

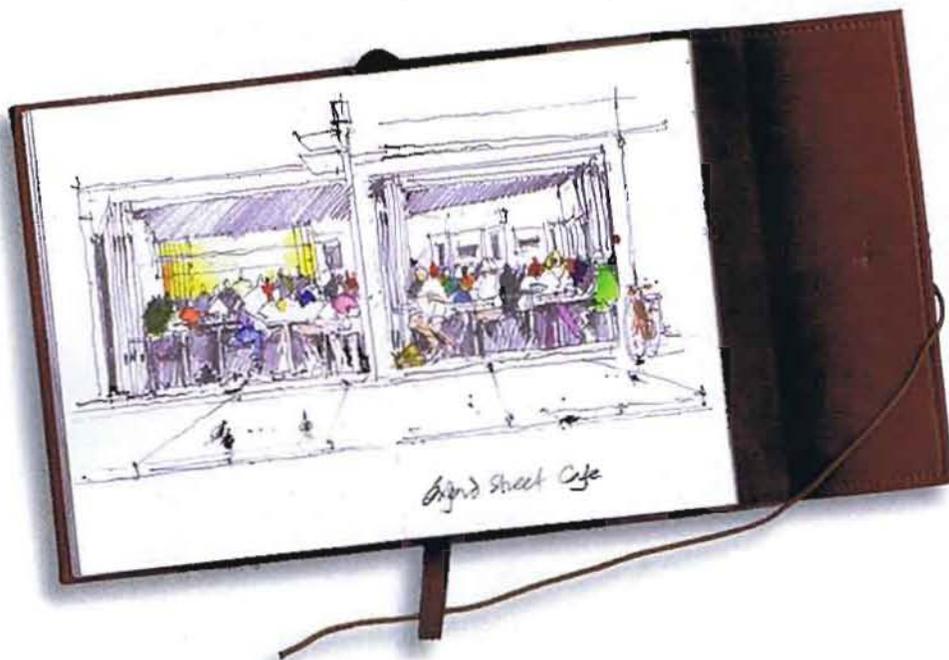


AUSTRALIA

WATERCOLOR

The Art of Seeing

MALCOLM CARVER SHOWS YOU WHY YOUR SKETCHBOOK IS PROBABLY MORE IMPORTANT TO AN ARTIST THAN THEIR HAPPY SNAPPER CAMERA



We used to call it sightseeing, but more often today it's snap, snap, as tourists disgorge from a bus. Today, in reality, it's apparent that there is a lot less looking and even less seeing, in travel.

As digital photography is effectively 'free' without the cost of film, no cost to process and perhaps no printing costs, there appears to be more photos with less discernment, less looking, less seeing and more snapping. "I might just look when I get home!" ...what a myth. Does someone really see things looking through the eye piece or glancing at the LCD display? "I'll sort these travel shots out one day" ... I suggest this might be an unlikely event. The time pressure of travelling seems to have negated the importance of the 'Art of Seeing'.

Having travelled extensively over many decades, I have come to appreciate that less is more. To stop more frequently and be constantly on the lookout for something special, has changed my travel habits. To sketch rather than just snap away, has

always been my preference, yet I'm more obsessive than ever.

Recently, in Italy, I saw many tourists clicking away and then back onto the bus - did they really see what I saw in sketching? Sure, I took a little longer. I still took a photo or two, to have a reference to finish the sketch later, but drawing makes you really look and study the scene, to actually see and appreciate how big, how wide. The added fulfilment to having travelled and retained a sketchbook, is quite compelling. A wonderful thing to share. I recommend it to all; even just a few sketches on a trip can be enormously fulfilling and rewarding. Even your best friends and family rarely wish to see your travel photos today in the digital age! Ah! but a sketchbook!!

Things change when you sit and draw - people emerge, bicycles, birds and even the odd animal appears. They all bring character into your scene. Yet tourists snap, snap, again and again, then move on to the next spot. What about smelling the roses, looking

at the detail, seeing the big shapes, seeing the light, and maybe there is a better time to see and come back later. Return when the sun is maybe in a different place, or when it might be a more active space - be flexible. The sketch of the Square in Fez, Morocco, was so much more exciting in early morning light and the little shop in Rome was more dramatic at night.

