



# THE FLOWERS That Bloom in May

a sketch a day field journal



## JIM BLODGET

2015

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*"Though April showers may come your way, they bring the flowers that bloom in May".*

Song "April Showers" - music written by Louis Silvers and lyrics by B. G. De Sylva. First published in 1921 and made popular by Al Jolson.

In the sixth grade I had a teacher by the name of Mr. Grabowski. All the teachers had coffee mugs with their names on them, but Mr. Grabowski's name was so long it wouldn't fit. So, his mug said "GRABO" and of course we all called him Mr. GRABO. Anyway, one of his endearing traits was that, almost every day, something would remind him of a song and he would say, "that reminds me of a song" and sing a few bars. We loved him.

The same thing happens to me. For some unknown reason a situation will trigger a familiar lyric and I'll find myself humming a few bars. Such was the case with this project. The song "April Showers" sprung to mind and thus the title.



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# INTRODUCTION

These sketches are the result of a personal challenge - to draw every day for a month. Liz Steel (an Australian artist and teacher) introduced me to the idea in [her blog](#). She described her experiences doing the Every Day in May challenge. The idea is to draw every day and share your drawings to a worldwide group on Flickr who is doing the same thing. The appeal is to expand your skills through daily practice with the added benefit that comes through sharing and discussion with other artists.

This sounded good to me. I was looking for something to do that was outside of a class. It had a nice mix of commitment and flexibility. I could draw what I wanted with whatever materials and techniques that interested me and get support and suggestions from other artists.

My theme would be the flowers in my backyard. I picked my backyard for the convenience. I chose to do flowers because of the variety of shapes and colors. I figured I could do individual portraits or broader landscapes showing the flowers in context. We had an early Spring this year. Our flowers were abundant, but I was worried that they wouldn't last throughout the whole month. I took a chance that I would be able to find at least thirty different subjects. I was lucky. It worked.

I told myself I could devote 15 minutes to an hour every day on the project. That turned out to be accurate. I usually found time late in the afternoon after a busy day. It became a nice way to relax and de-stress.

The part I hadn't anticipated was the time it takes to scan, edit, and post each day's sketch. It took an hour or more. Some days it was a challenge and I got to bed late.

Each day before (or during) breakfast I would read the comments on my sketches and comment on the sketches of the other artists. Often this would trigger a line of research and suggest techniques or materials to try while sketching that day.

For me art does four things.

1. It's fun and a form of relaxation. It's a break from a busy day and a form of meditation.
2. It stretches and tests my creative muscles. I love to try new techniques and materials and tackle new subjects.
3. It teaches me about the world around me through close observation. I discover a lot about my subject and how I feel about it when I draw it.
4. It helps me remember and form a deep connection. Years later I look at a drawing and remember the circumstances surrounding the drawing, the sights, the sounds, and the smells, who I was with and what we were doing - much more so than a photograph.

These became the goals of my project - to have fun, try new things, discover unknown territory, and develop new understandings.

Here then are my sketches and notes about my process, materials and discoveries.

Jim Blodget



# GALLERY



"Most people judge your work based on how realistic it is. The more realistic the better. I too used to judge my own work the same way and despaired when my drawings were less than realistic. I put a lot of effort into getting shapes, angles and proportions, values, and colors right. About a year ago I realized that the artworks I really admired were those that bent, exaggerated, or interpreted a subject to emphasize the emotion of the subject or the artist. I find photorealism less interesting than impressionism or expressionism or abstraction. I also discovered that a sketch does not have to be extraordinarily realistic to capture the subject and preserve a memory. This knowledge is very freeing".

Jim Blodget



### **White Rhododendron**

Sitting out in the garden today sketching flowers. This is my favorite rhododendron.

Stillman & Birn Zeta series 5.5 x 8 inch spiral bound notebook, pencil, Daniel Smith watercolor sticks, and Pentel medium size round waterbrush. ([Field Note page 34](#)).



## **Pink Dogwood**

The dogwood is in full bloom in the backyard. I painted this plein air late in the day.

Stillman & Birn Zeta series 5.5 x 8 inch spiral bound notebook, pencil, Daniel Smith watercolors, Kuretake Mini waterbrush, and Derwent Inktense pencils. ([Field Note page 35](#)).





### **Clematis**

Today I sketched the clematis on the side of our house by the gate. I did this standing up. It's a challenge to hold everything and sketch at the same time.

Stillman & Birn Zeta series 5.5 x 8 inch spiral bound notebook, pencil, Daniel Smith watercolors, Pentel medium round waterbrush, and Derwent Inktense pencils.  
([Field Note page 36](#)).





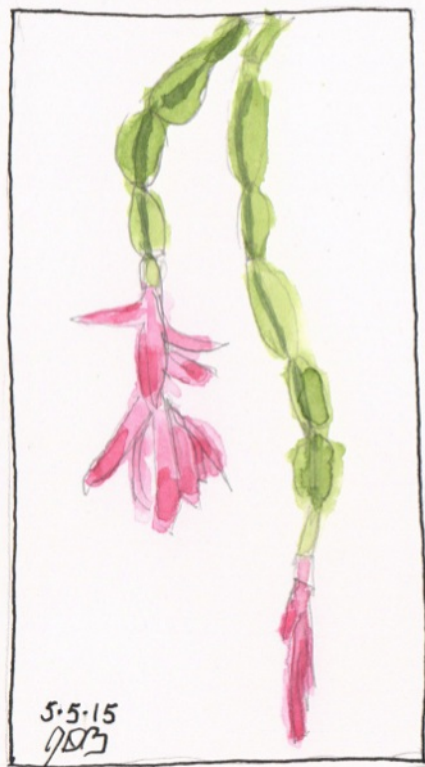
"3 Azaleas"

5.4.15 JB

### Three Azalias

Trying Neocolor II watercolor crayons today. Sitting in the backyard, looking west, late in the day.

Stillman & Birn Zeta series 5.5 x 8 inch spiral bound notebook, pencil, Neocolor II watercolor crayons, Pentel medium round waterbrush, Faber-Castell Pitt brush pens (dark gray and light gray), and Uni PIN 02 pen. ([Field Note page 36](#)).



This is the first time our Christmas Cactus  
has bloomed in May.

These violets live on the  
window sill above the kitchen sink.



### **Cactus and Violets**

Stormy on and off today. I decided to sketch indoors.

Stillman & Birn Zeta series 5.5 x 8 inch spiral bound notebook, pencil, Daniel Smith watercolors, and Pentel medium round waterbrush. ([Field Note page 37](#)).



### **Amaryllis**

I brought the amaryllis out from the greenhouse to the back porch where we could see it. I sketched it with pure color, no pencil or ink outlines, and then adding water to blend the colors and bring them to life.

Strathmore 3.5 x 5 inch Visual Journal, Derwent Inktense pencils, and Derwent Medium round waterbrush. ([Field Note page 37](#)).

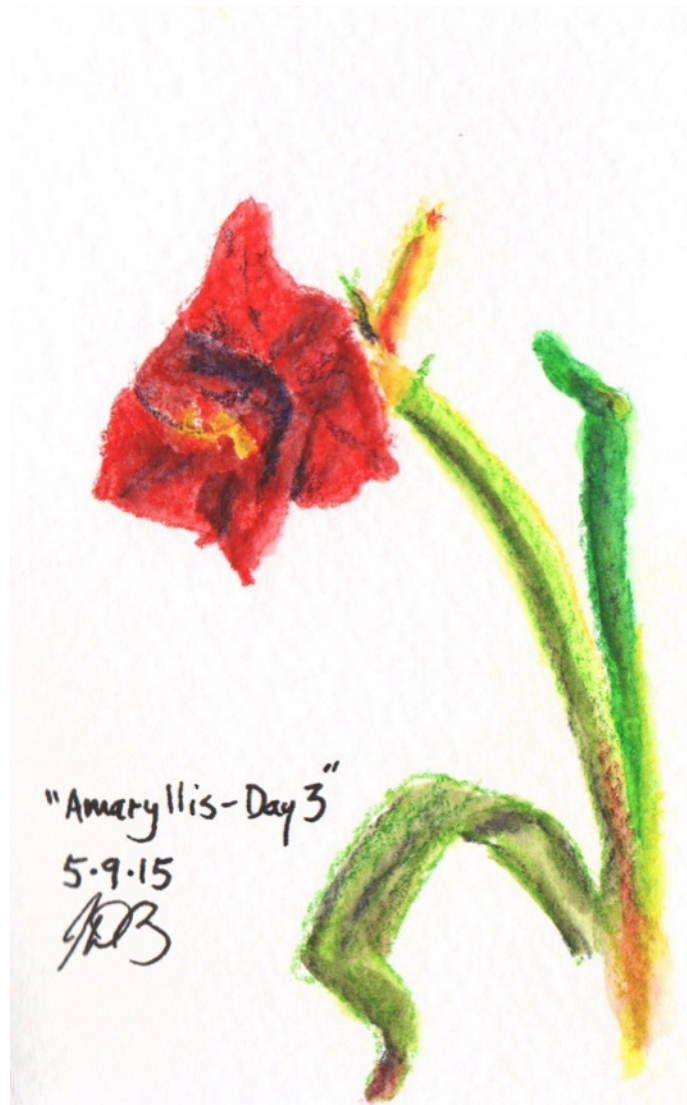


### **Amaryllis - Day 2**

One of the buds is opening today. I sketched with Inktense pencils again.

