

Architectural Preservation with Pen and Paper

by Melissa B. Tubbs



Tin Eagle

Pen-and-ink on Strathmore® 400 Series Drawing Paper,
6 3/4" x 10 3/16"

While I have always been an active artist, my art really came to life when I started creating pen-and-ink drawings of architectural subjects. Eighteen years ago my sister asked me to create an original pen-and-ink drawing of her father-in-law's house that she could give him as a Christmas gift. I had never used pen-and-ink before for anything more than sketching. That first drawing was very laborious – I worked very slowly and intentionally. Needless to say it took a very long time to finish. This drawing led to many other commissions through word-of-mouth; and after six years I quit my office job to be a full-time working artist.

I had not realized before just how much I like and enjoy architecture. I began drawing buildings of architectural significance and the ornamentation on those structures. Some were in danger of disappearing due to demolition or neglect, and some ornamentation had already been removed. My work became an act of preservation, something that was and still is very satisfying and important to me.

I discovered early in my search for the right materials that Strathmore 400 Series Drawing Paper was the best paper for my drawings, and I have used it ever since. It has a rich, warm, off-white color, which is beautiful with the black ink. I like the way the surface accepts the ink. It doesn't have too much tooth, which would cause the pen to drag or skip. I know that many pen-and-ink artists work on illustration board, but I don't like to work on a stiff or slick surface.



Carnegie Hall, NYC

Pen-and-ink on Strathmore 400 Series Drawing Paper,
10 5/8" x 15 1/2"

I work from photographs that I take because I want the strong light and shadows which add so much depth to my drawings – and the sun stands still for no one. I use a Nikon D50 SLR Digital Camera with a zoom lens and work out my compositions as I take the photos. I also have a larger zoom lens for when I travel to other cities in order to get better pictures of ornamentation on taller buildings. Even when I used a 35mm camera, I worked with color film so that I wouldn't lose all the detail in the shadows.

Another way that I get depth in my work is by drawing details in shadow areas before laying in the darkest shadows.

I started out using Rotring Rapidoliner until the manufacturer stopped making them in 2002. I have found a comparable pen in the Staedtler Mars 720 Professional pen. These pens never clog because the point and ink cartridge come as one piece so air never gets inside. The pens are always ready for use. An extra bonus is that you get a new pen point each time you put in a new ink cartridge. They come in several point sizes but the size

that I use the most, the .18, is not sold in the U.S. so I have to order them from an art supply store in Canada.

After sketching in the basic design of my subject with pencil, I lay in the underlying details in the first layers of ink. Those details include the shadow areas even though they may not be clearly seen in the finished drawing. 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



Blount's Bridge

Pen-and-ink on Strathmore® 400 Series Drawing Paper,
10 7/16" x 7 1/16"



Cloverdale Business District

Pen-and-ink on Strathmore 400 Series Drawing Paper,
8 3/4" x 11 3/4"

hatched and crosshatched marks describe the shape and volume of the subject. 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.

My work is definitely full-blown drawing, not sketching. When I put a line down, I want the marks to be deliberate and confident, not tentative and unsure. If I'm not sure of how to handle an object I've not drawn before, I look through my collection of books on drawing and print-making to get ideas from both a master like Albrecht Dürer and a contemporary artist like Barry Moser. The variety of lines in the wood engravings, etchings, ink drawings and wood cuts can suggest new ways for me to draw my lines.

I typically work 1-1/2 to 2 hours and take a 30 minute break. As I near completion of a drawing, I often have to make myself take breaks because it is so exciting to see the whole drawing taking shape and no longer see just the bits and pieces of areas I've been working on up until this point. The final shadows pull the areas together and make the drawing "pop" with the contrast of values and added depth. It can take anywhere from 2 hours, for the smallest drawing, to 70 hours, for the largest drawing, to complete a piece.



