

Urban Sketching/Journaling

Umbrella Community Arts Center, Fall 2026
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Course Objectives

Welcome to the class! You'll be provided with a structured and supportive environment to create a sketchbook or journal. We'll treat the sketchbook as experimental and individual – anything but precious. It's a safe place to try out new methods and record a journey in discovery and expression. It will give you an idea of which personal approaches and techniques feel comfortable for recording travels, memories, daily practice in drawing and painting, and studies for larger artwork.

We'll work on a 9x12 spiral bound hardcover sketchbook. If you're eyeing one of those sleek landscape "journals", a 9x12 will still let you do a landscape 2-page spread, leaving the lower area blank or filled with text. You can also do small vignettes on 9x12. The larger size will help with exercises to loosen up and draw more intentionally.

You will use most of your studio time for drawing and painting. We'll start out drawing from a photograph of an urban scene, then a still life, and move on to depict indoor environments and hopefully an outdoor night scene.

There will be ongoing group and individual critiques by the instructor. I also encourage students to be generous with their reviews and feedback from each other. Naturally there is no obligation to show work unless it feels ready.

Assignment

Draw from life daily, adding color when you can. The more you can work outside of class, the more you'll gain from this six-week session. Since this is an evening class, there won't be much opportunity to work outside during studio time. Keep your journal with you to record settings in cafes, urban and landscape vistas, time with family and friends, weekends away, and quiet scenes at home. Even with just 20-30 minutes each day, you'll be in practice for those important sketches when you're on the road.

Resources

Feel free to look up online teachers of urban sketching, watercolorists, and artists who show their journals. We're open to using collage materials in this class, but the emphasis will be on creating a visual diary through sketching the world around you.

Master watercolorist: Thomas Schaller <https://www.instagram.com/thomaswschaller/>

Urban sketchers: <https://urbansketchingworld.com/incredible-urban-sketchers-to-follow-2021/>

Julia Henze https://www.instagram.com/julia_henze/

Diversity and Inclusion

The class endeavors to be a supportive atmosphere for all – regardless of ability, experience, age, race, religion, nationality, gender ID, sexual orientation, or disability. If you have any concerns or suggestions to improve the classroom climate, please speak privately with the instructor. If you require special accommodations for a disability, please speak to an instructor or the Umbrella office.

MATERIALS LIST

1. **9x12 (minimum) spiral bound hardcover watercolor sketchbook:** Recommend Stillman and Birn Zeta series at Blick.com. 25 sheets, smooth, white, heavy (180 lb) paper so you can use both sides. Other Stillman and Birn series feature paper with a tooth if you prefer that. Don't get 100lb unless you're staying with dry materials.
2. **Pencils (2H-2B), erasers (kneaded and white vinyl).** I like a harder lead for watercolor (lighter and easier to erase afterwards) but softer leads are great for expressive line weights and shading in pencil drawings.
3. **Permanent sketching pen, black or sepia**
4. **Pencil sharpener.**
5. **Assorted watercolor brushes: wide flat, medium (size 8-10), fine.**
6. **Travel watercolor set and extra palette or
Watercolor palette with permanent wells for tube paints**
7. **2 plastic water cups (telescoping or square bottom plastic bags work well for travel)**
8. **Sponge**
9. **Regular paper towels from a roll**
10. **Small squirt bottle for water**
11. **Cardboard or paper view finder – rectangular**
12. **Phone to record the scene you're sketching, use as a view finder.**
13. **Backpack or shoulder bag**

OPTIONAL

1. **Masking tape**
2. **Colored pencils**
3. **Watercolor pencils**
4. **Papers, photos, or natural materials and glue for collage**
5. **Add a viewfinder with a square opening**

Feel free to email me with any questions, thanks!

Julia