

Peter Guo-hua Fu School of Architecture
ARCH 325 and ARCH 680 - Sketching School 2022
Sunday, August 21 – Saturday, August 27, 2022

Notes on media and equipment

1. Drawing: we recommend that you start with at least two pencils.

You have a wide choice of pencils. The simplest and least expensive are the classic wood pencils that you can find in any art supply store. Try to find pencils marked 2B or 3B, or higher, like 6B or 8B. These codes, or grades, refer to the hardness of the pencil lead. 'B' means black, or dark – the higher the number, the softer the lead and the darker the line. Pencils without erasers on the tip are preferred because you will need a separate, larger eraser that is designed to be used with graphite.

Also very useful for sketching are refillable mechanical pencils that are more expensive but extremely versatile. Mechanical pencils are refilled with individual leads that come not only in a variety of grades, for example, B, 2B, 5B, and even 8B (very soft, very dark), but also in a variety of diameters, from .07 or .09 mm (for small notebook sketching) to as much as 5.6 mm (for larger format work).

You will also need a sharpener. If you are using a wood pencil, you will be able to find many different types, including some that come with a small reservoir for the shavings. If you are using a mechanical pencil, you will find that many mechanical pencils include sharpeners that have been integrated into the removable tip.

2. Painting: start with watercolours and 2 or three brushes.

If you need to buy a set of watercolours, you could consider a set with 'cakes', or you could purchase separate tubes of pigment. If you decide to buy the separate tubes (which we recommend), you will need to develop a versatile palette. Below is one suggestion for a 12-colour palette – please note that the palette does NOT include black or white, which are unnecessary.

Red: Alizarin Crimson, Indian Red
Blue: French Ultramarine, Cobalt Blue
Yellows: Cadmium Yellow Pale
Greens: Hooker's Green, Olive Green
Browns: Burnt Umber, Burnt Sienna, Raw Umber
Other: Payne's Grey

If you are looking for a less expensive way to start, you could consider a small set. Sets may include a palette of 6, 8, 12 and more 'cakes' or 'pans' of different colours. Some sets include colours that you will never use, so let the list of colours above be your guide when you compare different versions. A more compact palette of colours, whether purchased as tubes or as a set of cakes, could be based on a 10-colour palette like this:

Red: Alizarin Crimson, Indian Red
Blue: French Ultramarine, Cobalt Blue
Yellow: Cadmium Yellow Pale, Yellow Ochre
Green: Olive Green
Brown: Burnt Umber, Raw Umber
Other: Payne's Grey

The names of the colours are fairly universal, but the names in the above list are based on the pigments manufactured by **Winsor & Newton**. Winsor & Newton produces two 'lines' of watercolours:

1. Winsor & Newton **Professional** (or Artists'): excellent but expensive
<https://www.winsornewton.com/na/paint/watercolour/professional-watercolour/>
2. Winsor & Newton **Cotman**: for students, affordable and very good quality
<https://www.winsornewton.com/na/paint/watercolour/cotman-watercolour/>

Another well-known manufacturer of watercolours is **Daniel Smith**. You can find Winsor & Newton, Daniel Smith and other brands of watercolour in most art stores.

De Serres, located close to campus and familiar to Montreal-based students, is a good one-stop-shop for all supplies. **Nota Bene**, on Avenue Parc, recently created an 'Urban Sketching' section on the mezzanine of the

store, with a great selection of pens and pencils, watercolour brushes, sketchbooks, and watercolour sets. And, as many of you know, Nota Bene offers discounts on most products to McGill Architecture students.

Two other good sources of art supplies are managed by the former owner of Art-Tec, a local art and drafting supply store that for many years worked closely with the ASA on the 'kits' for new students. Art-Tec has been closed for a long time but the owner has opened two 'new' stores, one in Pointe Claire (**Galerie d'Art**, in Pointe Claire Shopping Centre) and the other in Westmount (**Avenue des Arts**, 328 Victoria Avenue). Both locations carry an excellent selection of sketchbooks, watercolour paper (in sheets, pads and blocks), and anything else you might need for urban sketching.

3. Brushes

You will also need at least two or three good natural hair or synthetic brushes. You could start with a small and medium round brush and a medium and/or large (1/2 inch or 3/4 inch) flat brush. The synthetic brushes, as well as the natural hair brushes made with squirrel and ox hair, are affordable and, for our purposes, just as effective as the more expensive varieties. Kolinsky Sable brushes are the best and most expensive, but will last 50 years.



Brushes: flats and rounds, varying sizes



Compact 'pocket' or 'travel' brushes (optional)

There are a number of different kinds of roll-up brush cases available. Here are two excellent models: on the left, a soft case, and on the right, one that offers a little more protection. Both allow the brushes to dry, but it's always advisable to open the roll when you are at home.



You can also use these cases to store a spare face mask (left) in case of emergency.

