

We have all seen a variety of wonderful sketches, drawings and watercolors depicting traveler's journeys through foreign lands and the cultures and events they experienced.

Those drawings usually exhibit an accuracy and richness that express a feeling more than just a scene, as if the artist were part of the image rather than merely a passerby.

Most of us wish we had the time and skill to go on one of those journeys and craft our own version of the adventure with the same lines, shapes and colors an artist displays.

For students studying abroad, an international experience is typically recorded via cell phone or camera photographs and videos of the spaces and places they visit.

More often than not, their photos are efforts to capture specific moments of that experience rather than document, in detail, the elements within the viewfinder that constitute the experience.



Their images form tweets, chats, Instagram moments and Facebook posts. This isn't any different than most non-student tourists.

But what if they were given the opportunity to sketch their travels, to replicate the aforementioned artist's version of a scene, even if they didn't possess the skill?

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1. Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) abstracts emphasize relevant teaching methods used in interior design courses.

(Is there a way that my methods of teaching perspective sketching to design students...)

2. As designers, we are so impacted by the public perception of the interior design industry.

(... could inform and influence non-designers about the world around them...)

3. How do we affect communities through our work, our teaching, our research?

(...by giving them design-specific skills to visually record and communicate their experience of a place or space?)



2019 Annual Conference

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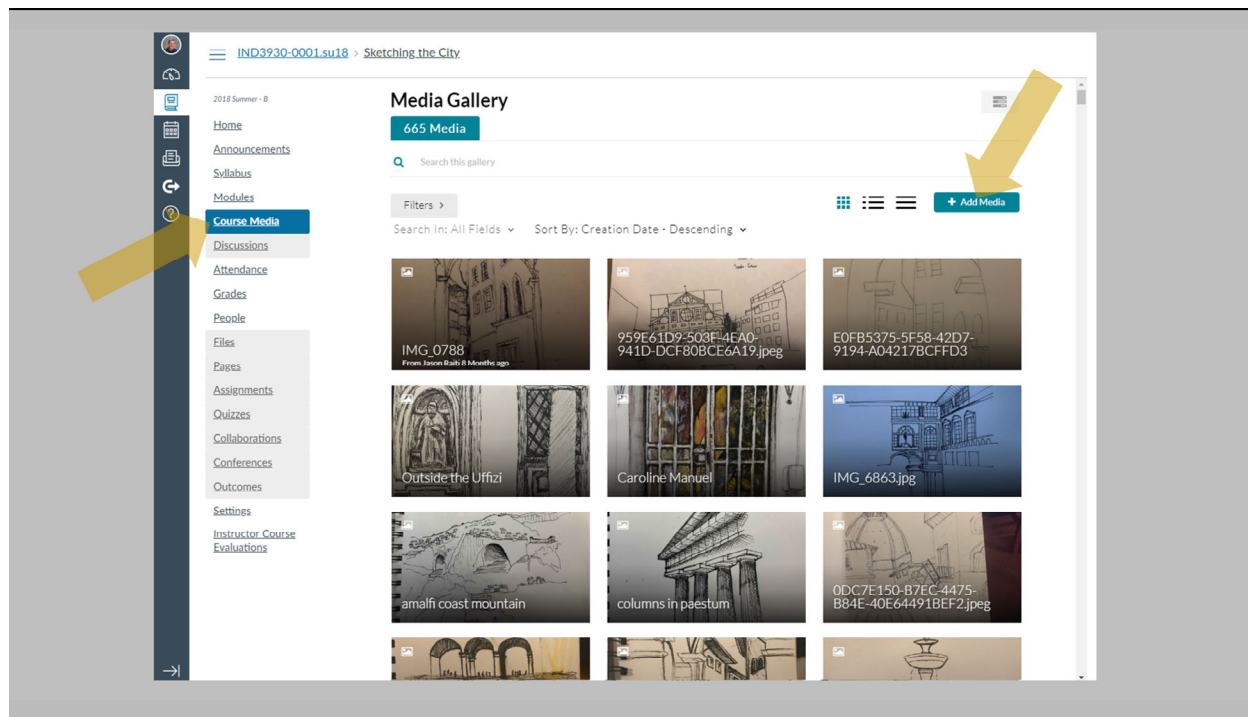
Charlotte, North Carolina



This presentation overviews the experience of a sketching class offered to broad curriculum Florida State University students (non-design majors) based in Florence, Italy.