There can be many rewards from sketching wherever you are. A picture is worth a thousand words and it communicates in every conceivable language. What is it though about sketching that fascinates people? We sketchers do attract onlookers: if one was writing a diary, or removing cash from an ATM, there is an unwritten norm or code to step back at least. Perhaps, you are too self-conscious to sketch in public. I suggest you find a wall to stand up against, or find a corner to sketch from which prevents people from hovering to watch your every mark.

I take hundreds of photographs when travelling, forever seeking to find an angle, or something special to capture - a particular view if nothing else. Look always for the image worthy of a sketch. Maybe 10% of what is photographed ends up being worthy of stopping to do a sketch. 10% of all that is sketched may result in a studio painting i.e. 100 photos = 10 sketches = 1 studio painting.

There are special places, most intriguing things, compelling light, incredible depth or character - some things just grab you and after the sketch comes further discernment, and something worthy of a studio painting. This is the process that enriches your creative mind. As an example see the painting of the villa window in Tuscany.

Video has a place too, though more for recording atmosphere, feeling and sound, but the camera has certainty - it captures a fleeting moment and it freezes shadows. I don't remember photographs per se, but I particularly remember my sketches vividly, even years later, having stopped, observed,

Savu Savu Bay, Fiji



captured, corrected and distilled an image. Sure, some detail is suggested and not overstated. Whilst it's difficult to remember taking a photograph, I can recall a sketch - a kind of an indelible print on the forehead - something special, rarely forgotten. In fact it's special and then drawn, fond memories abound.

The photograph, as well as the sketch, is an invaluable reference if the sketch is chosen to lead to a studio painting.

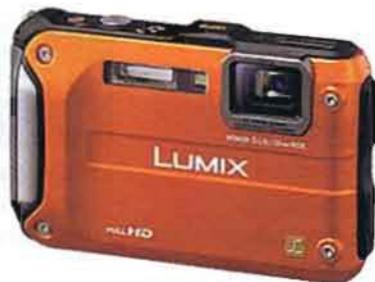
A great mentor, Lloyd Rees (1895-1988), was an intrepid traveller and an inspiration. Much time has been spent seeking out the classic viewpoints that he visited, yet travel was so limited fifty years ago. We are also more fortunate to now be able to use more technology, and more convenient locations to see unique viewpoints. However, Rees like Turner, and many before him, seemingly had more time, maybe a year's sabbatical to travel Europe. Time is now more precious for the current traveller and demands to see more seem to be increasing. →

