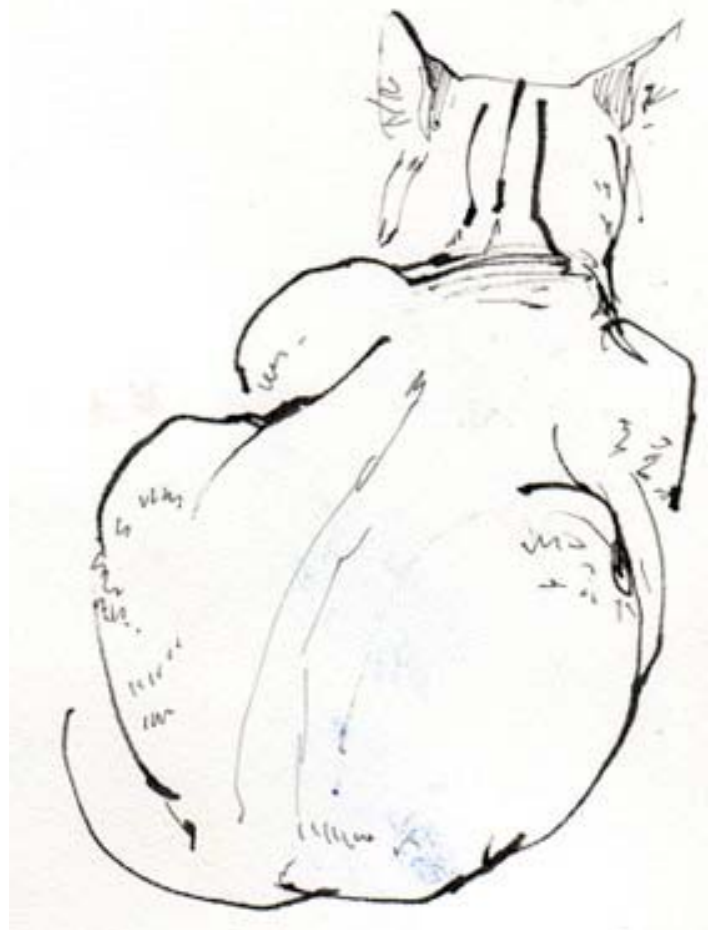
As British artist Harry Bell says, "Pens really do instill in you the commitment to the line and an acceptance of any errors." That is scary for some, so pencil guidelines may be in order – for others, the freedom is exhilarating. Check out Danny Gregory's books for some terrific advice and inspiration on using ink – especially *The Creative License* found at [http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1401307922/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=urbansketco0-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=1401307922!](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1401307922/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=urbansketco0-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=1401307922)

But WHICH ink pen suits you best? A dip pen, a technical pen, a fiber-tip, a fountain pen? And what will each one *do*?

Of course the best way to find that out is to try them. Like me, you may enjoy different pens for different moods, needs, or effects. (Disposable pens like Micron Pigmars definitely work better if you're flying—fountain pens seem to react poorly to cabin pressure!) But for now, we'll explore the wonderful world of fountain pens...

123-1

Amazingly, a Chinese calligraphy fountain pen makes a wonderfully variable line, from thick to thin, from sensitive to bold. Fountain pens can be filled again and again, either with a cartridge or with a filling mechanism like a piston or eyedropper. Technical or fiber-tipped pens come in various line widths and even an array of colors, but they ARE disposable, and I like to avoid that where I can. (Yes, cartridges are disposable too, but did you know you can refill them with the ink of your choice, using a pen syringe or even an eye dropper?)



This quick gesture sketch of my cat Merlin was done with a Hero calligraphy pen—it has a bent nib instead of the flat nib of a Western-style calligraphy pen, so it takes a bit of getting used to, but it's definitely versatile. This looks almost like it was drawn with a brush.

Don't be afraid to try a Western-style calligraphy pen like the Lamy joy in the sample below, though—they can make some wonderful marks, and it's fun to add notes with these pens.

123-2



Asian-made fountain pens may have a finer nib than European or American ones, even those called fine or *extra-fine*. They don't flex much, though. This was done with a Platinum pen, customized for length as mentioned in this post on our Artist's Journal Workshop blog: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/9506220@N08/sets/72157602083833556/with/7158154889/>. Pilot Prera works much the same way. This is similar to the effect you can get with a fine-tipped disposable pen like a Micron Pigma or Zig Millennium, but it's actually a fountain pen.

123-3

You may prefer a flexible nib, which you can find in prices varying from \$14 for a Noodler's Flex to a hundred dollars or more. (Sometimes a LOT more) I have a couple of vintage Waterman pens from the early 20th century that have a lovely flex (back to those thick-and-thin lines), but they're a bit temperamental. (We all



may get that way with age!) This little owl gargoyle was done with a Noodler's Konrad flex-nib pen. By varying the pressure on a flexible nib pen, you can get very fine lines up to a bit more than 1/16"!

123-4



Try out various pens to see what marks they'll make ... and consider all the factors. If I want a really dependable workhorse pen that works virtually every time under any circumstance, I'll probably pick up my Lamy with the EF nib. If I want a fine, delicate and controllable line, it's the Platinum (also very dependable) or the Pilot Prera, and if I want the excitement of

gorgeously varied lines, I'll go for a flex nib pen or a Japanese calligraphy nib and figure it's worth the occasional surprise factor. Hero pens are amazingly inexpensive on eBay, but the least expensive ones are sometimes a bit scratchy.

And do be aware that you have a real relationship with a fountain pen. It responds to your hand, the nib becomes smoother with use, but it does require some TLC. Most appreciate cleaning, periodically, with a solution of ammonia and water. They may get fussy when flying, as noted, or if the weather's too hot ... so do I!

For great service and excellent advice on pens or inks (or even paper, journals, or other goodies), contact Goulet Pens (<http://gouletpens.com>), or Jet Pens (<http://jetpens.com>). They often carry different lines, so check out both! (And nope, I don't work for either one, or get a cut ... I just have had good dealings with both of them.)

You may also like my Watercolor Pencil Mini-class ... for more information, read here: <http://www.cathyjohnson.info/watercolorpencil.html>

Check out all my YouTube videos for lots more art tutorials, youtube.com/user/KateJosTube.

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