

## Exploring Architecture through Drawing with Vicky Holbrough

**Composition** is the way in which shapes and forms are organised within a picture. This can be as simple as deciding how much of the building is in the drawing to creating drama and energy through a considered viewpoint and the use of strong vertical and horizontal lines. The composition also includes the shape of the drawing, whether it becomes 'landscape' or 'portrait' formats, or neither, it could be square or even oval.

If working directly from the building to create drawings a viewfinder will help to focus the eye, and avoid the surrounding distractions, which might try to creep into the drawing. This can be a fixed viewfinder, which is basically a rectangular frame, with the rectangle in the centre being where your composition lies. Or 2 L-shaped viewfinders can be used to alter the traditional rectangular composition, which can be used directly in front of the building to be drawn as well as being excellent to use when working from a photograph.

If you decide to concentrate on a small area, which has a lot of detail, compositionally it will help to separate it from its surroundings. This can be done by 'knocking back' the surrounding details, drawing them lighter or by gradually fading them out, to concentrate attention on your chosen feature.

You can use either the full piece of paper, cut to shape, or draw yourself a box, which matches the shape of the viewfinder, but remember it can be bigger than the viewfinder as long as it is the same shape.

**Perspective** can be a challenge when working from buildings, especially if you try to get a lot of different buildings and detail into one drawing. Try to keep it simple to start off with, concentrating on an interesting detail such as a window, an archway or even a section of roof. Things can go wrong with a drawing if scale and proportion are not carefully observed. Compare features such as the length of a wall with the size of the bricks which make up the wall, counting the bricks up the side of the building and making sure you have the same amount in your drawing. Also use the outside edge of your paper or box you are drawing in compared to the inner edge of your viewfinder to measure or estimate where things should be. These simple checks will help to make your drawing look more realistic.

**Materials** for drawing buildings will really depend on where the drawing is to be made. Dry materials such as pencils, charcoal, pastels are easily transportable and only need fixing after drawing, which is convenient for working directly from the building. As are marker pens, felt tips and drawing pens, which can give an immediate impression, which can be developed further at a later date using materials such as paint or collage.

The paper or surface to be drawn on can change an image, coloured or textured surfaces work well with charcoal and pastels. Even unusual drawing surfaces can be used such as newspaper, wallpaper or sandpaper. Try using coloured permanent marker pens and fine liners on tracing paper and acetate to layer images for an unusual effect.

**Mark making** is what drawing is all about. The variation in the use of line and tone and the combinations of these will decide what impact the drawing has. Rulers are not generally used in drawing, but they can be useful in architectural work, to make the marks perfectly straight and to help work out perspective.

A drawing normally begins with an outline of the main shapes, this is where all the working out is done, making sure proportion and perspective are observed, this initial part of the drawing sets a good foundation for the completed work. A normal drawing pencil can be used for this, anything between HB to 2HB. At this stage think about the quality of line used for different aspects of the drawing, shapes in the foreground will be more prominent so use a darker thicker line. Shapes in the distance towards the background of the picture will not be as obvious so a lighter more thinly drawn line will describe this better.

Now that the bones of the drawing are complete, the next step is to decide on how to develop the image, and whether it will be monochrome (using a range of tones within only one colour) or coloured. The drawing material will also decide how the drawing develops.

Dry materials such as pencils, charcoal and pastels can be used to give a clear crisp line using the point or end. As well as being able to give a larger area of soft tone or colour using the side which can also be softened further by smudging with a finger. These dry materials can also be manipulated on the surface of the paper with a rubber or putty rubber, which can remove marks or move them around. These materials will need to be 'fixed' with a spray fixative or hairspray to stop the pigments moving around further when the drawing is complete.

Marker pens, felt tips and drawing pens need a different approach. These can be used to create various marks, which can build up and describe an area as well as being able to block in a solid area of tone. Hatching and cross-hatching can be used with one colour or a combination of colours to show different textures and surfaces. Dots, strokes and even scribbles can also be used in the drawing. A drawing built up from one type of mark making will appear very different from one, which uses many, so consider this before you start. Water can be used over felt tips and some drawing pens, which can give another effect, this can be worked over again when dry. Use water cautiously though, as it can be a little unpredictable over the ink.

### **Further suggestions**

- Draw thumbnail sketches of different views to work out an interesting composition, before starting a larger drawing.
- Try a mark making exercise, to see how many different marks and combinations of marks you can create.
- Experiment with colour mixing, this can be using pastels, pencils or paint. Try using only the primary colours.