Strathmore 3.5 x 5 inch Visual Journal, Derwent Inktense pencils, and Derwent Medium round waterbrush. ([Field Note page 38](#)).





### **Amaryllis - Day 3**

Each day I'm doing a new portrait of the same flower. It's a different approach than I'm used to. I'm drawing one color at a time and then blending the colors with a waterbrush to bring them to life. You really can't erase Inktense pencil. So, you have to carefully plan each shape and its placement before you put pencil to page.

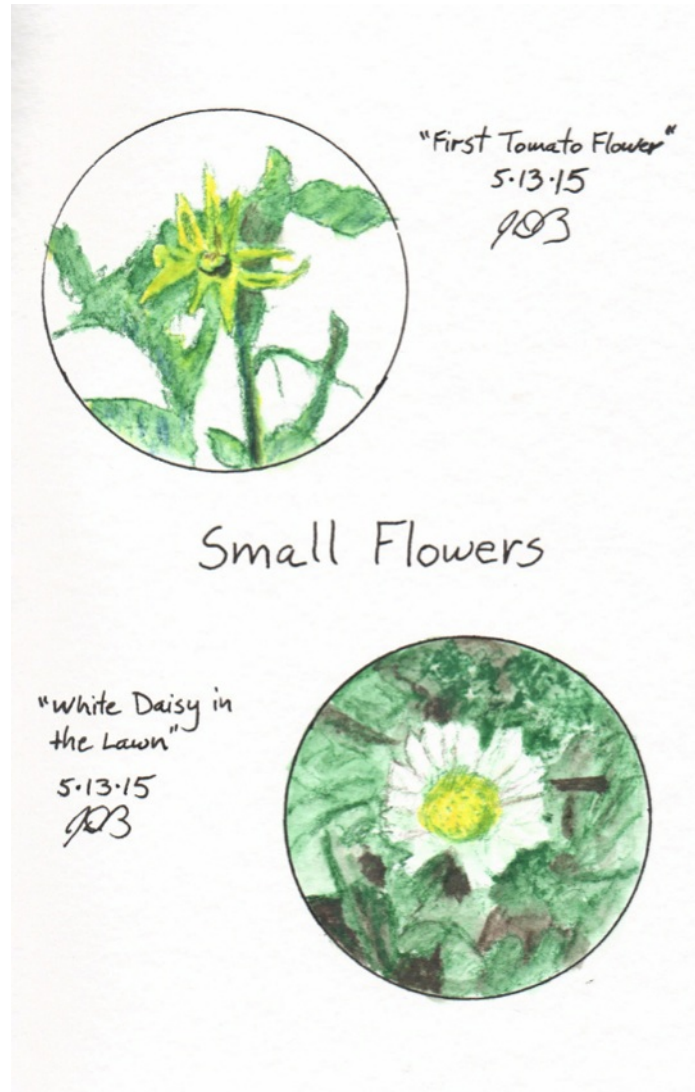
Strathmore 3.5 x 5 inch Visual Journal, Derwent Inktense pencils, and Derwent Medium round waterbrush. ([Field Note page 38](#)).



### **Amaryllis - Day 6**

Both buds are now open. It's raining and blustery today. So, I set the flower pot outside our sliding glass door and sat inside where it was nice and warm. I'm working on a larger sheet of paper today which helps with the details.

Strathmore 5 x 8 inch Visual Journal, Derwent Inktense pencils, and Derwent Medium round waterbrush. ([Field Note page 39](#)).



### Small Flowers

We have half a dozen tomato plants in containers on the back porch. I noticed the first flower on one of them today. Every year these small white daisies show up in the same place in the front lawn. I'm sketching with Faber-Castell watercolor pencils today.

Strathmore 5 x 8 inch Visual Journal, Faber-Castell watercolor pencils, and Derwent Medium round waterbrush. ([Field Note page 39](#)).



### **Irises**

Our iris bed is in full bloom. These purple velvety ones are my favorite. I sat in the shade and sketched them with colored pencils.

Strathmore 5 x 8 inch Visual Journal, Derwent Inktense pencils, and Derwent Medium round waterbrush. ([Field Note page 40](#)).





"Climbing Rose"

5-16-15 JDB

### **Climbing Rose**

I'm looking out the window on an overcast day at our beautiful rose bush on the trellis by the fence. I sketched this standing up.

Stillman & Birn Zeta series 5.5 x 8 inch spiral bound notebook, pencil, Daniel Smith watercolors, Derwent Inktense pencils, and several different brushes - Pentel medium round waterbrush, Derwent medium round waterbrush, and a small flat brush. Sketch is 6 x 4 1/4 inches (15.5 x 11 cm). ([Field Note page 40](#)).

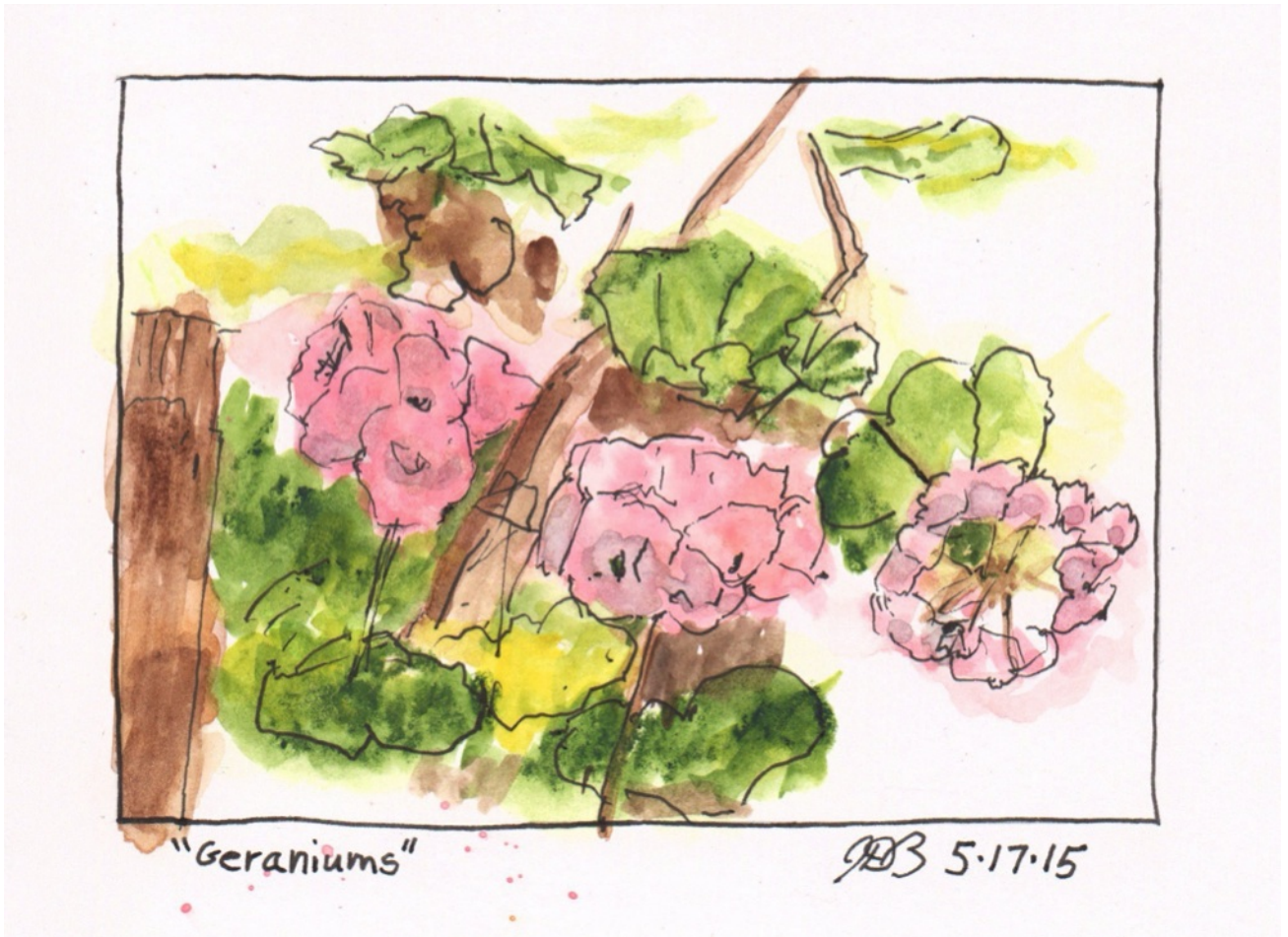


### Marigolds

Working a more traditional approach today. I used ink to sketch the shapes, and then I added watercolor. The ink I used bled into the watercolor and muddled up the bright yellow and smeared. Oh well, live and learn.

Stillman & Birn Zeta series 5.5 x 8 inch spiral bound notebook, pencil, Kaweco Sport pen, Daniel Smith watercolors, Derwent Inktense pencils, da Vinci #6 travel brush, and Kuretake Mini waterbrush. Sketch is 4.25 x 3 inches (11 x 7.7 cm). ([Field Note page 41](#)).





## Geraniums

I put down color first, let it dry, and then drew with ink on top of the color.

