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URBAN SKETCHING

An encouragement to pick up a notebook and pen
wherever you go

Urban sketching describes the practice of being within an urban setting and inscribing a visual representation of the context on a portable drawing medium such as a sketchbook, with a limited set of analogue tools available (pens, pencils, ink, watercolours or markers) and within a limited time frame, under the conditions of the location (weather, social interaction, location, temperature, time) (Campanario , 2009).



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What do you need?



At lest a notebook of your choice and a pencil.
Other tools I usually carry around are ink liners (0.05, 0.1, 0.3, brush tip)
markers (one light, one dark), colored pens (red or blue, for accents)
small watercolor kit (and a brush)
+ a coffee, as I usually sit down at cafes to sketch

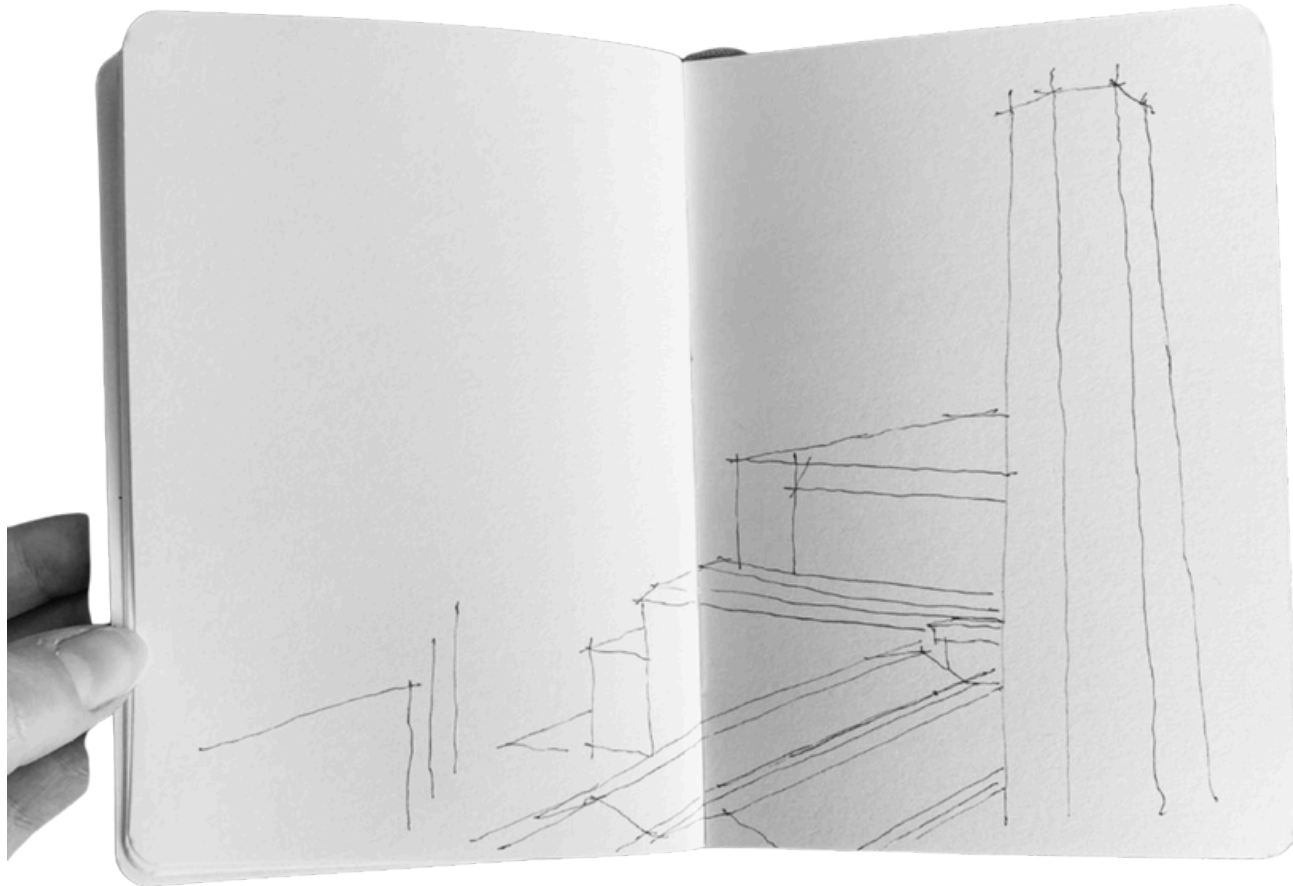


Drafting a drawing should not be reduced to the idea of creating an image, as that would mean underestimating both the subject and the final piece of work. The said drawing is not merely just an image formed visually in the mind of the artist, but rather the sum of the sensory stimuli that the person experiences while embarked on this task.

