



**JAMES GROSE**  
BVN DONOVAN HILL

I've been drawing on and off since I was 15 or 16, the age when everything changes and you start trying to understand the way you are perceiving the world. One of the fantastic things about drawing is it allows you another way to see the world. It becomes part of your visceral language, your perception of things becomes influenced by the way you might think of drawing it. I use it to try to reduce the complexity in something, and that's quite a

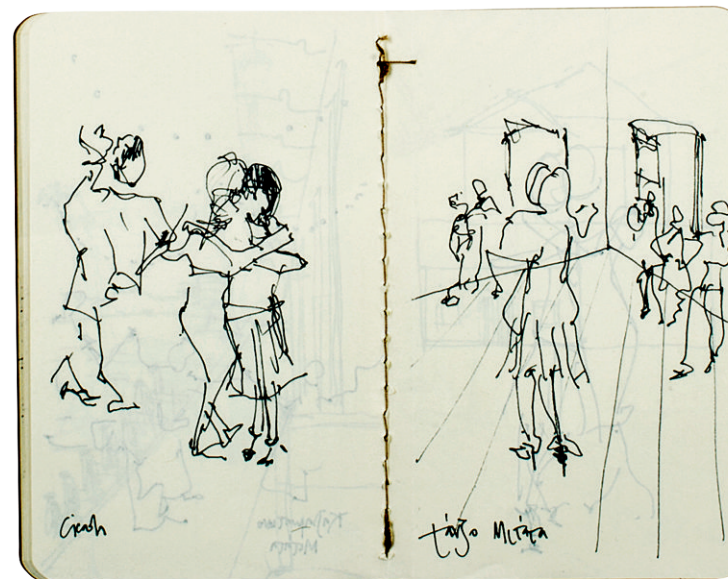
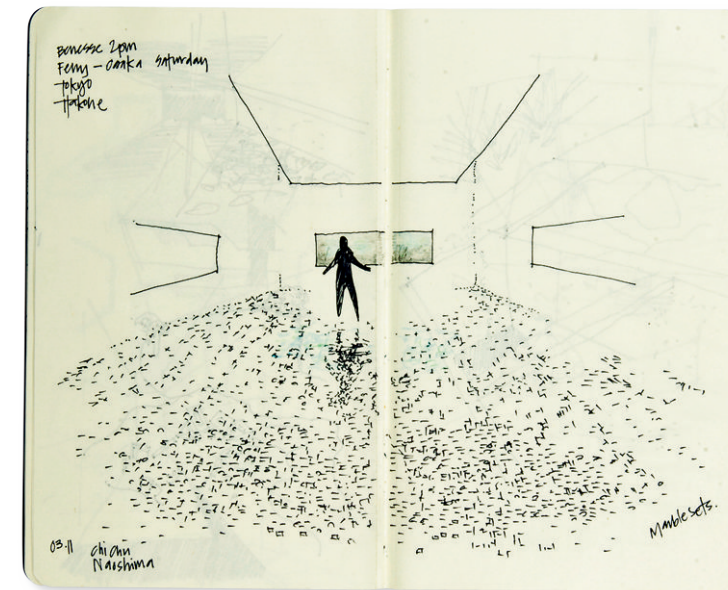
useful thing in life, to have a way to cut down complexity.

Over the past 10 years, as the world has become less interested in tactile things and more into movement on a screen, I've become more engaged by drawing. It can take five minutes or an hour; either way, it forces you to slow down.

In July I went to London to do a drawing course. That's when I did the drawing of the guy kicking a ball in Kensington Gardens. I am very fond of it, and I love the way drawings trigger memories.

After London I went to Iceland where I drew, amongst other things, a row of houses in Reykjavik. In Iceland I was walking along a path next to a glacier – as you do – and I stopped to chat to a guy sitting there doing a beautiful watercolour drawing. That's one of the things I like, that there's a community of like-minded people out there doing the same thing. Someone always stops for a chat when I'm out drawing.

It's about being thoughtful, taking time out. It's like the slow food movement, or reading a book. There's a real joy in the weight of the paper, the way the light falls at different angles on the page.



**EVA-MARIE PRINEAS**

ARCHITECT PRINEAS

Once I began studying architecture, the way I sketched changed. I sketch in the office and also try to sketch when we go away, although with two children aged three and five it is easier when I travel alone. I probably don't sketch enough in meetings because I'm self-conscious. I'm not confident enough to sketch in front of a client when the idea is not yet fully formed. But I have seen how sketching can completely seduce a client – some architects are masters.