Stillman & Birn Zeta series 5.5 x 8 inch spiral bound notebook, Neocolor II watersoluble crayons, Daniel Smith watercolor sticks, Uni o2 PIN pen, da Vinci #6 travel brush, and Pentel medium round waterbrush. Sketch is 4.25 x 3 inches (11 x 7.7 cm). ([Field Note page 41](#)).



### **Marion Berries**

We planted two new rows of berries just a year ago and they are already producing fruit. I sat between the rows to do these sketches. I drew with pen first and then added the watercolor.

I like doing two sketches. The first as a warm up and the second more finished.

Strathmore 5 x 8 inch Visual Journal, Uni o2 PIN pen, and Daniel Smith watercolors.  
([Field Note page 42](#)).





## **Peonies**

I'm using a new setup today clipping my notebook to a board attached to a tripod so I can sketch standing up. It's like working at a standing desk (very comfortable). I did this small sketch to test the system and to warm up my hand-eye coordination before tackling a larger sketch.

Epson glossy photo paper 4 x 6 inches, Derwent Inktense pencils, and Pentel medium waterbrush. ([Field Note page 43](#)).



### **Rhododendrons**

Second sketch of the day using my new tripod easel setup. This is our tallest rhododendron. It must be at least 12 feet. This year it's covered with blooms.

Strathmore 5 x 8 inch Visual Journal, Daniel Smith watercolor, a little Derwent Intense pencil, Neocolor II watersoluble crayons, small flat brush, and Pentel medium waterbrush. ([Field Note page 43](#)).



### **Calla Lilies**

The Calla Lilies are in bloom. I'm using a brush pen today just to try something different. I don't use one very often and haven't mastered the technique, but I like the bold line. The real story of these plants is in their enormous leaves.

Strathmore 5 x 8 inch Visual Journal, Kuretake No. 8 Fountain brush pen with a Platinum Carbon Black ink cartridge, and Daniel Smith watercolors. ([Field Note page 44](#)).





*Pencil*



*Pencil + Watercolor*



*Inktense Pencil + Waterbrush*

### **Same Subject, Different Media**

Today I'm comparing media. I first drew in pencil, scanned it, and then added watercolor and scanned it again. I turned the page and did the same subject using Derwent Inktense pencils and a waterbrush. As you can see, the Inktense colors are much more intense. Today was overcast. So, the watercolor version is actually closer to the colors I saw, but I must say I really like the contrast and saturated colors of the Inktense pencils.

Strathmore 5 x 8 inch Visual Journal, pencil, Daniel Smith watercolors, Derwent Inktense pencils, a 3/8 inch flat brush, and a Pentel Medium round waterbrush. ([Field Note page 45](#)).



*Neocolor II**Daniel Smith Watercolor Sticks*

### More Comparisons

Today I'm comparing Neocolor II watersoluble crayons with Daniel Smith watercolor sticks. The Neocolor is wax based and is more opaque than the Daniel Smith sticks which have a base of gum arabic. I did the Neocolor first drawing directly with the colors and then blending with a waterbrush. I scanned the color only version and then I added black ink and scanned it again. I did the same with the Daniel Smith sticks.

I also wanted to compare the two versions of each - the color only version and the color with inked shaped contours. I like the Daniel Smith color only version the best, but each has its own charm and personality.

Strathmore 5 x 8 inch Visual Journal, Neocolor II watersoluble crayons, Daniel Smith watercolor sticks, Pentel medium round waterbrush and 3/8 inch flat brush, and Uni o2 PIN pen. ([Field Note page 46](#)).



### **One Final Comparison**

One last sketch to add to my comparisons. I drew this one with a brush pen and then added watercolor. I got a new empty palette and filled up the pans with paint last night. Also, this morning my new sword brushes arrived from Amazon. The bristles are cut at a steep angle so you can make everything from very narrow to very broad strokes. It's kind of tricky to use, but I like the versatility.

Strathmore 5 x 8 inch Visual Journal, Kuretake #8 brush pen, Daniel Smith watercolors, and Pro Arte Medium 9A sword brush. ([Field Note page 47](#)).



"Gerbera Daisies"

903 5.24.15

### **Gerbera Daisies**

The sun came out today after several days of overcast skies. I managed to enjoy a bit of it on the back porch. These daisies were in the shade of the porch.

Strathmore 5 x 8 inch Visual Journal, Kuretake #8 brush pen, Daniel Smith watercolors, Pro Arte Medium 9A sword brush, and Derwent Medium Round waterbrush. Image is 3 x 4 inches (7.5 x 10 cm). ([Field Note page 48](#)).





### **Sun Drenched Lilies**

Be bold. Take risks. The lilies are starting to bloom. These brilliant yellow flowers were sitting in the sun with deep shade behind. I'm trying out some new colored brush pens. This was an experiment to see if I could get them to blend. I drew with the yellow and green pens first and then added the brown background with watercolor.

Strathmore 5 x 8 inch Visual Journal, Faber-Castell PITT artist brush pens, Daniel Smith watercolor, Pro Arte Medium 9A sword brush, 3/8 inch flat brush, and Derwent Medium round waterbrush. ([Field Note page 49](#)).





### **Red Rose**

Sketching is a good way to relax at the end of a busy day. I found this rose at the side of our house. I stood at my homemade camera tripod easel to explore and draw the shapes before me using a brush pen. I'm starting to feel more confident with this pen. Then I added watercolor from my new metal travel palette with a waterbrush. I spent about 20 minutes drawing and the same painting.

Strathmore 5 x 8 inch Visual Journal, Kuretake #8 brush pen with Platinum Carbon Black ink cartridge, Daniel Smith watercolors, and Pentel Medium round waterbrush.  
([Field Note page 50](#)).



Schreiner's Iris Garden



Columbine

983  
5-27-15

### **Schreiner's Iris Garden**

I drove over to the Schreiner's Iris Garden north of Keizer, Oregon. It was a beautiful day and a beautiful garden with an overwhelming variety of flowers. I picked a spot in the shade and did these two small sketches - watercolor first and then pen.

Strathmore 5 x 8 inch Visual Journal, Daniel Smith watercolors, Pro Arte Sword brush small, Derwent medium round waterbrush, and Platinum Carbon Desk pen. ([Field Note page 51](#)).



### **Schreiner's Iris Garden #2**

For this second sketch of the garden I took a very different approach. I worked on glossy photo paper using a brush pen first and then I added color with watersoluble pencil. I dipped the pencil in water and scribbled in the color. I also smoothed the color a bit with a wet finger. This loose, free sketch captures the delightfully chaotic colors and shapes that are the garden.

Epson glossy photo paper 4 x 6 inches, Kuretake #8 brush pen with Platinum Carbon Black ink, Faber-Castell PITT brush pens light gray and dark gray, and Derwent Inktense watersoluble pencils. ([Field Note page 51](#)).





### **Geranium**

Any day you can sit outside and sketch is a good day. For today's sketch I sat on the back porch in the shade as it was a hot day. I did color first and then pen.

Daler-Rowney A6 watercolor postcard (about 4 x 6 inches, 10 x 14.8 cm), Derwent Inktense watersoluble pencils, Daniel Smlth watercolors, Pro Arte medium sword brush, 3/8 flat brush, Pentel Medium round waterbrush, and Zebra super fine disposable brush pen.  
([Field Note page 52](#)).





### **Morning Glory**

This morning I walked out to the field and found a few morning glory blossoms. These are very small - around the size of a U.S. quarter. Also called bindweed they are the scourge of farmers everywhere, but I like them. I did this sitting on a small stool with the sun coming over my right shoulder about 10:30 in the morning. I sketched in the basic shapes with Inktense pencils and then did three passes of watercolor working from light to dark and wet to dry.

Strathmore 5 x 8 inch Visual Journal, Derwent Inktense watersoluble pencils, Daniel Smith watercolors, Pentel Medium round waterbrush, and a little bit of Pentel mechanical pencil. Larger than life size, 4.5 x 4.5 inches (11.5 x 11.5 cm). ([Field Note page 53](#)).



### **Peony Study**

I did this as a warm up for a larger painting and also to experiment with alternatives to using Derwent Inktense pencils which I found out are not archival. The colors fade over time.

I first tried Faber-Castell watercolor pencils, then PITT Artist Brush pens, and finally Daniel Smith watercolor sticks all dipped in water and then applied to the same piece of paper. The Daniel Smith worked the best.

Epson glossy 4 x 6 inch photo paper, Faber-Castell watercolor pencils, Faber-Castell PITT Artist Brush pens, and Daniel Smith watercolor sticks. ([Field Note page 54](#)).





### **The Grand Finale**

The last flowers to bloom in May in our garden are the peonies. They look spectacular next to the fading rhododendrons.

An old unmarked 7 x 10 inch watercolor spiral bound notebook (may be Canson), Faber-Castell watercolor pencils, China marker to mask out a few whites, Daniel Smith watercolors, Faber-Castell PITT brush pen dark gray, Kuretake #8 brush pen with Platinum Carbon Black ink cartridge, Uni PIN 02 pen, and da-Vinci #6 travel brush.  
([Field Note page 54](#)).



## Epilogue

The last day no new blooms were at hand. So, I decided to sketch a few old friends - the calla lily, the peony, the gerbera daisy, the iris, the rhododendron, the rose, the amaryllis, and the geranium. I felt it was both an appropriate ending and a fitting tribute to our journey together.

