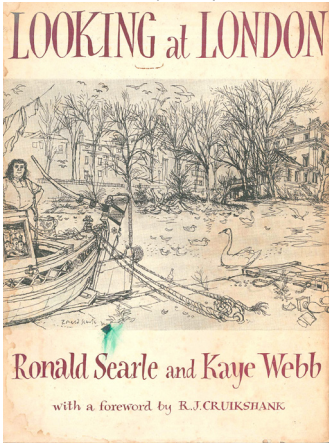


SKETCHING AS A WAY OF THINKING ON PAPER

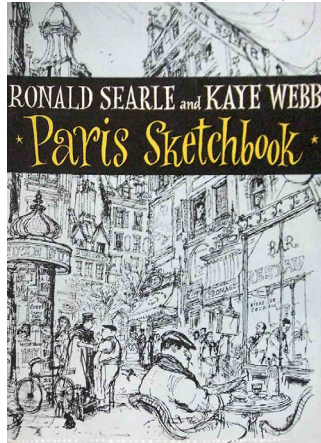
The Tricks of the Trade

Over the last 27 years there have been several booklets published on drawing, the two most important of which "Drawing The Line" (1995) was a National Exhibition from the South Bank curated by Michael Craig-Martin and featuring the work of painters, sculptors and architects, but out of the 208 exhibits, only three architects were represented – one work by Bernini, one work by Raphael and three by Michelangelo. The other publication was "First Thoughts: Architects Sketches" assembled by Jill Lever and Peter Murray on behalf of The Architects Benevolent Society (1999) representing the work of 20 architects. Jill Lever points out that for architects, "as for painters and sculptors, sketching was a way of thinking on paper; the act of drawing in itself stimulating further ideas". But, as she later acknowledges, "sketch books are intimately linked with travel and the best combine drawings for, as well as, of architecture and design as notes and lists. Inigo Jones filled his "Roman Sketchbook" with figurative drawings and notes".

It helps if you have a few heroes – top of my list is Felix Topolski (1907-1989). Born in Warsaw, Poland, he



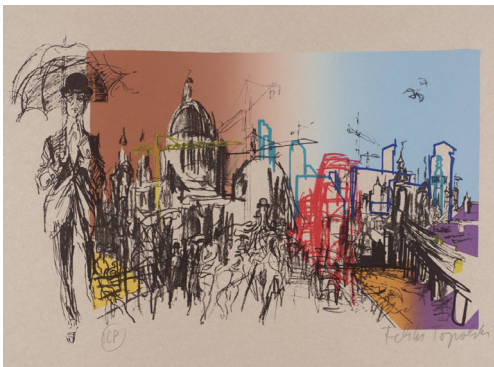
Ronald Searle (1920-2011)



Ronald Searle & Kaye Webb



John Minton (1917-1957)



Felix Topolski (1907-1989)



Paul Hogarth (1917-2001)

produced a regular broadsheet, Topolski's Chronicle (1953 - 82) and a sequence of murals including the Cavalcade of the Common Wealth a 600ft long mural painted over 20 years and housed beneath the arches leading to Hungerford Bridge. My other drawing/painting heroes included John Minton (1917-1957), Ronald Searle (1920-2011) and Paul Hogarth (1917-2001). I'd met most of them at the London galleries in the mid to late 1950's with my friend Ian McIver such as the Leicester Gallery

(1902-1977) opened in Leicester Square by Cecil and Wilfred Philips (later Ernest Brown and Philips Ltd). I met most of them at the Leicester Square gallery but John Minton and I met at the Lefevre Gallery where he had a solo exhibition in 1956. One thing I did learn from John Minton was his classic aphorism "Art for arts sake, but money for God's sake". It comes in handy in the post pandemic world! Whilst I learnt a lot about landscape painting and the painting of London townscapes from John Minton's work, I learnt most from Paul Hogarth, particularly in his later pencil drawings illustrating Brenden Behan's *New York* (1964) and Robert Graves' *Majorca Observed* (1965). Paul and I became good friends, both of us illustrating for The Weekend Telegraph when Geoff Axby was the art editor, and various advertising agencies.