seed



Recessed Shopfront, Woolahra

SOME OF THE TOOLS I USE ON MY TRIPS



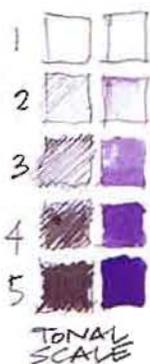
my art in the making

How to Evolve a Travel Sketch into a Studio Painting

Early Light, Villa Window Castello de Meleto, Tuscany, Italy

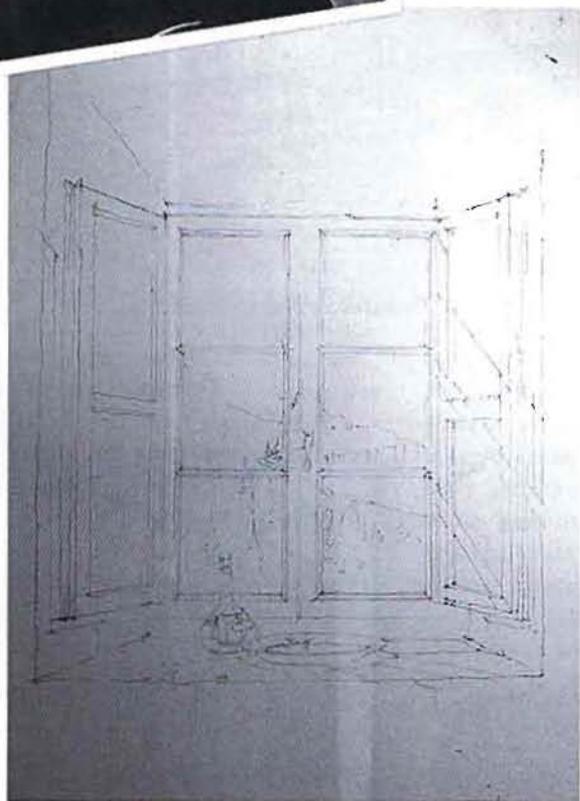


A black & white image removes colour from the equation and accentuates the tones.



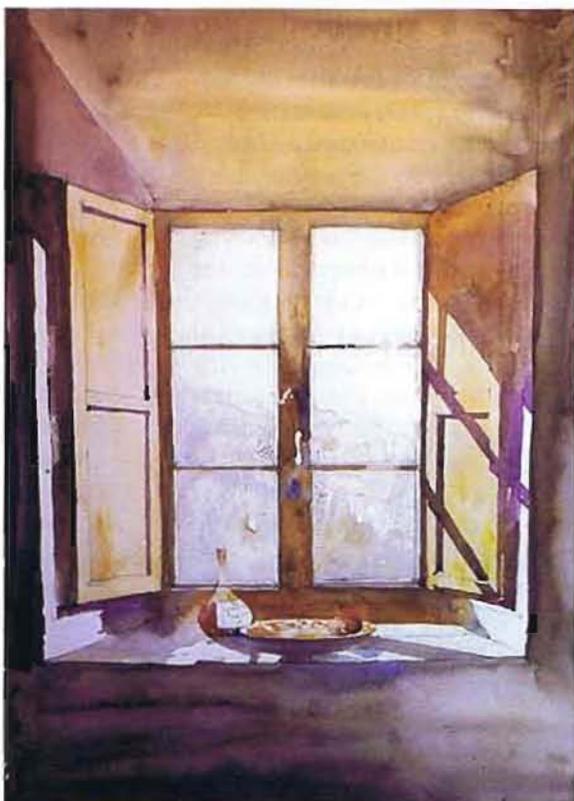
STAGE 1 Tonal sketch

The black and white tonal watercolour sketch was done in the sketchbook with a maximum of 5 tones at the villa I stayed in. I observed the full tonal range to create the backlit early morning sunlight.



