

# **Courtroom Artist Tips for Sketching a Mock Trial Scene**

1. **Drawing Drama from Life.** Remember when sitting in the courtroom as the sketch artist, that you are in the room in place of a camera. Think about what a camera would capture in the room. Picture the drama that a camera would focus in on; the setting; the view from your perspective of where you are sitting; who are the people in the courtroom and not necessarily the detail in the courtroom; capturing their movement and emotions by showing gestures and the energy in the emotions capturing the human story; the time of day with lightness and/or shadows; the integrity of the sketch showing the truth of the moment and not an exaggerated sketch or different colors of clothing than what is exactly witnessed; and lastly include, professionalism in the quality of work being sketched.
2. **Consider the Seven Principles of Art:** The seven principles of art include balance, contrast, emphasis, movement, pattern, rhythm and unity/variety. When sketching, consider the balance between the darks and lights and the movement it shows. Consider portraying characters sitting at different angles. Show where the eyes are looking and what the hands are doing.
3. **Establish varying Line Weights.** Think outside the box. Consider sketching a flower. The base of the stem supports the flower, so the stem should be heavier lines than the flower itself. Now look at the wrinkles in the petals within the flower. Those wrinkles might be conveyed with the lightest of lines to show delicacy and slight movement. Take this same context when sketching. Lines can show movement and lines separate the picture from the background. The picture would be the positive shape and the background would be the negative shape. Use the darker and heavier lines on where you want the observer's eye to draw their focus to see the shape and emotions/energy expressed the most. This can be done by developing texture and value.
4. **Find Value in Shapes.** A shape is defined as a two-dimensional area that is flat but describes length and width. The shapes can be geometric or organic and can be positive or negative. Practice sketching any picture by breaking it down into shapes. Learning shapes is the key to drawing faces. Don't fight the idea of how hard it is to draw a face, but look at the different shapes that make the entire picture. A great artist to study on how to sketch figures is by Burne Hogarth, "Dynamic Anatomy – Revised and Expanded."
5. **Use Color.** It is important to understand four components of color. **Hue** is what the color is like yellow, red, blue, etc. **Value** is how light or dark a color is. **Intensity** is how bright or dull the color is and can be termed as high intensity (bright) or low intensity (dull). The color that comes out of a paint tube is the brightest the color will ever be. And, **temperature** is how warm or cool the color is. The warm colors are your reds, yellows and oranges – your "fire" colors. And the cool colors are the greens and blues. Some colors can be used to frame a subject, light white shadows around a subject draws your eyes to the person sketched. You can also blur colors in the background, while the bigger more pronounced colors are in the forefront setting the mood and focus.

6. **Use Value.** Ask yourself... how light or dark is the scene I am looking at to sketch. The push and pull of value can create depth, separation, contrast, emphasis, definition and emotion. The dark colors in the suits may show how serious the situation is. The courtroom setting/background is minimal so the focus is on the characters sketched. Sketching light and dark next to one another can help differentiate different subjects next to one another.
7. **Consider Form.** The courtroom sketch artist can study and practice form using weight, height, depth and those forms can be geometric or organic. Consider drawing a ball. Look at how the light reflects on the ball and that spot is the lightest spot on the ball. Now look where the ball is closest to the floor or table. It has less light, so that side is darker and the shape of the darkness is almost like a crescent moon. Look at the shadow off to the side of the ball casted on the floor or table. This shows you that light reacts different with objects and is communicated in your sketching. Practice drawing a sphere or ball to better understand how light interacts with creating different values of color all while using one color. Go online and pick a sphere to draw. Or, look at a baseball or a tomato on a table with a spot light off to one side and draw how it looks with the attempt for the object to appear as if popping off the paper. Even better, practice this with a stipel technique and it slows down the mind, eyes, and hand allowing all three to work together to record what is being drawn. Doing this will build confidence and your skill level in the courtroom.
8. **Incorporate Texture.** When sketching an object take into consideration how an object feels or looks like it feels. Is it smooth, rough, polished, dull, etc.? Is the skin of a younger or older man? Is there texture in the hair you see?
9. **Visualize Space in Courtroom.** There are two types of space – positive and negative. The positive is the object of interest. The negative space is between the objects – i.e. the background is white drawing your eyes to the object. Consider overlapping objects allows different figures to come forward if in front of one another, the size of objects with smaller figures appearing further away, their placement with figures lower on the paper seem closer than figures higher on the page, details draws the viewer's eye closer, color and value demand attention and perspective is what the sketcher sees at eye level (no higher, no lower and no more to the right and left).
10. **Practice.** Practice drawing every day. Learn how shapes make a picture. Learn values in colors and practice incorporating drama into the subjects being sketched. Establish light, dimension and use of color to draw focus on the subjects. Remember your perspectives of what you see and add no more. Be real with the images drawn. You are the eyes for everyone not in the courtroom. They want to see the drama, the intensity, the emotions, the movement and overall feeling in the room.

*This helpful guide was written by Cynthia H. Cothran after attending a virtual Courtroom Sketching Session by Kendall College of Art & Design's Associate Professor Nancy Hart. May 2022*