

A watercolor illustration of a still life scene. On the left, a large, light-colored, rounded vase holds a bouquet of red flowers with green leaves. To the right, two tall, slender bottles with stoppers stand on a surface. The background is a simple, light-colored wall with a faint outline of a window or doorway. The overall style is soft and artistic, with visible brushstrokes and a muted color palette.

# Drawing Your Life: Learning How to Keep a Sketch Notebook

Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) at Vanderbilt University

Winter 2022

Arthur Witulski



# A little bit about me

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- Electrical engineering professor
- Last took a class in art in Junior High School
- My Mom was a watercolor painter in her spare time
- 2004-Class on “Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain
- Kept taking classes for about 10 years, acrylics, oils, watercolor
- Last few years: plein air painting, urban sketching
- Taught a spring 2021 freshman seminar on Urban Sketching

# What is a Sketchbook Journal?

- Simply a visual record of the objects, people, scenes of your life
- It's a sketch, not a finished drawing or painting
- Done in a limited time, at least started on location
- Kept in a notebook-gives you as sense of progress or time elapsing
- Mostly recorded from life-drawing from things around you rather than photos-drawing from 3D rather than 2D
- Can be mostly drawing, or mostly text, or a mixture of the two

# Sketch, Not Finished Artwork



10 Minutes



15 Minutes

# Sketch, Not Finished Artwork



40 Minutes



15 Minutes

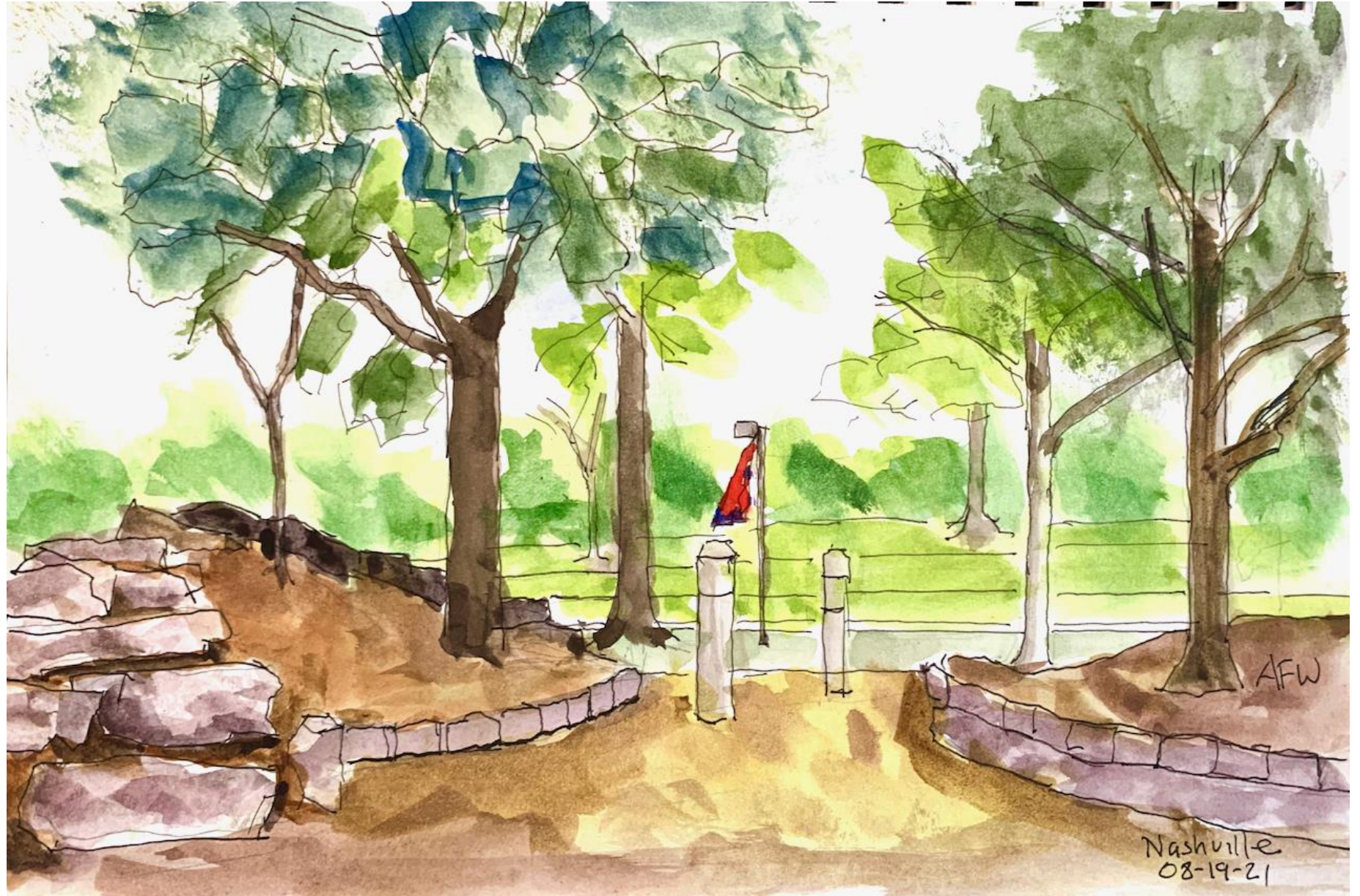
# Sketch, Not Finished Artwork



1 Hour

# Sketch, Not Finished Artwork

1.5 Hour  
Entirely on location  
Bicentennial Capitol  
Mall State Park in  
Nashville  
Ink and watercolor



# Finished Artwork

- 4 Hours
- Watercolor painting from photo
- Multiple layers and adjustments
- Just three colors





# Combination of Text and Figures

Can merge text and figures

"Drawing from Obs." Brian Curtis 05-29-21  
 A gestural drawing should be light.  
 Eye moving rapidly from point to point over the whole image. Eye only takes in 2% of visual field at a time. Mostly worried about placement of objects  
 RE-EVALUATE  
 Take 3-5 minutes  
 Delay rational approach as long as possible. Don't think, look. Closed object becomes harder to move or adjust later on.  
 Could really help with sketching - avoid doing so much measuring and thinking at the beginning. A light pencil or marker gesture drawing followed by pen once the placement of objects is obtained.  
 Can also do with brush or penknives  
 ... .. small drawings

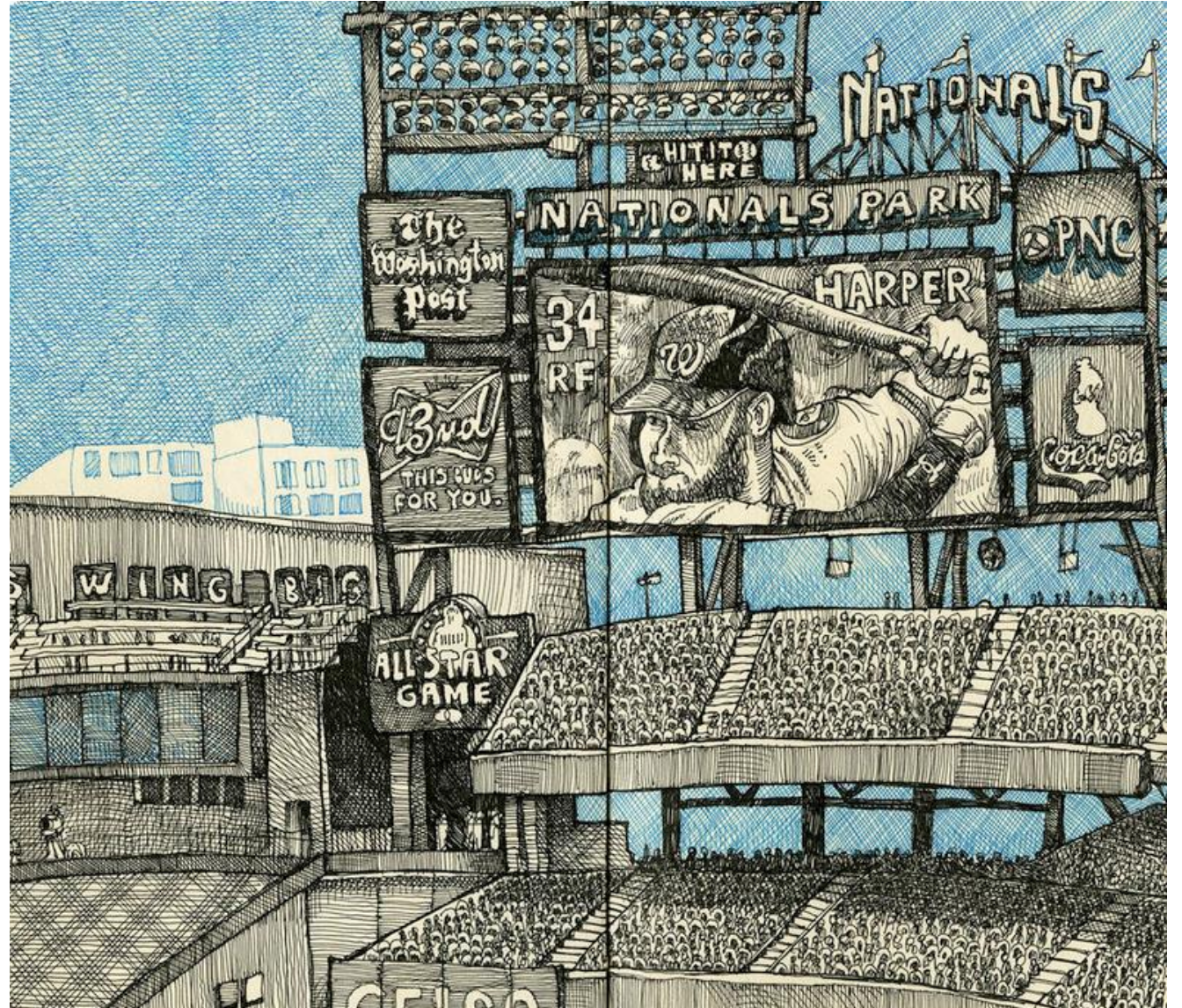
"An intuitive gesture or a quick, all-encompassing simultaneous overview of the wholeness of forms and their relationship in space. It is energetic, flexible, nonlinear, non-specific, intuitive, and constantly open to adjustment" (p33)

