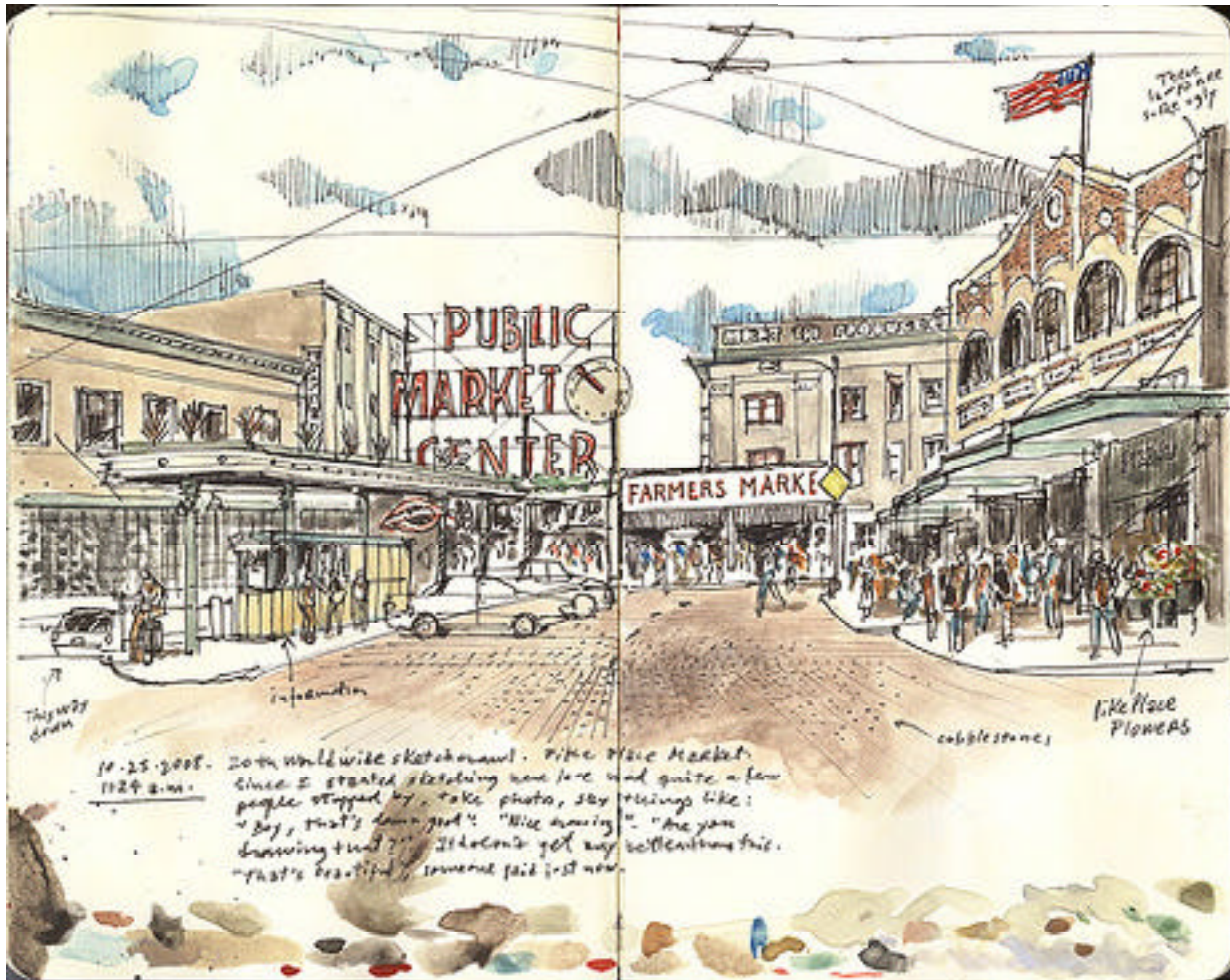


Tip #88

Part 3

Gabi Campanario on Starting a Successful Group Blog



Seattle sketcher Gabi Campanario's Pike Place Market

Q - Your Urban Sketchers blog has really taken off, and I'm delighted to be part of it. I look at my surroundings with new eyes, now, and my fingers itch to capture what I see. Thanks for showing us something very special, and bringing the world to us - as you say, one sketch at a time. It's an inspiration!