My father is from the Greek island of Cythera, which is south of the Peloponnese and north of Crete. When I was at university I started working on a conservation plan for our family house, which is at the top of the island in a village called Mitata. When you go there it is like stepping back into the 1940s. We got married there and until we had children, travelled there every summer. Our neighbour in Mitata, who is also an architect, organised a week of tango one summer. This sketch is of the masterclasses we would have in the morning in the old school house at the main square.

The other image is from the island of Naoshima in Japan, where there are a number of art museums including Chichu. To enter one of the galleries here, you have to remove your shoes and put on little slippers. You go through a dark space first, then emerge into a diffusely lit white room. Three significant Monet paintings appear to float on each of the walls. I made this sketch from memory afterwards. I was taken by the small moves the architect made, which completely changed the way I perceived the paintings.



Drawing is a crucial tool in an architect's kit, but its use goes way beyond drafting building plans. Six architects tell **Katrina Strickland** when, where and why they sketch – and how much it means to them.

# TO DRAW IS TO SEE





## RICHARD LEPLASTRIER

SELF-EMPLOYED

I had the great pleasure of working for Jorn Utzon on the Sydney Opera House in the mid-1960s, and he was the one who said you should always keep a sketch book. He said whenever you see something that inspires you, sketch it or note it down, and develop a real discipline around the practice. I was 23 or 24 and have done it ever since. When I was studying architecture, my drawing teachers were Lloyd Rees, a really great draughtsman, and Roland Wakelin, who taught us to love to draw, so that was a pretty good start.

I tend to do it when I'm travelling, because I'm in places I would never go to again. Most of my sketch books were burnt in the 1994 NSW bushfires, when we lost our house. There would have been 30 to 40 sketch books in there, documenting my travels from India to Europe on a motorcycle, in Africa, the Saharan desert. Of all the things we lost, I was particularly upset about losing the sketch books.

Drawing teaches you not just to look, but to see, and if it's a good drawing it allows you to see something in a different way. This monkey was called Boom Boom, and I drew him during a family holiday to north-west Thailand in 1998. It's about the physical extension of the body. You can exaggerate a drawing to emphasise a truth; it's truth through distortion.

I always encourage young architects to leave their computer and draw, particularly at the start of a project. It is very important. The connection between the eye, mind and hand is quite a phenomenal one.



## HECTOR ABRAHAMS

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ARCHITECTS

We think with our hands, they are an extension of the mind, and I find drawing to be a very direct tool for working out what I'm thinking about. I tend to carry a book with me in which I put notes and drawings – architectural plans, depictions of people.

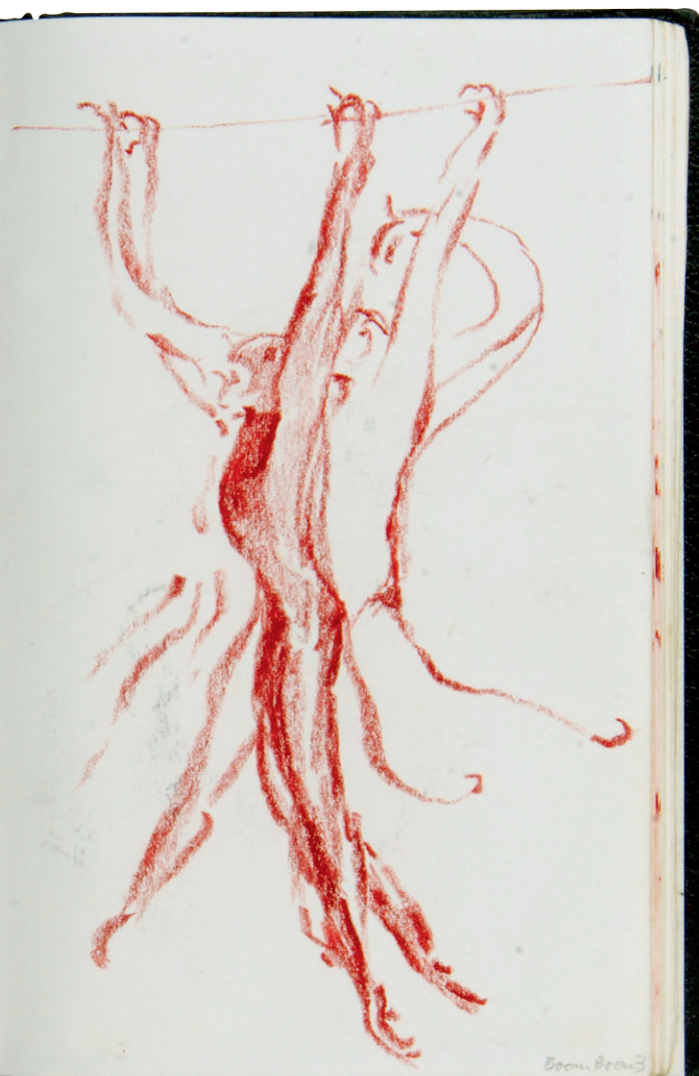
I love hands. There are no straight lines in a hand, so they really test your ability to capture sculptural shapes. I'm 53 and I'm just starting to realise that I can't think many things through without drawing. I'm not a portraitist though, I can't capture the likeness of someone.

