

SO BORING

Sometimes you are just out of luck: you look around, but there is nothing special to draw. Everything seems so boring. A sketcher once told me that you don't just have to draw beautiful postcard scenes, there is beauty to be found in all types of subjects. Another sketcher told me that he first looks for a good terrace, and then from there decides what to draw. If you make the effort to carefully look around, you can often see the essence of the town or village you are in.

In this edition of *That's another way of doing it* ten sketchers share their unadorned surroundings with us.

That's another way of doing it

'Sometimes you find a place boring or unexciting until you force yourself to look at it differently'

Wes Douglas

ANNE
ROSE

Wes Douglas from Glen Ellyn (Illinois, United States) is an art director and illustrator. He was also a visual correspondent at the urban sketchers symposium in Chicago. Wes is a sketcher at heart: he has been drawing for as long as he can remember and he loves to share his experience with others. For example, he has developed workshops on drawing people and vehicles, but also *urban uglies*. *Urban Uglies* was a term that he came up with when he needed a name for these unsightly but interesting scenes. This workshop was about appreciating the overlooked areas, places that others often find too unattractive to take a good look at. For Wes, sketching isn't about showing his artistic skill or being able to draw like an architect; it is more about the act of communicating by using visual stimuli to augment the verbal description to ensure the viewers see the same thing you do.

Often sketchers will look for a picturesque scene to sketch, but Wes prefers to look for a puddle filled alley, an overflowing dumpster, gas meters or rusted, dented old cars. On the left we see a drawing of a number of gas meters, look how intriguing such an image can be? To the right, a cellar door, which Wes noticed out of the blue in an alley behind his office. 'I've been in this location since 2001 and never noticed this door until I applied my beginner's mind and started to see what was once overlooked.' Luckily an urban sketcher looks at things differently, and he manages to see beauty in things that others might find 'ugly', or doesn't even see it at all. In this case, we are lucky that Wes shares it with us and makes us look at our surroundings with different eyes.

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Gary Geraths lives in Claremont (California, United States); he teaches art at the *Otis College of Art and Design* in Los Angeles. Making art became a passion and his pencil, palette, and sketchpad were always in his backpack. His work revolves around representational works and the effects of the evolving forces of nature on the landscape. His drawings does not have to be a pretty picture; what happens in such a place is more important, you can see that in these sketches. He found the corner on the left behind some bars in Pomona, California. Instead of going in to grab a pint, Gary casually found a spot to look at this part of town and capture it on paper. As ugly as it may seem, this drawing of it is special. Made with markers and brush pens, and a little bit of opaque white. The drawing on the right was made at *Ramos Auto & Tire* in Ontario, this time with markers, brush pens and a ballpoint pen. Gary shows us that you can also look differently at scenes.

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'People come to take a look, pass comments or have a conversation. When I look at my sketches the experience is much richer for this'

Joe Bean

Joe Bean from Leeds (England) is an independent graphic designer and the coordinator of Urban Sketchers Yorkshire. He once organized a drawing session at the National Coal Mining Museum, at a depth of a 140 meters. As well as the national drawing weekend in Great Britain (2022). In recent years, Joe has made many illustrations on the computer for work, but as soon as he stumbled upon the urban sketchers – while browsing the internet one lunchtime – it re-ignited the joy of sketching purely as a form of artistic expression in him. He once again experienced how liberating it can be to draw for fun. 'Sketching with a group was an unusual concept for me, but one that proved enjoyable. I was hooked.' Whenever he has a spare moment, he goes out to sketch. Joe sees scenes to draw all around him, it doesn't have to be pretty. He even prefers it not to be. When there are many traffic signs and trash cans in the picture, his eyes light up. 'Waiting because a bus, train or flight is delayed? For me, as an urban sketcher, it's a gift, it gives me the peace of mind to make a drawing. Sometimes I will even miss my next bus.' He made this drawing at the *Methley Bridge Boatyard*.

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Monali Haldipur from New Delhi (India) is a flight attendant and has a passion for drawing. Watercolors have always held a special charm for her. It is not just the inherent fluidity, spontaneity, and transparency of it that fascinates her, but also the fact that by virtue of all these characteristics, it is a challenging medium to master. 'It's a fine game between controlling the brush, the paints, the amount of water you use and when, and letting the colors do their own thing.' She sketches for the sheer joy of doing it. For her it is a source of daily motivation, a form of meditation, otherwise 'her rhythm goes astray', as she puts it. 'I just have to do it. It's not about creating a masterpiece. There are times when the result doesn't even get a second look from me. It's the act itself that aligns my energies.' Monali finds her inspiration in the small things, as she documents what is happening around her. She is an true observer. Sometimes her heart skips a beat when she suddenly sees what is available to sketch, like this pole in Delhi, full of electricity wires. Not a 'pretty picture' but a striking representation of her surroundings.