A - You're welcome Kate, I've also been inspired by your work ever since I found you online. I'm thrilled to count your amazing talent on Urban Sketchers! I also really enjoyed listening to your interview by Danny Gregory on one of his podcasts.

Q - When did you start blogging, yourself? What does it mean to you?

A - Here's a tidbit you may enjoy. For the longest time I thought I wanted to be a humorous cartoonist and from late 2003 until the beginning of 2005 I posted a cartoon online five days a week. That was the first time I actually

blogged but it didn't go anywhere. My humor is very limited and when you aspire to have your cartoons in The New Yorker, as I did, the humor is what matters most, not so much the art. I think I drew almost 400 cartoons before I realized that it wasn't meant to be.

In October of 2006, just a few months after leaving my job as art director at USA Today in the D.C. area and moving to Seattle, I started "el blog de gabi campanario," with no real sense of what I would do with it. For a couple of years it was a collection of sketches, illustrations, even the drawings I did for my kids ended up in the blog. Then I decided to focus just on my drawings on location, something I had always enjoyed doing but not as frequently as now. I realized that I had to go through all those experiments, drawing cartoons, drawing a bit of everything, before discovering what my real calling is, at almost 40. It's never too late I guess.

Now sketch-blogging has become an addictive pastime that has allowed me to meet and interact with fellow artists and sketchers around the world. And starting next Tuesday, April 28 it will even become part of my job as a news artist at The Seattle Times. My editors loved the idea of doing an illustrated blog about life in Seattle. I still have to do illustrations and information graphics but blogging at the newspaper will allow me to draw on location more often and hopefully keep improving.

Q - How did you come up with the idea of a group blog on the international scale?

A - The idea of the Urban Sketchers blog was brewing in the back of my head for a month or so before I went out on a limb and emailed a dozen artists whose urban sketches I loved and invited them to join. The response was phenomenal and, as you know, pretty soon we had more than 30 artists ready to launch the blog. I had told myself: all these artists have blogs already, many are already part of the Flickr group I had created a year before, there's no reason why they wouldn't go for it. They already posted to their own blogs, how hard would it be for them to post every now and then on Urban Sketchers? And look what's happened. Almost six months later the Flickr group has gone from 300 to 1,300 members and the blog gets more than 40,000 visitors per month. And I get less sleep!

Q - Have there been any problems you had to deal with, either technical or otherwise?

A - Not really. I have an inner computer geek in me and dealing with the technical difficulties is always a fun challenge. For example, I really enjoyed the recent redesign of the site, or creating an iMovie with drawings I did last year. The limit of 100 authors on one blog is my most immediate concern now, since we already are about 85. The more correspondents the better, in my opinion. So we have to figure out how to deal with that and stay fresh at the same time.

Q - What was your original vision for the group? And is it fulfilling that vision?

A - My original vision was to create a global illustrated journal, as well as a community/support group for people who draw on location. I thought it could be a great way to learn about places thru the eyes of artists who live there. In a way, Urban Sketchers combines some of my main passions: art, journalism, geography and the internet. Selfishly, the blog and the Flickr pool allow me to see the type of work I look for in many blogs but all in one place!

The group has far exceeded my expectations. I've even been invited to participate in a conference about travel sketchbooks in Spain in September because of the blog. And recently I met one of the blog correspondents, Lapin, in Barcelona. We had a great time. It was as if we had known each other for a long time. Six months ago I would have never thought about that happening. I know other urban sketchers in Europe have also met in person because of the blog. How cool is that!

Q - How did you find artists to be involved, initially?

A - As I mention above, I just emailed some of the people whose work I was already familiar with by looking at

their blogs or Flickr galleries. Now I get emails every day from folks who want to be correspondents or members of the network. It's become a lot of work! But I'm happy because it means the idea of sketching where you live is catching on.

Urban Sketchers inspired me to start the new group blog, Sketching in Nature, at <http://naturesketchers.blogspot.com/> -- thanks, Gabi!

And of course, please feel free to visit my original blog at <http://katequicksilvr.livejournal.com/> or my new gallery blog at <http://cathyjohnsonart.blogspot.com/>!



Gabi Campanario, sketching

See more of Gabi at Seattle Sketcher links:

Blog: <http://blog.seattletimes.nwsourc.com/seattlesketcher/>

Flickr: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/baconvelocity/>

Website: <http://www.gabrielcampanario.com>

Twitter: <http://twitter.com/seattlesketcher>

Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Seattle-Sketcher/21724856407>

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