I walked the back yard and sketched each one as I found them using pen first and then watercolor. I did the rhody in the center first, then the calla lily in the upper left, then the daisy upper right, the amaryllis, the geranium, the iris, the peony, and finally the rose I saved for last. It took about two hours (15 minutes each) all on one page without stopping.

Sennelier Oil Pastel 9 x 12 inch Pad, Kuretake #8 brush pen with Platinum Carbon Black ink cartridge, Daniel Smith watercolors, and Pentel Medium round waterbrush.  
([Field Note page 55](#)).



# FIELD NOTES

**Friday: May 1, 2015**

I got a brand new set of Daniel Smith watercolor sticks for my birthday and today I get to test them for the first time. I sat on the back porch in the shade and did a test chart.



I applied the colors five different ways: dry, dry then pulled the color with a wet brush, applied onto wet paper, wet brushed from the tip of the stick, and stick dipped in water. These techniques produce a nice range of values. I also tried a number of mixes. The colors blend just like the Daniel Smith tube watercolors. Their website says that both tubes and sticks use the same pure pigment and the same binder - gum arabic.



Next, I sat in the garden and sketched the white rhododendron. I first drew with a Pentel mechanical pencil and then I applied color. I used only two of the five techniques. I pulled color from the sticks with a wet brush and I applied sticks to wet paper.

(Full image page 3).

### **Saturday: May 2, 2015**

I took a lot of photos of the yard and flowers. I did this to explore and mentally catalog what is currently in bloom and also as a backup in case of rain although I promised myself that I would not sketch from photos, only from life. I also did a bit of yardwork raking the twigs and fir cones in front of the barn. So, by the time I got around to sketching it was late in the afternoon and I welcomed the break.



Our pink dogwood is in full bloom and is spectacular this year. I sat down on a small canvas folding chair and took a photo of my subject with my iPod Touch.

I sketched out the shapes with pencil. This time I painted with Daniel Smith tube paints so I could compare the colors with yesterday's sketch which used Daniel Smith watercolor sticks. I used Derwent Inktense watersoluble pencils for the pink on the blossoms. ([Full image page 4](#)).

I scanned the sketch using my Epson Stylus NX430 printer/scanner combination. I used the Epson iPrint app on my iPad to scan wirelessly to my iPad and then I used the Photogene app to rotate, crop, and adjust contrast and color. I then uploaded the image to my own web server to my watercolors folder. I also uploaded to my Flickr photostream and then linked the Flickr image to my Facebook account to share my work with friends and family. This would become my routine for the rest of the project.

**Sunday: May 3, 2015**

I sketched standing up today.



It is hard to juggle and manage all my supplies while standing. I need to figure out a better setup.

I used the same method of sketching - pencil first, then color. I used a combination of Daniel Smith watercolors and Derwent Inktense pencils. ([Full image page 5](#)).

**Monday: May 4, 2015**

I decided to do a panorama of the side yard. It is late in the day and I'm sitting on the back porch. The sun is throwing long, deep shadows.



I sketched the scene with pencil first, and then, for a change of pace, I'm working with Neocolor II watersoluble crayons. They are more opaque than Daniel Smith watercolors because they use wax as a binder. I used a light gray and a dark gray Faber-Castell PITT artist brush pen to indicate the values. I used the light gray on the roof tops and some of the fence boards and the dark gray for the deeper shadows and branches. PITT pens are waterproof. So, you can go back over them with watercolor and not worry about having the dark ink bleed into the colors and muddy them up. ([Full image page 6](#)).

This is a good example of how a photo differs from a sketch. A camera normally exposes for the highlight and on a sunny day you lose detail in the shadows. My eye could see detail and color in the shadows and that is how I sketched it.

### Tuesday: May 5, 2015

It is too stormy today to go outside. So, I'm sitting in our living room by the big picture window that faces south. Our Christmas cactus sits on a table by the window and is blooming. That's a first!



I also sketched a potted violet. I brought it into the living room from the window above the kitchen sink. I like working with pencil first to get the basic shapes on the page. I usually don't erase. It takes too much time. I then apply watercolor - lightest colors first, let that dry, and then add darker colors over the light. I rarely do more than two or three applications of color. Afterwards, I'll use a pen to add a frame and some text. ([Full image page 7](#)).

### Wednesday: May 6, 2015

I did not feel well today. Some new art supplies arrived in the mail. I relaxed and tested the new Derwent Inktense pencils and waterbrush. The stormy weather continued today. It hailed in the late afternoon.

### Thursday: May 7, 2015

Sunny today. I felt well enough to sit outside on the back porch and sketch the amaryllis I brought out from the greenhouse. It's about to bloom.



I'm trying the new Derwent Inktense pencils in a new small Strathmore Visual Journal (3.5 x 5 inch). The colors really come to life when you add water with a brush. ([Full image page 8](#)).



**Friday: May 8, 2015**

I decided to sketch the amaryllis again today. One of the buds is opening up.



I used the same approach as yesterday sketching in a small notebook with Inktense pencils. I started with the red pencil and then used the yellow green. I used a small waterbrush to blend and intensify the red and green, let it dry, and then added violet and blended it with the waterbrush. ([Full image page 9](#)).

**Saturday: May 9, 2015**

The amaryllis opened up some more today. Now I'm doing a sequence using the same media.



It gets easier as you sketch the same subject several days in a row. The shapes are familiar and I've learned which colors work. ([Full image page 10](#)).

### Tuesday: May 12, 2015

Health problems kept me from sketching the last two days and today it is overcast and raining. Both buds of the amaryllis are open now. I sat inside and sketched looking out the sliding glass door.



I worked on a larger sheet of paper and did a more finished drawing with the Inktense pencils. ([Full image page 11](#)).

### Wednesday: May 13, 2015

Today I'm drawing with standard watercolor pencils (Faber-Castell) because I want to compare them with the Inktense pencils. I discovered a small yellow flower on the tomatoes and some small daisies in the front yard.



It's hard to see the details on these small flowers. I took some photos on my iPod Touch and referred to them occasionally while I sketched. ([Full image page 12](#)).

**Thursday: May 14, 2015**

My favorite irises are in full bloom. I walked around the bed and used my iPod Touch to photograph the irises and decide which angle looked the best. I picked a spot and sat in a canvas folding chair.



I used Inktense pencils. I moved some of the flowers around on the page a bit to achieve a pleasing composition. ([Full image page 13](#)).

**Friday: May 15, 2015**

I placed an online order for art supplies today. I ordered empty half and full pans for my new watercolor palettes and additional colors of Inktense pencils and a set of six Faber-Castell PITT artist brush pens basic colors.

**Saturday: May 16, 2015**

It's overcast today. I sketched the climbing rose that's just outside our window. I did this standing up.



The trick to painting white flowers is to paint the space around the flowers and, once that is dry, go back in and add some shadow detail and a bit of color to the white flowers. ([Full image page 14](#)).



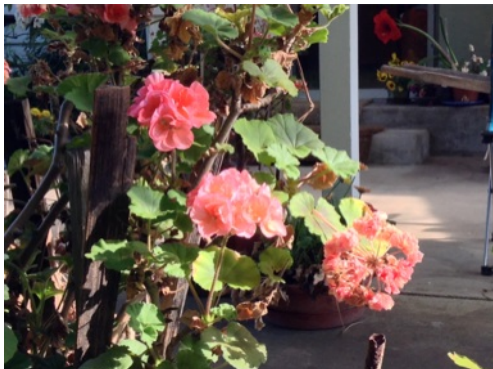
### Sunday: May 17, 2015

I sat on the back porch this afternoon and did two sketches in a Stillman & Birn Zeta series spiral bound notebook. The first was of some marigolds. I drew first using a Kaweco Sport pen. I thought it had



Platinum Carbon Black in it, but it must have had Noodler's Bulletproof Black because, when I added the watercolor, the ink bled and muddied up the yellow paint. ([Full image page 15](#)).

Next I sketched our geraniums. I painting with color first and then I added pen. I used Neocolor II crayons for the pink geraniums and Daniel Smith watercolor sticks for the other colors.



I used a Uni o2 PIN pen, which is waterproof, just to be safe. ([Full image page 16](#)).

**Monday: May 18, 2015**

Today I carried a small chair out to the garden and sat between two rows of Marion berries which are in full bloom. I warmed up by sketching a long shot. I did a contour drawing starting on the left and working across the page following the edges of the shapes.



I then drew the closeup in the circle and painted in the brown background to make the white flower stand out. ([Full image page 17](#)).

**Tuesday: May 19, 2015**

I did two sketches today standing up. I figured out a way to clip a folding board to the head of my small Sony tripod.



I used InstaMorph moldable plastic to make the piece that screws onto the tripod head. A bulldog clip holds to board to the mount. This makes attaching and releasing the board quick and easy.

I first sketched the pink peonies using Derwent Inktense pencils on Epson 4x6 inch glossy inkjet photo paper. I drew directly on the paper and enlivened the color with a waterbrush. The inkjet paper holds the wet pigment well and once it dries the Inktense colors do not smudge. ([Full image page 18](#)).



The tripod easel worked so well I decided to do a second sketch. I switched to larger paper (Strathmore 5x8 inch Visual Journal) and drew our large lavender rhododendron behind the peonies.



This one took longer. The two sketches had me standing there for two hours. This rhododendron's color is a very light lavender with touches of light pink. I couldn't get an exact match with the colors on hand. Sometimes you just have to go with what you've got. ([Full image page 19](#)).



