

Rapid sketches

This exercise breaks the tyranny of the blank sheet of paper with its demands of "getting things to look right". The time limit can be varied from a minute to say five minutes. The advantage of the short sketching time is that an instant, intuitive response is required which does not allow time for forethought and planning, neither does it allow time for the correcting of "mistakes". It is worth doing several of these rapid sketches in quick succession to enable the group to have the time to activate the mental mode from which this kind of drawing flows.

The drawings can be worked on further by, for example, adding colour. (This is done away from the site of the drawing to avoid the temptation to correct or overwork the original, more intuitive response).

Guidelines

- Find an interesting location, preferably out doors. Take a minute or two in silence to become aware of the surroundings - what can be seen? What can be heard?
- Focus on something close by and draw it within the given time limit.

Materials

A4 sheets of drawing paper on boards

Drawing pencils (B, 2B)

Colouring media for use later, eg, soft and oil pastels, coloured crayons.

Rapid sketching can be adapted for use in other situations where visual observation and recording are required. For example Estuary groups made small rapid sketches of details of farm machinery in a tractor museum. Attention was focused on the fact that a fragment of something implies the whole, that sometimes the fragment is more interesting because it leaves the observer free to complete in imagination what is not depicted. Students are encouraged to observe, select, simplify and record what they see.

Colin Riches