

THERE'S A TREE IN FRONT OF ME

Oops, you see a beautiful building or impressive panorama, but there is a tree in front of it. Is it annoying?

Not at all, it's just fine. It took me a few years to realise that, but a tree in front of the object has many advantages, especially if I see a complicated building. The tree gives depth to the sketch and if I first sketch the tree, I can then draw the building behind it. You will no longer see small errors.

If it is a large, symmetrical building, I prefer to hide half of the building behind the tree. Why draw all those windows twice? Even if you work in a sketchbook, a tree can offer a solution: put it in the middle of your booklet (see page 4).

So, you have got rid of that problem too. Give it a try. Maybe you will like it.

If you click on a red underlined word, you will see more (except here).

That's another way of doing it.

ANNE
ROSE

Jörg Asselborn is a graphic designer and illustrator from Wiesbaden (Germany). Jörg always has a sketchbook with him and he draws everything that he is touched by. On this sketch we see the pavilion in the Chinese garden in Bethmann Park, Frankfurt. The tree gives depth to the sketch.

Although the tree stands in front of the pavilion, we know exactly what the rest of the building looks like.

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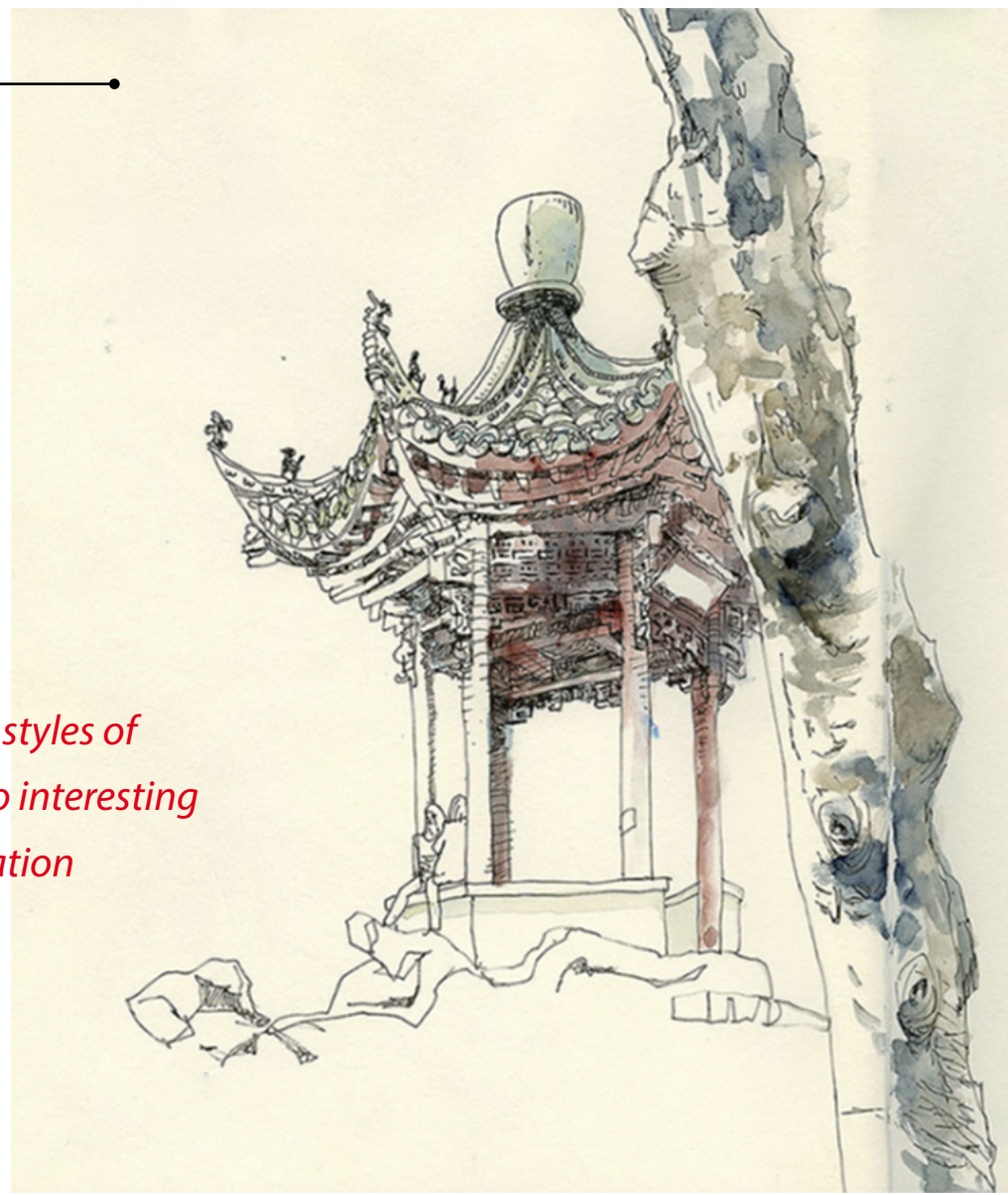
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'I love the variety of styles of other sketchers. It so interesting to see the interpretation from each artist'

