

Tip #103



Quick Sketching Techniques

One of the best learning tools, when it comes to sketching, is that pesky *need* for speed, frustrating though it might seem at the time. People move and change; shadows shift as the sun moves or a cloud drifts over; we travel down the road, processing instant images in our brains and wishing we had time to stop and sketch.

Well, we may not be able to stop, but we can still sketch! You just get down as much as you can, as fast as you can. If one person moves, add bits of another – they might not recognize themselves (these aren't formal portraits after all!), but you will capture something elusive on your page, and you'll remember the day!

One of the best books on the subject is David J. Rankin's *Fast Sketching Techniques*. (You can see it here, <http://astore.amazon.com/httpcathyjohi-20?node=7&page=2>, but do poke around while you're there – lots of great ideas on sketching!) When sketching people, he suggests getting down the outline – the hair, the face – then adding details of features if you have time.

Art 103-1, People on the move...

Gesture sketches are a common speed-sketching tool – you just keep moving, *fast*, and capture the main pose or gesture. I use that a lot to sketch birds, people, my cats, etc. You can leave the sketch as is, develop it more later, add color – whatever you wish. Here, I just added a splash of red and orange watercolor over my quick sketch of jazz musicians playing at our local Wine and Jazz Festival. I used Prismacolor black pencil for the main sketch – it's a nice, bold tool that doesn't smear like a soft graphite pencil might.

This works great for wildlife, too. Just scribble down the basic overall shape; you can add color later, as I did here. (This is the same bird, just different poses.)



Art 103-2, Three-Dollar Band

If you have a bit more time...

These musicians were still moving, but their poses returned to approximately the same over a period of a couple of hours, and I just went back to each man and added a bit more. Because we were there over the course of the evening, I even broke out my watercolors and travel brushes!

I've used this technique in cafés, doctor's offices, airports, and other public places, just developing the images as I have time; the upper part of a person may not belong to the lower bit, or the person sitting on the bench may be a whole different one than when I started sketching a group, but it's still a satisfying record and great practice.



In a zoo or at home, animals often return to the same pose; just sketch a bit, move on to something else, and return to your sketch when the pose repeats or a similar one will work.

Art 103-3, Landscapes

Don't try this if you're driving, of course, but you can dash down the bones of the landscape quickly in the car. Yes, the view changes and the angle shifts, but you can get the basic shapes in a few seconds. Then, if you like you can do as I did here, and add color and a bit more detail later.

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