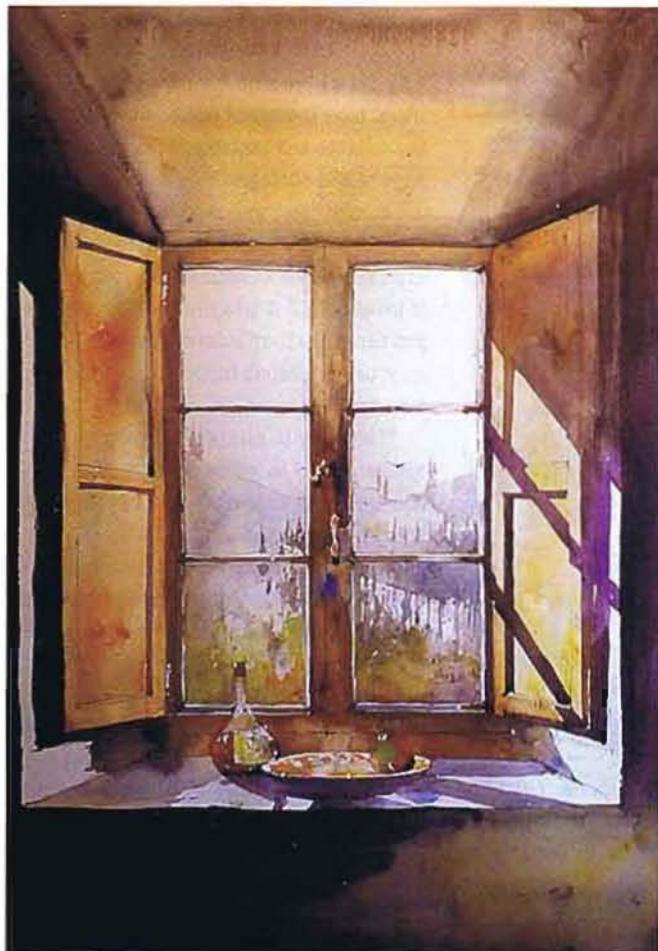
STAGE 2 Larger drawing

A more accurate larger drawing is then prepared, noting in particular how the light falls on the window surrounds and joinery. The drawing process requires close observation of the subject. Lightly sketch freely without a ruler and lighten with a kneading rubber to remove graphite. See the study of bottles to help with detail.



STAGE 3 Light washes

Begin painting with a light wash to block in areas, leaving the white of the paper on the sill and glass panes. The light wash is Quinacridone Gold and Burnt Sienna. My darks are splats of Ultramarine Violet, Burnt Sienna and sometimes Ultramarine Blue. The outside landscape is a weak wash of greyish water with a drop of Quinacridone Gold.



STAGE 4 Keep it fresh

Paint over shadow areas with stronger darks and add splats of fresh, juicy colorful pigments into wet areas. Do not mix colours on the palette, but allow colours to mix on the paper to attain freshness. Remember to soften edges on distant background shapes with a bristle brush or tissue, to help create the illusion of depth. Use recessive Cerulean Blue for distant landscape touches. Add green touches for suggestions of landscape and fruit.

What the Artist Used

Paper

Cartridge paper in Winsor & Newton Sketch Book
For larger work I use hot press (smooth)
Arches 185gsm watercolour paper

Brushes

Travel Round brush No 5 and No 8 (excellent for maintaining sharp points in pockets)

Camera

Panasonic Lumix FT3 Tough, unbreakable and waterproof
(I leave the larger SLR camera at home as the weight of too much gear is critical when travelling)

Other Materials

Pentel 'Twist Erase' Pencil 0.7 leads 2B grade
Mitsubishi Uniball Pen in white for highlights
Schmincke Aquarelle Masking Fluid in travel pack size 730
Spray Bottle
Kneadable Rubber or Blu Tac
Tissues

Palettes

Palette 1 (small)
Palette 2 (Medium)
Palette 3 (large).
They are all pocket-size with the smallest being 6 x 4cm. The medium one is excellent as it's really sold as a pill box and sealed air tight, to not spill and so that the pigments stay moist. The largest is the classic Winsor & Newton Travel Kit.

Artists' quality watercolour

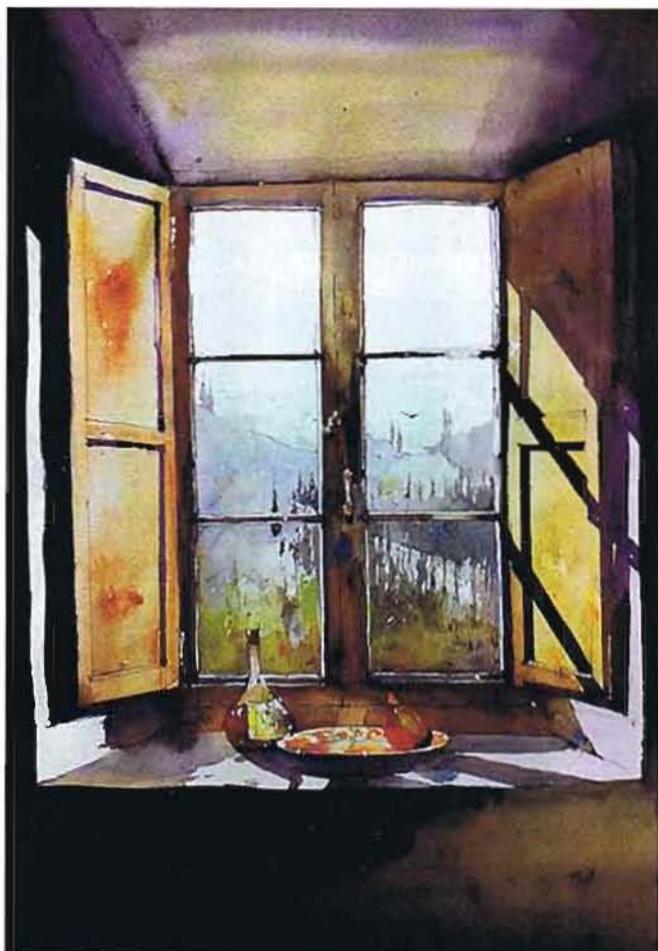
Cadmium Red
Cadmium Orange
Quinacridone Gold
Burnt Sienna
Brown Madder

