



From real  
life to illustrated  
scene ;

A drawing class  
with Julia Bethan  
(JB ...)



# HELLO!



Hey! I'm Julia Bethan or JB (I call myself JB in the third person all the time). I'm a freelance illustrator and textile artist based in Cardiff. Most of my illustration work these days is focused on children and family activities which is AWESOME. It's my firm intention to illustrate children's books one day. Aside from that, I work with small brands and businesses on branding bits and bobs (logo design, website assets, illustrations for social media/print, packaging design etc). I'm also a textile artist and have a whole side business in embroidery. I have lots of variety in my creative life and I love it.



I've not always been a professional illustrator, though I have been drawing and creating my whole life. In school I completed an art GCSE and A Level, and got the highest in this subject of all my subjects. Unfortunately, however, creativity and art was not considered a 'proper career' and I was advised to keep it as a hobby and pursue languages. Long story short, after 2 x degrees and 2 years of working as a paediatric nurse, I finally turned my 'hobby' into the creative career I have today. It took time to build myself up with part time jobs here and there, but now after 3 years I am a self-sufficient creative person (take that career's advice human!).



In this class, you will learn some little tips and tricks to guide you into turning a real life scene into an illustration. By the end of the class you will have;

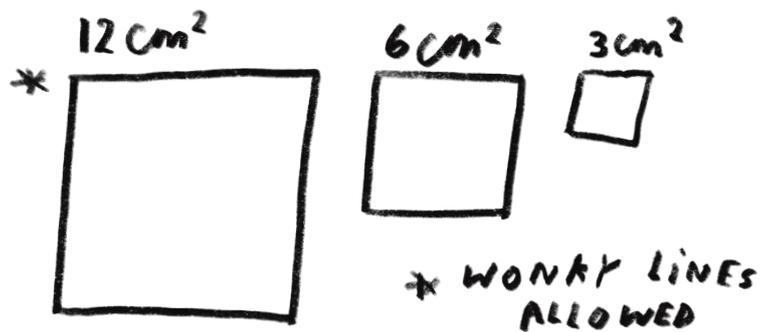
- Understood the basics of perspective and the level of detail required in objects close and far away
  - Simplify your illustration into shapes and lines to remove excess noise and detail
  - Use your lovely individual brain to create an imaginative and original take on your scene
  - Pull out some character and small details to make your piece illustrative and playful
- Use a limited colour palette and draw in colours and tones
  - Created a final piece of your chosen scene

# TASK 1

## BIG BOX, MEDIUM BOX, TINY BOX.

This exercise will help with perspective in scene drawing and illustration. By putting things in boxes, you can learn how much detail to add to foreground objects, and how to simplify objects that are further away by limiting the space you can draw in.

- Draw three boxes on some scrap paper, printer paper or in your sketchbook. The big box will be 12cm squared, the medium box 6cm squared and the tiny box - just 3cm squared.



- Choose any object you like and draw it three times in the three different sized boxes. You'll find that you aren't able to squeeze in as many details the smaller the box becomes - but this can be a good thing! By limiting the space you have, you have space only to draw what counts. Be that the outline, maybe a tiny shadow or two, or some vague idea of lettering detail. This task will help you on the final challenge, when you can split your scene into perspective layers.



I drew an old aloe vera plant and here's how it turned out. As you can see I was able to add much more detail in the big box, whereas the tiny box is limited to just linework.



## TASK 2

### SPEED DRAWING

You're going to tackle drawing your chosen scene for the first time. For this challenge, you'll need a wet tool (brush marker or felt tip) and a dry tool (a big chunky pencil/graphite stick or charcoal).

Drawing with speed can help to eliminate a lot of the noise from what's in front of you. Don't panic about getting in all the details, we are mainly going for shapes and lines.

#### BLOCKING SHAPES WITH WET TOOL



#### LINE WORK IN DRY TOOL

- Set your timer for 5 minutes and no longer.
- Using your wet tool, block in any shapes you see.
- When you've blocked in enough shapes, use your dry tool to outline your shapes.

Try and react quickly to what you see, what big shapes can you block out? What lines are most striking to you, or help inform the scene? You can attempt this task as many times as you like, but you must start from scratch every time.



Here is how my scene worked out. The speed made me simplify my leaves into heart shapes and removed lots of excess detail. See the back pages for more examples of 5 minute drawings.