**Wednesday: May 20, 2015**

I used the tripod easel again today standing by the side of the house in the shade. I sketched the Calla Lilies. ([Full image page 20](#)).



I wanted to try something different. So, I drew with a brush pen and then added watercolor. I prefer sketching standing up. The point of view is usually better and I feel energized.

I like this one because of its strong graphic design. Every once in a while a drawing surprises me by turning out well despite my lack of planning or knowing what I'm doing. I didn't do any pre-planning or preliminary layout on this one. I just started drawing at the bottom of the page and worked my way up. Now, when I look at it later, I realize that the composition is quite good. It uses an "S" curve, there is also a strong triangle from upper right to middle left and down to lower right, and there is a strong diagonal composition crossed by vertical lines. Anyway, it works and would make a nice card because of its strong design.

I've discovered several unexpected advantages to working with this setup. It allows me to work with both hands. I can get away from the drawing to take pictures, have a conversation, or do something else and then come back. So, I don't feel tied down for the hour or more it takes to complete the work. This helps me relax and enjoy my surroundings and feel less pressured. Also, I can pick everything up and move without having to take everything down and put it away. This allows me to adjust my point of view or sit down by just lowering the tripod. Also, I think I work faster and put more energy into the work.

### Thursday: May 21, 2015

I didn't have time to do a sketch today, but I got the idea to use 5 different sketching methods to draw the same subject for comparison. I'll try it tomorrow.

I modified my kit a bit. I put black Gorilla tape on my pencil bag to reinforce the bottom stitching and make a tab which I can use to secure the bag to the tripod easel board. I repaired the Inktense pencil box and reinforced the bend with tape. I also tried using the folded up board as a clipboard for taking field notes.

I timed setting up the tripod easel and equipment. It takes less than two and a half minutes.

### Friday: May 22, 2015

I started an exercise in comparing methods today. First task, pick a subject. I decided to stand inside and sketch a geranium pot that I could see out the window.



*Pencil*



*Pencil + Watercolor*



*Inktense Pencil + Waterbrush*

I want to compare five methods:

1. pencil then watercolor,
2. Inktense colored pencils plus a waterbrush,
3. watercolor only,
4. watercolor then pen, and
5. brush pen then watercolor.

Today I did the first two. Both methods take about the same amount of time. It's a little faster to draw with just one pencil than it is to draw switching between different colors of Inktense pencils, but then painting the Inktense colors with one waterbrush is faster than mixing and applying paint from a palette. Pencil with watercolor is my standard way of working. I'm used to the delicate look, but I must say I like the bold, saturated colors of the Inktense pencils. The two methods are very different while working. When drawing with a standard pencil I'm looking at shapes and proportions. Color comes later. When drawing with Inktense pencils color comes first. I look for all the red for instance and then all the green. It's a different mental process. ([Full image page 21](#)).

## Saturday: May 23, 2015

I did two more method comparisons of the same subject today - watercolor only and watercolor with pen. ([Full image page 22](#)).



I tested two different watercolor sticks - Neocolor II watersoluble crayons which are wax based and Daniel Smith watercolor sticks which use gum arabic as a binder. The Neocolor leaves crayon-like marks. The Daniel Smith dissolves completely showing fewer marks. It's a little easier to draw with the Neocolor because they are smaller, but I like the transparency of the Daniel Smith colors and they are easier to lift by scrubbing with a wet brush and then blotting with a tissue.

I used the Neocolor II first drawing directly with the colors and then blending with a waterbrush. I scanned the color only version and then I added black ink with a Uni o2 PIN pen and scanned it again. I did the same procedure with the Daniel Smith sticks also using the Uni PIN pen.

I also filled my new metal palettes with Daniel Smith tube watercolors. I look forward to trying them out tomorrow after the colors dry overnight.





### **Sunday: May 24, 2015**

I did my last method comparison - brush pen with watercolor. I used a Kuretake #8 brush pen with Platinum Carbon Black ink.



I received the new sword brush I ordered today. It's a Pro Arte Medium 9A sword brush. I used it for the first time on this sketch. I also used my new metal palette with Daniel Smith tube watercolors for the first time. ([Full image page 23](#)).



I'll need to practice more with the sword brush, but I think I'm really going to like it. It can do both broad washes and fine, narrow strokes and everything in between.

I liked the look of the brush pen and sword brush so much that I did a second sketch sitting in the shade on the back porch.



"Gerbera Daisies"

103 5-24-15

Again I used the brush pen first and then I added watercolor with the sword brush. I added a bit of detail with a medium round waterbrush. ([Full image page 24](#)).



5/24/15 5:28 PM - Back Porch

Today I'm trying out my tripod easel sitting down.

The gerbera daisies caught my eye. It is sunny (partly cloudy) after several days of overcast skies and drizzle. All the birds and squirrels seem happy. I saw a mother and baby squirrel in the maple tree yesterday, and this morning I saw gold finches in the front yard.

Finished at 6:23 pm.

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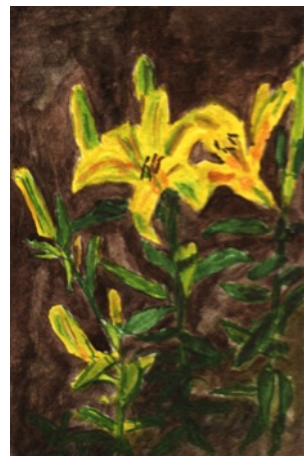
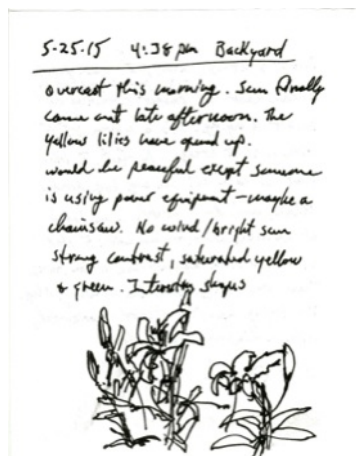
Lap is better than tripod when sitting.

I worked on my tripod easel. I lowered it so I could sit, but it was awkward straddling the tripod. It was much easier to just use the folding board in my lap, which is the way I usually do it.

Also, today is the first day I'm taking notes on a quarter folded sheet of 8.5 x 11 inch plain inkjet paper clipped to the front of my folding lap board. The idea is to document the time and place, setting, technique, and any discoveries or thoughts about purpose, feelings, or process. I found that writing first before drawing has the added benefit of warming up my hand-eye coordination.

### Monday: May 25, 2015

Today I'm experimenting with some new Faber-Castell colored PITT artist's brush pens (a set of 6). I bought them to add spot color to pen and ink drawings, but I wanted to see if I could blend the colors together. It turned out to be difficult because the ink dries so quickly. If you look closely, you can see I did manage to slightly blend the yellow and green inks. ([Full image page 25](#)).

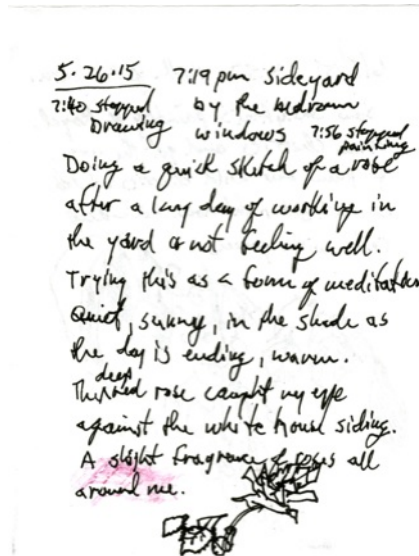


I did the flowers and leaves first with the PITT pens and then I added the brown watercolor background. I used three brushes starting with a sword brush and then a 3/8 inch flat brush and a medium round waterbrush to get close to the flower and leaf shapes. The PITT pens create nice bold colors. They dry quickly and are completely waterproof. However, they are a lot to carry around and are of limited use to the way I work. I'm not adding them to my kit at this point, but will continue to experiment with them. I may be able to use them as an underpainting or for background colors since they are waterproof.



## Tuesday: May 26, 2015

I did this sketch of a rose after a long day of yard work and not feeling well. Instead of going inside and putting my feet up, I set up my tripod easel and stood in the shade and sketched as a form of relaxation. It worked and is a good reminder of my first rule of art which is "Show up".



I started by writing a note about the time and place and setting. At the bottom of the note I did a quick pen sketch of the rose to explore the shapes.



I drew with a brush pen for about 20 minutes and then added watercolor with a waterbrush. This is one of my favorite sketches from the project. I'm glad I made the time. ([Full image page 26](#)).

### Wednesday: May 27, 2015

After a visit to the doctor's, I decided to treat myself and drove to Schreiner's Iris Garden, which is north of town. It's a beautiful garden with a wide variety of flowers. I like to visit at least once a year in the Spring.

5-27-15 3:49 Schreiner's Iris  
Garden.  
4:22 Finish

A beautiful sunny day. Very quiet  
& peaceful except for traffic noise.  
Such a wealth of flowers, it's  
overwhelming. Too many to choose.  
So, I found a shady spot. Maybe  
I'll do several from one place.

Painted with small sword brush  
first. Then Dremont waterbrush.  
Finally Matixum Carbon Desk pen.



Schreiner's Iris Garden



Columbine

983  
5-27-15

I set up my tripod easel in the back garden in a bit of shade and did two small sketches on the same page of an iris and some columbines. I painted with watercolor first and then I added some ink.

