



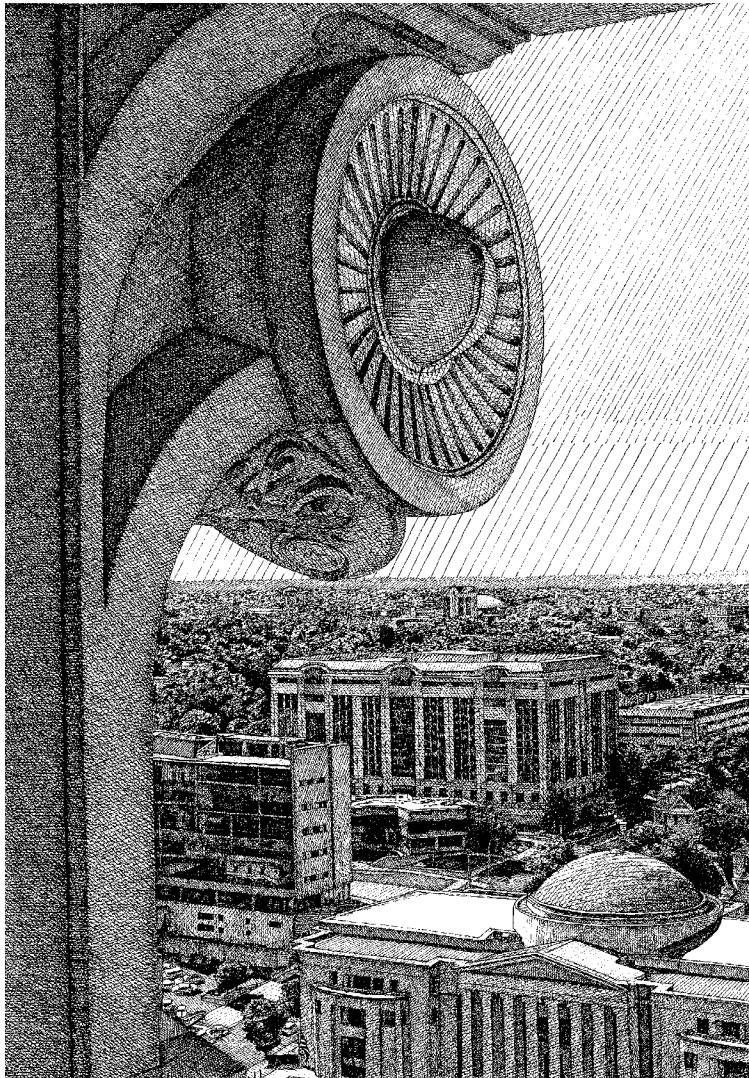
artist daily
presents

PEN AND INK DRAWING TECHNIQUES

Drawing with Ink
to Create Art with
Strong Contrast and
Surprising Subtlety

PRESERVATION *in Pen & Ink*

by **Melissa B. Tubbs**



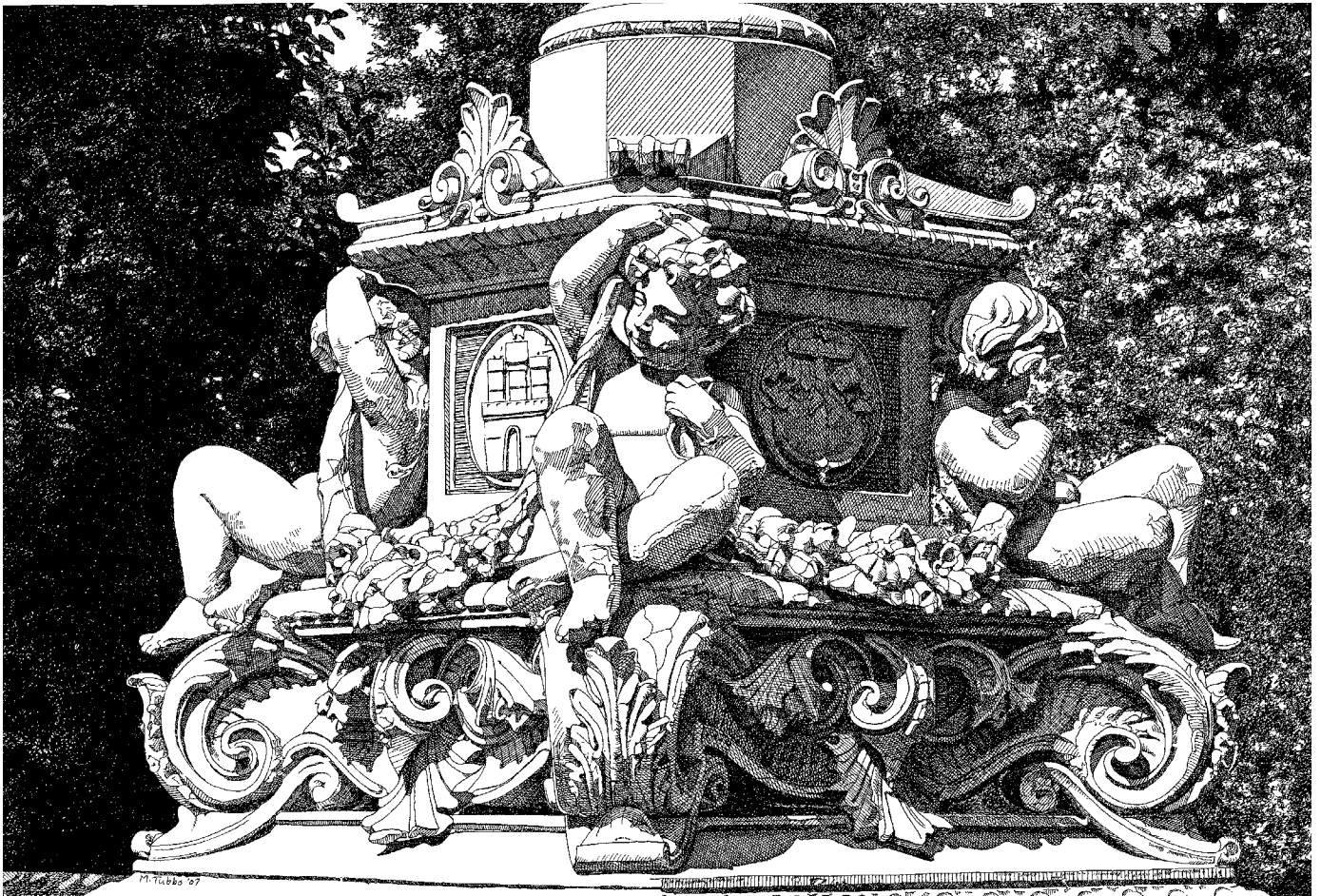
In the mid-90s, I was sensing a lack of focus and accomplishment in my drawings and pastel paintings. I felt a need to concentrate on one medium and develop into the very best artist I was capable of becoming—and, at the same time, to create work that was marketable. Those concerns led me to find a medium few other artists were using, and determine how to provide a service people valued.

At about that time, my sister came to me with the kind of request artists often receive. She asked if I would create an original drawing of her father-in-law's house that she could give him as a Christmas gift. Fulfilling such requests from family members for holiday or wedding gifts, children's portraits, or commemorative documents is often a thankless and unprofitable enterprise. However, in this case, it gave me an idea of how I might change the direction of my art career.

I put a lot of effort into that house portrait, and several people who saw my pen-and-ink drawing ordered similar renderings of their dwellings. With that encouragement, I asked a local gift shop to display a few of my drawings of historic homes in hopes of attracting more commissions. That display led to an ongoing assignment from a local law firm (Gidiere, Hinton, and Herndon

Looking South
by Melissa R. Tubbs,
2009, pen-and-ink,
12 x 9.

of Montgomery, Alabama) to document every courthouse in Montgomery and the surrounding counties.



Lombard Lamp
Central Park
South, NYC
by Melissa Tubbs, 2007,
pen-and-ink, 8 x 11 $\frac{3}{4}$.

To date, I have created more than a dozen such courthouse drawings that are now framed and displayed in the law offices; the firm allowed me to reproduce the images on note cards sold throughout the region.

Within a relatively short period of time, I began to concentrate on drawing buildings of architectural significance or the decorative ornaments on those structures. Some were in danger of being altered or demolished, and a few fragments were already removed from their original place of honor. My work became an act of preservation, something that was and still is very satisfying to me. For example, in 1995, the Will's Guild Montgomery chapter of the American Institute of Architects' Tour of Homes

committee commissioned six drawings of the buildings open during their annual tour. Those drawings brought me a great deal of additional attention in the region and reinforced my standing as an artist available for drawing private homes and public buildings.