GESTALT  
 Educated Guess  
 OPEN TO AMBIGUITY, COMPLEXITY, and PARADOX  
 "Flexible search for information" Start without touching the paper.  
 "process of perception, evaluation, correction, and re-evaluation" Start with peripheral not touching the paper.

only two sides visible  
 APU  
 where things are in space  
 where things are in space  
 where things are in space

# Sketches from Various Artists

- Tommy Kane
- These artists been sketching a long time-but give us inspiration
- Looks like just two ballpoint pens, blue and black
- <https://www.tommykane.com>



# Sketches from Various Artists

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- Greg Betza
- Ink and wash-fast technique
- See more sketches at [www.urbansketchers.org](http://www.urbansketchers.org)
- <http://www.urbansketchers.org/search/label/Greg%20Betza>



# Sketches from Various Artists

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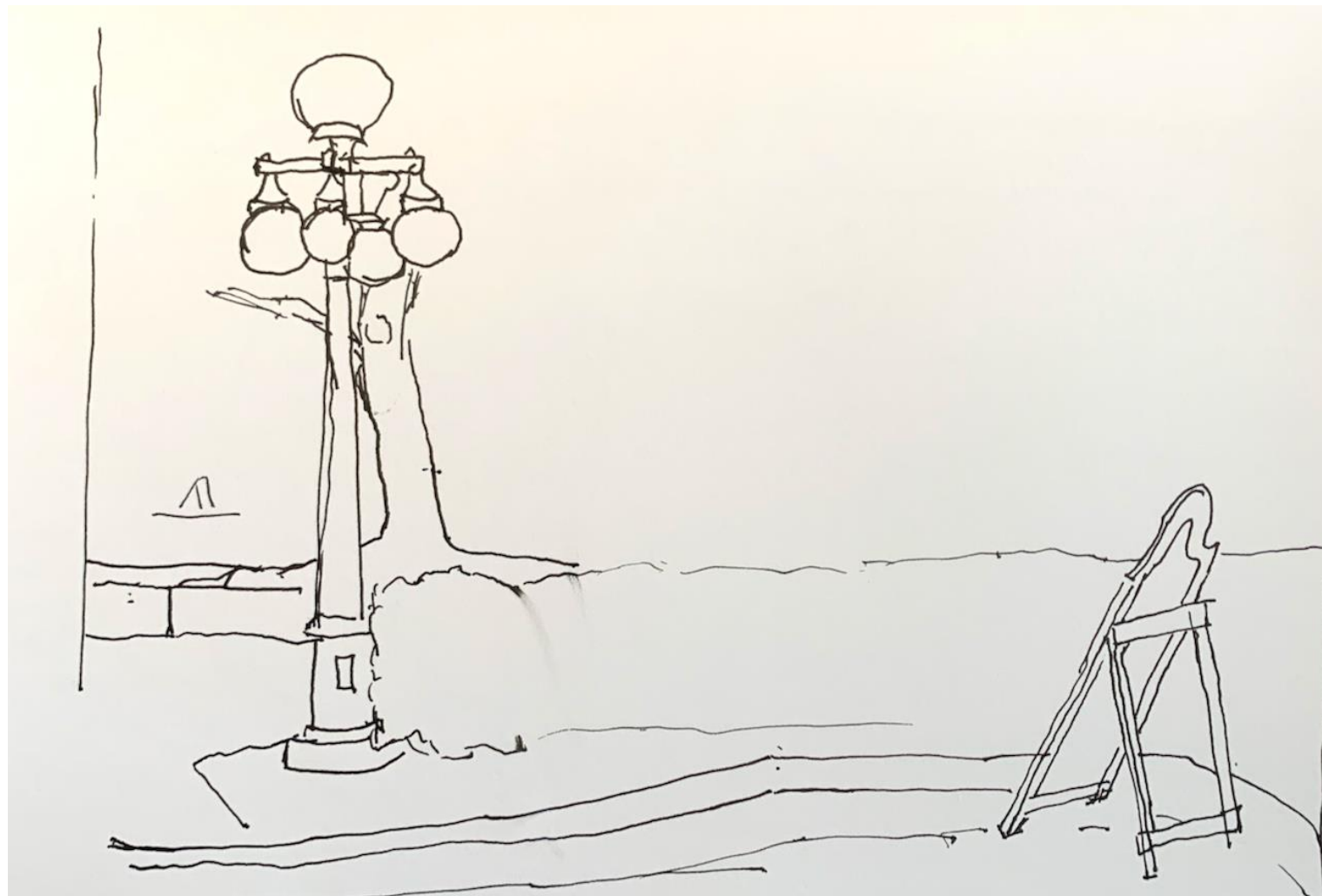
- Neil Whitehead
- This sketch from Pinterest, Urban Sketchers
- Ink and watercolor
- Alternates warm and cool colors
- [neilwhitehead.co.uk](http://neilwhitehead.co.uk)



For a sketch,  
we have to  
adjust  
expectations

- Limited amount of time
- Outdoors, the light is changing quickly
- Circumstances change, e.g., a car parks between you and your scene
- Have to choose one element, focus on the one thing we want to communicate or remember
- Don't have time for corrections