([Full image page 27](#)).

I had time for a second sketch. So, I walked to the front of the garden, sat on a wooden bench, pulled out my lap board, and had fun drawing with a brush pen and Inktense watersoluble pencils on glossy 4x6 inch photo paper.

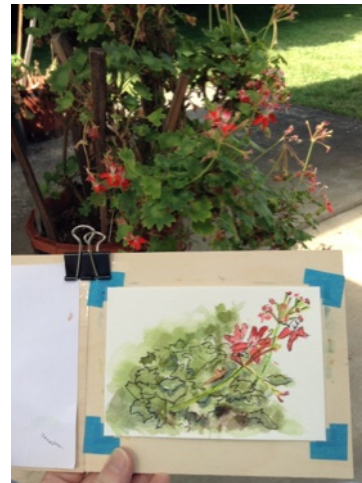


I like the energy of this one. It captures the personality of the garden. ([Full image page 28](#)).

## Thursday: May 28, 2015

Lately I've been trying this approach - Look, Discover, Describe, Experiment, Relax, Review, Refine. For today's sketch I sat on the back porch in the shade since it was a hot day. I looked around at the familiar scene and then looked closer at one of the geraniums and discovered that what drew my eye was the delicate red five star blooms against a field of green leaves fading but still brilliant. Before diving into the sketch I wrote a description of my surroundings - the sights, the sounds, the temperature, and my intention for the sketch which was to capture the red against the green in a diagonal composition. This all took about five minutes.

Thurs. 5-28-15 2:25 PM back porch  
 2:31 PM stopped looking.  
 I can hear the rooster crowing and  
 Becker singing. It's a warm 85°F  
 with a light breeze. Perfect. I like  
 that I can sit on my back porch,  
 relax, and do a sketch. I'm looking  
 at an unusual geranium with 5 star  
 blooms of red against the green leaves.  
 These are fading as is the month of May.  
 I'm trying Lucy's postcard - horizontal,  
 with a diagonal composition.  
 3:25 finished



I used a watercolor postcard attached to my lap board with tabs of sticky side up painter's tape. I drew with Inktense pencils and painted with watercolor. I did this in a spirit of experimentation, not really thinking about it, but trying some things that carry a risk like splashing colors onto a wet page.

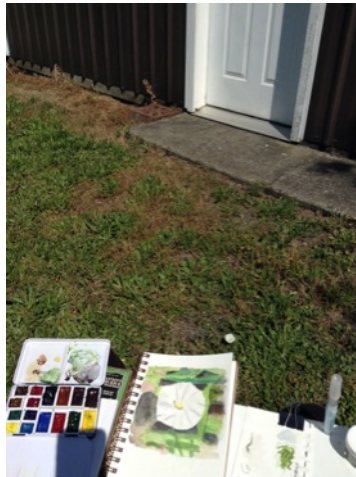
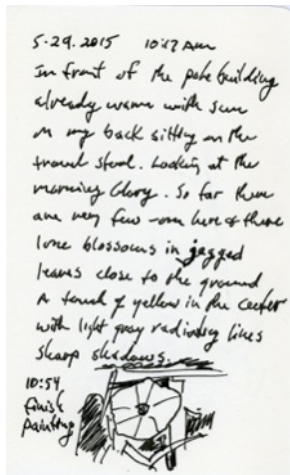


After I felt finished with the paint, I relaxed for a bit and then compared what I had with what I saw and what I wanted in my initial description. Finally I refined the shapes with pen and ink and added a few darker values with a little more watercolor and called it done. The whole session took about an hour. (Full image page 29).



### Friday: May 29, 2015

I did a sketch in the morning today instead of the late afternoon. I sat low to the ground on a travel stool.



I wrote my initial impressions in my Moleskine pocket notebook instead of my usual quarter folded sheet of 8.5x11 inch inkjet paper. I did a small sketch in pen at the bottom of the note to explore the basic shapes and then took a few reference photos with my iPod Touch. I then drew with Inktense watersoluble pencils in my Strathmore 5x8 inch Visual Journal holding everything clipped to my lap board. I then added watercolor using a medium round waterbrush working in several passes letting each pass dry before adding more color. The flower is very small and was hard to see from where I was seated. As a last step I referred to the reference photos on my iPod Touch to see and work on the details of the flower. ([Full image page 30](#)).

### Saturday: May 30, 2015

This morning I read that the Derwent Inktense watersoluble pencils I've been using are not archival. The colors fade quickly. I need to find an alternative. So, today I'm experimenting with three media I have on hand - Daniel Smith watercolor sticks, Faber-Castell watercolor pencils, and PITT artist brush pens - on Epson 4x6 inch glossy photo paper.

5-30-2015 5:09 pm - 5:40 / 7:00

Sitting in front of the greenhouse  
after a day of chores and  
feeling extremely fatigued.  
It's nice to get out of the house  
& all the noise to a quiet place.  
I'm looking at (admiring) the pink  
peonies at the end of the walk.  
They have such bright yellow centers.  
I plan to try Faber-Castell watercolor  
pencils on Epson photo paper & maybe  
some D.S. watercolor sticks & Pitt pens.



I sat on my travel stool and worked on my lap board. I wrote a note first and sketched the shapes of three peonies at the bottom of the note. I then tried each of the media dipped in water and applied to the same piece of Epson 4x6 inch photo paper. The Daniel Smith watercolor sticks worked the best. ([Full image page 31](#)).

Next, I moved my chair to do a full page watercolor sketch in a 7x10 inch Canson notebook. The peonies were in deep shade.



I sketched first with Faber-Castell watercolor pencils and used a white China marker to mask out some whites. I then applied watercolors with a #6 travel brush and then used brush pens (gray and black) to add some darks and a Uni PIN 02 pen to outline some of the shapes. ([Full image page 32](#)).

### Sunday: May 31, 2015

On this the final day of my project, I decided to do a composite drawing of several of my favorite flowers to show how they have fared since I sketched them in their prime.



I wrote a note first outlining my idea and listing the flowers I wanted to draw. I spent about 15 minutes on each flower starting with the rhododendron in the center of the page. I used a brush pen and then applied watercolor with a medium round waterbrush. I didn't do any layout first. I relied on instinct to compose the page as I went depending on the shapes of the flowers. This is the largest drawing of the project. I did it on a sheet of 9x12 inch (23x30.5 cm) paper.

Typically I spent an hour or less drawing each day. This drawing took two hours from start to finish. I did it all in one go without taking a break during the heat of the day from 3 until 5 in the afternoon. I sat down to sketch the daises, the amaryllis, the geranium, and the irises. The rest I did standing at my tripod easel. ([Full image page 33](#)).



# METHODS AND MATERIALS

My mantra for the project was "*Show up, work large to small, and make it pop*". It was short and easy to remember and meant "Don't procrastinate. Just get out there and do it. Draw the large shapes first and then add smaller shapes within the large shapes. Do something to add visual interest and center attention on the main subject".

The other idea I kept in mind was: "*Process affects outcomes*" or to say it in a longer way: the steps or stages that you take and the order in which you do them affect the finished product. The way you change the outcome is to change the process. It sounds obvious, but it's easy to forget and hard to put into practice particularly if you've already formed a habitual way of working. I constantly look for new ways of working and tried several new methods during this project.

I carry with me a one page reminder of my goals and working methods. I keep it in the Notes app on my iPod Touch which I always carry with me in my shirt pocket. Here is my list:

## **Goals:**

- Have fun.
- Be fearless.
- Try something new.
- Stay loose.
- Stay open.
- Be bold or be subtle.

## **Planning:**

- Warm up. Explore. Experiment.
- Pick a subject of interest. How do you feel about it?
- Explore a variety.
- Eliminate the unessential.
- 80/20 - look for light and/or color contrasts.
- Depth - look for 2 or 3 planes to add a 3rd dimension. Look for atmospheric perspective / placement of horizon.
- Take reference photos.
- Do sketches and notes to aid construction.
- Pick a composition layout.
- Pick a value scheme.
- Pick a color scheme.
- Embellish and exaggerate.

## **Construction:**

- Use tools to speed up construction.
- Layout with a pencil
- Make sure the drawing is accurate.
- Painting:
  - Work from back to front, light to dark or dark to light depending on the medium..
  - Rough in large areas and shapes and mid value colors.

- Work one color at a time around the page or canvas.
- Add darks and lights.
- Work toward detail, but don't overdo it.
- Work fast and remember to stay loose.

### **Evaluation:**

- Let it rest. Look with fresh eyes.
- Turn it upside down.
- Squint at it.
- Check it in a mirror.
- Check values by taking the color out with an image editor.
- Back off or look at a thumbnail.
- Write notes about what you learned or tried.
- Move on.

I don't use just one method. I like to try different ways of working and new combinations of materials.

### **Method 1: Pencil, then watercolor:**

This is the method I learned first and the one I fall back to most often. It results in a more subtle sketch emphasizing value and color over outlines of shapes. I almost never erase pencil marks. It takes too much time. Sometimes I use watersoluble pencils. The lines melt into the watercolor.

I use several types of pencils.

- **Graphite.** My favorite is a Pentel mechanical pencil with 0.5 mm HB leads.
- **Watersoluble.** I like the General Sketch & Wash graphite pencil. I also use a yellow ochre or blue Faber-Castell watercolor pencil.
- **Water Enhanced.** The Derwent Inktense pencils become very bright when you add water with a brush.