In 1997, I ended a career as an art director and the managing editor of a magazine to become a full-time fine artist. I simply needed more time to fulfill commissions, and I had ideas about expanding my art business by making proposals to area businesses and institutions. Three months after I resigned from my job, the Montgomery Area Business Committee for the Arts accepted my proposal to create five drawings that were given to businesses supporting the arts; a year later, the Montgomery

Museum of Fine Arts commissioned a series of eight drawings of the interior and exterior of its building, and a short time later, the museum asked me to teach drawing classes.

In the past 15 years, the number of opportunities I've received to create collections of drawings, lecture on my work, apply for grants, teach classes, and enter juried shows has been greater than I ever imagined. In 1999, I received a \$14,000 grant award from the Mellon Bank in Pittsburgh to support the publication of a brochure, approach galleries, and—most important—create more drawings. In 2002, I participated in a National Trust for Historic Preservation study tour in New York. In 2009, my drawing, *Carnegie Hall, NYC* was included in the book "Strokes of Genius 2: The Best of Drawing Light and Shadow." In 2010



Terra-Cotta Faces, Goatman
by Melissa R. Tubbs,
2009, pen-and-ink,
9 3/8 x 14 1/4.
and 2011, I was commissioned by Strathmore Artist Papers to create drawings for their newly re-designed drawing pad covers, 400 Series smooth surface and 500 Series Bristol plate finish. *Urban Lion* was created for the 400 series pads and a drawing of their logo, the thistle, was created for the 500 series.

Materials and Techniques

My drawings are based on photographs I take with Nikon D50 digital SLR camera with a zoom lens and an additional longer range zoom lens for taking pictures of ornamentation on taller buildings. I shoot overall photographs of the subjects, trying to get the best composition within the lens so I can use one of those images as the basis of a drawing. I take a lot of detail photographs at different exposures so I capture important information in both the shadow and sunlit areas. I determine when to take photographs of buildings in order to get the best shadows by noting which direction they face. If facing east, take pictures in mid-to-late

morning. If facing west, mid-to-late afternoon. If the building faces south, the best time is either early morning or late afternoon. I prefer late afternoon because I like the shadows going from left to right. It is almost impossible to get a photograph with strong shadows of a building facing north because the sun stays so low in the sky—especially in the winter. I print color images on HP Premium Plus glossy photo paper from which to work.

After trying a number of different pens, inks, papers, and boards, I found the combination of materials that works best for me. The pen I preferred to use is no longer available. I have had to find a new pen to use twice now because the manufacturers stopped making the pens that I used. I now primarily use the Rotring Isograph. The barrel is shorter than a rapidograph so there is less chance of clogging. It is always ready to use. The point glides smoothly along the paper and the ink is a rich, dense black and lightfast. These pens come in several point sizes. I use the smallest which is .18. Rotring pens are no longer sold in North America so I purchase them online.

In my search for a pen to use for my architectural drawings I discovered two pens that work well for other types of drawings. The Copic

Multiliner SPs, a Japanese made pen, is wonderful for very small drawings requiring more wispy type line; and Prismacolor Premier Fine Line Markers for drawings when a warmer black ink is needed. Both of these pens come in several point sizes and may be purchased in artist supply stores and hobby shops or online. The inks in these pens are also lightfast.

I prefer to work on sheets of Strathmore 400 series drawing paper because of its rich, warm, off-white color and the way the surface accepts the ink. I know many other pen-and-ink artists work on illustration boards, but I find them to be either too stiff or too glaringly bright. This archival drawing paper can be purchased in pads, in rolls and in sheets. The rolls of paper have been very useful when creating a drawing larger than the largest pad or sheet size.

After sketching the basic design of a subject with a graphite pencil, I lay in the underlying details in the first layers of ink. Those details include the shadow areas that may not be clearly seen in the finished drawing, but add depth to the image. I slowly build up layers of lines in one small area at a time, changing the direction of my parallel lines so the combination of hatched and cross-hatched marks adequately describes the shape and volume of the subject. When I put a line down, I want the marks to be deliberate and confident, not tentative and sketchy. In addition to the number of layers of lines, I can also control values by the amount of space I leave between the lines. As the drawing progresses, I continually add several more layers of lines to the darkest areas to strengthen value contrast.