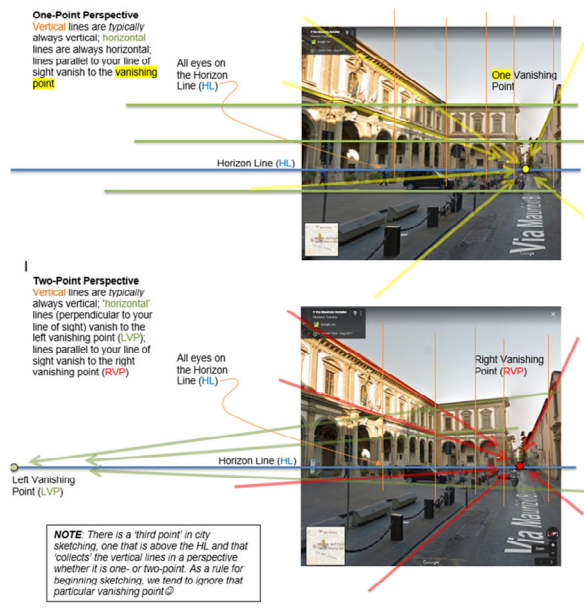
90% of the students taking the class had no formal training in sketching or drawing. Most had never attempted sketching other than doodling in the margins of their notebooks during a boring lecture.

However, leaning on Ericsson & Poole's research suggesting that "[t]he right sort of practice carried out over a sufficient period of time leads to improvement", I believed that with an appropriate type of instruction, students could sketch at a level enabling them to capture more meaningful aspects of their study abroad experience.



The class was taught two days per week, 3 hours per class. We set up in a different place in Florence each day. Students had to post photos or scans of their sketches to the class Canvas page in the Course Media section from each day's session of drawing.

In addition, they had to post at least two additional sketches from the city or their independent travels no later than midnight Sunday of the week they just finished for each full week of the summer session – about 16 or 17 sketches were all that was required.



What they said:

Uhhhhh.....I thought this was supposed to be a sketching class.

What they thought:

Dude, what the fudge?!?

Day One...just a tad bit of overload, but that was the intent – just a bit of fun with freaking them out.

Amy Shelton and Tim McNamara in an article for *Cognitive Psychology* entitled “**Systems of Spatial Reference in Human Memory**” proposed that “**learning and remembering the spatial structure of the surrounding environment involves interpreting the layout in terms of a spatial reference system. This reference system is imposed on the environment but defined by egocentric experience.**”

So, the idea was that while a student’s sketch would be from *their* unique point of view, it would necessarily be from within (or *through* as Alberti might suggest) an established framework.

Since the course’s focus was on sketching a student’s travel experiences with design in mind, my instructional methods utilized a certain **framework of guidelines** unique to design drawing: a horizon line, vanishing points, scale figures and line construction and variety.

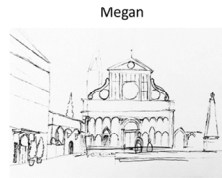
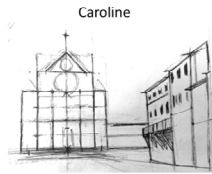


With these tools forming the basis of a somewhat formal framework to guide a student's sketching, I was pretty sure that a *non-design student* might be able to more accurately record a particular scene, *at least in their mind*.

My goal was to have the students accept the framework and that by believing things such as a horizon line, vanishing points and scale actually exist, they would more clearly 'see' the scene in front of them, create that view initially on-site and later on, **using their memory** of that view, refine the sketch. It was **believe, see, sketch and remember**.

An *intended* by-product of this method would be to demonstrate how design thinking combined with design-specific expression (technically accurate drawings) could add a layer of richness to their recollection and enjoyment of specific moments and memories on their study abroad trip.

Some came with sketching skills and thought, "I got this"



Then the professor suggesting 'seeing' a different way and they said: "how thick are this dude's glasses?"



But then they leaped forward and felt the joy:

"Oh yeah, I got this."



So...

Gabriel



A few started with the idea that,
"It's a sketching class in Italy; how hard can this be?"

And at week 4 had a fleeting thought:
hmmmm....did he say four drawings per week?"

