

**WHITE IS ALSO A COLOUR!**

You are sitting outside. The beautiful watercolour box in your hand is brimming with colour and then you see it: the building you are looking at is white. Your paper is white. What to do?

In this edition of **That's another way of doing it**

I would like to show you that white is an important colour, sometimes more important than one of your 'real' colours. Yes, white is a colour too.

First you have to carefully look at what you want to draw and even more important: what you want to leave out. This edition shows you the approach of ten sketchers. When you want to include a lot of white areas in your sketch it is wise to think about how you want to approach it beforehand. It oftentimes means that you end up sketching nothing, but how could this be the case?

Take a look at how these sketchers used limited resources to capture the atmosphere of a scene. If you click on [a link underlined in red](#), you will see much more (except here).

**That's another way of doing it.**

ANNE  
ROSE

**Fedde Tessa** (Federico Tessandori) is an architect who lives in Buenos Aires (Argentina). Fedde regularly walks past this white railway building on Avenida Paseo Colon. He has been thinking about sketching the building for quite a while now, but how do you approach drawing it when your paper is also white? Fedde cleverly solved that problem by leaving the building almost completely white and painting the sky behind it with a solid colour. In doing this he manages to emphasize the white colour of the building. White, thus by not painting or drawing something.

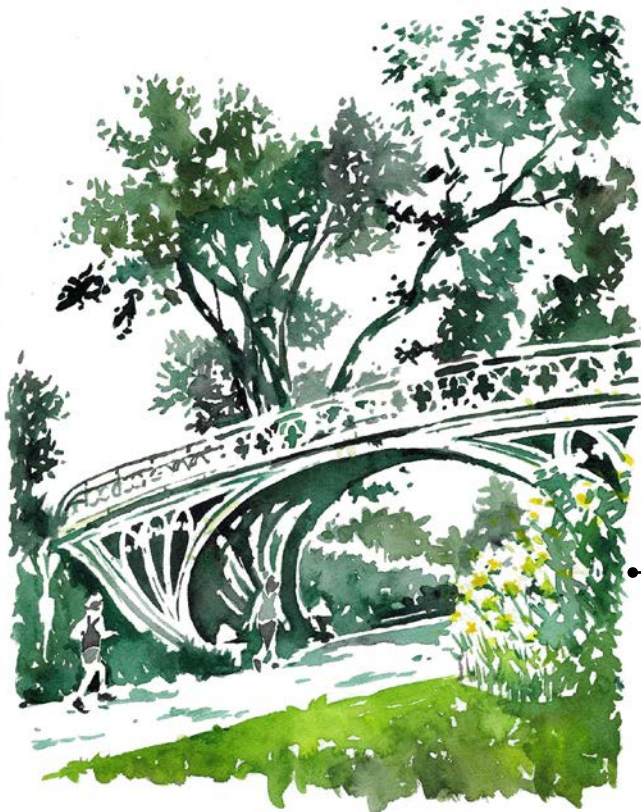
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*'It's refreshing to have a period of detailed observation, of seeing, where you are focused on one challenge and nothing else is on your mind'*

**Gavin Snider**

**Gavin Snider**, artist, illustrator and designer from Brooklyn, New York (USA) says, 'I draw things that are worth remembering'. His inspiration often comes from the places people don't usually notice. 'Drawing became almost a sort of therapy, where you get out and you take a moment to stop, pause, reflect and look at something you'd never seen before or had just passed. It's about the experience of drawing as much as it is about the building or subject itself.' When he sees that sketch at a later stage, it reminds him of the light and the people that walked past at that moment. This drawing Gavin made reflects what makes the city

such an exciting place to live and work in. Snider typically spends one to two hours sketching the architecture, trees and the people that inhabit his chosen space. This is the best way for him to experience the city: 'I challenge myself to use the act of drawing to tell a story'. In this sketch which Gavin made in Central Park, he used the white of the paper by not painting the bridge, but the greenery around it. This causes the bridge to jump off the page.