Cerulean Blue

French Ultramarine Blue

Ultramarine Violet

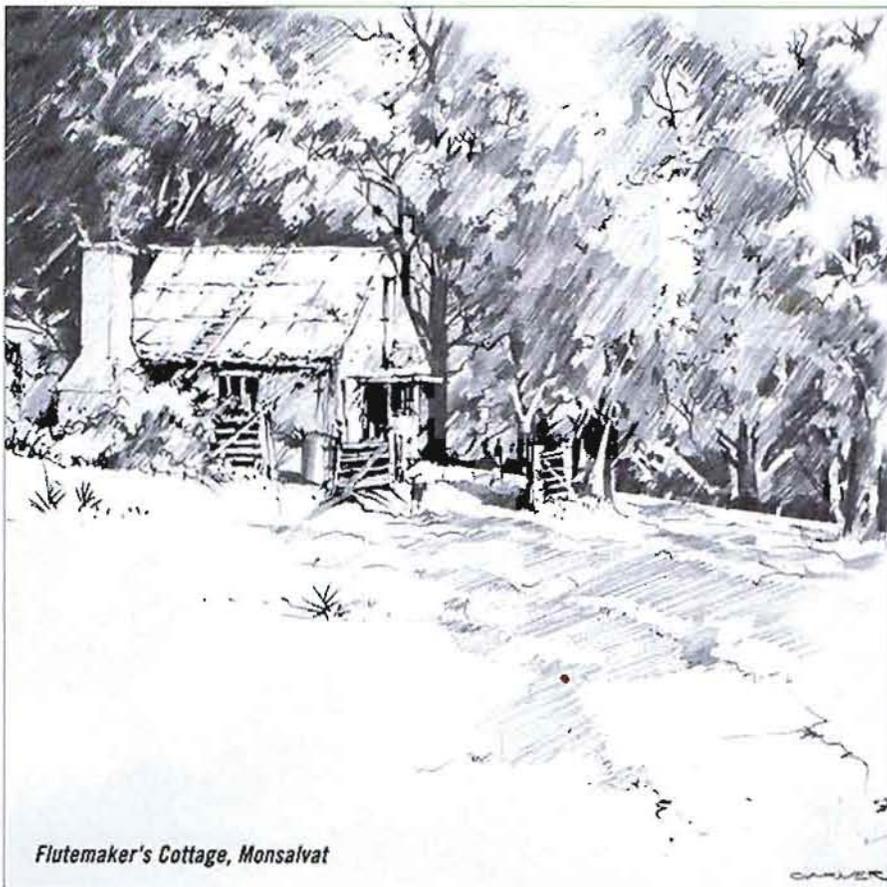
Charcoal Grey in a tube to paint monotoes



STAGE 5 How to finish off

Lay in again further dark washes for the wall behind and beneath the solid window shutters. Add further detail on the hardware. The occasional splatter of colour like Quinacridone Gold on the panels and Cerulean Blue on the sill, ties the painting and connects areas. Finish the painting with a fine white pen to create some life in the darks and a touch of suggestive detail, but don't outline anything in a black pen.