# TASK 3

## MEMORY DRAWING

This drawing challenge will free you from the reality of what you're seeing. So often when we attempt to illustrate, we can be too bound to the reality of what we can see. By drawing from memory, we can draw from our own interpretation.



- Take at least 5 minutes to study the scene in front of you.
- Ask yourself, what items or objects are popping out at you? Where is everything placed? If there are any mirrors, what is in the reflection?
- Now turn away from it, or move into another room and sketch out what you remember.

You can take as much time as you like for this task, and use your speed drawing to help you if you need to (though I would recommend using just your brain memory power if you can!). A pencil and some scrap paper are more than enough for this.

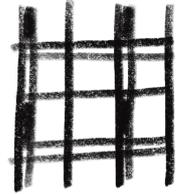


*This is my memory sketch next to a photograph of my chosen scene. The two are definitely different but I've got the basic layout and some of the details I'd like to keep (the roof of the house opposite).*

# TASK 4



## FINDING & SIMPLIFYING DETAILS & PATTERNS

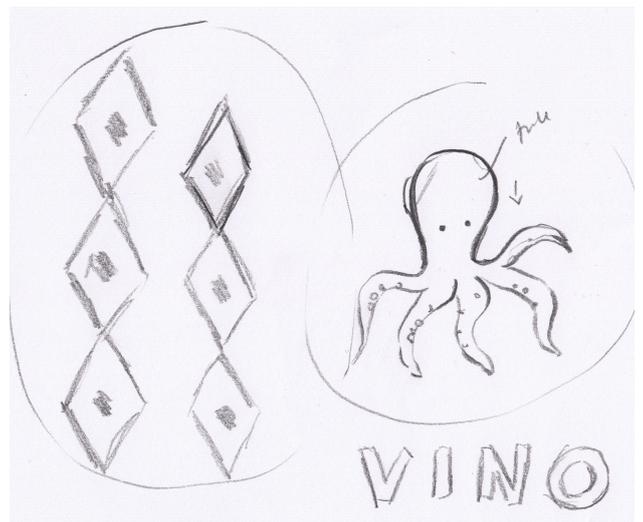


So we've eliminated some irrelevant stuff in our speed and memory drawings, but what about details and elements you'd like to keep? This task will add a fun detailed element to the scene drawing, where you can choose one part of the scene you wish to stand out (an object, a pattern, etc).



If we attempt to accurately represent every detail and pattern in front of us, we are at risk of overwhelming our illustration (& brain!). By simplifying one pattern or making one or two objects stand out can be a great way of making the entire illustration feel complete, adding personal character without getting lost in a sea of detail.

- Pick one pattern in your scene and simplify it. To do this, only draw one small section of the pattern.
- Pick one detail on an object in your scene. This could be a lighthouse in a painting on the wall, a character on a book cover, or a symbol on a road sign. Draw this detail and simplify it using the method in task one.



# TASK 5

## DRAWING WITH COLOUR

Task five will help you limit your colour palette, as well as aid tonal difference. Say goodbye to the pencil, you can now sketch your scene using only colour (no black or white allowed!).

Pick three colours of your choice; the colours themselves do not have to match, or compliment each other.



- Colour one - Pick a dark colour, like a navy, or deep purple. I have chosen dark turquoise. This is our outline, or shadow colour.
- Colour two - Pick a mid tone colour. This will be lighter than colour one, but not extremely light. I'd say, a 'normal' shade. I've chosen a medium red. This is our mid tone colour, neither light nor shade.
- Colour three - Pick a light colour, that is lighter than colour two. I've chosen a light pinky/purple. This is our highlight colour.