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'I believe everything under the sun is beautiful; it's in your seeing that makes it so beautiful'

Monali Haldipur

'Look properly and be honest about what you see'

Roisin Curé

Roisin Curé lives in the county of Galway, on the west coast of Ireland, and she is an illustrator and an artist for decades. Once her mother gave her the book *Everyday Matters* by Danny Gregory. In it he talks about drawing something from your environment, quite randomly, without regard to whether it is beautiful or ugly. Roisin devoured the book and wondered why she didn't draw this herself. 'I began to sketch anything in the vicinity.' Then she set out to capture everything in her environment. This went so well that she ended up sharing her knowledge in a workshop in Porto (2018) and Amsterdam (2019) as well as writing three books about urban sketching. She now teaches live classes twice a week. 'Sketching offers us a moment of rest in these rushed lives of ours. It provides a way to 'be in the moment' and savour it. You end up with beautiful memories that are simply not comparable to photos. A sketch makes me feel very warm and fuzzy and happy.' For Roisin, 'a good sketch must reflect real life'. We immediately see that in these two sketches, which Roisin made from her car, when she found it too cold to draw outside.

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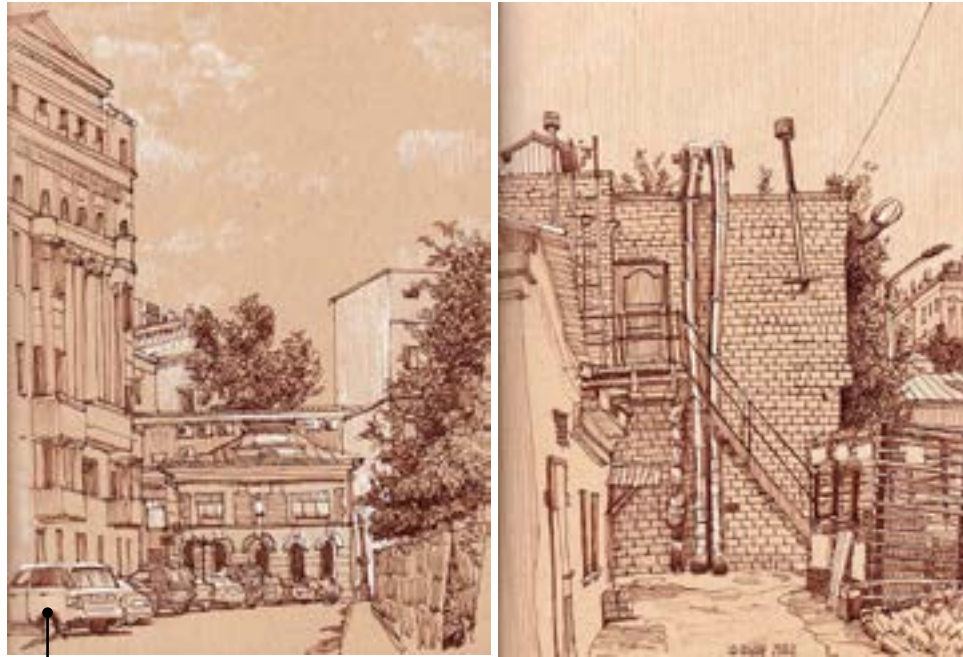
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Book: The Urban Sketching Handbook: Drawing Expressive People





Alex Gimein from Moscow (Russia) is an amateur artist and of course, an urban sketcher. He prefers to draw the streets of old Moscow and does not skip anything. Alex prefers quiet courtyards and alleys, with brick walls, drain pipes and air ducts. It doesn't have to be pretty, as long as one can see that the space is being 'lived' in. He usually draws with his fountain pen filled with waterproof ink, in his Stillman & Birn Nova sketchbook with beige paper. On the left a glimpse of a courtyard close to *Bolshaya Ordynka*, on the right a small courtyard on *Tsvetnoy Boulevard*. For Alex the subjects are there for the taking: he even gives a workshop on drawing in old, dilapidated streets and courtyards. This is urban sketching: 'our drawings tell the stories of our environment, the places where we live and the places we visit'. Raw and unadorned.