Jörg Asselborn





Nicolas Doucedame is a freelance graphic designer/illustrator and lives in Rognes, close to Aix-en-Provence (France). Nicolas is a wonderful man: he writes that there is no copyright on his work. Now that he is retired, he often goes out, preferably abroad, which means for him: 'More than 30 km from home'. In this sketch, which he made in Peypin-d'Aigues, the plane tree forms an integral part of the terrace and provides much-needed shade. Doucedame: 'By not sketching every detail, I give the viewer the opportunity to complete the drawing in his mind. In a really good sketch you have the feeling that you are part of it, that you are in the middle of the scene'

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'I love the simplicity of urban sketching; all you need is a drawing tool and a blank book'

Harshad Arole

Harshad Arole is an entrepreneur (computer games) from Pune, Maharashtra (India). He says: 'Drawing on location and capturing what you observe is for me a way of discovering the essence of a place.' Harshad creates shapes of colours mixed directly on the paper. Only then he makes the finer details over it with a fountain pen or a fine marker. He says: 'Colour fascinates me and plays a determining role in my drawings.' The tree seems to have been carelessly painted, but we immediately find the image believable. The tree is the focal point and is decisive for the atmosphere of this square near the temple.

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Ian Fennelly is from Hoylake, near Liverpool (England). Ian prefers to visit busy locations in the city. He draws and paints quickly and loosely, always on location, using watercolor, a (water) brush and thin markers. His urban sketches typically take around two to three hours to complete.

In this drawing of the Bluecoat Courtyard in Liverpool, Ian deliberately focused on the tree. He had to struggle with the building for that; actually, there is too much space between the door and the left-hand windows. Ian knows that, and thinks it's better for his sketch. If I hadn't said it, you probably wouldn't have seen it. It is the tree that plays the leading role here.

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*'The more you look
the more you see
the more you
understand'*

Ian Fennelly

Rajesh Dhawan lives in New York (USA) and Prague (Czech Republic). He draws as much as possible as he wants to improve himself continuously. In this sketch of the Castle in Český Krumlov (Czech Republic), the tree seems to stand in the way. But Rajesh has seen that the shape of the tower and the tree complement each other: we can look at the tower of the castle through the branches. The tower seems to grow together with the shape of the tree.

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'My favorite sketch is always the next one'

Eric Nieder

Eric Nieder is an architect and lives in Colmar (France). 'The pleasure of sketching is more important to me than the result. Sketching is a quest, an introspection, almost a moment of meditation.'

In this drawing of the greenhouse of the Hortus Botanicus Amsterdam, Eric made good use of the thick tree by placing it exactly on the transition between the two pages of his sketchbook.

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'I'd always enjoyed drawing on location so discovering that there were people all over the world doing the same thing was great' Lis Watkins

Lis Watkins is an illustrator and lives south of London (England). In her spare time she likes to stroll around in South East London and in her own city, Croydon. She often goes to London Urban Sketchers' sketchcrawls.