Flutemaker's Cottage, Monsalvat

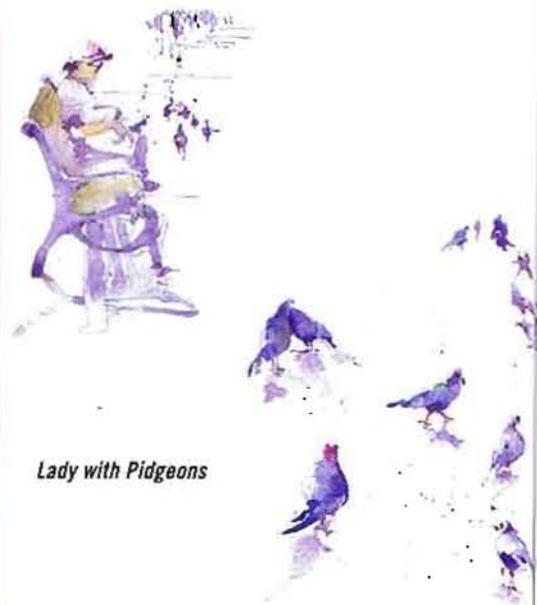
→ Now is the time to slow down, enjoy more and appreciate fewer places, yet observe with more intensity. Alas, the pleasures of travel have increased accordingly; savouring the delights and tantalising the memories. Anyone can photograph - some good some not so well - less can sketch, though the discipline of slowing down enriches the experience. The sketchbook on your return is invaluable, but many of the photographs, you can "take it or leave it". Paste a reward on your sketchbook inside cover. You would hate to lose it.

The ability to capture and respond spontaneously in whatever medium is enormously rewarding. I used to just keep one sketchbook and add to it with an assortment of where I've been. Nowadays, I simply keep a small sketchbook of specific places where I travel. To give more meaning to a place or country when I return to that place, I can add sketches. Most books are incomplete and I add to a sketchbook when I return to that place. The sketches then have more specific context and relevance.

It's true that often interruptions occur and sketches remain with that unfinished touch. The photograph comes to the fore to assist with some further detail. However, a more recent phenomenon to aid the artist is the Apple Ipad or similar laptop, that enables you to back up your photos each day. The 10 inch screen size is particularly useful as a reference and enlargement of detail is a quick instant finger movement. Coupled with the ability to google travel details and maps on the road, it has now proved to be an essential travel companion.