### **Method 2: Pen, then watercolor:**

Some people draw in pencil first and then draw over the pencil with ink. I prefer to draw directly with ink for two reasons. It's faster (you don't have to draw the same thing twice), and the inked drawing looks more lively. I find that when I ink over an initial pencil drawing, the lines look traced. They don't carry that initial energy of the pencil drawing. I think it has to do with my intent while drawing. During my initial line work my focus is on the subject and my intent is to transfer what I see to the page. When I then add ink over the pencil my focus is on the drawing. I'm editing what's already there trying to draw the lines right. When I'm drawing with the pencil, I'm drawing intuitively. Then when I draw with the pen, I'm drawing consciously. I think it uses different neural pathways.

I use several variations of pen, then watercolor.

- **Contour drawing.** I draw the outlines of objects. The pen I use makes a difference.
  - Fixed width waterproof pens (Uni Vision, Uni PIN, Micron, Kaweco Sport)
  - Fixed width watersoluble pens (Zig sepia and black, Pentel EnerGel 0.5)

- Variable width pens (Sailor CE calligraphy)
- Brush pen (Kuretake #8)
- **Dark drawing.** Ink is a dark mark on a light page. I draw what's dark in the scene instead of drawing the outlines of the shapes.
- **Grisaille under drawing.** I use three waterproof pens to capture the values - light gray, dark gray, and black (Faber-Castell PITT artists brush pens #272 and 273 and Kuretake #8 brush pen). I then add transparent watercolor over the ink.

### **Method 3: Watercolor, then pen:**

I brush on color first. Sometimes I'll take my glasses off (I'm extremely nearsighted) so I can't see detail and paint what I see which is areas of color and value. Then I'll put my glasses back on and draw in some detail with pen.

### **Method 4: Watercolor only:**

I enjoy working directly with color. I use four different color media:

**Daniel Smith tube watercolors** in a metal palette applied with a brush (usually a da Vinci #6 travel brush, a 3/8 inch flat brush, or a Pentel, Derwent, or Kuretake round waterbrush). I also experimented with a sword brush. My palette has 16 colors: hansa yellow light, hansa yellow medium, sap green, viridian, ultramarine blue, cobalt blue, phthalo blue (red shade), cerulean blue, permanent alizarin crimson, quinacridone rose, quinacridone magenta, quinacridone gold, burnt sienna, burnt umber, gray mix (ultramarine blue and burnt sienna), and violet mix (cobalt blue and permanent alizarin crimson). See [palettes on page 46](#).

**Derwent Inktense water enhanced pencils.** I carry about two dozen colors in my homemade pencil boxes. I love working with these, but unfortunately the colors fade over time.

**Neocolor II watersoluble crayons.** I added these to my kit about a year ago and I really like them. If you apply them directly to dry paper, they look textured like a kid's crayon. If you then apply water with a brush, they blend and smear. You can also pull color from the tip of the crayon with a wet brush and paint with it. If you draw into wet paper, you get vibrant color. They are very versatile. The crayons are wax based and therefore somewhat opaque. If you paint over ink, you may have to reapply the pen lines to bring them back to a deep black.

**Daniel Smith watercolor sticks.** I tried these for the first time during this project. The sticks are thicker in diameter than the Neocolor II crayons. This makes them a little harder to hold and control. The colors are more transparent than the Neocolors. They use the same pigment and binder (gum arabic) as the Daniel Smith tube watercolors. You can mix the colors with a little water in a palette just like the tube paints. You can apply them just like the Neocolors. They are versatile and easy to carry.



### **Measuring:**

Sometimes I measure angles and proportions. Usually I don't, but when I do, I use my pencil or pen to measure relative sizes and angles.

### **Reference Photos:**

I use my iPod Touch to take reference photos. Sometimes I use my Sony DSC-HX30V digital point and shoot camera, but usually I'm not carrying it. I do like to explore the subject first with a camera. I walk around and try different angles and distances and try to find a point of view with a foreground, middle ground, and background. I use it as a tool for looking and for thinking about my subject. I rarely look at these photos while drawing and painting.

### **Scanning:**

I have two scanners - an Epson Perfection 4870 Photo scanner attached to my iMac, and an Epson Stylus NX430 all in one scanner, copier, and printer which is wireless. I generally use the NX430 because it is quicker (I don't have to wait for the iMac to boot) and I can scan directly to my iPad using the Epson iPrint app. I use the Photogene app on my iPad to edit the scans and save them back to Photos on the iPad.

### **Online storage and sharing:**

I use Photogene on my iPad to upload (FTP) my pictures to my own server at [Dreamhost.com](http://Dreamhost.com) to use on my Wordpress blog. I also upload to Flickr using the FlickrStackr app on my iPad. I then link to the Flickr picture on Facebook. I also keep copies of my sketches and paintings and my artist's notes on [Evernote.com](http://Evernote.com). All my files are also stored on the internal drive of my iMac and on an external drive.

### **Links:**

- My website: <http://jimblodget.com>
- My blog: <http://jimblodget.com/blog>
- My Flickr Photostream: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/jimblodget/>
- My Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/jimblodget>

# THOUGHTS AND DISCOVERIES

After I complete a project, I like to set it aside for a while and then look at it with fresh eyes. I often discover things that didn't occur to me at the time and look at the work with a new appreciation. Reviewing this project I discovered that I worked through stages. In the first stage I was "Getting Started". I formed new habits and hit my stride. The second stage was "Pencil". I worked with Derwent Inktense watersoluble pencils and Faber-Castell watercolor pencils. In the third stage I did "Comparisons". I compared media and methods. Finally, I "Tried Something New". I explored and tested a variety of materials and techniques. I discovered new ways of working and new favorite media.

The **new equipment and setups** I tested include - a standing camera tripod easel, a new lap board with sticky corner tabs for holding paper, and a quarter folded sheet of paper for notes clipped to the lap board. I also tried **new media** - Daniel Smith watercolor sticks, Derwent Inktense watersoluble pencils, Faber-Castell PITT Artists Brush Pens (6 color set) - **new paper** - Epson glossy 4x4 inch photo paper and Daler-Rowney A6 watercolor postcards - and a **new palette and brushes** - Art Basics metal palette with Schmincke half and full pans filled with 16 Daniel Smith tube watercolor paints, a Derwent Medium Round waterbrush, and a Pro Arte Medium 9A sword brush. I also developed a new workflow: Look, Discover, Describe, Experiment, Rest, Review, Refine.

The motto: "Just show up" really works for me. I used it nearly every day. I often found myself at the end of a busy day with little desire to draw and I said to myself, "Jim, just show up". I did and it worked and I felt better.

My drawing skills improved in just 30 days. The more I sketched the more closely I observed and the better I got at representing what I saw. Dedicated practice counts. You make real strides when you work at it every day.

I like to warm up first. It doesn't take long - usually just two to five minutes. It can take several forms. It could be thumbnails or a small drawing or a blind contour drawing or small color or value sketches. During this project I discovered that writing a brief note first worked to warm up my perception and hand/eye coordination.

I have a built-in sense of composition. I rarely make conscious decisions about composition as I am working, but later when I look at the work I realize that it follows good compositional practice. It must be all those years of doing photography. When I am beginning a drawing, I do think about placement on the page. I might mark the boundaries of the edges of the subject or major shapes and make sure the height and width are roughly proportional, but that's it.

I thought a lot about the difference between doing a sketch and doing a painting. They serve different goals and purposes. A sketch is like a note to remember or a tool for exploration. It's a way to feel the edges or notice the range of colors or values or see the relative differences in size or a thousand other details that you may notice and want to record. The goal of a painting is to create something new. You look at a scene and you decide what it is that moves or inspires you and then you interpret it in paint in order to express yourself. Being a perfectionist I have a tendency to turn my sketches into paintings.

I made a conscious effort during this project to loosen up and to sketch more and paint less.

I thought about how working from life is different from working from a photo. It occurred to me that when you are working from life, you are using two eyes instead of one. You can see around nearby objects. The brain combines two images into a single understanding of the object. You have to choose what to draw (what your left eye sees or what your right eye sees). Yes, you can close one eye, but that's a cheat. It's better to draw what you really see, which is a combination. Also the human eye can see a much wider range of values than a camera. On a bright sunny day we can see lots of color and detail in shadow areas that would render as black in a photo. Value is extremely important. So, the limited range of values in a photo is a real problem. Finally, there's a lot more going on in a three dimensional reality than there is in a two dimensional photo. The experience of sketching from life is much richer than sketching from a photo.

My attention while working is on the subject. I'm cut off from what's happening around me, behind me, above me. I'm missing other experiences. I should make a point of taking attention breaks to stay aware of what's happening around me.

Drawing is like meditation. I call it the "the long, deep look". I use it to more fully explore and understand the thing I'm drawing. I notice very fine detail and relationships. I find it remarkable that anyone takes the time to do it since it does require an inordinate amount of concentration and time. Most of the time I look at something for maybe two or three seconds; then I've got it and move on. A drawing can easily take an hour of careful observation.