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**Chris Haldane** is a passionate artist and urban sketcher from Sydney (Australia). 'Drawing has always fascinated me. My favorite subjects are urban and industrial ones, especially demolition and construction sites and the cranes which hover over them, so much so that I've been nicknamed Chris Halcrane! However, I've also recently fallen in love with drawing trees, perhaps because being locked down at home during Covid has given me a renewed appreciation of the natural environment.'

In both sketches Chris made clever use of the white of the paper. Straight to paint, no pencil. The same goes for the palm trees in Milson Park, Kirribilli (New South Wales, Australia): the tops of the palm trees and the bushes have not been drawn by Chris, and yet we know exactly what we see.

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**Laurie Wigham** is a painter and sketcher who lives in San Francisco, California (USA). After nearly three decades of doing illustration and design in the tech world, Laurie fell out of love with the computer and decided to get back to seeing the physical world with her own eyes. To work without an undo button and get ink stains on her fingers.

The focus of Laurie's fine art is *This Time, This Place*; responding to what she's seeing and feeling in that moment. She uses watercolours, charcoal, pens and found sticks dipped in ink.

This watercolour painting, *Dirty Snow and*

*Mossy Rocks*, was done in the old Donner Pass area, after most of the snow has melted, except in the highest passes. It was the last painting of the day, painted fast and with big brushes.

Laurie cleverly used the white paper to indicate the snow. She painted fast, focussed and with powerful strokes.

About this Laurie writes, 'Oh, if only I could figure out how to start out like that and keep painting in that mode all day.'

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*'If my video inspires but one sketcher to pick up his or her brush and paint, I have reached my goal'*

Daniel Novotny

**Daniel Novotny** is an artist, producer & founder of Atelier Novotny living and working in Slovakia.

Daniel: 'My medium of choice is water-colour. It is safe, fast and versatile.

When I was starting out I cared about the materials tremendously. I learned that all I need is good quality paper, pigment rich paint and a flat brush I am comfortable with handling.'

'Skillful use of white, especially in watercolor where your whites are the white of the paper, is an essential component of artist's visual vocabulary. Whites should be consciously designed. Make the whites suggested by the subject into meaningful shapes defining your subject. Or scatter a few well-placed whites to enliven the scene. Always make your whites varied in size and arrange them in a pleasing way –

balance them against each other.

Make them into puzzle pieces that are interesting in themselves and at the same time a profound part of your composition.'

'Because my own watercolor journey has been a solitary one I want to give something back.' On YouTube one can watch how Daniel works and I learnt a lot from watching his videos.

'The great American artist and teacher Edgar Whitney said "No door is closed to a stubborn scholar." It's been my life motto ever since I first heard it.'

Daniel's advice: 'There is no sense in doing things you don't like. Do what you like and do it every day.'

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**Franciel Jean Lucca** calls himself an economist and urban sketcher. He lives in Bagé, Rio Grande do Sul (Brazil). Jean is an autodidact; when he sketches a building, he always looks for the elements that are characteristic of the history of his country.

Jean also sketches with sticks that he dips in Indian ink. He prefers to draw with jaboticaba (one of the most wstriking fruit trees of the tropics) or jasmine twigs. In this instance Jean drew only the indispensable lines in black ink and added some shadows with watered down ink. The power of this drawing lies in what was not drawn, that which was purposefully left out.

Dare to try it, it works!