They reluctantly drank the kool-aid and finally said,

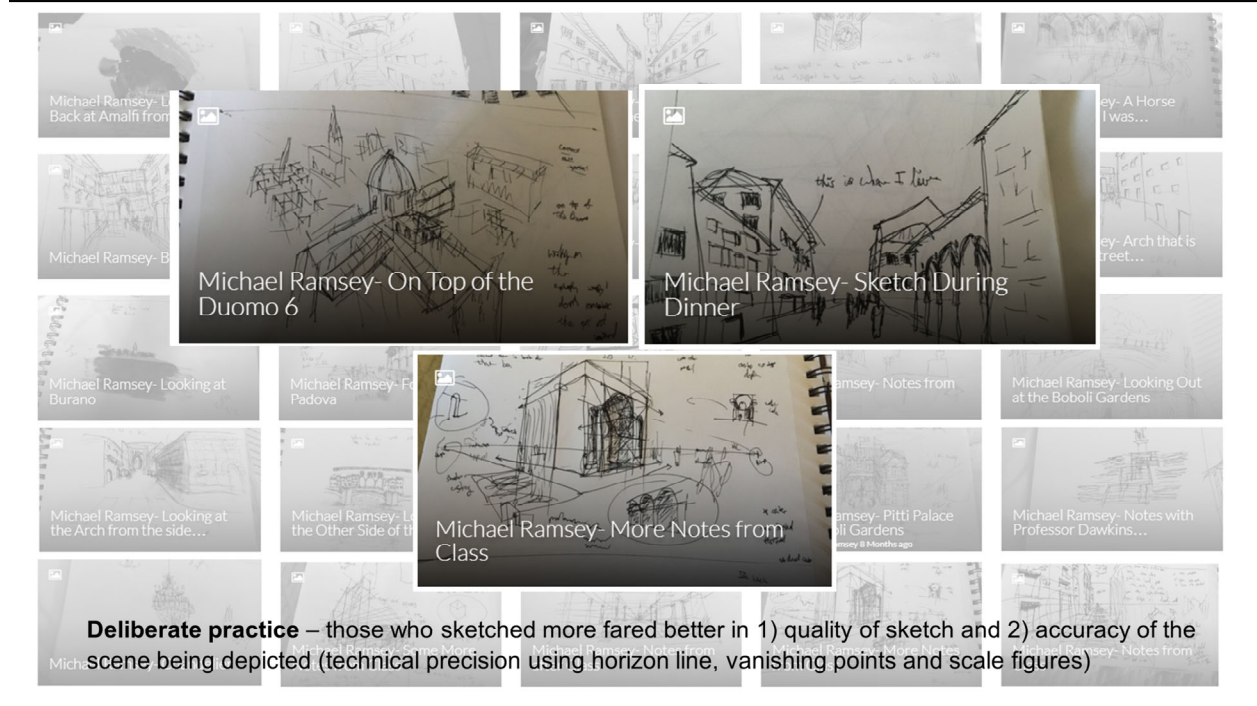
"Cool - it wasn't so bad after all!"

Samantha



Lara



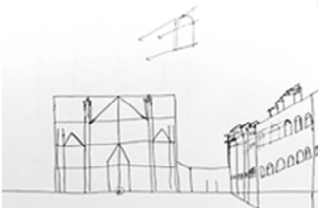


But the ones that made the biggest gains drew almost twice as much as their peers.

And the more they drew, *the more they adhered to the guidelines*, the more progress they saw.

Michael Ramsey had 58 total sketches - over 10 per week. The next closest student had about half that amount. **Deliberate practice with a *desire* to 'see' more clearly.**

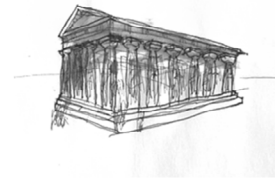
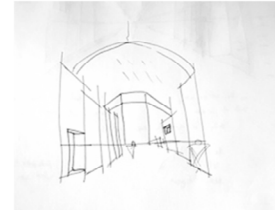
Danielle



Reid



Michael



Others started with the belief that, "I can't draw"

Then they drew a bit and said, "i might be able to do this"

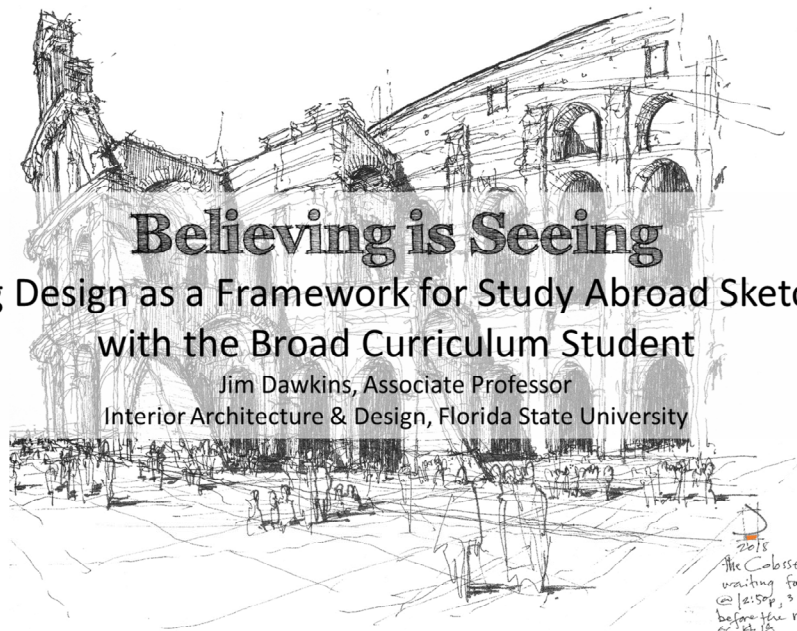
And finally realized that, "Hey, the more I draw, the better I get!"

Danielle had a hard time getting her pen on the paper at the beginning, but couldn't seem to get it off the paper toward the end. Reid was another student that drew every chance he got and it shows. You can see Michael's progress here on the right.



And in the end...using a designer's methods and tools for constructing a view of their world, some students actually found that their sketches took on a deeper meaning and created a more visceral memory than a photo could ever communicate.

Designers with design tools for sure can have an impact on the non-design community!



Believing is Seeing

Using Design as a Framework for Study Abroad Sketching
with the Broad Curriculum Student

Jim Dawkins, Associate Professor
Interior Architecture & Design, Florida State University