For a sketch,  
we have to  
adjust  
expectations

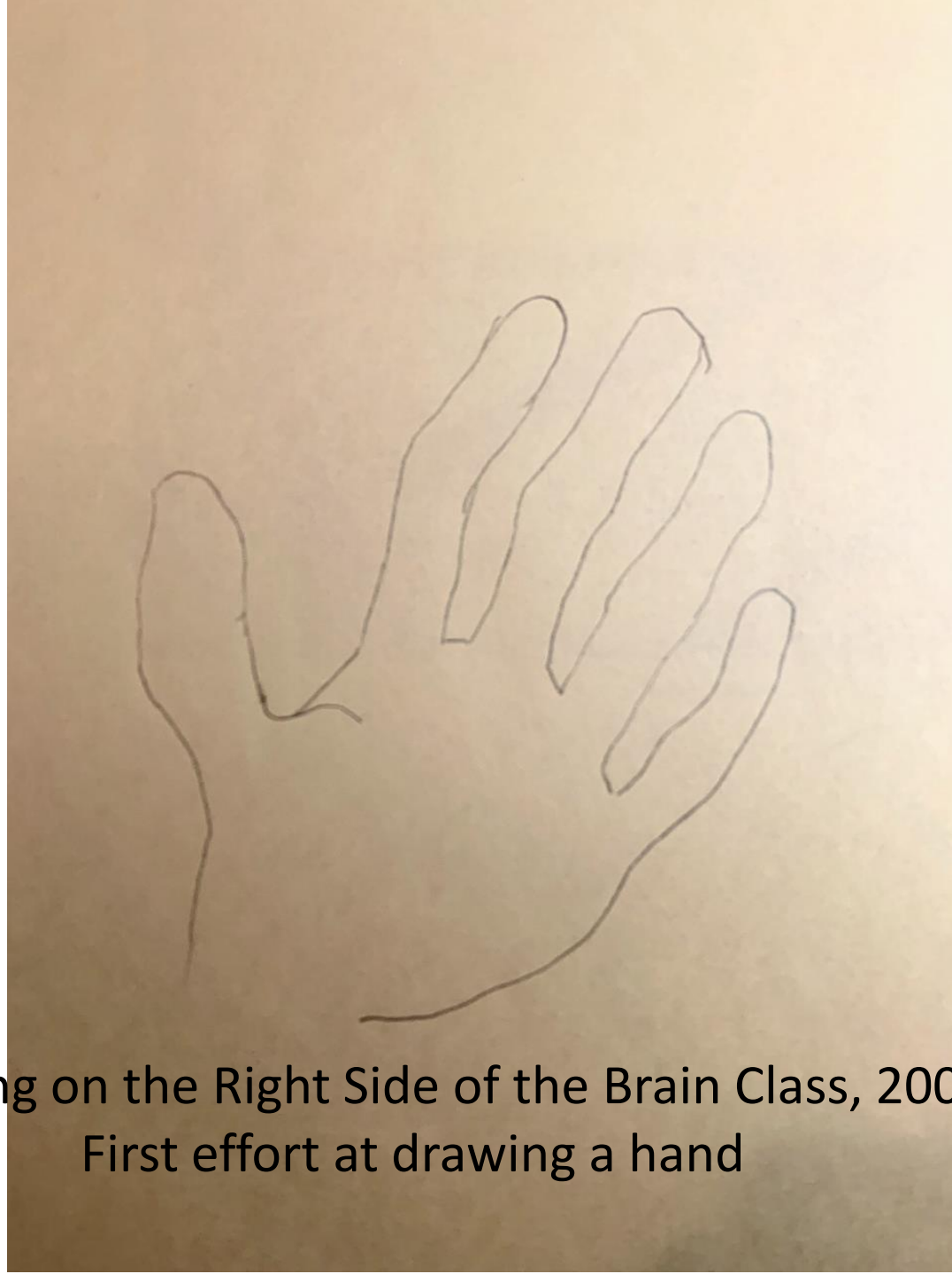


Hot Springs AR, drawing, interrupted

# Why Keep a Sketchbook Journal?

- Helps you slow down, activate the right side of your brain, experience the present
- Learn art concepts like perspective and color theory, learn to see
- Get away from screens-look at things from different distances
- Excuse to be outside-experience nature a little more
- Appreciate the complexity around us in objects and scenery
- Meet people you wouldn't otherwise meet
- Photos are good for line and shape, not for color and value
- Enhances your experience of a place
- Deeper memories