Terra-Cotta Faces, Goatman

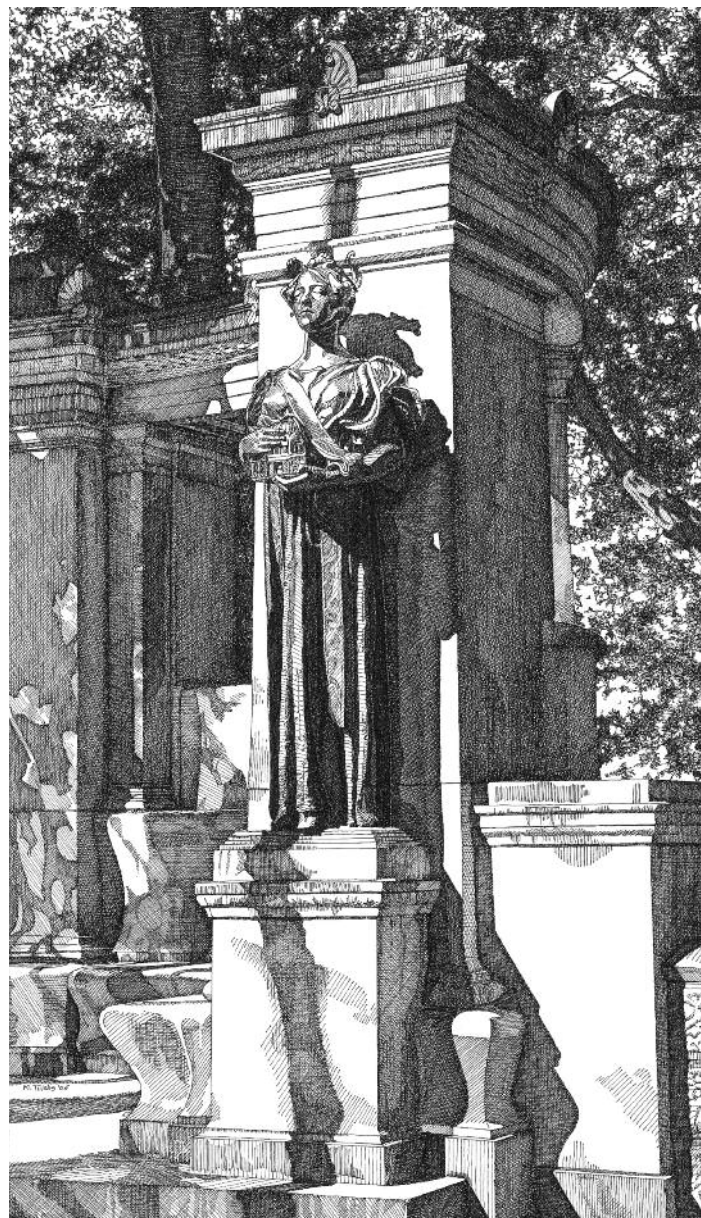
Pen-and-ink on Strathmore® 400 Series Drawing Paper,
9 3/16" x 14 3/4"



Lombard Lamp, Central Park, NYC

Pen-and-ink on Strathmore 400 Series Drawing Paper,
8" x 11 3/4"

In the last few years I have also drawn people and pets, but my favorite subject will always be architecture. There's something special about drawing a building that architects, artists and craftsmen have created; capturing and preserving it for future generations to see. It's fascinating to me to learn the history of a building—why it was built, when it was built, who built it and what materials were used.