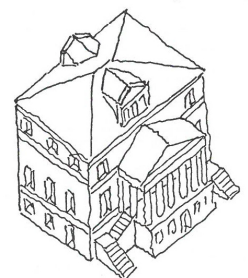
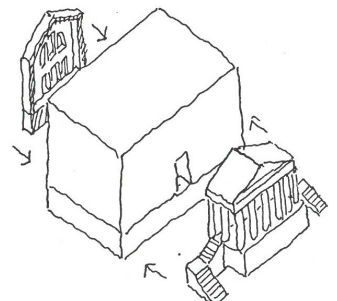
But being inspired by, rather than "following in the footsteps" of



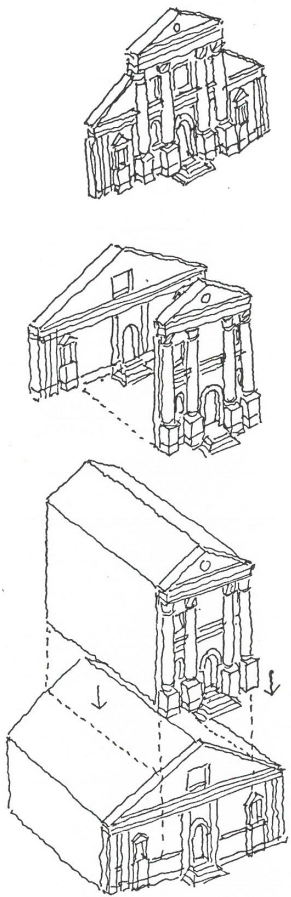
Long Row, Camp Hilltown
at 74 | 1960



Union Street, Camp Hilltown
Smaller domestic houses



Vila Malcontenta, 1560, RR
The Landmark House



Palladian Church, 1560, RR

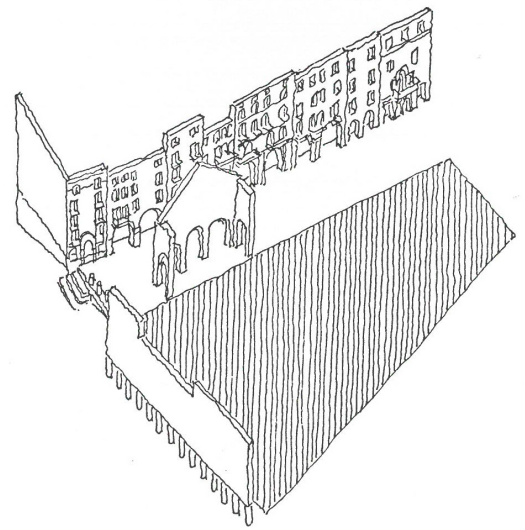
a painter or illustrator was something you see most clearly in the mid 18th Century paintings by the Welsh painter, Richard Wilson, who, learning the "*tricks of the trade*" from his visit to Rome to see the paintings by Claude Lorrain and Poussin on the walls of many clients and the lessons he learned transformed him from an average painter to one near the genius of his heroes. Turner's 1817 paintings of the Cathaginian Empire are clearly also inspired by the paintings of Claude Lorrain (c1839) although 178 years apart!

With pen and pencil I would follow the basic volumetric sketches of buildings and monuments as I began to take the elements apart, particularly where a long box of a house, or palazzo or square was present, I would make the attached elements read like "*cartoons*" leaning up against the main volumes. I followed a similar strategy for the painted sketches using the "*framework*" of guide lines on a part of the picture, whereas in the pen or pencil drawings such a strategy soon disappeared as I completed the various sketches.

