



I LOVE SKETCHING BECAUSE...

Anna Thurmayr

Department Head and Associate Professor

Department of Landscape Architecture

... it is not part of my daily routine and therefore it is special and a treat to myself. Plenty of unstructured time without unnecessary interruptions is a requirement for good performance. The last summer being on sabbatical was a perfect time to collect all tools necessary to go on sketching hikes. As soon as temperatures allowed it, I went out with my folding chair, pencil, and sketchbook. Even though I was rusty in the beginning, through practise I started to get better, bit by bit. Freeze, breathe, look, and record. A skill, I had almost forgotten.

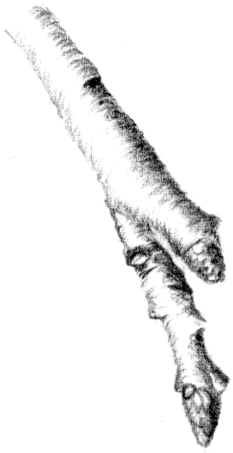
... it brings back fond memories. Shortly after high school graduation I fell in love with sketching people and animals. I used the summer weeks to draw anything that crossed my path. Day in day out, I recorded my sightings of public life, while strolling around my hometown, Munich. Still today I guard these happy moments and pencil drawings like a little treasure.

... I was lucky to have good teachers. My father's best friend was a painter and I was able to watch him create watercolour paintings many times. His outdoor routine always followed the same procedure. First, he positioned himself in the landscape after intensively searching for the right motive and perspective. He then unpacked his easel. As soon as he sat down in front of it, the tremendous concentration that the work required transported him into a trancelike state. With few but well placed traces he quickly outlined the scene in front of him. After wetting the pencil drawing with a clean sponge, he started painting and

a landscape emerged on the paper. Sun, shadow, rain, or mist – using watercolours he documented them all in powerful accents. The pencil's precision disappeared. What initially looked fuzzy or blurry became a delightful, atmospheric dance of water, paper and colours capturing the moment. It was special and enchanting to be able to witness this procedure. He was so focused on painting, that he did not notice me watching, completely enthralled in his work.

... it urges me to see. It does not matter whether I end up with something that can be shown in an art gallery or should remain unseen. What matters for me is the ability to value and embrace the analytic part of the drawing process. Drawing makes sense to me because it teaches me to look carefully and to perceive things that I otherwise would have overlooked. I attempt to reproduce, using my hand, what I have seen with my eyes and that changes my relationship to the object. Instead of just looking at it, I acquire a deeper understanding of the object's component and this enables me to memorize it with greater precision (Thurmayr Straub 2012).

... it fosters my creative thought processes. What is important to record? What is unnecessary? What attracts me to certain landscapes, gardens, or buildings? What other meaning is entailed? Through all my questions during the drawing process I have found a means of testing and explaining my taste what retroactively supports me in my ongoing search of being capable to make decision within a design process.



... it makes me notice the way in which light, colours and shade are changed by the Prairie's strong wind. Due to the dry climate and strong winds from all directions, the sky regularly clears of clouds and moisture into a brilliant blue colour. The cloudless sky and the dry air make the Prairies a perfect study ground for contrast, shading, proportions, and image composition, especially when the abundant sunrays hit plants or water.

... it is my favourite way to communicate. While others like to talk or to write I prefer to observe and to record. It may sound strange but a pencil in my hand makes me chatty in the true sense of words. Drawing ideas and the preparation of images has become my greatest joy in exploring landscape architecture.

NOTES:

Thurmayr, A., & Straub, D. (2012). On the Preparation of Images. In E. Buhmann, S. Ervin & M. Pietsch (Eds.), Peer reviewed proceedings of Digital Landscape Architecture 2011/2012: GeoDesign and Teaching, Anhalt University of Applied Sciences (147-154). Berlin and Offenbach, Germany: Herbert Wichmann Verlag.

*All drawings by Anna Thurmayr
Photo of Anna by Dietmar Straub*