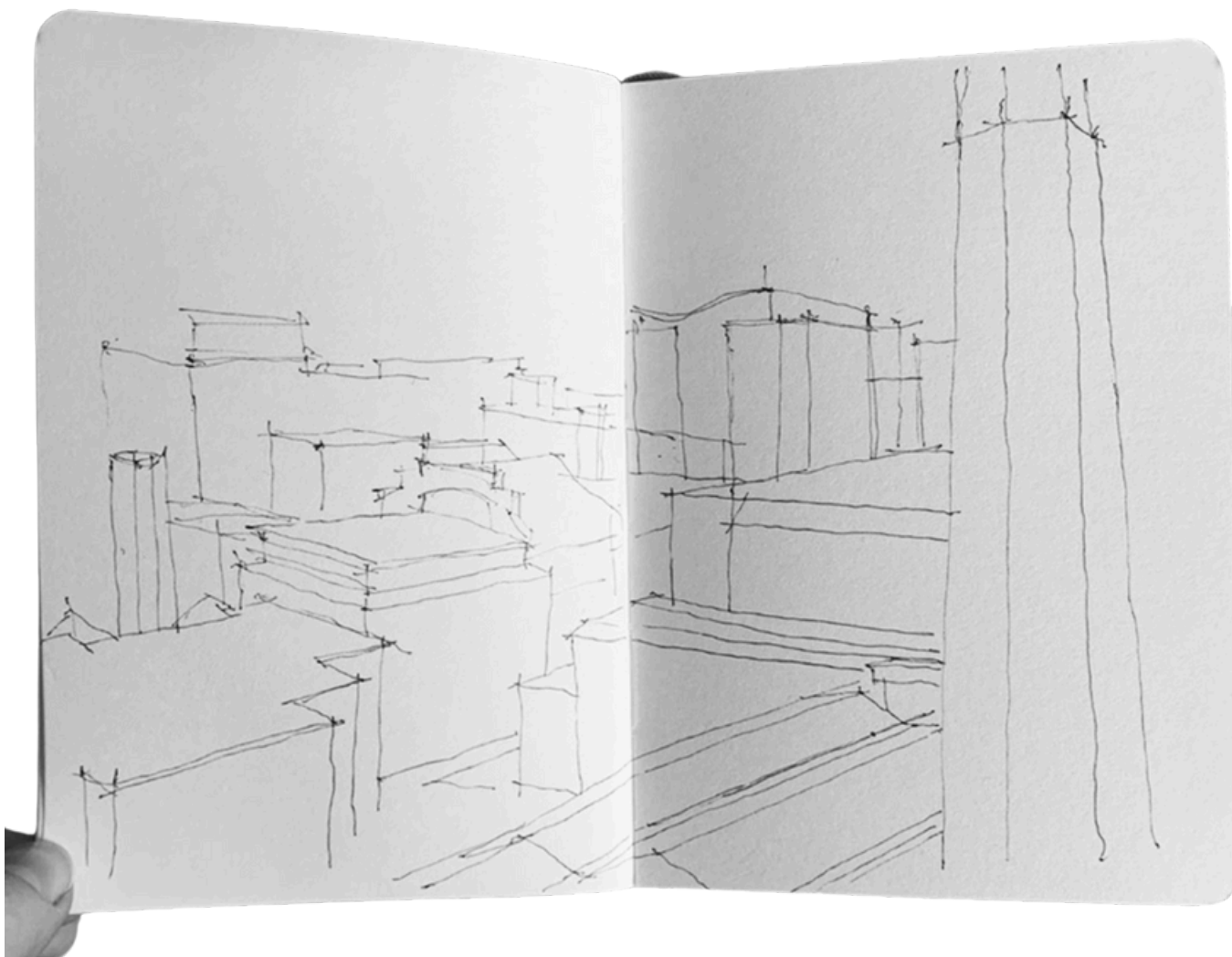
Some examples of stimuli are visual (the subject of our drawing), the smell, the humidity or dry-ness of the air, the sounds and noises, the social element interacting with the built environment and the overall emotional and psychological impact that a particular place or piece of Architecture has on the observer.

