

## Wallach Sketch Session

Time Capsule

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Hi everyone, my name is Anastasiya Gutnik, and I'm a mixed media artist. In this Wallach Sketch Session, we are going to be creating time capsule drawings from items found in our surroundings.

Time capsules are a collection of items stored in a safe container as a way to communicate with the future, whether it be to those that come after us or for ourselves about our present existence. They have been used in various cultures and civilizations for hundreds of years. While humans have a long history of burying artifacts, such as ritual objects entombed with Egyptian pharaohs in the pyramids, the term "time capsule" that we think of today wasn't coined until 1939 when a capsule was buried for that year's World's Fair.

Many artists integrate the preservation of personal memories in their artwork. In a recent exhibition at Columbia's Wallach Gallery, *After the End: Timing Socialism in Contemporary African Art*, artist Kebedech Tekleab presented a multi-layered piece entitled "The Future Unfolding". An abstracted form, this work weaves in the artist's history and experiences.

As we collectively reflect on unprecedented times that we are living in, we will assemble objects that represent our personal experience. This exercise will be a twist on a traditional time capsule as we will use the items we assemble to create a drawing from our objects. Once we gather our items, we will use a viewfinder to select a section of our items and draw a focused moment in time.

For this exercise we will be using drawing materials, a viewfinder, and items to fill your time capsule with. We'll begin with our viewfinder. You will need a ruler, scissors or an X-Acto knife, a pencil, either floss or thread, tape and an index card that is 4x6. If you don't have a 4x6 index card, you can use any type of cardboard or any thicker material that you have on hand and cut it down to 4x6 inches. We're going to be cutting a rectangle that's 2x3 inches out of the center.

So we are going to start off by measuring an inch from both sides of our thinner part of our index card. So we're going to measure one inch here, and one inch here, from the side. And do the same thing at the bottom, and we're going to connect those lines.

And now we will measure an inch and a half from the wider part of the card on both sides. So put a dot there, and put a dot there. Put a dot at one and a half here, one and a half there, and then connect those lines.

So right now we have a 3x2 rectangle in the very center that we are going to cut. We're also going to want to put a mark in the center of this rectangle that is going to guide us as to where we put our floss. So since this is three inches I'm going to put that mark at one and a half, and same thing at the very top. And this side is two inches, so I'm going to put our center mark at one, and same thing here. Okay and, if you're following along, here are those dimensions.

So now that we have those marks we can go ahead and cut out that center circle - that center square. You can either use an X-Actor or if you have scissors like me, I'll show you a trick to cutting that out easier. If you want to fold it, gently like that, and cut the very center it will be easier for you to snip out that center part.

So once you're done cutting, you're going to have this viewfinder that has that center cut out. And we are going to take our floss, or if you have thread on hand you can use that, and we are going to tape that to the center of our viewfinder on each side. So we'll line it up to the mark that we made on both sides, and this will separate our viewfinder into quadrants and make it really easy for you to figure out the composition of your objects.

So you're going to do the other side, and when you're done it's going to look like this. So if you take an object - say this rose over here - and you look through this viewfinder at the rose you can very quickly determine where the object is laid out. You can really zoom in or zoom out and see how that changes your composition. And this 3x2 rectangle is going to equivalent to approximately the proportions of 8.5x11 printer paper. So that's it for your viewfinder.

Now that we've created our viewfinder, we're going to start working on our drawing. You're going to need an 8.5x11 printer paper, or any other paper you have in a similar size or that you can cut down, a pencil, eraser, and your ruler.

We are going to measure halfway on each side of our paper and draw a dividing line so that we match our viewfinder. So because my paper is 8.5x11, we're going to measure four and a quarter on one side, do the same at the top, and then connect the line as I've done here. And then on our long side, since it's eleven inches, we are going to make a mark at five and a half, do the same on the other side and connect the line.

So when we're ready with our paper, we're going to take some time to find items in our surroundings that are meaningful for you at this time. Perhaps these are objects that represent an introspection, a learned skill, an item that you've thankful for during quarantine, something you've been reflecting on, or a place you've been yearning to return to. Whatever it is, assemble objects that you want to remember.

Once you've gathered your time capsule contents, arrange them in a shoe box or another container in a way where they overlap, make interesting shapes, create depth, or otherwise intrigue your eye. So let's peek inside my container.

Some of the contents I've collected: I've got a postcard from friends that were traveling, a pin that I recently acquired, a card from a trip that I am planning, a fancy bottle of Purell that is relevant to all of our lives at the moment, a candle I've been burning, and a ring that has personal significance.

So now that we have both our viewfinder and our time capsule materials, we can play with various compositions. So let's take our viewfinder, and hover over our box of items. So as you'll see, you can zoom out or zoom in, you can move this (viewfinder) around, and it dramatically changes the composition that we're working with.

So once you have a composition that you're happy with, you can secure your viewfinder over it. I'm really like this interest that's really, that's at the center over here, there's a lot going on there. So you can kind of play with it... okay, I think that is a composition that I like. And we can begin working on our drawing.

What you're going to pay attention to is where you have your quadrants on your paper is where - is the quadrant of your viewfinder. So if we something in the top right quadrant over here, its going to go down over here. And we are just going to start very loosely laying in where the information is.