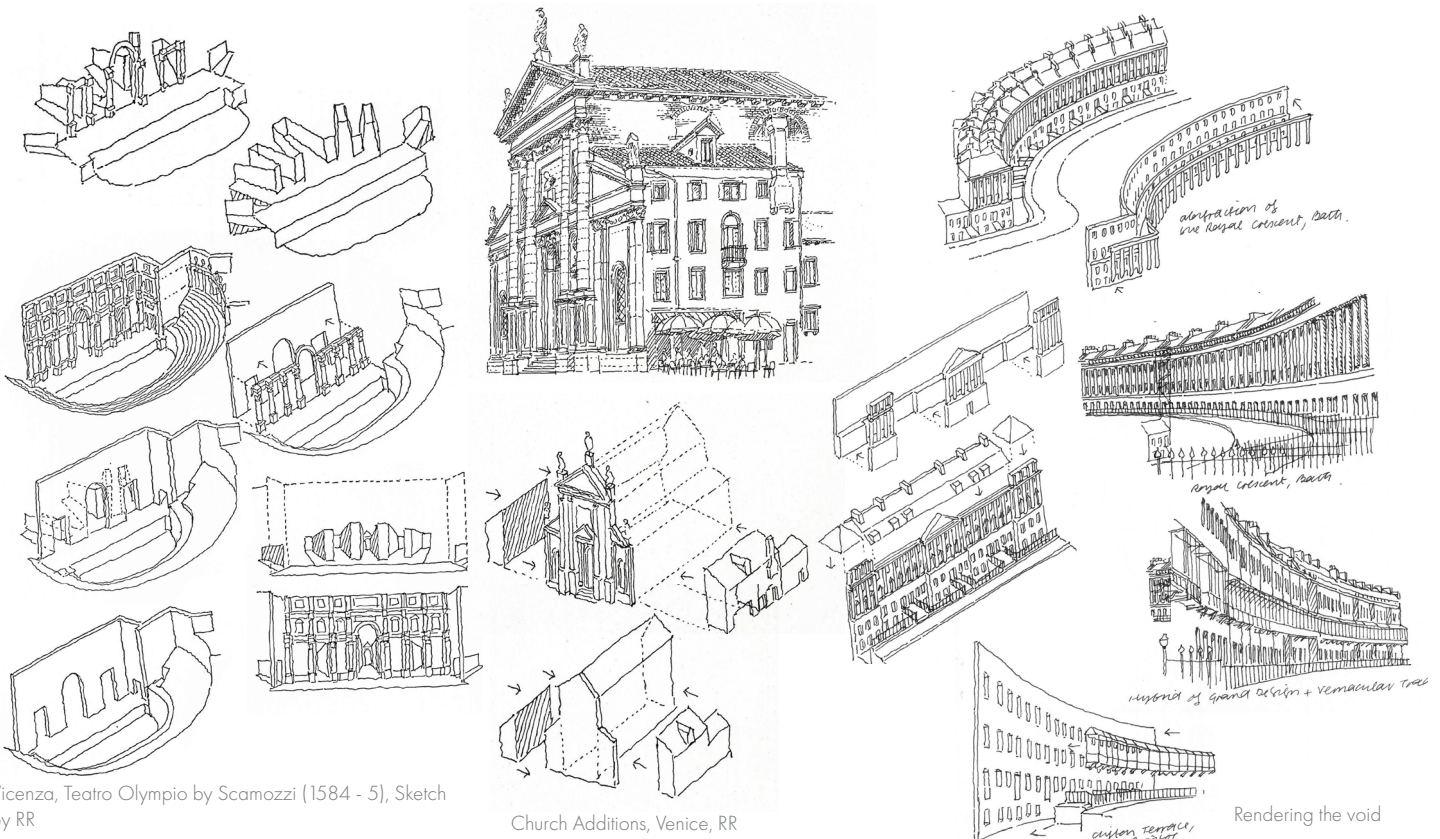
I was more concerned to get the volumes and details roughly right rather than exactly right. Once I had got the main volumes set up in the sketch, I would start adding the key landscape elements of the context.

This was less of a problem with the pure line drafting of later drawings as I always liked them as cartoon-like structures, even in our proposed contemporary townscapes.

Once I was in Taormina at the start of one of our EEC sponsored study programmes with a group of students who hadn't drawn before on such a study and I was pointing out that this kind of townscape (historic or modern) was all made up of square or rectangular openings, and the occasional projecting volumes which were themselves three dimensional squares or rectangles and that whilst they could draw the frontal elevations of these, it was only a minor shift of such a drawing needed to make it more three dimensional and so on. And whilst I said they had all to draw in ink (Rotring pens) I'd also asked them to bring Tixex to paint out the odd mistakes. Strangely those who couldn't draw at all, found the task easier than the students who could draw and who had been fed the idea of making one drawing



Square in Vicenza, RR



Vicenza, Teatro Olimpico by Scamozzi (1584 - 5), Sketch by RR

Church Additions, Venice, RR

Rendering the void

per page! I managed to get them to make more notes and analytical drawings of a series of coherent fragments of the structure under examination.

