

DRAWING IN THE DARK

We will have long summer evenings again, during which we can enjoy drawing until late in the evening, but at some point it starts to get dark and yet, you still don't feel like stopping. Drawing in the dark, how do you go about it?

Here we have some valuable tips from sketchers who often draw in the dark. One striking detail: they all started on a sheet of white paper.

In this edition of **That's Another Way of Doing It** you can see how ten urban sketchers draw in the dark with enjoyment and great results.

That's another way of doing it.

ANNE
ROSE

Claude We19 from Strasbourg (France) always draws with black ink; sometimes he dilutes the ink a little to create grey tones, as he did for the sky in the drawing on the right. Here we can see two wonderful examples of a city scene in the dark; on the left *Place du Château* and on the right *Rue de la Nuée-Bleue*, both in Strasbourg. In both cases, Claude started on white paper. He drew the buildings with black ink. On the left he made the sky pitch black. On the right it was not necessary, because there are more light sources, for instance the lanterns and illuminated shop windows. Thanks to the contrast with the dark houses, we understand how dark the streets really are. What is important in both drawings, are the sometimes small areas in the sketch that are left white. Windows through which lights shine, the moon lighting up corners of the tower and even wet areas on the street that catch some light. Those white bits help us to understand what we are seeing. That's something to pay attention to when working with watercolour or ink; your paper can get full quite quickly.

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Isabel Carmona Andreau, artist and teacher, lives in Newbury (UK); she is originally from Madrid (Spain). She feels that one needs to engage with the unexpected, as in this case, where she was sitting in London on the South Bank, overlooking the Thames. 'For me art should be messy and in the moment. Urban sketching is being attentive to environmental light and colour, usually using watercolour to set the mood, block in shapes, and create the composition before judiciously sharpening forms with ink or pencil line.' That is exactly what Isabel did here: she took her white sketchbook and intuitively made this drawing, using very few colours. It is too dark to see details; the bridge and buildings are almost absorbed into the sky and river. 'This sketchbook is my happy place, as stopping to look and draw allows stories and anecdotes to develop of which I am later reminded.' She likes to share that joy with others. Isabel is working on a larger project about this river: she cycles and walks along the Thames from the mouth to the source and draws everything that catches her eye.

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Books: *Urban Sketching, An artist's guide* and *Brighton: Watercolor Memories*

Eko S. Darmansyah (nick name, Eko Tcetihcra) is independent architect and interior designer lives in Jakarta, Indonesia. His drawings are mixture of representations of real place and sets for popular television series and movies. As an architect he also is enthusiast about sketching traditional culture of architecture vernacular.

For this drawing, Eko started on lightly coloured paper. *Padhang Bulan* means of full moon in Javanese traditional language. The dark night with a full moon caught his attention. On the sketch we see also a Javanese traditional building called *Joglo* with the light shining from the inside and the moon shining on the outside. Apart from that, almost everything is dark. Not pitch black however, we can still see many tonal nuances. The slight of the building is slightly illuminated by the light come from inside.

Afterwards, Eko marked a few more points of light with his white marker or color pencil, especially where the moon light up and edge. Here we can once again see the importance of selectively leaving areas of the paper white (or making them white) in night sketch.

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Inhong Park from Suwon (South Korea) is very skilful when it comes to night drawing, she just gets it right: she is a great urban sketcher. She gives many workshops, which fortunately allows her to share her vast knowledge and talent. These drawings of streets in the evening light are actually not that dark at all. There are a lot of light sources: from the lanterns to the light that can be seen through the windows. It is because of all the lighter areas, that the areas without light reads so dark. Both drawings were made in the narrow streets of Shinjuku, Tokyo (Japan).

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Fritz Angerstein, an artist from Lünen, just north of Dortmund (Germany), used to be a bookseller and teacher; now he spends his time drawing. Here we can see a street in Dortmund in the last vestige of evening light, with the last traces of the setting sun in the distance. It is raining, which we can tell by the reflections of the car lights on the wet asphalt. Through the reflections on the asphalt and the light of the lampposts a little bit of light escapes to shine on the buildings. Otherwise, it is dark, very dark. Fritz has rendered that beautifully in this dynamic drawing.

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Daniele Barillari, an architect and urban sketcher from Milan, Italy, was very clever when he drew this petrol station, one evening, in the dark. He only had a few things with him: a black brush pen, a regular black pen and a water-brush. The surroundings are pitch dark, with the illuminated station a beacon of light, even without the use of colour. All the lighter areas have been pared down and grey tones have been used sparingly, the rest is black. That's how you do it, hats off to you, Daniele.

