

Michael Dobson - Artist's Statement

From Pen to Paint is the title of this exhibition. This body of work originates solely from my pen and ink sketches. It embodies places I revisit often because their windswept pines and black spruce forests, cliffs and mountains, lakes and mineral-laced rivers, big skies and panoramas draw me back again and again. Unique architecture and industrial landscapes also fascinate me and figure prominently in my sketches.

Typically, I plan painting trips, and sketch or paint on location in all seasons. I have repeatedly observed that some passers-by enjoy looking over my shoulder while I work on these trips. Normally I enjoy these encounters and engage with onlookers. During the current Covid-19 era, however, I have worked entirely in my studio in order to avoid this physical proximity and work safely. For subject matter I've relied on my pen and ink sketches, some of which go back 24 years. Sketching with ink requires considerable confidence as erasing is not an option. My sketches are spontaneous, energetic and quick – usually rendered in just a few minutes. I sketch with the intention of creating a strong composition, not trying to reproduce an exact likeness. I may simplify, take things out, move objects around or change their size depending on what I want to emphasize. What I eliminate is just as important as what I leave in. I've included some of my sketch books in this exhibition because they are the genesis of this body of work.

Thumbing through my sketch books is like visiting old friends; through them I return to places I've lived in and experienced intimately. When I contemplate a sketch long enough it begins to suggest a direction my painting might take, along with the palette, media, size of work, and which tools to use. The moment I start to paint my imagination controls the painting process. A sketch made on a warm June morning may evolve into a frigid winter midnight scene because I happen to look out my studio window, as I'm painting in January. My mood also impacts my painting; a sketch done on a stormy spring daytrip may develop into a blast of autumn colour or a nocturnal moonlit landscape.

For this exhibition, I want to invite viewers to experience the creative process by engaging their own imaginations as they glance ***from pen to paint***. I would also like to acknowledge support from the Ontario Arts Council for making this exhibition possible.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "M Dobson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.