

Six Drawings--Mike Pease

I'm an architect, and I believe that to function well as an architect, making useful changes in the world around me, I must first understand the way the world is. I use drawings such as these as my primary research tool toward that end: when I draw, I see. I have deliberately developed many different ways to draw, because it seems that each way of drawing (medium, format, viewpoint, level of abstraction) allows me to see some things well and others not so well, or not at all. So the MAKING of the drawing is its primary purpose. Of course, once made, these drawings often become important in new ways: as reminders of important places, or experiences, or ideas, or simply as enjoyable artifacts.

The six drawings here, from top to bottom, and left to right:

--Ebeltoft, a small town in northwestern Denmark (1986). Ink, Prismacolor pencils. One of my favorite techniques for doing quick studies of architectural subjects in color. First, a sketch with a fountain pen, black ink, including some quick "hatching" to establish darks and lights. The color is added quickly with Prismacolor pencils, using the three primary colors (more about this technique below--'Lands End'). A variation on this approach (not shown in this set of six) begins with the same

ink line drawing, then uses a black Prismacolor pencil for shading, then finishes with the colored pencils. A great advantage to both these techniques is that they allow me to combine color with the strength of the ink line. To combine an ink line with watercolor or marking pens requires using India ink (not water soluble), which doesn't work in ordinary pens, and is not a good traveling medium in any pen. Technical pens are ok if cleaned frequently, but better for slow, deliberate lines than quick, expressive ones.

--Aegina, Greece (1987). Graphite pencil and watercolor. Here the primary drawing is in pencil (2B), carefully done. In a very complex scene such as this one, graphite pencil is the right starting point if I'm interested in understanding these forms accurately and in detail, since the graphite pencil erases easily. The watercolor here gives a sense of the light and color conditions, but leaves the pencil lines intact, so even in the finished drawing much of the form definition comes from the pencil work.

--Korčula, Yugoslavia (1965). Black Prismacolor pencil. A

drawing of this size, using this technique (small strokes with a sharp pencil) will take two or three hours to do, or more. My interest here was in the way forms are defined by light, thus, no visible lines (lines are a convenient way to describe shapes, but lines work against understanding how light defines form--as we actually see it). The more precise the drawing technique, of course, the more precise the observation, and in this case I was interested in a fairly precise view. This could have been done with watercolor, but pencil is an easier way to study subtle variations in light.

--Lands End, Sawtooth Valley, Idaho (1984). Prismacolor pencils. This is a very quick sketch--10 or 15 minutes--to catch the overall impression of a landscape in the light and color of the moment. As with the Ebeltoft sketch, this is made with the three primary colors: blue (cyan), magenta, and yellow, applied in that order. I use primaries because they allow me to draw the full spectrum of color from just three pencils--a great convenience for traveling--but also because I like the vibrancy that results from the eye's having to synthesize the color. As with any pencil medium, the finer the point, the more focus there is on detail, and the longer the drawing will take; this drawing is made with very blunt pencils.

--Willamette Valley Farm, Oregon (1991). Watercolor. A traditional use of watercolor, without visible line work (light graphite pencil lines were used for a quick layout sketch), to

4

capture the impression of a place in light and color.

Especially at this size, watercolor encourages generalizing--ignoring detail in favor of essence. Indeed, at the detail level watercolor tends to have a life of its own, and one must learn to expect that and use it in ways that reflect the spirit, if not the literal reality, of a scene.

--Århus, Denmark (1986). Fountain pen, black ink. Like the Land's End drawing, this is a kind of "snapshot" to catch the feeling of a place in a short time (20-30 minutes). Here my interest is in the complex of built shapes as clarified by light and dark, but not color. Thus, the pen: it delineates edges quickly, and can suggest darks and lights quickly. It's an impression, not a detailed accounting.