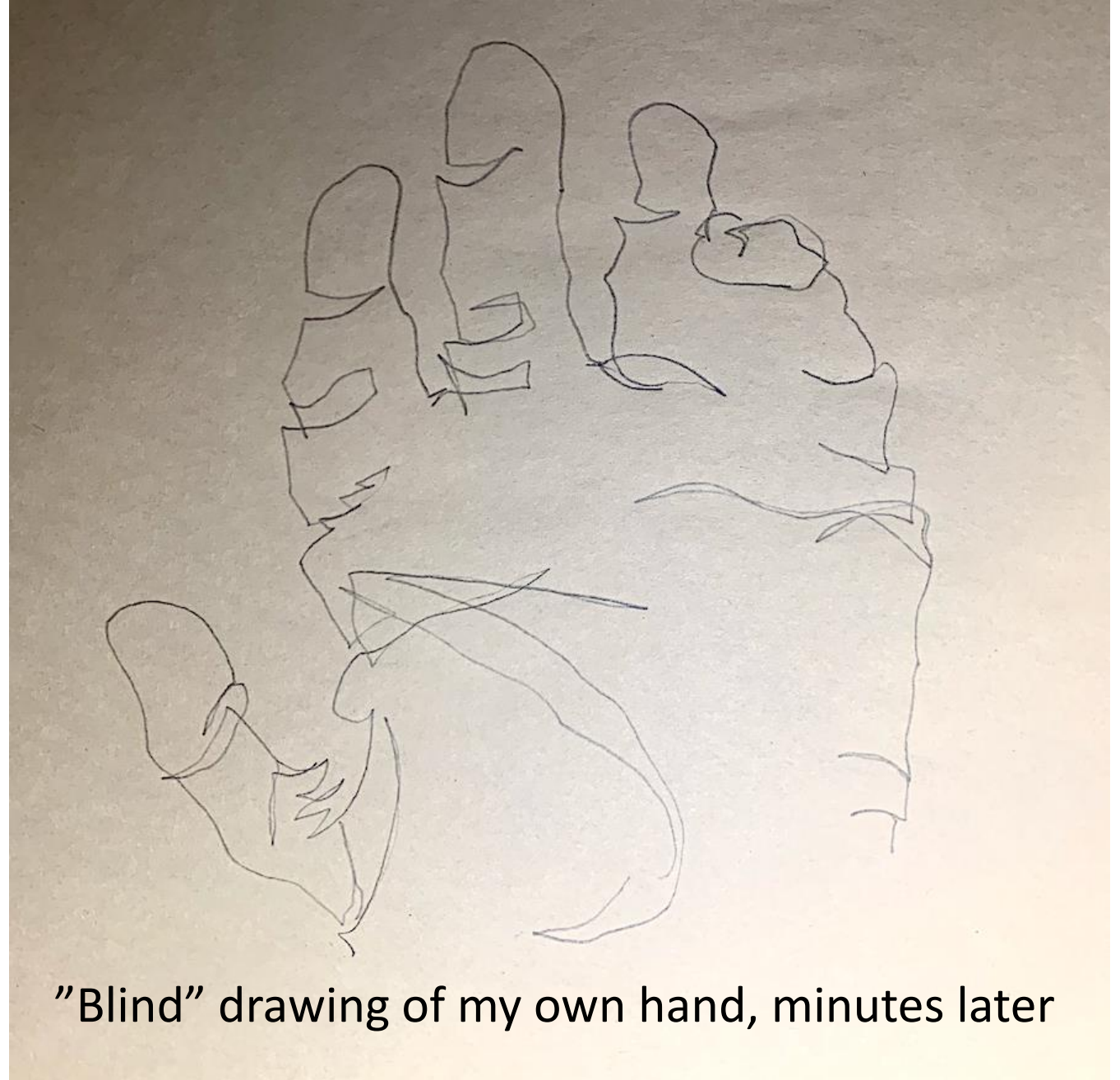
But can I really  
learn to draw ?



“Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain Class, 2004  
First effort at drawing a hand