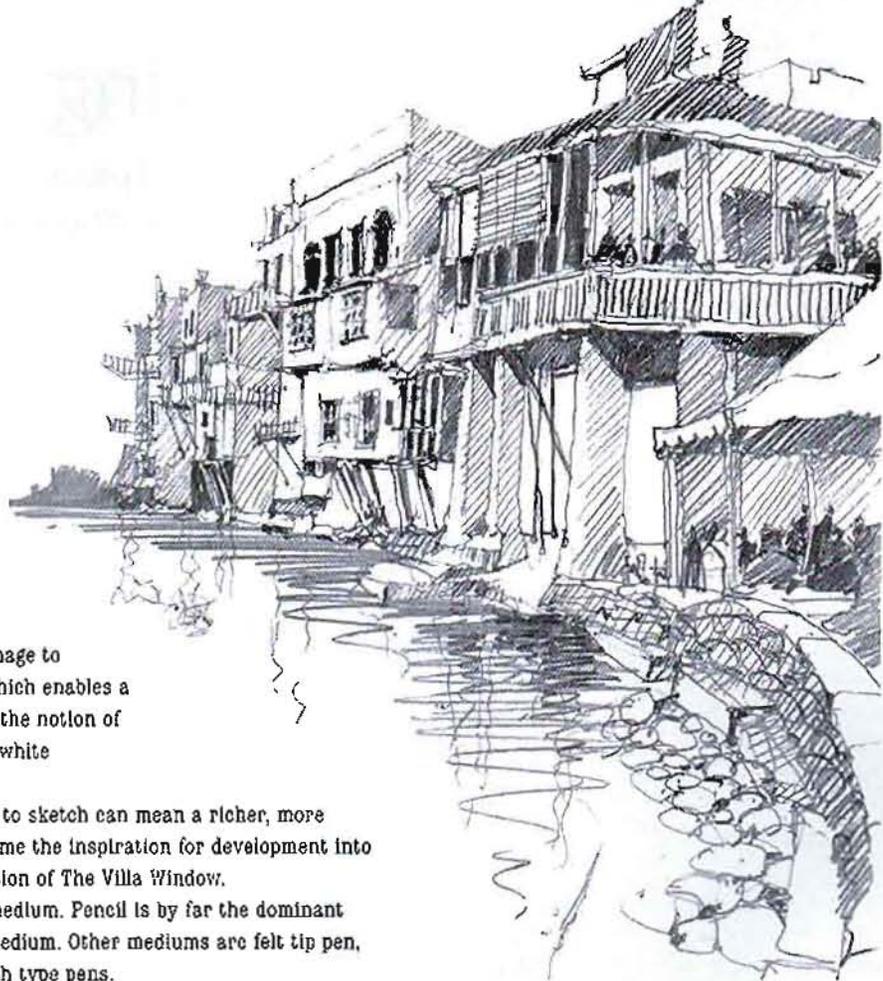
My Design and Compositional Tactics

- The notion of light does not appear magically at the end. Capture the light from the very first step and then preserve it, and enhance it till the end.
- The limited colour palette is intentional to reduce complexity using primarily complementary colours of purple and yellow.
- The dramatic composition is framed with a centre of interest, being the light source.
- Keep sketches small or less than A4 (Letter size), as anything bigger becomes more time consuming. Work fast and don't overwork.
- Protect the primary strong light direction and seek consistency and continuity throughout, particularly with shadows, to reveal the shapes. Seek out reflected light and ensure shadows have hard and soft edges. Use soft hazy edges in areas to indicate the intensity of light.



Lady with Pigeons

Little Venice, Mykonos, Greece.



Thus, there are tools like Ipad which aid the ability to see, with applications that allow the image to be reversed, or to convert to black and white, which enables a clear understanding of tones. Darks help create the notion of light, as does the retention and inclusion of the white of the paper.

The importance of taking time out on travels to sketch can mean a richer, more memorable experience. The sketchbook can become the inspiration for development into studio painting, like the step by step demonstration of *The Villa Window*.

The following examples of sketches vary in medium. Pencil is by far the dominant medium and watercolour, the preferred colour medium. Other mediums are felt tip pen, fine fountain pen, often with sepia ink, and brush type pens.

Photography is a wonderful pursuit, yet sketching, travelling and taking it all in can be an even greater memorable event. You might just try and pick up a pencil today to embark on a new world, to really begin to train your eye, to see rather than snap. □

about the artist

Malcolm Carver is an Architect and has over the past 40 years, travelled extensively in Europe, Australia, Asia and the Americas. He has devoted these experiences to creating extensive travel sketchbooks, providing valuable inspiration for his painting workshops and studio work in watercolour. He also leads contemporary architecture tours each year to special places around the world.

Malcolm has an enlightened and passionate approach to sketching, drawing and watercolour painting. He believes that we can all draw to a degree and we can learn to see, like other life skills. He seeks to reinforce the fundamental skill of seeing and sketching before painting, by simplifying detail in drawing techniques and learning to see shapes.

Member of the Australian Institute of Architects
Member of Royal Institute of British Architects
Member Australian Watercolour Institute
Associate Member Royal Art Society
President of Ku-ring-gai Arts Society

Patron Grafton Artsfest

Email: mcarver@me.com
Websites: www.malcolmcarver.com.au
www.aquarellegallery.com.au/malcolmcarver

JOIN ME IN VENICE AND ASSISI, ITALY

WORKSHOP WEDNESDAY 18 APRIL 2011 TO MONDAY 30 APRIL, 2012

*13 days of painting and exploration in two wonderful cities,
Venice and Assisi. See page 142 for full details*

Future workshops

Travelrite USA Architecture Tour of the Work of Frank Lloyd Wright: 6-25 October 2011

Australian Artist Painting Workshop, Western Australia: 17-29 November 2011

