

## LESS CAN BE MORE

If you are already an urban sketcher you have probably been experimenting with different sizes and formats of pads and sketchbooks. You may have discovered how using different sizes and formats can influence the way you draw.

I have noticed many people when starting to draw tend to buy A4 or A3 sketchpads as these are the most common sizes available. I have also observed how unknowingly they can often continue to develop their drawing skills at this size and do not experiment with other sizes. Personally I think a little experimentation is always beneficial and choosing to draw and sketch at different sizes will help you discover new mark making skills and influence your drawing style and even the way you compose drawings.

I started using small sketchbooks quite a long time ago particularly for sketching en plein air as they have particular advantages.

- easy to carry
- they force me to focus on key elements of the subject
- help me to avoid getting carried away with too much detail
- enable me to produce sketches more quickly on site

I also tend to limit the mediums I carry with me so all my stuff can fit into a pocket or two. I usually choose one of the following.

- graphite
- fine liner pens
- watercolour pencils

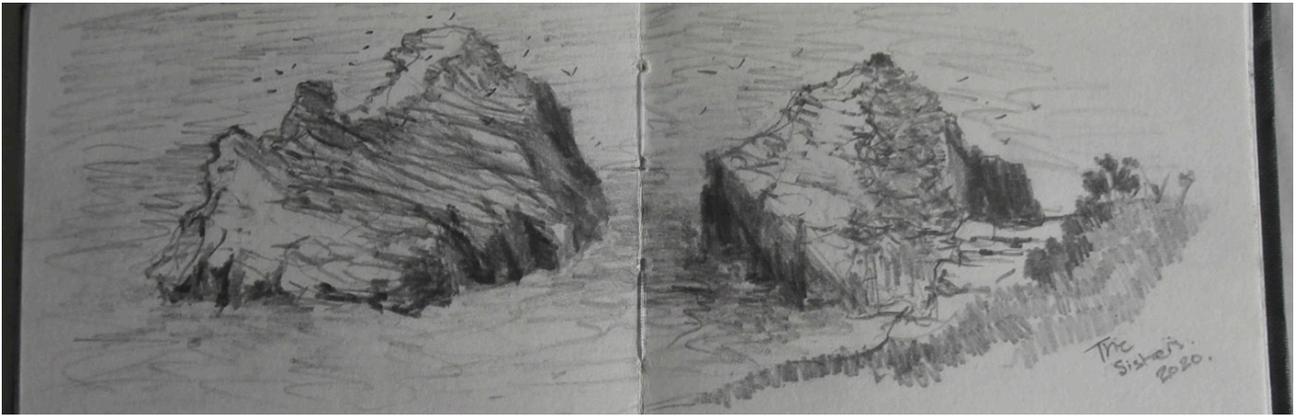
Having a limited choice of materials forces me to adapt my technique and style to fit the medium and also means I can get down to work more quickly.



Polzeath Beach Cornwall (graphite)

Clearly working on smaller formats means you have less space to make your marks and capture your subject, you have to look for the big shapes and lines and be economical with your mark making.

I am always surprised how its possible to capture big scale landscapes in a small format. When I return to my studio and open my sketchbook to review twork after an en plein air session it sometimes seems that the landscapes leap from the page and then expand into



The Sisters near Tintagel Cornwall (graphite)

my mind's eye. I feel its like condensing large spaces into small formats for safe keeping and posterity.

Strangely over time the size of my sketchbooks seems to be shrinking my current one is 11.5 x 9.0 centimetres, see above sketches. When opened out it creates a nicely proportioned panoramic format which I find perfect for landscape sketching landscapes

My earlier sketchbooks were 20 x 20 centimetres allowed me to capture more detail but were a bit large for my pockets, see below.



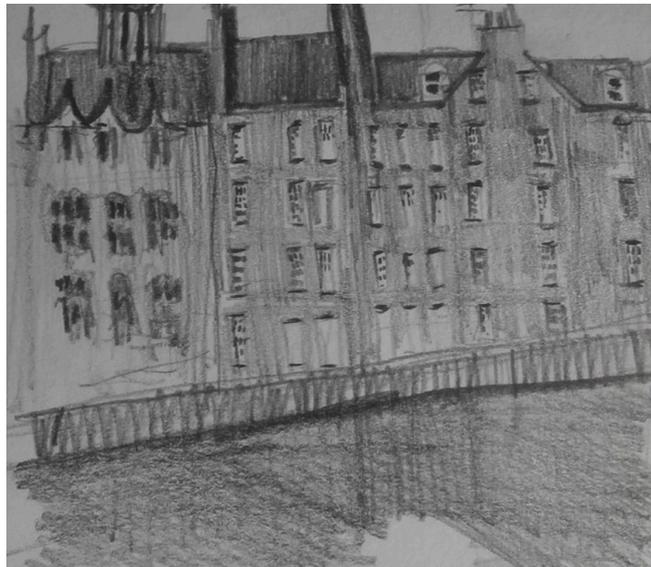
View towards Trebarwith and Gull Rock

This size however does allow you to develop more detail if you want to record a wider range of shapes and tones but is still quite compact.



Hilbre Island, off Wirral Merseyside

Another good pocket size is book 13.5 x 14.0 cms again they can be used as single sheets or panoramic running across two sheets.



Buildings Edinburgh

I keep all my mini books for reference and they also take me back to the time and place I did the sketches and provide special memory joggers quite different to photographs.

They take up minimal storage space and it is surprising how much reference material you have for future studio pieces.

So if you haven't gone small yet **go for it!!** Less room will mean you will develop your mark making techniques in new ways and I hope you discover that less can indeed be more.

Article by Paul Scragg  
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