

Allen W. Seaby: *Urban sketcher* explores sketches that Seaby drew on location during his travels around Europe and North Africa in the early twentieth century. A common practice amongst artists and explorers, it remains popular today through the urban sketching movement. Urban sketching can serve many purposes: much can be learned from drawing on location, and preliminary sketches and studies remain essential tools in any creative practice. Keeping a travel journal is also a wonderful way to stay present and preserve memories without the need for a camera. But most of all, urban sketching is a fun and creative way to express yourself.

How to start

Good news: everybody can be an urban sketcher. You only need some paper (preferably some type of sketchbook) and your art supplies of choice or, if you would like to work digitally, a tablet.

1. Choose what to draw

Find some interesting buildings, a lovely field or even your living room and look for a comfortable and safe place (mind the traffic!) where you can stand or sit for a few minutes while you draw.

2. Choose your composition

Choosing what to draw and what to leave out can be tricky. You can make a frame with your hands or bring one made of cardboard to look for compositions.

3. Draw!

Start drawing and have fun.

4. For the record...

Write the place, the date and any other information you would like to remember.

Some Tips

- **Making the first mark on the paper can be daunting.** If you are not feeling confident, blocking-in the figures can help you; this can be done by tracing the scenery with a light-coloured pencil so you can be sure that your drawing will fit inside the page and you keep proportions right.
- **It's not about perfection.** Every style is welcome in urban sketching and loosing up can lead to interesting results.
- **Experiment with media.** Seaby's toned paper trick can be helpful to provide a mid-tone, and urban sketchers use all kinds of art supplies: ink, watercolours, gouache, even coffee!
- **Colour is not mandatory.** You can sketch in black and white or add as many colours as you like – your choice!
- **The most difficult thing about drawing on location is translating a 3D image (your view) to a 2D platform (your sketchbook or tablet).** As you practice, you will expand your “toolbox” and learn new ways to represent different textures, lighting or shapes. Look at Seaby's sketches – How did he represent the grass? Did he draw the trees without outlining every single leaf? What about bricks?
- **Try drawing the people you see as well,** it will make your sketch come alive!

Find your chapter

Drawing in public can be intimidating. That's why local groups of urban sketchers, called “chapters”, meet regularly to draw. All styles and levels are welcome: urban sketching is all about community and encouraging others to draw. Find your chapter here: urbansketchers.org/where-we-sketch

“Show the world, one drawing at a time”

The Urban Sketcher movement was born around the time social media was becoming popular. Urban sketchers started using Facebook and Instagram to share their work in those early days and now this practice has become an important part of the urban sketching community. You can absolutely keep your sketches to yourself, but **why don't you share them on social media to your friends and other urban sketchers?**