4. Sketchbooks, pads, paper: we recommend that you start with at least two sketchbooks, one small (A5; 5 inch by 7 inch or smaller), and one larger (A4; 9 inch by 12 inch or 8 ½ by 11)

The smaller pocket notebook is for thumbnail sketches and experiments with wash and watercolour. The larger is for more developed pencil, pen and ink, and, depending on the paper, even watercolour sketches. For pencil and pen and ink, paper with a smooth matte finish works best, and a binding that allows the sketchbook to lie flat, or folded over, is preferred.

If you are just starting, or hoping to lighten your knapsack, you can find good quality and inexpensive general-purpose sketchbooks with paper that is smooth enough for pencil and ink and heavy enough for watercolour.

Please note that watercolour paper (for example, in the Arches and Winsor & Newton 'blocks' illustrated below) is usually based on two types: *cold pressed*, which is lightly textured, enabling interesting effects, and fairly forgiving; and *hot pressed*, which is relatively smooth and much more challenging (but rewarding). Below are some examples of sketchbooks (pencil, pen, watercolour) and watercolour blocks (hot and cold pressed), in a range of sizes. Watercolour blocks work like pads but the edges are sealed with a factory-applied tape, which means that the paper remains 'stretched' while you work.



A selection of general purpose sketchbooks – the two in the centre are 8 ½ x 11, with a 'standard' Moleskine on the lower right and the Leuchtturm equivalent above.

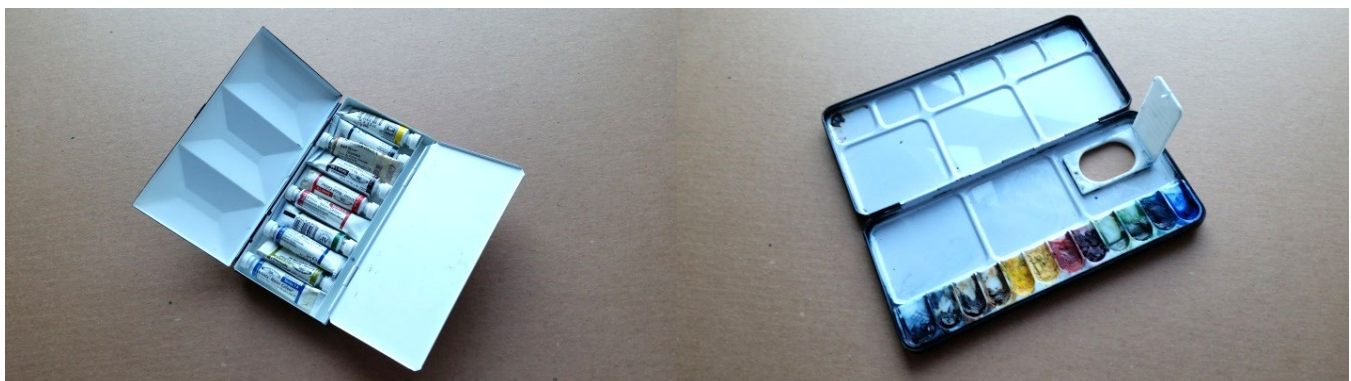


Watercolour blocks by Winsor & Newton (grey/hot pressed), and Arches (green/cold, pink/hot) with two Hand-Book watercolour sketchbooks on the lower right.

Watercolour paper in all forms – paper, pads, sketchbooks and blocks - can be expensive, so we also recommend that you share the larger format watercolour pads and blocks with one or more classmates. If you are interested in working with very large individual watercolour sheets (eg, 15 x 20 or 24 x 36 inches), you will also need a light backing board for carrying and supporting the paper while you work.

5. Other equipment: mixing palettes/trays, water containers, stools

Blank mixing palettes are available in a variety of sizes and are typically made of metal or plastic. They almost always provide shallow trays for mixing and pans for dabs of pigment. Many painters arrange the colours in a logical pattern or sequence, one that suits their particular way of working. Here are two examples: on the left, a case for tube storage with 2 mixing trays, and on the right, a case designed for mixing, with a hole for your thumb and a series of small plastic pans for dabs of pigment.



Tube colours are squeezed into the pans on a blank palette. They will dry and can be used for years like traditional 'cakes'. In other words, do not wash them from your palette when the sketch is done – clean the palette, but save the dabs of pigment.

Illustrated below is an example of a compact watercolour set (optional) manufactured by Winsor & Newton with refillable pans, an integrated water reservoir and a small clip-on water dish. Many companies produce sets like this one in much less expensive versions.



You will also need a closed container for water and at least two separate cups for mixing. If you try to work with one cup of water, your colours will become muddy very quickly.



Folding or collapsible cups work very well, as well as refillable water bottles. You can find cups and bottles in a variety of sizes (and colours) in any camping store



Bicycles have always been valuable additions to the standard "kit" and are highly recommended, and a folding camp stool, lightweight garden chair, or small foam pad can make 3 hours on the ground much more endurable.

Finally, please be sure to bring masking tape (1/2 or 3/4 inch in width) and rags with you. You will use the tape to secure loose corners and to lay out different work areas on your watercolour paper - the green masking tape used by housepainters is cheap, easily removed without tearing the paper, and reusable. You will need the rags - cotton always works best - to 'lift' extra water from the brush or from the paper, to mop up undesirable spills, and to clean up when you're ready to leave.