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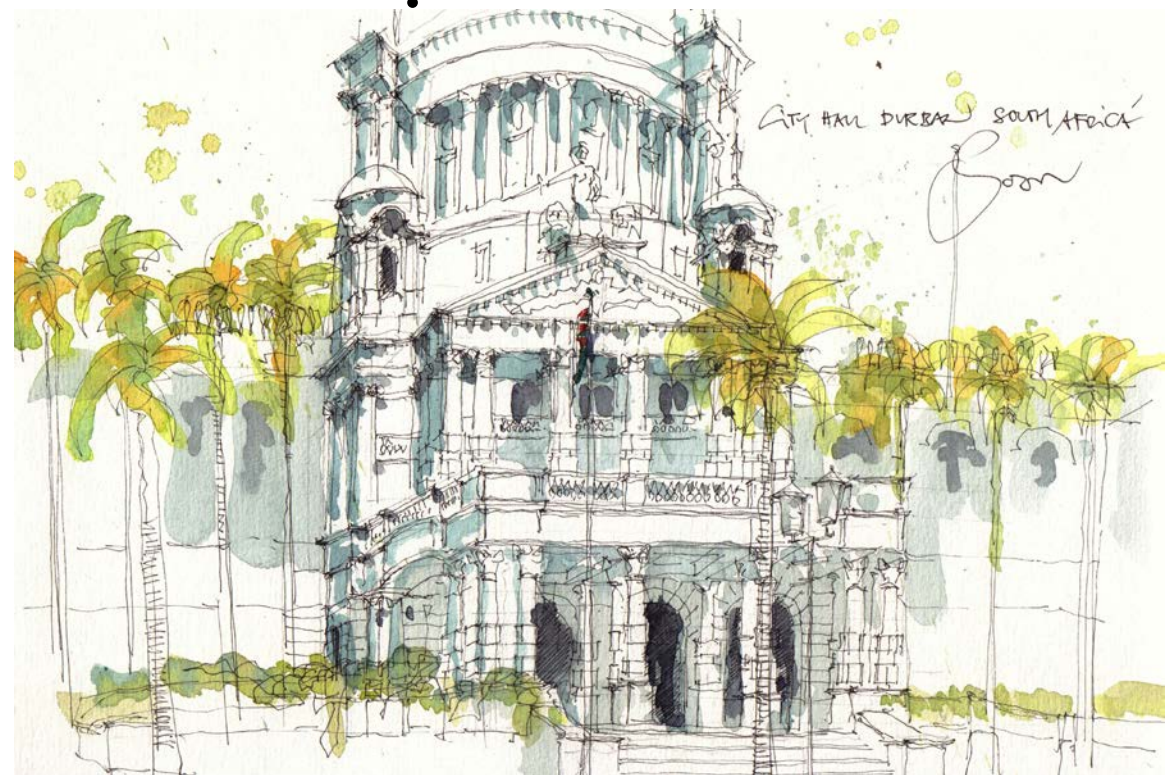
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**Jochen Schittkowski** is an architect and lives in Castrop-Rauxel, Nordrhein-Westfalen (Germany). Jochen says: 'Sketching your surroundings requires your full concentration. When I'm drawing, I first want to look around for a while to see the proportions, colours and details, so that I can understand that which I am drawing. I want to have a feel for the environment. These places stay with me for a long time; when I look at the drawing at a later point in time, all the smells and the feelings I felt comes back to me. I don't have that when I look at a photo. One time I was drawing in Venice, an American walked by and when he saw my sketch of the church of San Giorgio Maggiore, he said to me: "You are a happy man." He is right.'

This drawing of the town hall of Durban (South Africa) has been made with great reverence. With only a few lines and some tufts of grey and colour. Here too, the white of the paper, the parts that are not drawn, is what defines the sketch.

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*'A drawing helps me to keep the memory of a place closer to my heart'*

Jochen Schittkowski



We met **Steve Faraday** from Karlsruhe earlier in episode 2 (Focus). Steve is a master of omission (negative spaces); he knows perfectly well what story he wants to tell with his drawing. He sketches with a felt-tip pen right away and then fills the larger areas with a brush pen. At home, he scans his drawing and sometimes adds a coloured background digitally. Steve made this sketch a few years ago in Faschina, a ski resort in Vorarlberg (Austria). So, how do you approach drawing a ski resort under a thick layer of snow? Like this. Look at the negative spaces. He captured everything with just a few simple lines and shaded areas. In this case, Steve drew from inside his car because it was too cold outside.