Those who couldn't draw seemed to understand the abstractions of the Villa Malcontenta or the Baptistry, Pisa, better than their fellow students who knew (to an extent) how to draw but had all the attendant baggage that went with that and were less confident, as a result, to experiment with the "*Tricks of the Trade*". But for those confident enough to experiment, in this way appeared to have a far better grasp of the various volumes more clearly because they were able to avoid complicating the task unnecessarily. I was after a neatened up stream of "*consciousness*" type of drawings across the A4 page of detail paper. It wasn't an onerous task. I learnt a lot from Ronald Brunskill's vernacular studies, far more than I had imagined. He used to come down to the South Bank to talk to my students. He was a lovely teacher, very skilled and knowledgeable about his passion for traditional buildings and their source and origins.

THE LIVING BUILDING

When I was 12, my father bought me the reprinted publication of "*An Outline of European Architecture*" by Nikolaus Pevsner. There is a passage (p.90) where, he points out, according to Alberti's theoretical writings, the very essence of beauty which Alberti defines as "*the harmony and concord of all the parts achieved in such a manner that nothing could be added or taken away or altered except for the worse*". As Pevsner points out, such definitions "*make one feel the contrast of Renaissance and Gothic most sharply. In Gothic architecture, the sensation of growth is predominant everywhere*".

Pevsner then makes the point that one could not imagine a donor in the 14th century decreeing as Pope Pius II did when rebuilding the cathedral of his native town (Pienza) "*that no one should ever erect sepulchral monuments in the church or found new altars or have wall paintings executed or gold chapels or alter the colour of walls or piers. For a Gothic building is never complete in that sense. It remains alive being influenced in its destiny by the piety of generation after generation. And as its beginning and end are not fixed in time so they are not in space*".

Some five years later, when I am about to go to study Architecture at the Northern Polytechnic, my Dad buys me another architectural present of the 1905 three volume edition of *Ruskin's The Stones of Venice* in which Ruskin publishes his thesis on *The Nature of Gothic* in which he sets out, in order of importance the characteristic or moral elements of Gothic under six key headings *Savageness, Changefulness, Naturalism, Grotesqueness, Rigidity, Redundance*. Of these six headings, the one most pertinent to Pevsner's observations with regards to the design of the Cathedral in Pienza (1459-62) by Bernardo Rossellino, former assistant to Alberti, is *Rigidity* - not merely stable but active rigidity; the peculiar energy which gives tension to movement, and stiffness to resistance. According to Alberti's theoretical writings, the very essence of beauty, which he defines as "*the harmony and concord of all parts achieved*" in such a manner that *nothing could be added or taken away or altered except for the worse!*" and located at the head of a new square as the one-time village was transformed into the first city of the Renaissance. And where, the moment the design is complete, it is already a "*dead*" building, in the architectural sense, in comparison with its Gothic neighbours, or Habracken's "*Support Structures*" or a genuine *living building!* Good examples are the *Ruins of Bury St Edmunds C.1939*, the *Theatre of Marcellus, Rome* of the ancient *Roman Theatre, Vicenza*. Our problem in many towns and cities in the UK and Europe is housing these "*living buildings*" which we regard as a "*dead buildings*" out of *sheer ignorance!*

Architects who I enjoyed drawing with over many years were old friends like David Wild, who accompanied me to Bologna, Siena, Taromina etc on the EEC sponsored study trips that I organised in the 1970's and 1980's, and the late Ian Mclver, who I studied with and who introduced me to Giacometti, the Swiss sculptor and painter when Ian was working for Yona Friedman in Paris in the 1960's. Other influences included the usual suspects - Corb, Camillo Sitte, Ruskin, Ronald Brunskill and Ken Browne, the only qualified architect of the "*Poets of Place and the Enemies of arrogance*", Gordon Cullen, Ian Nairn and Ken Browne - "*the Three Musketeers*", as I called them. And an ex-student and Rome Scholar, Robert Voticky whose sketch books from his period in Rome are an inspiration.