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Praveen Ram from Kozhikode (India) is an architectural visualiser and architect. And a traveler & sketcher! A visualiser draws a building and its surroundings, during the early stages, while there is still only a construction drawing of it and it hasn't been built yet. In that way, the client and investor can get an idea of what the building will look like later.

During festival in Pune and Kozhikode, Praveen tried something completely different from what he usually does. He left his colours at home and drew only with black and white: the white of the paper and black from the pens he brought along. It was quite the challenge for him, but in retrospect he is satisfied with the result and glad he tried it. On the left, Praveen made an 'ordinary' drawing and then darkened the sky and everything that could not catch light due to the shielding of the roofs. The drawing on the right is incredibly complicated, because of all the beams of light. The light and the parts that catch the light are carefully kept white in this black drawing. Everything else is dark, even the backs of the people. It really is thinking in reverse, and Praveen has succeeded wonderfully.

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Pedro Loureiro from Lisbon (Portugal) says: 'A childhood of legos and sand castles led me to architecture school, but an adolescence of doodling drove me to illustration. I work halfway between the two professions, as an architecture illustrator.' Pedro has some great tips when it comes to drawing in the dark: 'Get a cheap sketchbook to beat that sketcher's block, and in it, sketch everything like you would have to leave in ten seconds – sudden death sketches. It forces you to relax. Sketching the cityscape at night is both easy and challenging! The easy aspect of it, is that your palette gets reduced to a couple – three

at most – colours. Simplification of what you see – that includes lines, shapes and colours – is key. One dark, cool colour for the shadows and sky, one light warm colour for the illuminated parts, and a third one for special details and highlights. When it's dark you can't see the details so there's no point in putting them in. The challenge is to be precise in saving the white areas on your paper, such as the shimmer of the lamps and shiny surfaces.'

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'I think that after our teenage years we lose that sense of getting lost in a drawing, it feels like that time becomes more scarce as we grow up. Drawing is the way I see the world'

Pedro Loureiro

*'Drawing for me, is a path, not a goal.
I sketch to improve my skills'*

Pedro Alves

Pedro Alves x from Torre Vedras (Portugal) is a colleague of Pedro Loureiro. They work at the same agency, do the same work and are good friends. They do workshops together on drawing in the dark. They usually start one of these workshops during dusk, so you can still see a bit of what you are drawing, but only add colour once it is truly dark.

Pedro doesn't like drawing in the same style all the time, but wants to continually try out something new. His advice to other sketchers: 'Learn the rules in order to break them afterwards and not the other way around. And keep track of others' work, study how they do it, what their struggles were. Remember that the most talented artist you know had to start somewhere.'

Pedro also points out the importance of leaving white areas in your evening sketch; in this case he used an opaque white marker for that.

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Vincent Andrieu from Rennes (France) is, according to himself, not only an exaggerated sportsman, but also an architect. He has made an interesting choice when it comes to his drawing materials: he uses those thick, flat fluorescent markers, by Stabilo. You know the ones that you use when you want to highlight a piece of text in a book or piece of print. Vincent considers all materials to be good, but with these markers he can work nice and fast. First he squints at the landscape in front of him and divides it into areas with clear contrasts. For the lighter parts he uses a light coloured marker, it doesn't have to be the right colour. For the very darkest parts, he often uses black, as one can see here in this night drawing of the *Porte Auguste* in Nîmes. For the intermediate colours, he uses a limited number of markers with a solid colour, often combined with a colour close to it. The result? Drawings that are bathed in light.

For Vincent, it comes down to understanding and exploring how contrasts work, how to render them on his paper, and then to find a colour that matches. Vincent is also known as the *Stabilo boss*. It takes something to wrap your head around it, but it is definitely worth trying.

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'I start with light because space is light. And color is light' Vincent Andrieu

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

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- [3. A tree in front of the building](#)
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- [7. Sketching in your car](#)
- [8. It rains. Bah, now what](#)

- [9. No time. Really?](#)
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The Dutch blogs have appeared on [the website of Urban Sketchers Netherlands](#). You can find all episodes and downloads at [urban sketchers.nl/vind-pagina](#) under the heading 'ZO KAN HET OOK'.

More inspiration on YouTube:

- Alvin Mark: Nocturne Painting | [Night Sketch](#) Lighting Tips
- Mateusz Urbanowicz: [Late-night](#) sketching
- Matthew White: How to Paint A [Night Scene](#) in Watercolor:
- Tim Wilmot: How to Paint a Beautiful [Night Scene](#) in Watercolor - Perfect for Beginners

This is the last edition of **That's another way of doing it**. Very special thanks to Erin Taylor and Nino van Vuuren for compiling the English text, so that the participants of this blog could read what was written about them and react on it.