### **Take Aways:**

- Just show up at the page.
- Intense observation is its own reward.
- Warm up.
- Dedicated daily practice counts. You make real strides when you work at it every day. Work often. Have fun.
- Value makes the drawing. I need to be bolder when adding darks - make them darker than I'm currently doing.
- Use a juicier watercolor mix - more water and pigment.
- When mixing watercolors, mix light colors into darker/stronger colors.
- It helps to draw the same subject multiple times.
- I prefer to work standing up.
- To paint a white object, paint the surrounding negative shapes and then add shadow detail to define the form of the white object.
- Write a brief note about your subject before starting a sketch. Note the time of day, weather, what catches your eye, how you feel about it. This will warm up your hand and your mind.
- Use a little analysis up front and then rely on intuition.
- Watch your foregrounds. The tendency is to make them too big.
- Work big shapes and values first. Then add a little detail as needed to focus attention on the main subject. Focus attention with color, detail, contrast, and/or hard edges.
- Sketching is its own medium and is separate and different from other media, such as photography, drawing, or painting.



# ABOUT JIM BLODGET

I like to draw. I always have. It's fun, but it also requires patience and persistence, which require time that had been in short supply until I retired in 2008.

In the fourth grade we were studying California history and the whole class worked together on a mural. I was held in high regard because I could draw cows, which were needed to accurately depict life in the missions. This was the start of my reputation as an artist. I taught other students how to draw funny looking aliens. I drew comics for the school newspaper, and I continued to include drawings in my school reports and projects. I also made cards for special occasions like birthdays, Valentine's Day, and Easter, and at home I drew and painted just for fun. My older brother mentored me and my mother arranged for private lessons from Mrs. Wells, a retired artist, who lived through the orchard and over the hill.



Then in the seventh grade I had a wonderful art teacher, Miss Kilmer, who was very encouraging and provided helpful feedback and gave me special projects that stretched my imagination and introduced me to new media. That was fun, but I had other interests too. I had a camera and enjoyed taking pictures. I was taking piano lessons and loved music. My brother and I saved up and bought an 8mm movie camera and made movies. He and his friends wanted to act. So, I was recruited to be the cinematographer. I was going to school dances and won a Charleston contest. I learned to juggle and do magic, and I was an avid collector of rocks and shells.

In high school I became interested in acting and participated in the school plays. My friends and I made movies - mostly parodies of popular genres with titles like "The Man From Apple", "Dr. Yo", "Journey to Planet Zort", "Son of a Beach", and "The Atomic Toad". The only art class I took was mechanical drawing. I was encouraged to go into architecture because I was good at both art and math.

So, off I went to the school of architecture at UC Berkeley. That first year I took the required art and design courses and discovered that I really didn't have a talent for working in three dimensions. After a great deal of angst, I changed my major to Communications. I dreamed of being a director and making movies. My love for photography grew. I bought my first serious 35mm film camera and carried it often. I was seduced by the equipment and techniques and got a thrill looking through the viewfinder. I made a documentary called "The Moratorium Days at Berkeley" about the student protests of the Vietnam War in the late 60's, and for my senior thesis I made a 40 minute film called "Choices" starring all my friends. It was about what it was like to be a student and the choices we faced and made during those turbulent times. I also worked on a project for the Lawrence Hall of Science called "The Laws of Motion in a Fictitious Universe". It was a series of experiments done on 8mm film loops. Each experiment showed two billiard balls interacting. For instance, you'd see one sitting there in the middle of screen, another one would come rolling in from the right side and hit the first one which would go off at a right angle towards the top of the screen. Students viewed the first experiment and were asked to form a hypothesis about the laws of motion in this fictitious universe. They then tested their hypothesis by viewing the

next film loop. My job was to devise the laws of motion and film the experiments using stop motion animation. It was my first experience at creating multimedia courseware. Later, as a media specialist, I would spend 40 years helping instructors teach their most challenging concepts.

But first my life would take a left turn, literally, in front of an oncoming vehicle. I was the passenger in a 1953 MG-TD. My friend Sparky, the car, and I were all badly damaged. It took me a month to get off the crutches. Times were bad. There were no jobs in the Bay Area. So, I packed up all my possessions and drove north to Oregon to recuperate at my brother's. I found work and an apartment and stayed.

My first real job (after pumping gas, working in a camera store and a department store, playing piano in a bar, teaching photography classes at night at the local art center and community college, and teaching fencing at the YMCA) was as a film director at a local television station. I was there for almost four years working my way up to production manager. I put my acting skills to good use as weatherman, as host for a series of movie specials, and for "News Makers," a show where I interviewed local movers and shakers. We produced nine live-to-tape shows a week plus the news. I learned a lot about running cameras, lighting, set design, working with non professional talent, and juggling multiple projects on a tight schedule with no budget. I was on my way and then a disgruntled viewer cut our transmitter tower down and we were off the air and I was out of a job.

I learned through one of my photography students that there was a full-time position opening up at the community college. I applied. The college had built a beautiful new television studio and I was hired to run it as the video media specialist. We also had state of the art portable 3/4 inch video tape recorder and camera systems for shooting on location and a 3/4 inch video editing system. I was in heaven. Still no budget, but I was left alone to produce anything worth doing, and we did a lot - averaging over two hundred productions a year for ten years.



Then along came the personal computer. I bought an Apple IIe and took a year's sabbatical to explore educational uses for this new medium. I ended up creating one of the first authoring systems that married the computer to a laserdisc player. I called it Laserworks and it empowered instructors to easily create interactive programs that used materials from commercially produced laserdiscs and repurpose it for use in their own classrooms and labs.

Then Apple released the Macintosh with HyperCard and we produced our own interactive computer programs and simulations. Macromedia developed Director, which became Shockwave, which became Flash. We made our own CD-ROMS. Our college was one of only ten colleges selected by Apple to participate in the Apple Community College Alliance program. I presented at national conferences. Then the Internet came along and the college starting offering courses online. Media Services became Distance Education and Instructional Technology. My job morphed into helping other instructors add multimedia capabilities to their online courses. I taught the first online photography course in 1996. I took a sabbatical in 2001 to explore the new digital media and things really started getting exciting as more and more students world wide gained access to broadband connections. Digital cameras and camcorders became commonplace. Audio and video edited software became cheaper and more powerful.

Things were looking up.

In 2007 I had a heart attack. No one expected it. I struggled. The next year I retired, but I continued to explore new media. I blogged. I podcast and vodcast (video podcast). I shared my photos on Flickr. Then in 2009 I bought a first generation Apple iPod Touch. I joined an online community of artists from around the world who were the very first to draw and paint on the iPod. This was my introduction back into the world of art after forty years of doing other things. I fell in love with it, and when the first iPad appeared, I bought one of those and continued to experiment and share online. I grew as an artist. I started to combine traditional art with digital art. I did watercolors, scanned them, and retouched them on the iPad and then printed them on watercolor paper. I also did pen and ink drawings on paper, scanned them, and colored them on the iPad.

March 2012 I took my first online watercolor class. It was offered for free through the [Strathmore Paper website](#) and it was taught by the wonderful [Cathy Johnson](#). I bought her books and started sketching in a Moleskine watercolor journal. I did more and more watercolors and continued to do a mix of digital and traditional art through 2013. In the Spring of 2014 I discovered [Sketchbook Skool](#) and [Danny Gregory's Every Day Matters](#). I took two classes "Seeing" and later "Storytelling" and joined the [Sketchbook Skool Group on Facebook](#). I also took Liz Steel's amazing [Sketching Now Foundations 12 week online course](#) during the winter.

My goal has always been to paint outside on location (plein air). As a kid I painted a few oil paintings while on vacation and fell in love with it and have wanted to do it ever since. To that end I have been slowly learning my craft and tweaking my art supplies, equipment and techniques. So, if you see an old guy wearing a hat out there painting, it might be me. Say, "Hi".



Jim Blodget

# COLOPHON

## **Text:**

I wrote my initial ideas and notes using the Evernote app on my iPad. Then, on my iMac, I copied and pasted text from Evernote into Swift Publisher 3 which is a desktop publishing software. Most of the text in the Gallery section came from my descriptions of each sketch, which I posted each day in my Flickr.com Photostream. I used Safari on the iMac to copy the description and paste it into Swift Publisher 3. All further writing and editing were done directly in Swift Publisher 3.

Fonts for the project included Hoefler Text Regular, Italic, and Black size 11 for the body text and Helvetica Bold size 30 for the headers, and Baskerville Semi-Bold size 30 for the title on the cover and title page.

I saved the document as a PDF from Swift Publisher 3 and opened it in Preview to proof read it. I used the annotation feature in Preview to mark and note corrections. I reduced the file size of the PDF (from 58 Mb down to 10 Mb) by resampling and compressing the images in the file with ColorSync Utility. I created links to URLs and to pages within the document using Adobe Acrobat Professional.

## **Images:**

I used an iPod Touch to take reference and equipment photos.

I scanned my artwork with an Epson Stylus NX430 scanner and occasionally with an Epson Perfection 4870 Photo scanner. I photographed artwork that was too large to scan with a Sony DSC-HX30V digital camera.

I edited the scanned artwork with the Photogene app on my iPad. I created a few collages with the Moldiv app on my iPad. I made the cover in GIMP, the free open source image editor, on my iMac.

I put copies of all my photographs and artwork files into iPhoto on the iMac. I was able to just drag and drop them into Swift Publisher 3 to position and resize them on the page.

## **Special Thanks:**

I'd like to thank my friend Lucy MacDonald who's encouragement and help through the final editing process was invaluable.