

# Urban Sketching

A workshop with Graham Thew

## What is “Urban Sketching” anyway?

Urban sketching is quite simply the act of drawing on location, indoors or out and capturing what you see from direct observation.

It has become something of a global phenomenon. Beginning in the early years of the century there is now a global community of artists drawing on location, and capturing the life that flows around them, wherever they happen to be. There's nothing new about the idea, people have been sketching and painting in groups for centuries, but somehow it is improved as a shared activity in this troubled world where “community” is often a thing of the past. As such it has struck a chord with many amateur and professional artists.

The result is that the activity has grown into a massively popular movement, connecting sketchers from all over the globe, who share their work, support and inspire one another, and inspire other sketchers everywhere. Drawings are often shared on the Internet which has certainly contributed to the rapid expansion of the “Urban Sketching Movement”

After all, we all see the world differently, our own outlook on life mitigated by the thoughts and views of those around us. We all have different horizons and whilst recording this perspective on life can be done in many varied forms, sketching is probably the most basic and yet potentially the most meaningful of these forms.

But whether or not you choose to share your work Internationally, nationally, locally, or not at all, ***the main reason for taking part is that it is a fun community activity*** . No membership requirements or standards, no role calls, no subscriptions. Just groups of friends meeting up for a shared activity , a chat, and an interest in common.

Most groups meet for 2-3 hours, sketching together (but not usually shoulder to shoulder) in an area of interest. They then reassemble at a pre-determined location (usually a pleasant hostelry or cafe ) to share their experiences, have a look at one another's sketches, and smile.

You can get as involved as you like, there are International Expos' attracting thousands of sketchers, national forums, sketch weekends and regular monthly meetings. Locally, Liverpool and Wirral Urban sketchers are active and welcoming groups attracting 40-50 sketchers at their monthly meetings come rain or shine.

## Everybody can draw!

It's just that many people have long since stopped and developed the "I can't draw for toffee" and the "last time I painted was at school" excuse. This phobia (for that's what it often is!) is the result of the way our society educates people to believe there is a "right" and a "wrong" way to draw. There isn't, there's just many different ways of drawing and therefore many ways of seeing and interpreting one's environment.

*"Every child is an Artist. The problem is how to remain an Artist once we grow up"*

*Pablo Picasso.*

Basic tuition helps to build up confidence, awareness, and an understanding that sketching & drawing are essential elements of the activity known as "Art". Urban Sketching is **not competitive, not comparative, and not judged.**

**"What's the difference between Drawing and Sketching?"** *I hear you say...* the quick answer is "not a lot." But thinking about it in the context of Urban Sketching I should say....

**Drawing** is draughtsmanship, being able to draw exactly what you intend as the motive for your action. Perhaps using the product of your work to inform others in detail about what you have seen, what you intend others to fabricate or to make an historical record .

**Sketching** is what you do when you are searching to capture a moment or a feeling, a quicker and more interpretive activity. Sketching is about observation, thought and choice.

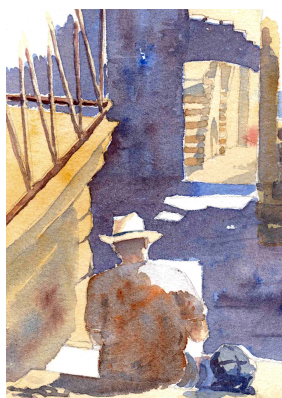
**"Why Sketch and not photograph ?"** *Is your follow up question.....Because,*  
**You** see more than a camera.  
**You** can see into the shadows.  
**You** can appreciate form and depth.  
**You** have two eyes not one lens.  
**You** can "see through things" i.e. wait for a van to move, a tree to blow, a person to walk.

## URBAN SKETCHING Workshop Days

with Graham Thew [grahamthewart.uk](http://grahamthewart.uk)

**Whilst it is not an activity that needs a “Manifesto”** the following bullet-points would serve to sum up the “Top Ten” reasons why we choose to take part in “Urban Sketching”.....