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*'Sometimes, when I make a drawing,
I forget time and space'*

Alex Gimein

Ian Chung lives in Sokcho, a famous tourist destination in the north of South Korea. From 1945 to the end of the Korean War (1953), Sokcho was still part of North Korea. Although Korea is a divided country, there are unique neighborhoods where the old cultures of the South and the North mix. Ian tells us with pride about his city through his drawings, without making it prettier than it is. He has a simple binder with paper and a pen, that's all; sometimes he takes some watercolor or a gray felt-tip pen along. Ian searches for small businesses and shops on the verge of disappearing; he draws them as a tribute to the changing city, the city he loves so much.

Urban sketchers from around the world show us what their surroundings look like. In this case, Ian takes us by the hand through the quiet streets of Sokcho and shows us his city as it is, without making it prettier.

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Jeroen Janssen works in a library in the municipality of Evergem and lives in Gent (Belgium). According to him, ever since kindergarten he was not suitable for anything other than drawing. He studied Free Graphics at the St-Lukas Institu - te in Ghent. Janssen started drawing comics in the 1990s. During that period he worked at an art school in Rwanda, where he converted true stories and autobiographical fragments into comic drawings. Nowadays he mainly deals with graphic reports: he calls himself the slowest journalist in Europe. Since the 1960s, the Flemish government has been involved in a lengthy procedure to expand the port of Antwerp on the left bank of the Schelde. As a result, the future of the polder area around Doel was uncertain for decades. For years now, Janssen has been cycling through this village threatened with demolition on a weekly basis. Through his drawings, he reports on life there. What emerges through his drawings, is the love with which the remaining population speaks about the past and the resignation about what is about to happen now. The quality of life in this village has been under par for years. Jeroen, together with the Iranian-Belgian Arezoo Moradi, is currently working on a drawn report of a square kilometer of Ghent territory, enclosed between major motorways and rail - ways. On the left we see an abandoned house; on the right we are under a viaduct. Even a region in decline is worth drawing. These drawings will be part of a new book, that will be published in September 2023; the working title is *My Autostradelandje*.

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Graphic novels: *Doel* and *Er wonen nog mensen*

Marco Liu is an illustrator living in Taipei (Taiwan). He draws outside, on the street, every day and prefers to find a hidden alley to depict. He looks for the landscape of the city. On the left we see a shop where you can buy drinks; on the right an escalator in a department store. Marco didn't feel like drawing a house this time around and then he saw this escalator, wondering if others would find him weird for sketching it. Not me for one, Marco sees the charm of unnoticed places, back streets full of small details and a narrow escalator. He takes us on his quests, shares his love for insignificant corners and shows us how beautiful it can be. An impressive accordion folding book of almost four meters long, packed with his drawings, has now been published in France.

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Book: *À Taiwan* (éditions Elytis)





'Draw as much as you can, preferably every day. You learn the most from your own observations, exercises and mistakes'

Paulo J. Mendes

Have you missed the previous episodes of **That's another way of doing it?** Here you can see and download the last eleven episodes (sorry, #1 and #2 are in Dutch only):

3. A tree in front of the building

4. Colored pencils

5. Perspective?

6. White is also a color

7. Sketching in your car

8. It rains. Bah, now what

9. No time. Really?

10. Let's draw trees

11. Pencil only

12. Forgot my sketchbook

13. Perspective without ruler

14. The tower doesn't fit

15. The real color. Or not

16. Within the lines

17. Text in your sketch

18. Tinted paper

19. Up on the roof

The Dutch blogs have appeared on [the website of Urban Sketchers Netherlands](#).

You can find all episodes and downloads at urbansketchers.nl/vind-pagina under the heading 'ZO KAN HET OOK'.

Paulo J. Mendes lives near Porto (Portugal) and is an independent draftsman; he spends most of the day being an urban sketcher. In his words, he 'steals' landscapes in his sketchbook. If you have been to the Porto symposium you might remember Paulo: he was a visual correspondent and walked through the city day in and day out with his sketchbook to record everything and everyone. Paulo draws what he sees, that's what he likes to do most and he's constantly getting better at it. 'For me, drawing is an act of freedom. I don't have a nine-to-five schedule, no deadlines. I don't look for monumental or iconic places to draw, although I live in a city full of beautiful buildings. I make my best drawings in a random corner, with garbage cans or parked cars in the foreground. One of the most exciting challenges for me is capturing places that someone wouldn't notice when they walked past it, places that transform into interesting subjects through a drawing. There is always something new, fresh or unexpected just around the corner, waiting to be drawn. Urban sketching forces one to look closer. On the mental side, it's like taking your brain to the gym by processing a lot of information at once, making quick decisions, mentally measuring proportions and distances, and mixing colors instinctively. I am a person who is easily distracted; drawing forces me to concentrate on the sketch.'

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