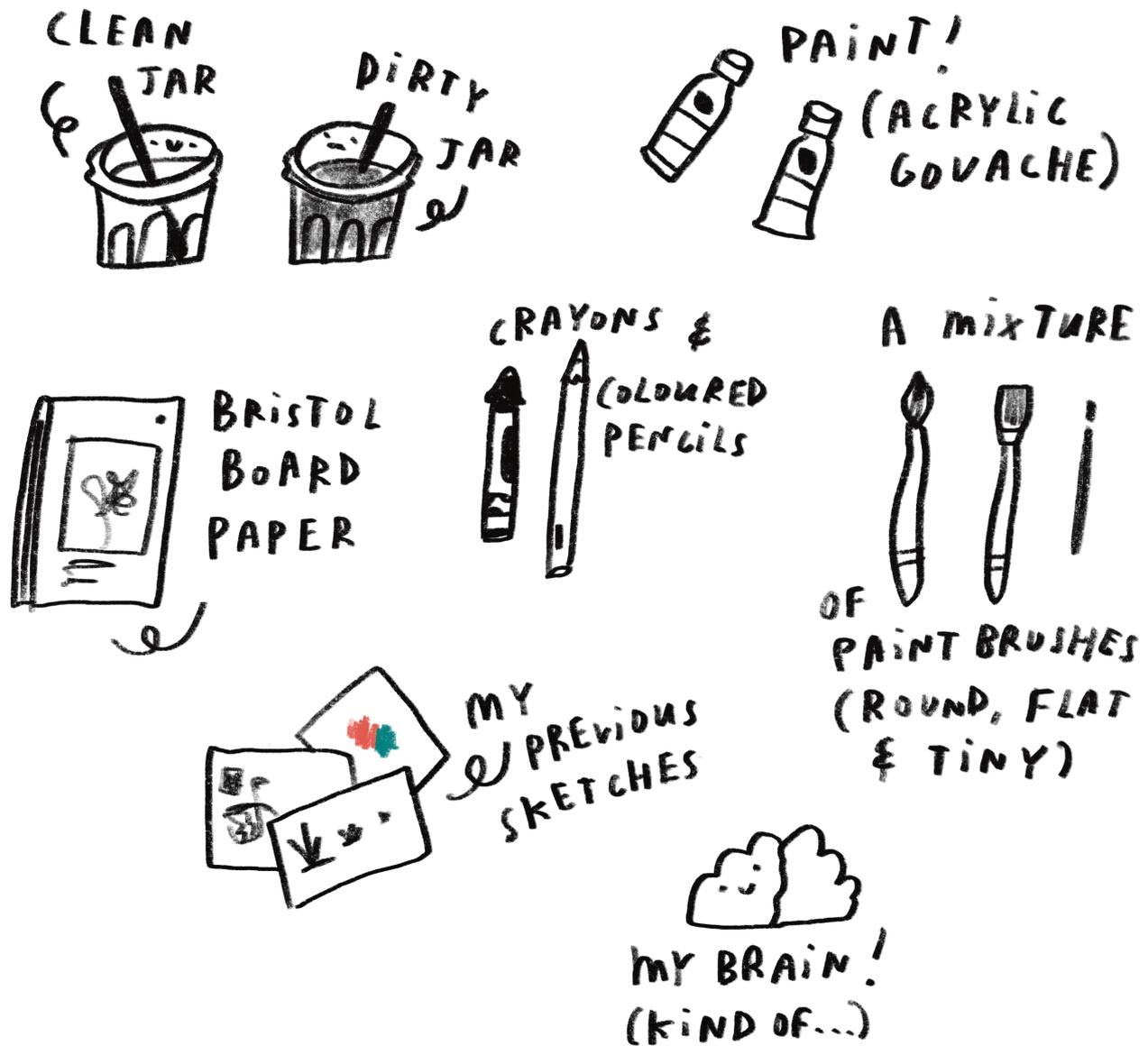
Using your previous tasks, redraw your scene again using just these three colours. Block out big shapes with your mid tone colour, notice any strong areas of light (such as the sunlight bouncing off of a surface) and mark these with your light colour, and outline your shapes & add pattern with your dark tone.



This is my colour sketch. You can see the sun bouncing off the lamp in colour 1, the bulk of the illustration is comprised of blocked out shapes with colour 2, and outlines and patterns drawn in colour 3.

# FINAL TASK

## JB'S MATERIALS



This is not a painting class and I completely give you the floor on what material you want to use to create your final piece. But, I'm nosy and I like to know what other artists/illustrators use, so here are some of my tools! Keep your previous sketches in front of you to guide you, and HAVE FUN! Please attempt your final illustrated scene in traditional media aka not digital - this will create a more expressive, fluid & characterful piece.

# FINAL TASK

## MY FINAL PIECE



well done !!

You've completed the class! I really hope you've enjoyed it and learnt some valuable little tips along the way. Be sure to practise these as much as you like, you will improve and improve! And never fear if your final illustration doesn't go exactly how you wanted it to - to be honest I'd change a couple of things about mine too and that's totally fine. Can't wait to see what you create in your own individually illustrative way.

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JB x



And here is my ACTUAL scene!! Check out the cute octopus.