- 1: Drawing is on location, indoors or out, capturing what we see from direct observation.
- 2: Drawings that tells the story of our surroundings, the places we live and where we have travelled.
- 3: Drawings that are a record of time and place.
- 4: We are as truthful as our skill allows to the scenes we observe.
- 5: We use any kind of media and cherish individual styles.
- 6: We support each other, sketching together.
- 7: We happily share our drawings and experiences.
- 8: We show the world, how we see it.
- 9: We encourage each other with positive and enthusiastic words.
10. We enjoy a community activity with like-minded folk.



*Further information about Urban Sketching can be found by reviewing the Facebook pages;*  
**Wirral Urban Sketchers.**  
**Liverpool Urban Sketchers.**  
**watercolour sketchers.**  
**Inside your sketchbook.watercolour sketches.**  
*and websites at:*  
[www.urbansketchers.org](http://www.urbansketchers.org)  
[www.artistsnetwork.com/urban-sketching-guide/](http://www.artistsnetwork.com/urban-sketching-guide/)  
*and many more....*

*Wirral Urban Sketchers meet on the last Sunday of every month (come rain or shine!) look at the Facebook page “Wirral Urban Sketchers” for the venue.*

## **URBAN SKETCHING** **Workshop Days**

*with Graham Thew [grahamthewart.uk](http://grahamthewart.uk)*

## [Graham Thew B.A. B.Arch. A Potted History](#)

Graham qualified as an Architect at Liverpool University in 1976. He founded an Architectural practice in 1981 with his business partner. This grew and by the time they merged with a multi-national group in 2004 the staff numbered over 65 and were one of the North-West's largest practices.

In 2006 Graham forsook the world of Architecture to return to University as a mature student. Undertaking a full time Fine Art Degree he qualified in 2009 with a First Class Honours degree. He was invited to Austria and London to exhibit work, worked at a cutting edge gallery/project in Liverpool and exhibited widely. In short immersing himself in the field of contemporary art .

In 2011 after a period as a carer, Graham returned to his core skills of drawing, sketching and watercolour painting. He also began teaching watercolour painting as a retirement hobby, and by 2013 was running 5 classes a week from his studio and the local community centre. He was also appointed as Chairman of Wirral Society of Arts.

2015 undertook his first appointment teaching watercolour painting on cruise liners and was also shortlisted by the "Artist's and Illustrator's Magazine" as "Artist of the Year" exhibiting in London's Mall gallery. Graham teaches more on a one-to-one basis these days and demonstrates and undertakes workshops for North-west art societies.

In 2015 joined Liverpool's fledgling "Urban Sketching Group" and in 2016 founded "Wirral Urban Sketchers" a non-profit, no subscription group dedicated to sketching drawing and generally enjoying a community activity. Now numbering over 80 active members and with a facebook following of over 300. Members enjoy regular monthly get-togethers and additional workshop days over the summer.

He has recently been a "winning" contestant on the BBC show "Home is Where the Art Is" and featured in "Cheshire Life" magazine and Wirral B.C.s "Creative Bulletin"

**Graham's Website is at [grahamthewart.uk](http://grahamthewart.uk)  
*contact email is [grahamthew25@gmail.com](mailto:grahamthew25@gmail.com)***

*Visit the website to review his portfolio of work which varies from the contemporary to the traditional, in particular look at :*

**"About"** for a full C.V.

**"Sketching"** for examples of drawing and a run through extracts of one of his sketchbooks.

**"Resources"** free to download pages of information on various topics especially pertinent the pages on "sketching".

Also dip into the **"News"** pages especially relevant being the blog type articles on Urban sketching

*“ I believe “ART” arises out of the ideas and concepts an artist wishes to explore. Having become a full time artist relatively late in life I still feel like “a child in a sweetshop” in the face of so many opportunities and options about how to investigate the ideas and concepts which occur to me*

*I see the artist’s role as determining just how to convey ideas and concepts to an unsuspecting world!*

*Sketching is just one of the ways to convey ideas about how **you** see the world and tell people the story of what **you** see.”*

