



THE ART OF HAND DRAWING

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Hello, my name is Oliver Vranesh and I'm a senior design professional at the HOK St. Louis office. I'm here to talk about the role drawing has at a large design firm. Not just any drawing, but the impactful and versatile traditional method of hand drawing. Like, yea... actually taking a pen or a pencil and putting lines on paper. I prefer pen because it makes a more confident statement, but that's a discussion for another time.

So, I guess what happened to architects of the previous generations that had drafting tables and would draw all the time? Well we use a computer now, because we're in the 21st century and not the 1950s. We have a wide array of BIM and three-dimensional parametric software that can portray our design intent with clarity and realism. The computer can really bring our ideas into this magnificent reality. And that's always evolving. So, why would we keep drawing by hand?

Even if we do create images from the computer, usually as a team, we end up drawing all over them anyway. We do this to point out different or more efficient ways of detailing, to develop better conditions, comments that can help make better and more memorable spaces for our clients. It's a way that we constantly improve our work. Drawing is fast. It doesn't lag. It doesn't crash. It's imaginative and iterative. It's a one-way, high-speed track from your brain to paper. Each drawing doesn't have to be a masterpiece. It can be sloppy and that's perfectly okay, as long as your idea is clear.

So, on a day to day, what do we use drawing for? I can think of five ways off the top of my head, but I'm sure there's more.

We use drawing for attendance. It's a way as architects and designers we capture thoughts and ideas that happen in meetings. It's really a crucial part of our notes.

We use drawing to portray the main essence of a design, like in a parti diagram, of those 14 lines of paper that can carry all the way through the end of a built project.

We use drawing to explain and imagine new ideas. We let our mind roam free without hindrance and really show what's happening or show the potential of a certain space.

We use drawing to explore and make mistakes. And most importantly, learn from those mistakes. That type of thinking gives us a better course of direction for a project and makes sure the best ideas come to fruition.

We use drawing to see. Going to a new city, building or environment and jotting down what your eye sees, remembering it on paper and using it as a design reference for later. This type of seeing, looking and understanding becomes inspirational for future projects we encounter.



So, what's the future of drawing? Hand drawing will be highly adaptive. We'll always find a way to draw one way or another. Taking hand sketches and using the model. Taking hand sketches and taking the computer to model them up. Or maybe sketching digitally on some tablet or whatever futuristic surface shows up. Really whatever brings the connection of the mind, hand and line into existence. There will always be drawing.

Even every day in this COVID-19 world, we find ourselves drawing digitally in online meetings, sharing drawings by email and having work from home desks filled with sketches. It proves that drawing by hand is here to stay and is an integral part of the practice.

Drawing really is an essential part of the process of architecture. It's necessary and it's just what we do as designers and architects. It's one of the many reasons why we love our profession.