This sketch book is from 1983, when I spent three months in Europe between my two architecture degrees. I was a single man travelling in winter through England, France, Holland, Italy and Spain. There are many drawings of interiors because it was too cold to be outside. I was in Rome on

Christmas Day and took myself to the Colosseum, which at that stage still had lanes of traffic driving around it. I was as taken by the texture of the building as by its form. I am often drawn to texture. I particularly like the appearance of aged buildings.

When you're travelling around Europe you see a lot of cathedrals which don't always resonate with you. But I remember walking into the cathedral at Durham at about 5pm and being completely floored. It's not the most elegant, but its relationship with the landscape and the Celtic carvings inside was really powerful.

I draw the way musicians play scales; it's about marking my own sensitivities, mapping my learning. Sometimes when I'm trying to explain something to a client I can see their eyes glaze over, but as soon as I sketch it, and they can see it in 3D, they get it. I would not regard myself as a natural drawer though. It's about practice. You have to get match fit.







## ROD HAYES

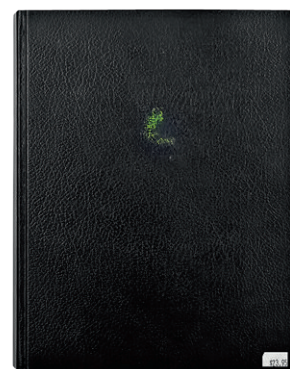
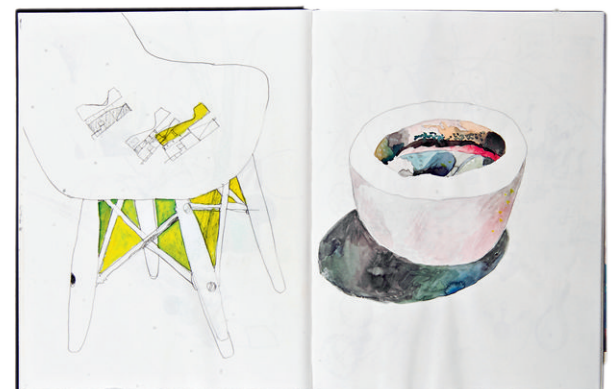
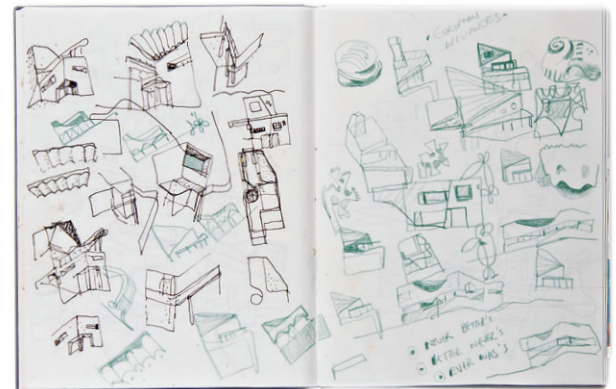
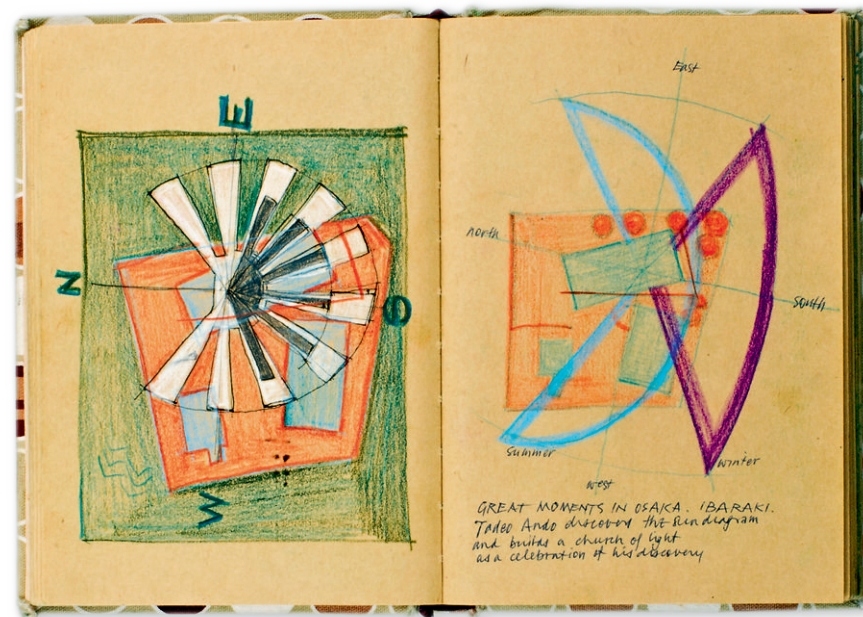
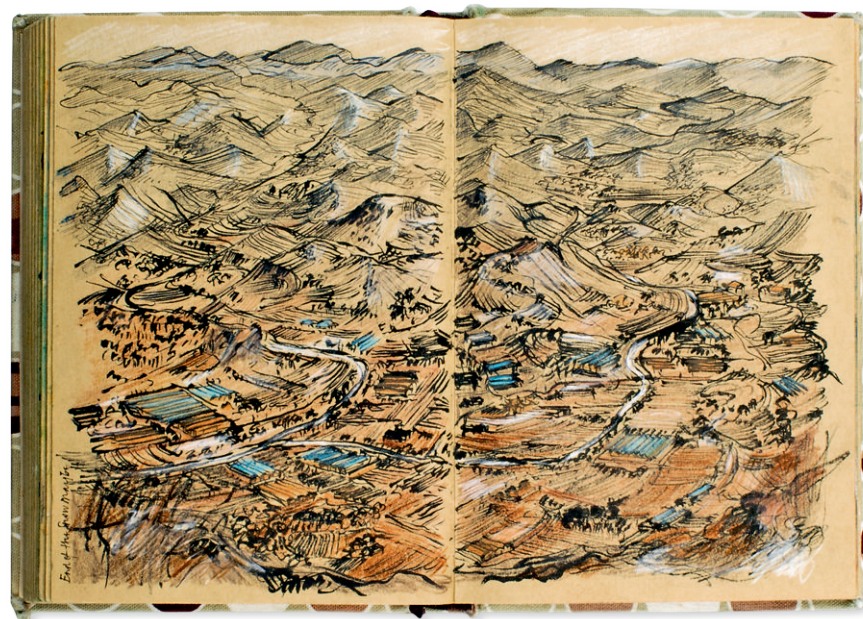
RETIRED