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**Lluís Bruguera Martí** is a versatile and sensitive painter from Palafrugell (Spain). We also know Lluís from the blog about perspective (5). His brush dances lightly over the paper. It resembles a poem more than a watercolor painting. A rhythm made up of silences.

Lluís paints with feeling, he tries to capture the essence of his environment on paper at lightning speed. The white of the paper is not just the background, but a space with meaning, he consciously uses it. There are only a few marks on the paper, in simple colours. And yet we see exactly what Lluís meant: a white house in Calella de Palafrugell, in the blazing sunlight. He stops painting at the right time, leaving enough unsaid that you can interpret what you are seeing for yourself. *Less is more*. Take a look at his work by clicking on the links below. You will behold one surprise after another.

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*'Don't stand still, keep moving'*

Lluís Bruguera Martí

**Ch'ng Kiah Kiean** from Penang (Malaysia) has devoted his time to drawing for a few years now. KK, as we usually call Kiah Kiean, focusses on the infinite possibilities that black ink lines brings. He reinterprets traditional Chinese ink painting, where white is not just a blank space but a fundamental part of the composition. In his drawings it seems as if lines are missing, but that is precisely why the drawing is so powerful. KK usually uses a cut sprig of the water jasmine for drawing. The advantage of this is that the lines are irregular and sometimes unpredictable. Moreover, this way of drawing is the closest that you can get to nature, the basis of art. He is careful when it comes to building the composition of the drawing. He looks closely, lets his hand float over the sheet of paper for a few minutes and only then starts drawing. KK is generous with his knowledge. He enjoys sharing his ideas and experience. Take a look at the extensive manuals that he gives away in pdf format (next page).

He says, 'I don't think I'm successful, I'm still learning. We have to work hard and work smart in everything. Reading is quite important to me. It is important to read about art theory. Practicing isn't enough, we have to read to improve ourselves.' According to KK, anyone can draw: 'Practicing regularly will lead to improvement. So anyone can draw. Never give up on your dream.'

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*'Why must the whole building be drawn?*