If I am uncertain how to handle a

TOP RIGHT
Urban Lion
by Melissa R. Tubbs,
2010, pen-and-ink,
13 x 9.

BOTTOM RIGHT
Doors & Porches,
Home Again
by Melissa R. Tubbs,
2009, pen-and-ink,
13½ x 9½.

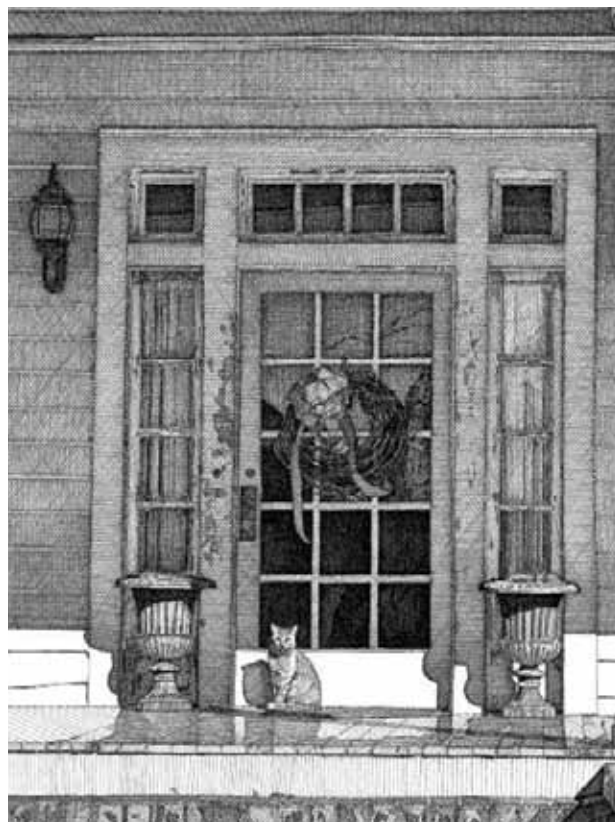
passage in a drawing or how to present a new subject, I look through my library of books on drawing and printmaking to get ideas from both a master like Albrecht Dürer and a contemporary

artist like Barry Moser. The variety of line patterns in the reproduced wood engravings, etchings, ink drawings, and woodcuts can suggest new ways of developing flat patterns, dimensional shadows, strong contrasts, clear edges, and effective compositions.

I work best in intervals of two hours or so, with 30-minute breaks between each session. I often get so excited about a developing picture that I have to force myself to take breaks, especially as I'm nearing the completion of a drawing and become impatient to evaluate my finished work. The final shadow patterns pull all the individual areas together and make the drawing "pop" with the contrast of values and the added depth. It can take anywhere from two hours, for the smallest drawing, to 70 hours, for the largest drawing, to complete a work.

Recording the Drawings

When I complete a drawing, I have it professionally scanned and filed on a CD. These scans hold the line detail of my drawings beautifully. I can e-mail images, upload images to show entry sites, burn to CDs to mail and reproduce images as needed. The cost is nominal because the work is black and white. Technology has really made it so much easier than when we had to have slides made. ■





Ink Along & Around the Form

FROM HONORÉ DAUMIER AND CHARLES DANA GIBSON TO CONTEMPORARY NEW YORKERS DAVID BEYNON PENA AND NEIL MCMILLAN, ARTISTS HAVE FOUND THAT PEN-AND-INK IS A MEDIUM THAT ALLOWS QUICK WORK, STRONG CONTRAST, AND SURPRISING SUBTLETY.

by **John A. Parks**

Picturesque America
Anywhere Along
the Beach
by Charles Dana Gibson,
pen-and-ink.

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The Golden Age of Illustration continues to exert a lively influence on American art. In the late-19th- and early-20th centuries, the advent of mass printing, the widespread distribution of magazines, and the somewhat primitive state of photography combined to give illustration a unique power. A number of immensely skilled artists were able to deploy their talents before an enormous public and amass considerable riches. Along the way they established an approach to representation that is uniquely American. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the pen-and-ink sketches of Charles Dana Gibson

(1867–1944). Gibson reworked the venerable art of pen-and-ink to suit the ebullience and optimism of a new continent and a new age. He invented the character of the Gibson Girl, a smart, independent, vivacious, and attractive type of young lady whose presence and poise command the respect and admiration of the entire male gender. In a typical example, *Picturesque America—Anywhere Along the Beach*, a group of the Gibson Girls are amusingly presented instead of the expected landscape of the

title. Not only is the subject a celebration of modernity but the way the image is made also conveys a very modern sense defined by a certain zippiness and general light-heartedness.