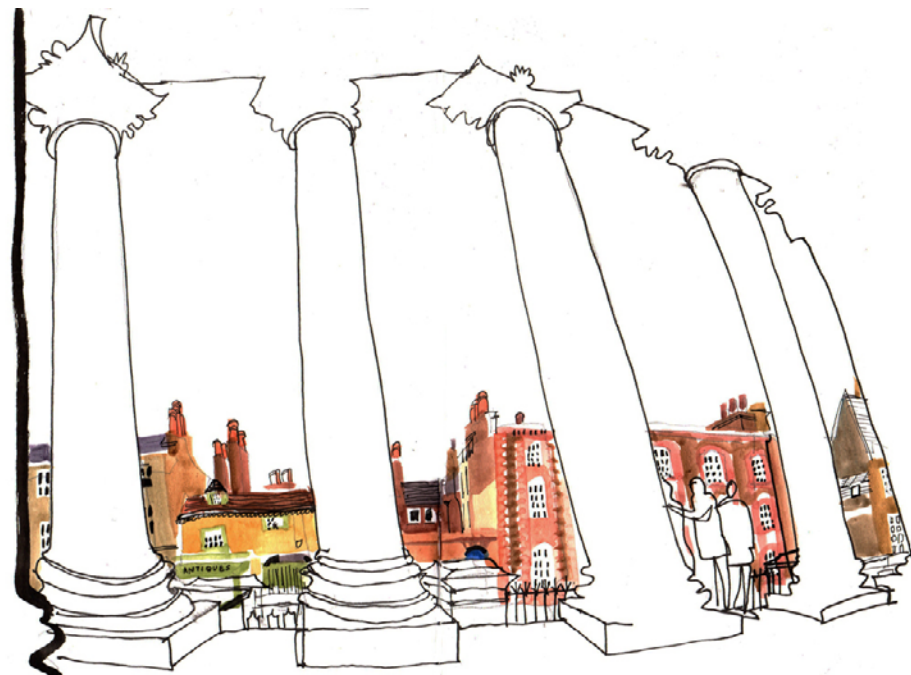
Lis usually sketches with pen and watercolors. 'I love drawing and I'm also nosy, so I'd happily draw anything, anywhere. Buildings are great because they don't move!'

In this case it is not a tree, but the pillars of the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge that stand in the way. What do you mean, in the way? Fortunately Lis sat down behind those pillars, instead of in front of them.

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James Dyson is an architect from Stockport near Manchester (England).

In this sketch of the Cathedral of York there were quite a few trees in the way that obstructed the view of the church. James: 'Seen through trees, omitted for clarity or because they're harder to draw.' Well, why make it complicated?

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York Minster
Between the Trees



'I like that I know people around the globe simply because they draw in a sketchbook'

James Hobbs

James Hobbs, librarian and artist from Stoke Newington, London (England), prefers to sketch with a thick marker in a small sketchbook. James wants to simplify the sketch, reduce it to the essence of the place where he draws.

James: 'Essentially you have to make do with whatever you put down. I like that level of risk. Apart from cycling in London and following the England cricket team, I don't take many risks. Using markers is another. I work best when I work fast.

Dare to fail, I think.'

In this sketch we see the city hall of Porto. Beneath this, out of sight, are around 800 people busily drawing, just before the final group photo was made. We only see a part of the building; the trees bring dynamism to the sketch. James has written a number of books, including *Sketch Your World* and *Pen and Ink*.

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Marc Taro Holmes is an illustrator and lives in Edmonton (Canada). He says of sketching: 'The randomness – it's a dance. You move, it moves – there's timing – the paper starts out dry, (I paint wet-into-dry) but for every mark you make, the surface changes – the wet area forms and immediately it's a high-risk game.' Marc wrote a book called *The Urban Sketcher: Techniques for Seeing and Drawing on Location*, now a classic.

Imagine if the trees had not stood in front of the building, that would have been quite boring.

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Did you miss the previous two episodes of **'That's another way of doing it'**? Here you can still view and download them (at the end, sorry these are only in Dutch):

[1. How about skies?](#)

[2. Focus before you start](#)

All artists have given permission for the use of their sketches in this blog.

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YouTube:

Urban sketching, what is it exactly? [Teoh explains](#)

And here a video that makes me happy. [David Litchfield tells](#)