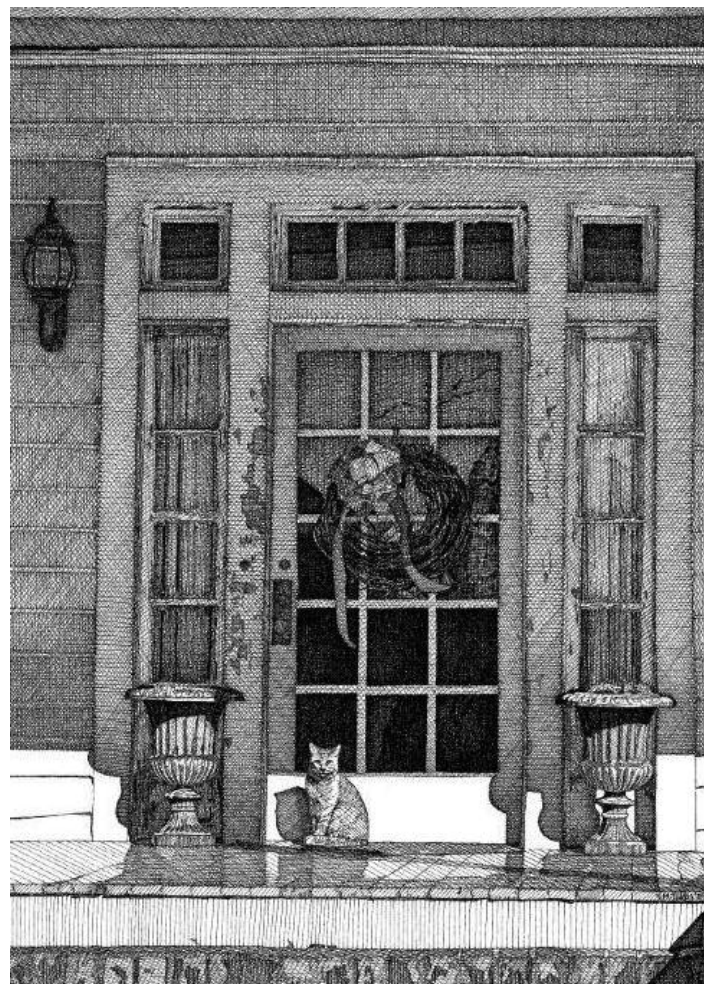
Hunt Memorial, NYC

Pen-and-ink on Strathmore 400 Series Drawing Paper,
13 1/2" x 7 11/16"



Park Avenue Ram, NYC

Pen-and-ink on Strathmore® 400 Series Drawing Paper,
11 1/4" x 8"



Doors & Porches: Home Again

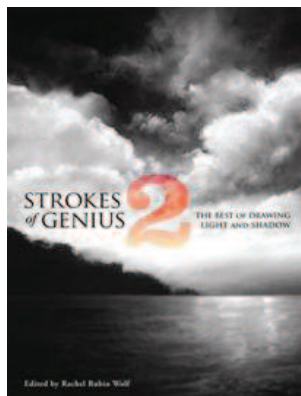
Pen-and-ink on Strathmore 400 Series Drawing Paper,
13 1/2" x 9 1/2"

The finely detailed pen-and-ink drawings that I create entice viewers to come closer and see the details. The architectural detail that has been a consistent part of human history satisfies a need for beauty that all people share. I want people to see the beauty in those details. I am a firm believer in the proverb "The wise man preserves that which he values and celebrates that which he preserves."

About the Artist



In 1997, Melissa B. Tubbs ended a career as an art director and managing editor of a magazine to become a full-time artist. Three months after resigning from her job, the Montgomery Area Business Committee for the Arts accepted her 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



Strokes of Genius 2

drawings of the interior and exterior of the building. Since then she has had two more Museum commissions to create a total of 13 drawings.

In the last 12 years, Melissa has accomplished many impressive achievements and has been afforded a number of tremendous opportunities which include creating collections of drawings, lecturing,

applying for and receiving grants, teaching classes and entering juried shows. Melissa received a \$14,000 grant from the Eben Demarest Trust through Mellon Bank in Pittsburgh for creating new work. In 2001 she was one of the artists from Alabama to create a three-dimensional ornament for the official White House Christmas tree. The theme was "Home for the Holidays" and the artists recreated miniature versions of a historical home in their state. Melissa drew all of the windows on Strathmore® Drawing Paper which was cut to fit the walls and glued the pieces to the foam core structure. She participated in a National Trust for Historic Preservation study tour in New York City. There was a feature article which



Doors & Porches: Home Again

Pen-and-ink on Strathmore 400 Series Drawing Paper,
13 1/2" x 9 1/2"

highlighted her work in the November 2004 issue of American Artist magazine. In 2008 she was asked by the Birmingham Museum of Art to make a PowerPoint presentation on Leonardo da Vinci's materials and methods in conjunction with the Museum's exhibition of a group of da Vinci's drawings shown for the first time in the United States. Her drawing of Carnegie Hall is included in "Strokes of Genius 2: The Best of Drawing Light and Shadow" published in October 2009 by North Light Books.