In order to understand just how this look is achieved it is worth comparing the piece to a pen-and-ink work by a European draftsman of the previous generation, Honoré Daumier (1808-1879). In *Clown With Drum* we see an equally prodigious talent also deploying a fast and sure line to illustrate a highly readable

Hercules Overpowering a Lion
by Raphael, pen-and-ink over preliminary indentation with the stylus, 10 $\frac{3}{16}$ x 10 $\frac{1}{16}$.
Collection Ashmolean Museum of Art and Archaeology, Oxford, England.





TOP LEFT
Subway Commuter
by David Beynon Pena,
2006, pen-and-ink.

TOP RIGHT
Study After Charles
Daumier
by David Beynon Pena,
2008, pen-and-ink.

principal technical difference between the two works apart from the inclusion of a wash in the Daumier is that the Gibson drawing runs nearly all the pen strokes in one direction along each form. You can see this very clearly in the extended legs of the nearest girl in Picturesque America, where the lines all run down the leg. The Daumier, on the other hand, runs pen lines both along and around the forms. In European drawing, going back to the Renaissance, the idea was to use hatching to both build tone and to display the contour

scene. And yet we sense immediately that the work is European and attached to the great tradition of draftsmen going back to the Renaissance. The

of the form. A drawing by Raphael, Hercules Overpowering a Lion, shows typical freehand hatching running both ways around the form, particularly in the legs and in the back of the figure.

We can see in the Gibson drawing that the artist abandoned the attempt to fully describe the form. By simply running the line one way along the form he stated only the tonal position and thereby created a much more lively appearance in the image as a whole. This effort is combined with a greater simplification of contour than Daumier attempted. While nearly all drawing involves editing and selection, Gibson seems to have taken an extra step, reducing figures, clothing, and space to a concise repertoire of highly readable shapes. For the viewer it is like eating ice cream—and the American public really did lap it up. Gibson commanded an income of more than \$50,000 a

year in the late 19th century, a colossal fortune in today's dollars. He owned an island off the coast of Maine and, when one of his principal publishers—Life magazine—got into financial difficulties he simply bought the whole thing. He married into the Astor family, and even had the Gibson martini named after him.

Gibson's stylistic adventures influenced the next generation of illustrators, particularly the work of James Montgomery Flagg (1877–1960). Most famous for his work in color, which included the legendary recruitment poster of Uncle Sam, Flagg did many pen-and-ink drawings that clearly owe a considerable debt to Gibson. Flagg worked directly in ink, without any preparatory graphite, to achieve a powerfully decisive finish. The illustrator and portraitist Everett Raymond Kinstler (1926–) continued the tradition.



Clown With Drum

by Honoré Daumier, ca. 1865, black chalk, pen-and-ink, wash, watercolor, gouache, and Conté crayon on paper, 13¼ x 10. Collection The British Museum, London, England.



ABOUT THE ARTIST

David Beynon Pena first came into contact with the tradition of American illustration when, at the age of 16, he watched Everett Raymond Kinstler do a demonstration portrait of Mario Cooper. He was captivated. After studying at New York's High School of Art & Design, he enrolled at the Phoenix School of Art just as it was taken over by the Pratt Institute. There he found himself working under Clifford Young, a brilliant illustrator who had also been a mentor to Kinstler many years before at the Dunn School of Illustration, in Leonia, New Jersey. Pena's talent and enthusiasm were quickly recognized by the group of mature artists who gathered at The National Arts Club and the Salmagundi Art Club. Eventually Pena would find himself working as an assistant to Kinstler and talks appreciatively of the older artist's mentoring and help over a number of years. Today Pena keeps a studio on Union Square in Manhattan and plies the trade of a portrait painter with great success.