So I'm going to start with my pin, because that takes up a really large part of my drawing. And as you'll notice, for my drawing, I selected a very zoomed in option. So my viewfinder is right on top of the objects, so for scale my drawing is going to be significantly bigger than my actual objects. And you can play with that, see what proportions you want to make.

So I'm going to, just very loosely, lay in where the layout on my page - I've got this postcard that's tucked underneath the pin, and another card that's underneath that, and then we've got our bug over here somewhere. Now you'll notice that as soon as your vision changes where you're looking, you're objects are going to shift which quadrant or movement it's in, so make sure you're coming back to the same position when you're looking at your objects in your shoebox.

So you'll notice I'm putting this information down in a really simplified form, and I will make adjustments as needed in further stages of this. So I've got my candle over here, and I see another postcard edge over here. So the reason we laid this down really loosely at this stage, is that so you don't get to a point where you're working in a very detailed manner and find that your positioning is all wrong.

So at this point, once you've laid in all of your items that are going to be in this page, you can start to look at their relationships and see if they're in the right place. You know, maybe this drops down a little bit more with our candle, there's a little bit less space between this candle and this pin. And you're just going to continue to move through, and start giving a little more definition to your drawing. I see that underneath our pin

where this postcard is, you can see a little bit of the underlying image. It's sort of a clown photograph. So I'm going to, again, loosely lay that in.

And if you have picked maybe newspaper clippings or some kind of postcard, you might also have some text on your objects. So for instance you can see the pin that I have over here. If you are interested in adding the lettering, you can use your ruler and draw yourself a line on which you can add in your lettering so that it's nice and straight across.

So I'm going to, still loosely, sketch in my letters and really just pay attention to the type of lettering that's used. Lettering is, the type of letters used for any kind of promotion are always very specific so that they communicate something that is intended by the, by whoever's making it. So the way that the text is laid out and the type of font that's used is really intentional, so that's a nice thing to be able to capture to get the feel of whatever you're drawing. So I'm going to just very loosely lay that in.

I can see that I have a little bit... and I might have a little piece of lettering over here that still comes in, but at this point I'm going just still leave it really loose in case I end up needing to change this. And also I see that on the postcard that's over here, there's a white edge so I'm just going to draw that in with my ruler.

Okay, so it looks like I may have moved the bug a little bit over to the left quadrant, so I might – I can use either my eraser or just really draw over this image. And I'm going to move it down just a little bit over here. But again you want to make sure that you are being consistent in where you're looking, because if you shift your vision your drawing will continue to move.

So at this point once you have everything laid out and you feel confident that your composition is the way you want it to be, you can start to lay in more tones and start to build shadows. So pay attention to the areas in your drawing that are light and dark. For instance, my darkest points are the postcard that's on the very bottom because it has black background, and this candle is really dark. And then my brightest brights are for instance this pin that's very, that is dramatic white.

So I might start to lay in those tones, because that will give us kind of the outliers of tonality. So we know if this is going to be our darkest dark, that a middle tone is going to be lighter than our darkest dark and darker than our lightest light.

Now you can continue to move pretty quickly at this stage because you will still have the ability to move this, but I'm going to just start to make a little bit more intentional decisions about putting in my darks. And you'll see that I have a lot of, kind of, gestural lines and as I go back in and decide that oh yes this is in the placement that I want it, I'm going to put in my darker line and the other lines will kind of disappear. So you're going to have a drawing that almost has varied layers as you continue to build it.

Now that I have my - it's actually a scarab - now that I have my scarab in the correct place I can start to add a little bit more detail. And depending on how big your drawing is, or how dark you're making your marks you might have to go back and sharpen your pencil as well. Okay, now so I've got these little legs...

And as you notice even when I go to a smaller area in my drawing and I'm doing sketchy lines, I'm still moving throughout the object because I'm constantly evaluating the proportions and how light and dark something is, even within a smaller area, so that you don't end up in place where you've committed to something and find that it's not correct.

Okay so we have some shadow in between the back of this beetle, and this kind of in-between part... this head. So I can also take a look at how dark is this head in comparison to the postcard. Our postcard is going to be dramatically darker so I can lay in that tone and the beetle will start to kind of pop off of the page because of the contrast that we have created. And now on the postcard underneath the scarab we have the image that has a really bright shirt on, that is also one of our lightest areas, so I'm going to leave that white for now.

So you are going to move through your drawing until you're happy with the level of detail that you've built. You can also go back in with your eraser and start to highlight certain areas once you've gone really dark. You can spend more time in the lettering and really tease out exactly the way that the letters are being written in your drawing.

But the way that you want to finish your drawing is really up to you – you can make it more sketchy, you can make it more refined and more photorealistic. I'll give you an example that I had just finished of a previous drawing.

So in this drawing, I added I would say about – worked on it about fifteen more minutes, and arrived to this point. So you'll see that in this drawing I still have some somewhat sketchy lines. I added some more detail and some more shadow in all of the areas, and I feel like this has gotten to a place that I'm really happy with the overall feel. I'm able to identify each of the items in this drawing and I have some nice depth that's being built in shadow from where objects sit on top of each other.

If you need help in your finishing touches, another good trick is to squint at what you have in your box and your drawing and you'll start to easily tell if there are areas that need a little bit more brightness or a little bit more darkness in comparison. And you can see if there are any relationships between light and dark areas that need adjustment.

So take a look at your drawing, it's a testament to this moment that we're living through, I hope this was a meaningful exercise, and I want to thank you for participating.