Drawing slowly emerged as I was practising architecture, and as I got older it became more important. I was writing in journals and found myself drawing as well, and over time that became an end in itself.

I always have a journal with me. It's about being curious about a place or experience, and wanting to explore it deeply. The only way for me to do that effectively is by drawing it. I write a lot too, but that's more abstract, playing with words. Drawing tends to be more realistic, although I never try to catch the exact detail. Some people want to capture the exact detail on St Paul's spire, but that's not me. I prefer to look and then draw from memory, to capture an idea of a place.

If I go to a coffee shop I will take a journal with me. It's like a companion, you're never bored or alone. I use pen and watercolour pencil. The book needs to be big enough to rest your hand on, with good quality paper. I've bought some nice books in Japan over the years; I used to go there to take architecture and design tours.

This geometric image (bottom right) was my response to Japanese architect Tadao Ando's Church of the Light. He's a genius in how he can capture the way of thinking in ancient Japan and incorporate it into the modern day, but maintaining the same sense of spirituality. And in concrete.



## NEIL DURBACH

DURBACH BLOCK JAGGERS

Sketching is a way of easing my thoughts into the day. I love to sketch in the mornings, from 7am to 10am, which is probably why I start later than some in the office. Sometimes it is just writing stuff down, on other occasions it is more. I find it a consistent way to sort out problems.

I don't tend to do travel sketches. I think it takes a long time to get a sense of a place, and you often don't have that luxury when you're travelling. I tend to draw the same thing over and over as a way of

relaxing. At that point it's a meditative thing.

Sometimes I let the drawing lead me into a way of seeing something, rather than driving it. Often it's the slight mistakes, the semi-conscious moves, that lead you to a more nuanced way of understanding or seeing something. Your hand sees it before your eyes.

It's about continuous synthesis, a pretty un-intense way of working. I enjoy the feeling of pencil and paint on paper, it's a really nice sensation.

You do sketches for clients although I don't use my sketch book for that purpose.