

Pete's perspective - a resident artist's creative viewpoint

As you might expect from an institution achieving regular distinction in the Which Survey of most creative universities, there is always more than one way of looking at things. Pete Jarvis, senior lecturer in design, is a case in point. Pete's office looks directly out across the University's new building works and he has taken to drawing exactly what he sees from his own perspective.

Pete's drawings have attracted considerable attention from students, colleagues, and in particular those working on site he regularly look up and wave to him as he sketches. We thought we'd find out a little more about the man behind the pen!

What made you start sketching the scene from your window?

Well, I have a good view [of the building site] from my second floor office window and as an inveterate sketcher it's just natural for me to draw. I had some spare time one day and took one of my sketchbooks to the window. I started off just making elaborate "doodles" and by chance mentioned what I was doing to a colleague who thought it would be of wider interest if I continued sketching.

How much time does it take to produce an illustration/drawing (what would you prefer us to call them)?

I use an A5 sketchbook with smooth cartridge paper which means the watercolour dries very quickly, compared to actual watercolour paper. This allows me to sketch quickly to capture movement and freeze action. Most pages I complete within an hour but some take longer if I spend more time on applying colour.

I refer to my drawings as "sketches" as it implies they are carried out quickly and I don't consider them 'precious'. Some are completed entirely while standing at my window - others I sketch first and then take some photographs and upload them onto my Mac and sit at my desk and finish them off.

Do you feel as though you are starting to develop a relationship with the build and everyone involved with it?

Certainly - through my drawing I have become aware of all that's happened since the start of groundwork on the site. Drawing really heightens your awareness and increases your powers of observation and enquiry. Each stage of the build process has become very familiar to me.

Do you think it is now becoming something of an obsession?

Once I started sketching more seriously and on a regular basis it has become a slight obsession - ask Julian Konczak in my office (he sits by the window so I have to choose my time strategically!) I sketch when I can and I missed coming to work over Xmas!

The build will reach a stage when you will no longer be able to see out of your window. What will you do then?

My drawings have reached the attention of the Project Manager. He's keen for me to continue and is making arrangements for me to draw on a larger scale from within the site - so we'll have to see. .

Were you surprised at how people have responded to them?

In my experience people are always intrigued by the act of drawing - it probably goes back to their childhood and the loss of drawing skills as one grows up. However I am surprised (and impressed) by the reaction of the developers Interserve -

they seem to really appreciate my sketches. Otherwise colleagues and friends know what I do and would be surprised if I hadn't taken advantage of the opportunity.

Do you think that we are starting to see a bit of a kickback from computer-generated imagery?

The games industry has taken CGI as far as it can go in 2D. Like drawing, traditional methods in film and special effects offer the audience, or in drawing the viewer, a more personal interpretation.

I think that there is a certain immediacy about drawing and the act of sketching on location cannot be replaced by digital means. Having said that I draw every month with Urban Sketchers Southampton group and a couple of members do bring their tablets/ipads with them from time to time. In my teaching I combine traditional and digital methods using Photoshop which I enjoy.

If you were stranded on a desert island what three things would you take with you?

You guessed it: a very large sketchbook; a pencil or pen (with an endless supply of ink) and a set of watercolours - what else?

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT THE MEDIA OFFICE ON 023 8201 3048 or press.office@solent.ac.uk

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