The drawing produced should not be regarded simply as an image either. It represents the time and attention put into understanding the parameters of that moment and place. Therefore, the person performing the act of urban sketching sees, feels, hears and interacts with the environment of its subject. They put more time into understanding the subject than into sketching itself. There is no instant representation under the form of an image in the mind of the sketcher but rather a series of elements discovered along the process of drawing.

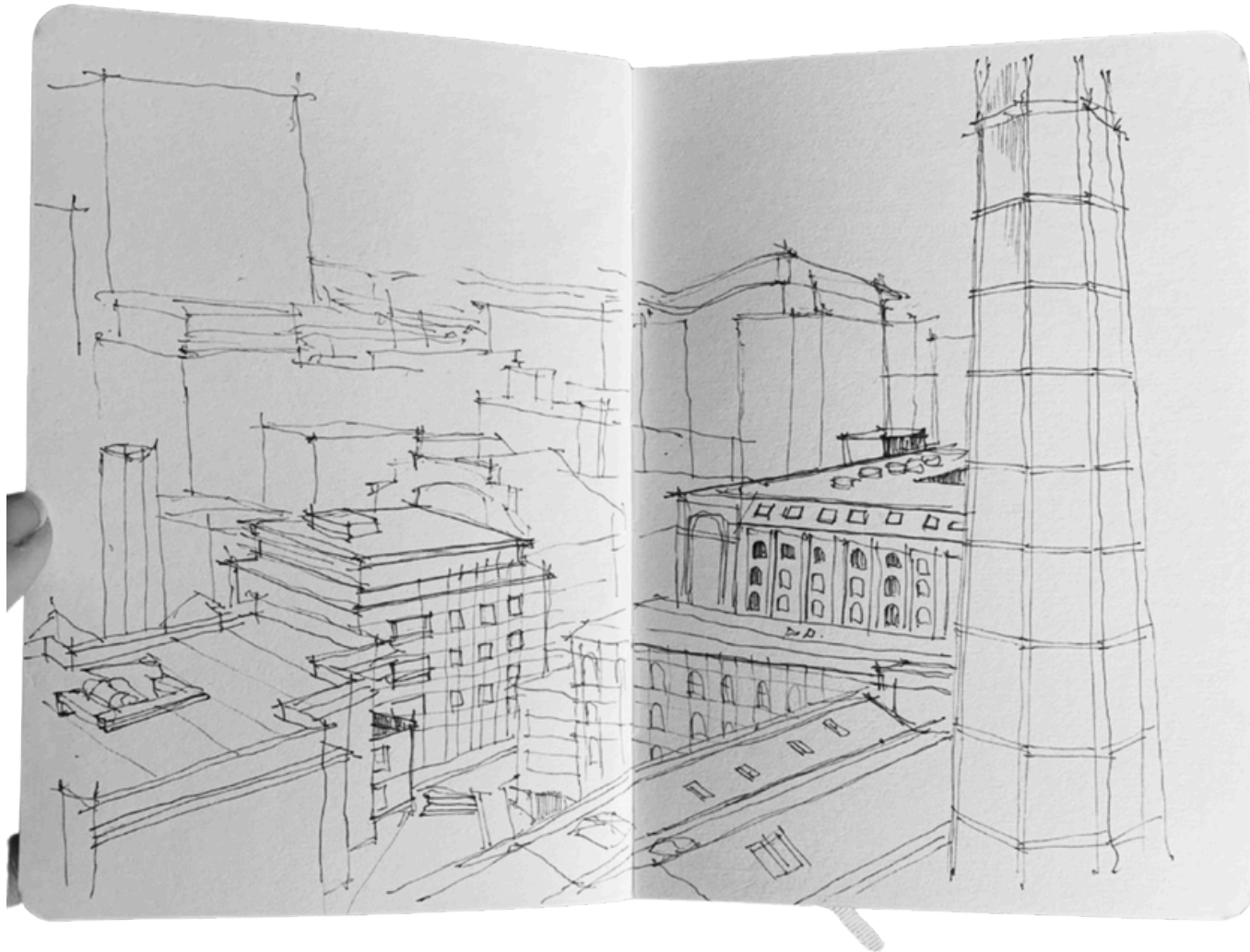
Step by step



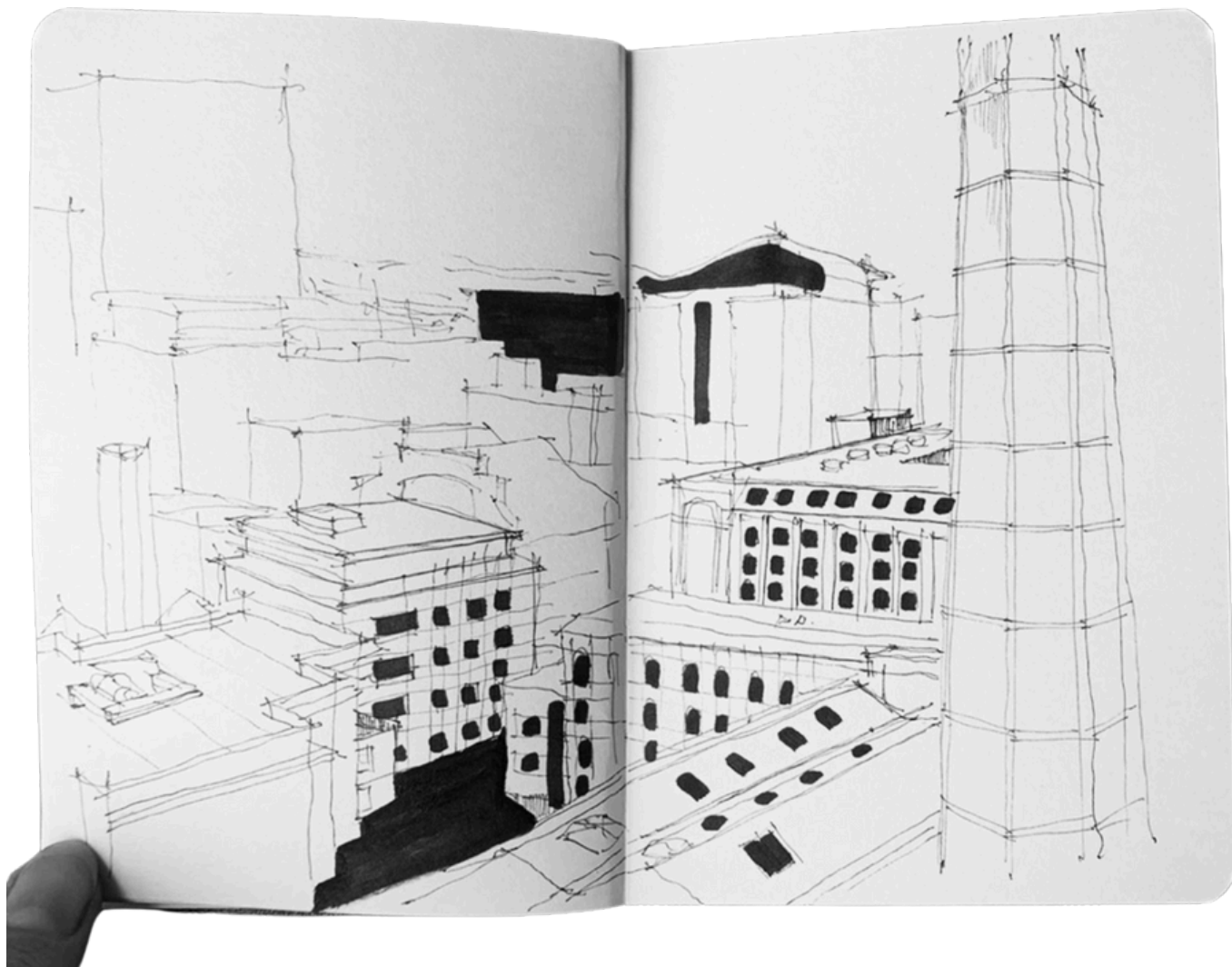
Those first few lines might be the scariest. Try this mental exercise:
What is the first thing that stands out? Where are my eyes drawn to?
I usually start sketching a few loose volumes, building up the scene as I go.