Exhibitions include:

2010 - Solo exhibition of 13 drawings commissioned by the Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts at the Museum, Montgomery, AL

2009 - Semi-Finalist, 5th International 2008/2009 ARC Salon Competition

2008 - 5th Annual Evening of Arts & Entertainment, Arts & Entertainment Ministries, Los Angeles, CA

"The Fine Art of Drawing" Invitational, 2 drawings, Florida State University Museum of Fine Arts, Tallahassee, FL

2007 - "Lineal Investigations," Drawing Invitational, 2 drawings, Housatonic Museum of Art, Bridgeport, CT

2004 - "In the Spotlight," 9 artists, NAWA Gallery, New York City, NY

2003 - NAWA Medal of Honor and the Elizabeth Stanton Blake Memorial Award of \$1,000 for Work on Paper, New York City, NY

"An Absence of Color," 3 artists, Marymount Manhattan College, New York City, NY

Melissa lives and works in Montgomery, Alabama where her work is represented by Stonehenge Gallery and Charleston House Gallery. She is also represented by Clay Scot Artworks in Birmingham. Melissa has been an artist with Portraits, Inc. of Birmingham and New York City since 2006.

Melissa B. Tubbs

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Featured Product

new! 500 SERIES Marker Paper



Original artwork by Katherine Cantrell

Introducing a new surface for designers and graphic artists.

With Strathmore's new 100% cotton Marker Paper, you can create layouts, rough comps and renderings on a surface designed for heavy marker coverage. Colors flow smoothly and stay vibrant, with no bleeding or feathering. If you are an artist or designer, this paper is sure to become a valuable tool.

This smooth, semi-transparent paper is excellent with permanent and watercolor markers, also suitable for pencil, charcoal, pastels and pen & ink.



Available in sizes:

9"x12", 11"x14", 14"x17" and 19"x24"

Questions From Our Website

What should I look for when selecting a Marker Paper?

We suggest that you look for a 100% cotton paper. Cotton fibers are stronger than wood pulp fibers. Cotton improves many of the working properties that are important, including the paper's ability to accept heavy marker coverage without bleeding, and allows for the building of colors and blending of tones. Cotton also improves surface strength.



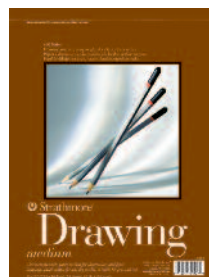
Strathmore 500
Series Marker Paper

The paper should have some degree of transparency if you intend to “trace” from images. A nice white sheet provides the proper background reflection for marker pen colors. Look for a smooth finish which allows the marker to flow across the surface of the sheet with little resistance. This allows you to work at a quicker pace which reduces the likelihood of feathering. Smoothness also helps artists achieve sharper edges.

I work mostly with a graphite pencil, can you give some tips on selecting a drawing paper for shading techniques?

The selection of paper for shading techniques is influenced by the type of pencil used, the degree of darkness desired, the shading technique used and the expression of the shading technique desired. The key here is to select a paper surface (medium or smooth) based upon the effects you're looking to achieve.

As a general rule, a textured surface will be able to produce a more even, more luminescent shade than a smooth surface. These types of surfaces are usually chosen for shading as the texture of the paper makes shading easier and produces a greater range of tone that can be more evenly applied.



Strathmore 400
Series Drawing

The higher the grade of textured paper surfaces the deeper and more even the resulting shading will be. While all three Strathmore® grades – 300, 400 and 500 – will produce even, deep, luminescent shades, the 500 Series papers will produce the richest and deepest shade.



Strathmore 500
Series Bristol

The smoother the paper grain the more difficult it will be to produce an even shade. Although smooth papers can produce good results with graphite, they cannot produce as great a range of tone (shade) as textured surface paper. A smooth surface is very good for pen and ink as well as marker.

Strathmore Medium Surface Drawing Paper

Even, medium textured surface. Random surface produces subtle, rich shades that are expressive with great luminosity and sensitivity.

Strathmore Bristol Vellum

Medium textured surface. Random surface, with texture that is slightly more pronounced (peaks and valleys slightly further apart than drawing paper), enabling paper to handle very soft graphite pencils. Produces shades that are extremely expressive, but not as sensitive as Strathmore medium surface drawing paper.

Smooth Paper Surface

The higher the grade of smooth surface paper, the smoother the paper surface. While all three Strathmore grades – 300, 400 and 500 – are smooth, the 500 Series paper is the smoothest. The smoother the paper the more difficult it is to produce an even shade.