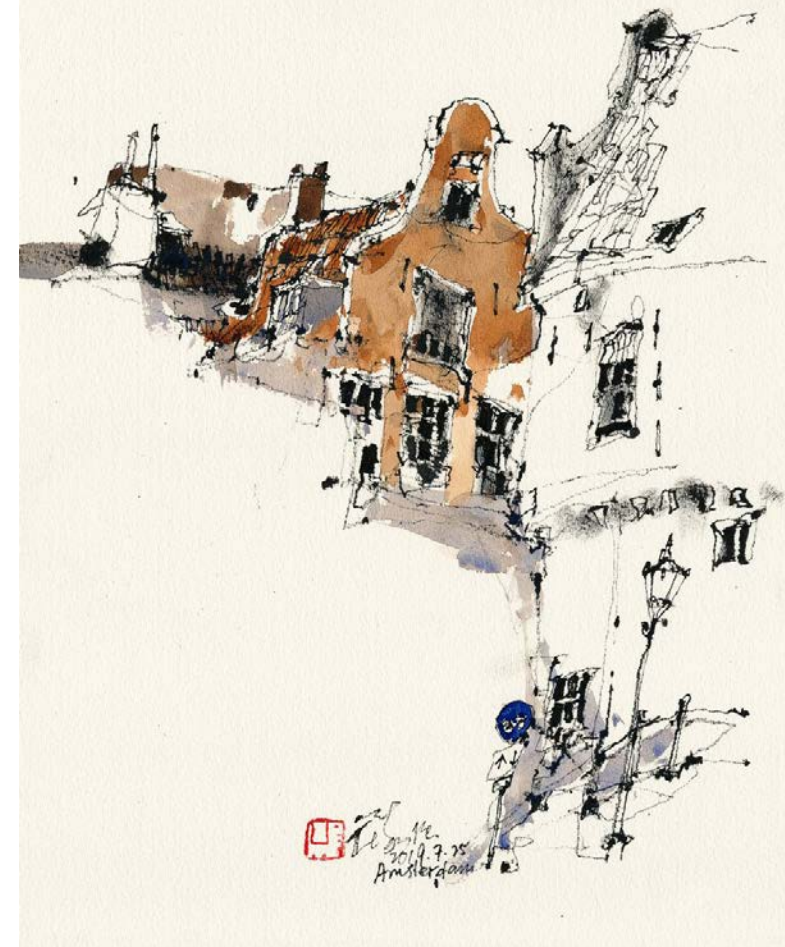
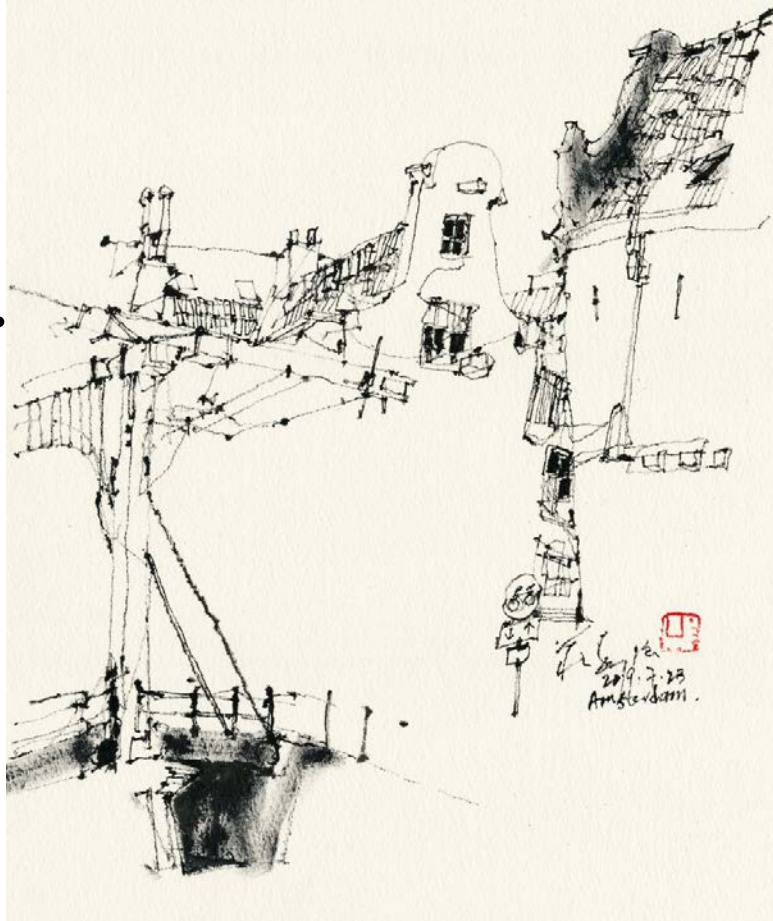
*I am free to decide what I draw!'*

**Ch'ng Kiah Kiean**



Here you can see how generous KK is. When I asked him for permission to use the drawing from the previous page in this story, he sent me two extra drawings, which he made in Amsterdam. Both sketches show how important 'white' is.

[More sketches from Amsterdam](#)



Have you missed the previous episodes of **That's another way of doing it?**

Here you can see and download the last three episodes:

[3. Oops, a tree](#)

[4. Coloured pencils](#)

[5. What do you mean, perspective](#)

How does KK draw with a stick? [Here you can download](#) a pdf explaining it step-by-step.

After you have cut a nice point for your stick, [what do you do?](#)

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

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