

Drawing as a Way to Investigate Architecture and Urban Space

There are too many components to study architecture through a set of flashcards.

Exploring architecture and urban space through different mediums provides an opportunity to see beyond the surface. Although hand-drawing and drafting has taken a backseat to software systems, sketching is still prominent in the design process, and the ability to sketch verbal ideas on paper can establish a baseline. But aside from the obvious, drawing lies at the opposite end of extremes in terms of saved work when compared to software systems. When a laptop dies, all unsaved work is lost. When drawing on paper, every mistake is saved for viewing. It is the worst of both worlds, and sometimes why I find it difficult to start drawing. But with practice, drawing *exactly* what the eye sees is more accurate than subconsciously drawing to meet expectations of the final product. The forms that the human brain perceives to be true, are often not, and do not allow for further investigation of the site. Drawing real-time observations helps to see figure/ground relationships, do materials studies, and understand the makeup of urban landscapes.

I took a class during my sophomore year called Visual Literacy. The course material examined what made great works of art, *great*. My professor made the most arbitrary connections to conventional shapes, as if any blur of three objects could make a triangle. As my visual literacy improved though, I began to understand why these far-fetched ideas were of value. Now, I am big on making “arbitrary” connections as a way for my creative brain to show through. Ancient Roman architecture seems overwhelming at first, both in scale and in design, but breaking it down into conventional shapes could help to understand the whole. Drawing allows me to go beyond the surface, to understand the beauty and to find triangles where no one

else can. Most importantly, drawing helps to develop visual literacy as a way to investigate architecture and urban space.