But once, in the 1960's, Ian Melver and I had been painting in Paris when we bumped into Giacometti with a character we had not met, before, Henri Cartier-Bresson, the legendary photographer and artist who founded the Magnum Photographic Agency in 1947, before its headquarters were relocated to New York as the American illustrated magazines became their principal clients. with Robert Capa and David Seymour. And, stranger still Cartier-Bresson had met my Dad at the liberation of Paris in 1944. And even more weird, I bumped into Cartier-Bresson on the steps of the Reform Club, in the 1990's, which he had joined in 1989. My father had died in 1974 and Cartier-Bresson in 2004. We'd have a few convivial chats in the Reform Club when we "*bumped*" into each other during those remaining years. My Dad had apparently met Hemingway in Paris at this time too. My Dad was with Patton's third Army as a war correspondent, but I was to learn a great deal more later when I met up with two American journalists on Martha's Vineyard to play doubles tennis when my family and I were invited there by my friend Professor Ken White and his wife

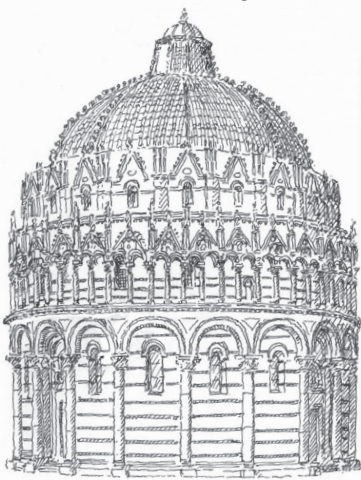
Jean in the late 1970's. I had gone there originally to meet Kevin Lynch who had a vacation home there, at Gay Head where he died at age 66 in 1984. A summer Island resident, he produced, in 1973, an important study "*Looking at the Vinyard*", in which he creates an image of the Island as "*a set of interconnecting journeys*" through diverse landscapes.



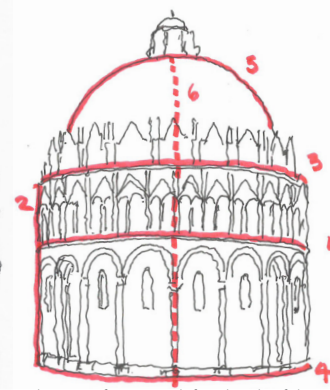
View of Basilica with RR drawing



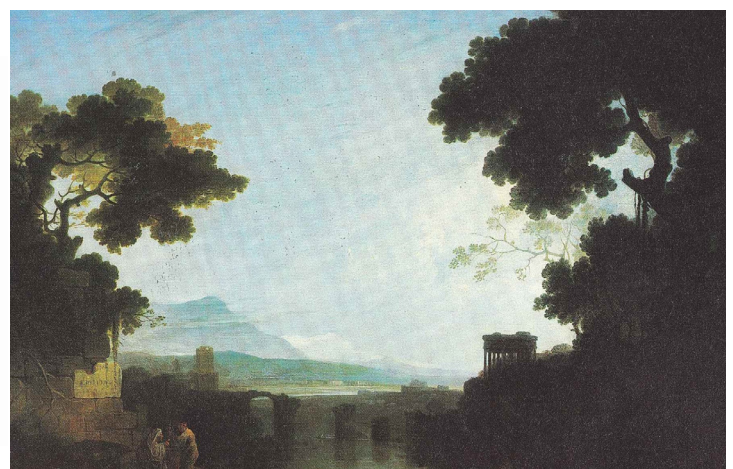
Richard Wilson (c1762-4) Llyn Peris and Dolbadarn Castle



Sketch of the Baptistery Pisa (1934), RR



Preliminary framework for sketch of the Baptistery Pisa (1934) by Nicola Pisano, architect and sculptor. RR



Richard Wilson (1754) Temple of Sybilla at Tivoli



"Dido building Carthage" by Turner (1817)



"The Decline of the Carthaginian Empire" by Turner (1817)



"Landscape with Dancing Figures" by Claude Lorraine (1648)



"Sea Port at Sunset" by Claude Lorraine (1639)