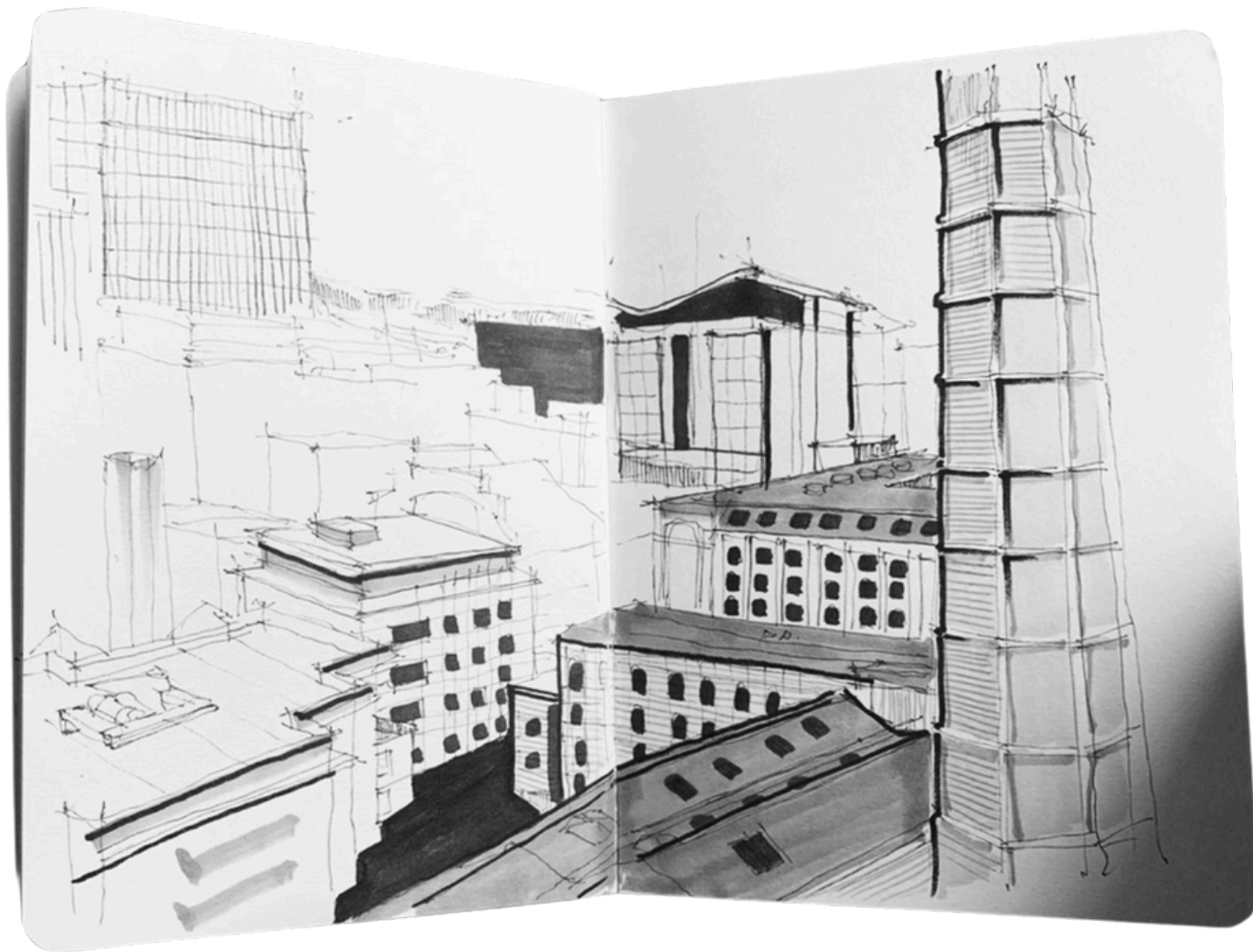
I try not to focus on details at first. As I build up the scenery, I keep track of perspective based on what I have already put down on paper. Some bits sadly get lost if the scale is off, but I often find myself observing elements that I completely missed the first time I looked at the subject.



Now comes the fun part, details. Drawing with ink and liners without an initial pencil sketch can be challenging, but in my case, it also takes away the pressure of a “perfect” drawing. Don’t be too precious about your sketch.



In this case, light and shadows played a big role. I quickly filled in some values before moving on to other details, as I felt this would allow me to work around those highlighted areas. I wanted to convey a sense of depth and draw more attention to the pavement in-between the front buildings.



Now that some level of detail and the darkest values are set, the next step is to bring in the middle tones. Started with the roofs, some shaded areas and blocked in windows at the forefront.



The final stages usually involve adding more detail where it can be added, overlaying some whites over the darkest values and, of course, signing the drawing. At this stage, I sometimes take the liberty to create details myself, without focusing as much on the subject as I did during the initial stages.



The same principles can be applied using colors, creating a hierarchy in the drawing.

I hope this encourages you to pick up a pen and notebook and start sketching!