Neil McMillan grew up in South Carolina and was an avid artist as a child. When it came time for college, however, he attended The Citadel, in Charleston, South Carolina, intending to take up a career in medicine. Shortly after graduating, a bout of frostbite in his fingers during a hike on the Appalachian Trail alerted him to how much he valued his hands and his ability to draw. Nudged by this experience he began to study at the Art Students League of New York and the New York Academy of Art. He has particular praise for the teaching of Frank Porcu, Andrew Reiss, Ephraim Rubenstein, and Costa Vavagiakis.

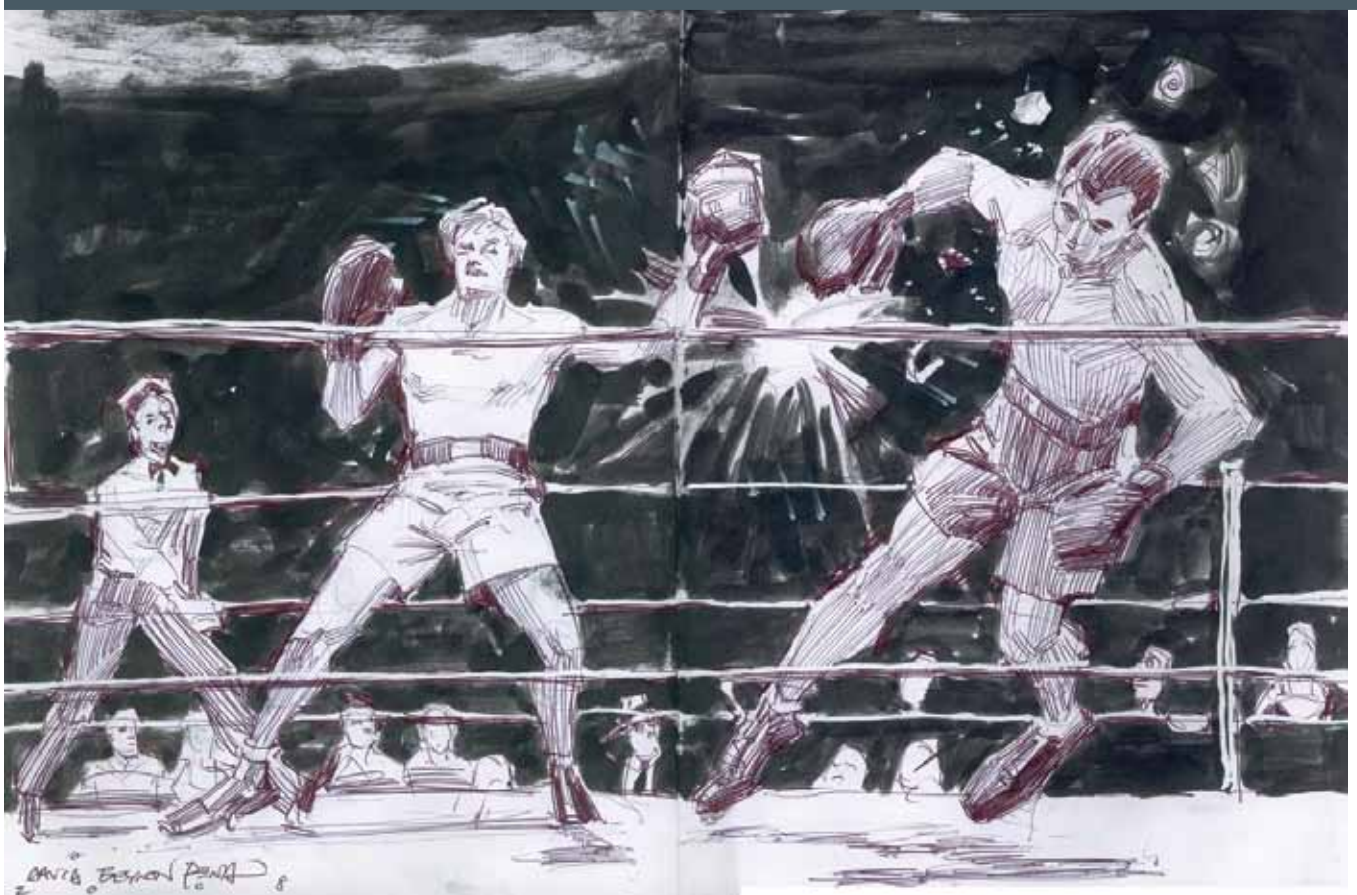


ABOVE

Vanessa Redgrave
by David Beynon Pena,
2007, pen-and-ink.

