

Further notes on using a Sketchbook!

Written by Joan

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As a follow on from the previous article on 'Keeping a Sketchbook' here are some ideas on working from your sketches!

To capture the moment with a few lines done rapidly takes practice but can be invaluable to producing a good painting even if you do not use much from the sketches in the final work.

If you are using the handy spiral bound pads which fold back on themselves, remember they can also be used opened out flat using both sides of the spiral wire for one sketch. 4B-8B pencils are ideal as they give bold lines and can denote dark areas well.

Pens are also handy using waterproof ink. Also watercolour wash can be added directly onto the sketch. In this case a fairly strong watercolour paper, over 90lb, is best so it doesn't ripple from the water.

Keep a putty rubber handy as an eraser which is more gentle on the paper surface. You can shape it into a point if need be for small fiddly bits you may want to erase.

When planning your sketch, consider a few points such as the subject matter. What appeals to you? For example skies with their innumerable cloud formations, buildings, people and animals (how many should you put into your picture) and so on.

Composition -

Remember never to place your focal point in the middle of your picture. If you divide your picture area into 9 squares, the four points of the centre square are the ideal spots for focal points so choose one of those.

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Light and shaded areas can give the best impact on your sketch and later in your painting with what can be that special dramatic effect needed to draw the eye to your work. By putting the darkest areas next to the lightest ones, see how these areas jump out at you with that special sparkle that makes a good painting!

Colours can be noted also on a sketch in a few ways. One is to write the names or the colours on the sketch but this can make your sketch confusing to look at. Or you can give the colours a number code so you just write the number where you want a certain colour. Alternatively, you may prefer to write notes on colours on the facing page and also any other points you may need like the direction of the light as the light changes as the time of day passes etc.

Try sketching from different view points. Walk around and consider different angles as, otherwise, you may miss a really good picture.

When you finally decide to start your painting and you have taken note of all these suggestions in this article, you will be sure to see big improvement in your work. Start painting with confidence and you are sure to produce very satisfying work with practice that will make you so glad you used your sketchbook as a planner for your work. Good luck and enjoy this wonderful life of painting!