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How to Sketch (more)

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Learning to sketch is learning to see in a new way. It is not only an ability that records visual data but it also involves the translation of existing visual information or an idea to a two-dimensional surface. Sketching is a creative and inventive practice that allows one to see places and subjects "more deeply, more completely, more wholly." The advantages of sketching over photographing are evident in site analysis, interpretation and even the design process: "sketches teaches you to see, not just to look." It is precisely the careful observation of a scene and its translation onto paper that requires a serious understanding of the subject and an assessment of relationships.

Unfortunately the practice of sketching, or carrying a sketchbook has become obsolete by the popularity of smartphones. These small and portable devices allow the quick and effortless recording of information during site visits, explorations, documentations and even the digitalization of documents. While designers, instructors, faculty and teachers try to encourage students to sketch, students take notes, write down measurements, scan documents and document site visits in photographs and videos using their mobile phones.

If sketching is a creative and informative activity that allows a designer to record an idea quickly, to visualize a design or to solve problems, how can we encourage students to sketch more? How can students be asked to practice sketching everyday to improve their skills?

"Obsessive Consumption" is a book by Kate Bingaman Burt in which she records all her purchases for two years, and was used as the basis for a similar documentation that asked students to draw everything they purchase during the duration of the course (10 weeks). The paper will present the findings from implementing "Obsessive Consumption" as a means to improve drawing and abstracting abilities. Additionally, it will also share students thoughts in regards to consumerism and spending habits, and their reflections on their purchases and budgeting, from items that they regretted buying to the shocking price of food to the cost of studying Landscape Architecture.

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