RIGHT

Amy Brown and
Gavin Lee in Mary
Poppins
by David Beynon Pena,
2007, pen-and-ink.



Left Jab at the Garden
by David Beynon Pena, 2008, pen-and-ink with wash.

The work of two contemporary New York artists demonstrates that both the Renaissance tradition of hatching both ways around a form and the American illustrative tradition of carrying the hatching only one way along a form remain very much alive. David Beynon Pena and Neil McMillan are both avid practitioners of the art of pen-and-ink, but each has adopted a different approach. “I carry my sketchbook everywhere,” says Pena. “I draw wherever I happen to be—on the subway, waiting on line at the pharmacy, or outdoors in the park.” Pena works with both fountain pens and Bic ballpoint Clic Stic pens. “Ballpoint is very convenient,” he points out. “If you lose one you can always find another one close by—some stores such as Kinkos or FedEx even give them away.” The artist also finds that pulling out a ballpoint pen is less threatening or unusual to most people since it is a tool that everybody uses. In the studio he is more inclined to work with a traditional nib. “I love working with an assortment of Sheaffer,

Mont Blanc, Pelikan, Parker, Platignum Silverline, and Waterman fountain pens,” he says. “Although nothing can compare with the sharp contrast and efficacy of the Crow Quill nib.” Pena relishes the strengths of pen-and-ink, in particular its portability, its speed, and its demand for sureness of hand. “There are no excuses with pen-and-ink,” he states. “Ink is permanent and—as with golf—every stroke counts, and less is more.”

Primarily a portrait artist with an avid following, Pena uses pen-and-ink as a means of honing his skills and as a tool to refine his ideas for individual paintings. A trip on the subway usually finds him sketching fellow passengers. “I’m careful not to stare too much at any one person,” he says, “although sometimes the person sitting next to you can give you away by staring from your sketchbook to the subject and back again.” The artist will also use his traveling time to think through a painting he is planning in the studio. “Pen-and-ink is a good medium to refine ideas about how things are going to be placed or just how you are going to show an arm or a hand,” he explains. Pena will

tuck working photographs into his sketchbook to make this possible. Recently, the artist has found himself spending an hour once a week traveling out to teach a class at the Visual Arts Center of New Jersey, in Summit. He uses the time to prepare the forthcoming lesson in his sketchbook, demonstrating his approach to drawing the world. “I always tell my students that I don’t have a magic pill that can turn them into artists,” he says. “What I can teach them is principles.”

Like Gibson, Pena uses a drawing style in which the line runs along the form, not around it. “When the line is running just one way it is really just a tonal statement,” he explains. In general, Pena propounds a very clear idea about the way in which a work is constructed. “I think of it as a five-step process,” the artist says. “First comes the concept, the idea. This is usually a fairly linear thing. Second comes the construction, which deals with everything that we see. We can think of seeing all forms from three sides: front, one side, and then either the top or the bottom. Having broken the forms down, third is dividing the subject into areas of light and shadow. Once we have achieved this, fourth we can observe that every area has a contour and those contours have to be refined, which is where the halftones come in. We have to look at the areas where light and shadow meet, and resolve them. Last, we have to make sure that everything is consistent.”

This breakdown of the pictorial process yields drawings that have a kind of angular jauntiness. A sketch of Vanessa Redgrave finds the artist rendering the jaw and chin in a series of almost straight lines, an approach that is also particularly evident in the drawing of the eyebrows. The form emerges as a kind of construction framework reinforced by areas of tone established in quick strokes running along the form. In the deep darks of nostril holes and eyelids the line and tone coalesce into rich, dark accents that nicely anchor the illusion.



TOP
‘A’ Train
by Neil McMillan, 2008, pen-and-ink, 5½ x 7.

ABOVE
Diego, ‘A’ Train
by Neil McMillan, 2008, pen-and-ink, 5½ x 7.

Studies in Expression—An Imitation of the Lady of the House by Charles Dana Gibson, pen-and-ink.