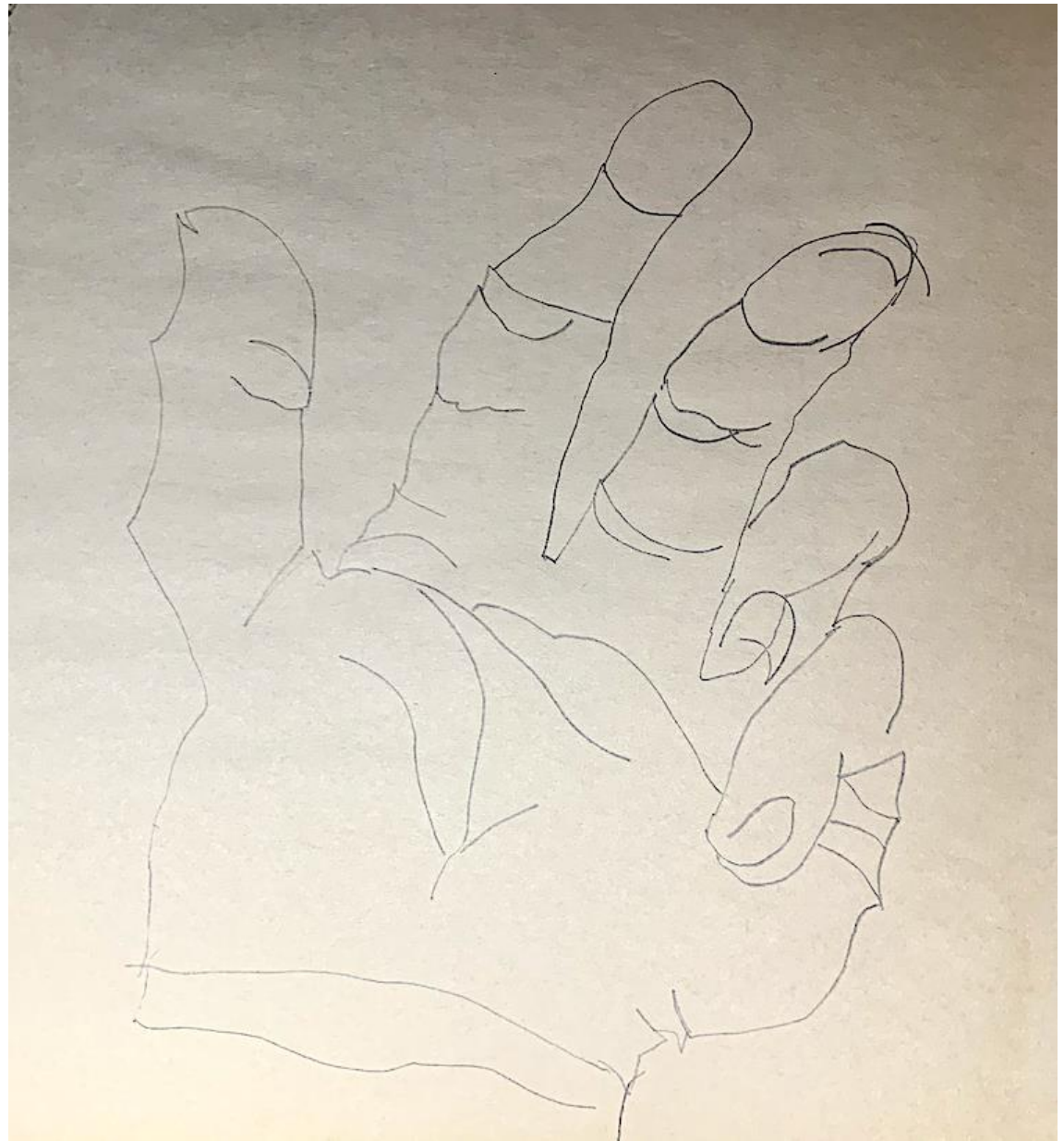


But can I really  
learn to draw?



"Blind" drawing of my own hand, minutes later

But can I really  
learn to draw?



"Peek" drawing of my own hand, minutes later

But can I really  
learn to draw?



"Blind" drawing of my shoe, same class 2004

But can I really  
learn to draw?



"Peek" drawing of my shoe, same class 2004

# Yes! You Can Learn to Draw

- Avoid accessing the stored symbolic forms in the left side of your brain
- Access the spatial capability of the right side of your brain
- Learn to draw what you actually see, not what you think you see: “Perceptual Skills”
- Learn the principles of drawing, such as perspective, relative size of shapes, light and dark values, line width, and composition
- Drawing is a skill that can be learned!
- Betty Edwards <https://www.drawright.com/>
- Book: “Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain”
- <http://www.howtodrawjourney.com/>

# Sketchbook Supplies-See Handout



# Overview of Remaining Lectures

1. What is keeping a sketchbook-today's lecture
2. Sketching Objects-the things in your life 3D>2D
  1. Basic forms: sphere, box, cylinder
  2. Basic shading and shadows
3. Sketching interior scenes-the rooms of your life
  1. Basic perspective
  2. Measuring-determining the size of things
4. Sketching outside-the scenes of your life
  1. Fore-middle-background
  2. Selecting the scene
  3. Focal point or centers of interest
5. Shades of Gray and Color
  1. Dark/light values with pens
  2. Ink Washes with water brushes
  3. Intro to Color Wheel
6. Intro to Watercolor painting
  1. Choosing a palette or range of colors
  2. How to apply watercolors

# Suggested Activities

1. Engage the right side of your brain
  1. Try a blind sketch
    1. Look only at your object reference
    2. Slowly draw what you see, only look at the end.
  2. Try a blind/peek sketch
    1. Draw blind for 1 minute
    2. Peek at your drawing for 10 seconds, Repeat
  3. Try to reproduce a drawing upside down
    1. Find a fairly simple drawing you like
    2. Turn the image upside down, try to draw what you see
2. Look around at the sketching of others
  1. Check out the USk blog at [urbansketchers.org](http://urbansketchers.org)
  2. YouTube channel: Taria's Sketchy Adventures
3. If you're interested, buy a few art supplies and try them out