Neil McMillan is also a passionate devotee of pen-and-ink. Like Pena, McMillan takes a sketchbook everywhere, a habit he began when studying under Ephraim Rubenstein at the Art Students League of New York, in Manhattan. “The first day that I met him, he suggested that everyone carry a small sketchbook,” says McMillan. “I was hesitant to do so, but it immediately became an addiction. The bulk of my sketches were first done in graphite. As I began to adjust to the medium and approach, I found that some limitations of graphite were less suited for doing candid sketches. I was doing a lot of figure drawing in the stu-

dio and classroom at the time, and I was most comfortable with subjects who were perfectly still. My initial sketches were people sleeping on the subway, or in the park. Over time, I became bolder with the approach. I began to draw people who were animated, or in conversation. I find that the movement and risk of ruining the drawing or of getting caught adds a whole new level of excitement to the experience. I would often get caught drawing because the sound of the pencil scratching, the sound of sharpening, or pulling out the blade to sharpen would attract too much attention. I began doing the sketches in pen-and-ink because it’s better suited for sneaking up on people.”

Although McMillan’s drawings

enjoy the same speedy attack as those of Pena, his line is more searching and less graphic in feel. Often the main construction lines are “felt for” and restated once or twice before being laid down more decisively. And then lines, once established, are often modified by hatched contours moving around and away from them. While his approach is less studied than wholly academic drawing, McMillan will freely draw contour lines both around and along the form. The result is something of a hybrid that harks back to earlier approaches to pen-and-ink and is reflected in the curious mixture of artists that McMillan most admires: Leonardo da Vinci, Rembrandt, Hokusai, and Al Hirschfeld. McMillan seems more comfortable than any of



these artists in leaving sections of his drawings unresolved, and it is sometimes the case that his abilities as a draftsman are considerably challenged by the complexities of a subject. To his credit, the artist bravely leaves us to consider the results of his battle with the subject matter. Throughout all the work there is an obvious delight in the sheer presence of pen-and-ink as a medium. “Its winning qualities are contrast, permanence, and elegance,” says McMillan. Talking of its powers of contrast he says, “Ballpoint pens may respond to pressure, offering a slight range of line values, more like graphite. But I find the limitations of felt-tip pens to be a wonderful transition. When drawing, it’s either on or off. This characteristic forces one to problem-solve in order to achieve value gradations. It has forced me to become more aware of hatching direction, line-spacing, and individual line thickness and variation.”

McMillan finds the permanence of ink is most desirable in a sketchbook where continued handling and abrasion can degrade a graphite drawing but leave a pen line as fresh as the moment it was done. As for elegance, the artist feels that much of the quality of pen-and-ink arises from the inability to erase it. “This limitation forces one’s mindset and mark-making to adapt,” he says. “When I switched to pen-and-ink, I found that my lines had to become looser and more sensitive in the beginning. As a whole, the liquid medium is just more sensitive than graphite or other dry media. The lines tend to be more elegant.”



Pigeon on my Window Ledge
by David Beynon Pena,
2007, pen-and-ink.

as a painter. “When I began doing pen-and-ink sketches, I was also beginning to learn how to paint in oil,” the artist explains. “I was doing a lot of painting and found that I was having difficulty thinking in terms of paint—that is, thinking in terms of pigment on top of surface. I’m not certain that pen-and-ink fits the bill, but there is something about it that I find more akin to oil painting than graphite.” The artist also finds that he uses his sketches to explore composition ideas that apply to later studio work. “Some of my favorite paintings were derived from compositional ideas that I explored on the subway and streets of New York,” he says. “I learned this from Seurat. I will never forget the exhibition of his work at MoMA this past year. It was amazing

McMillan also finds that pen-and-ink helps considerably with his work

to see his sketchbooks from the parks and streets. They were all studies for the figures in his paintings. It was wonderful to see his raw choice of subjects.”

For the future McMillan sees himself expanding his pen-and-ink work. “I’d like to try a greater variety of materials—maybe brush or nib work,” he says. “I am still trying to get more variation out of my lines. In general, I think that ‘less is more’ with pen-and-ink. This isn’t always true. But I would like to simplify my use of line.”

Although both Pena and McMillan continue to enjoy the lively rendering possibilities offered by pen-and-ink, neither of them has taken up the task of social commentator in the manner of Charles Dana Gibson or Honoré Daumier. Instead they give us a sense of immediate encounter with the modern world, made all the more dramatic by the boldness and riskiness of pen-and-ink. ■

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