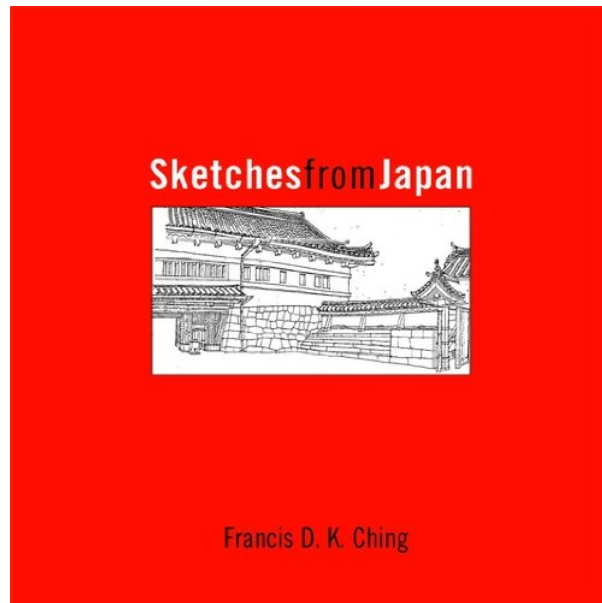


SKETCHES FROM JAPAN BY FRANCIS D. K. CHING



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Sketches from Japan



Francis D. K. Ching

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Amazon.com Review

Sketches from Japan is the charming record of an eminent architect's visit to Tokyo and Kyoto. Each day Francis Ching would walk downtown, past temples and through residential districts, recording his visual impressions with a fine pen. He delights in the juxtapositions of old and new, hard-edged and organic, plain and richly textured, that are nowhere more striking than in a modern Japanese city. His freehand line drawings capture the essence of springtime Japan--more successfully than photographs, perhaps, through the isolation of elements and elimination of details inherent in the sketching process. The dark wood of an ancient gateway is emphasized by drawing the surrounding trees only in profile; the shaggy outline of a thatch roof suggests its straw surface as clearly as a completed study. The artist places each drawing in context with a few articulate sentences; he includes some gentle lessons on drawing and geometry, but the text is not didactic. The intimacy of many of the scenes--small interiors, architectural details, people strolling down narrow streets--is enhanced by the informality of the pen-and-ink medium. The monochromatic line treatment is in keeping with traditional Japanese sumi-ink drawings. The book also continues a tradition set by 18th-century haiku poets and artists such as Buson and Taiga, who recorded their journeys in combinations of diary and sketchbook. Sketches from Japan is a small-scale gem, and we can learn as much from it as from many more elaborate photographic studies and coffee-table books. --John Stevenson

About the Author

Francis D. K. Ching (Seattle, WA) is a registered architect and a professor at the University of Washington. He is the author of six highly successful architecture books, all of which focus on the basic processes and forms of architectural design.

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"Drawing stimulates the mind to think and can make visible those aspects which cannot be seen by the naked eye or captured on film by a camera." - From the Introduction to Sketches from Japan

The art of the travel sketchbook from one of the world's most talented graphic communicators.

Following in the footsteps of such creative geniuses as Leonardo da Vinci and Le Corbusier, designers and artists often keep visual notebooks of the new worlds they encounter in their travels. Sketches from Japan provides an intimate look at how one of today's most accomplished visual communicators, Francis D. K. Ching, documented a month's stay in Japan. Accomplished architects and novice artists alike will be inspired by the sheer beauty of Ching's ink drawings and by the journey that they represent.

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Cultural and Aesthetic Delight

By Azlan Adnan

There is a long tradition among artists and writers of maintaining a journal to record observations and impressions. Many writers use journals to write informally, often spontaneously, to describe real or imagined people, places, and events. Artists and naturalists as well fill sketchbooks with both words and images to help focus their observations. Frank Ching, the author of this sketchbook, not only records the optical reality of what is seen; he uses these drawings as a means of gaining understanding, insight, and perhaps even inspiration. His drawings stimulate the mind to think and can even make visible aspects that cannot be seen by the naked eye, or captured on film by a camera.

Frank Ching made most of the drawings in this sketchbook in or around O-okayama, a town southwest of downtown Tokyo, where the Tokyo Institute of Technology is located. The subject matter ranges from street scenes to traditional construction details, from temples and their sacred precincts to stimulating juxtapositions of old and new. He has successfully captured the sights, sounds and even smells of vibrant metropolis Tokyo, enabling the reader to feel the humid heat of the day or the cool rainy mist that fell as he drew. In addition, there are scenes sketched during the author's brief excursion to Kyoto and the mountain village of Takayama

All the drawings were executed in a pure contour-line technique with a fountain pen and black ink. There is a crispness and finality to an in-ink line that is both daunting and exciting. The process not only fostered the careful observation of details; it also required seeing how they fit into the larger framework and pattern of shapes, and noting which details could be omitted. The shape and extent of the white spaces are as important to a composition as what is delineated.

Francis D.K. Ching (1943-) completed a month in the spring of 1990 as a visiting scholar at the Tokyo Institute of Technology which he spent producing this sketchbook.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful.

beautiful and INSPIRING collection of drawings

By Amazon Customer

Every fan of drawing, everyone who has ever traveled with a sketchbook will enjoy this little collection of his travel sketches from Japan, and this will delight those already acquainted with the ravishing beauty of Francis Ching's architectural drawings. Ching's other books are analytical drawings, showing architectural detail and forms with a controlled, disciplined line that architects know as the Ching style - contour drawings with a hierarchy of line emphasizing the outlines of figures. Ching's freehand sketches are a remarkably free riff on the drawing approach seen in his other work, as if he finally took his tie off and improvised a solo.

These are predominantly contour drawings. Tone is used for contrast of focus, or emphasis of a figure to its ground, but tone is rarely used to define a volume. The control of line is extraordinary, and the variety of marks interesting. But the power of the drawings often comes from his orchestration of many contrasting textures, shapes, and details.

Ching has remarkable control of representing a detail and describing its place as a part of a whole: there is always clarity in the disorder, even showing the exuberant chaos of telephone and power lines crisscrossing over the busy street. One can almost feel the mist, smell the sounds and hear the bustling noise on the street. The crowds of people are convincing, and he has no fear of quickly sketching a whole cluster of motorcycles. Looking at Ching's drawings feels like taking lessons in vitality, in visual selection, and in how a talented draughtsman really requires an editing, selective eye.

The drawings are unfortunately interrupted by a graphic drawing analysis of the Centennial Hall of the Tokyo Institute of Technology. There's nothing particularly wrong with the analysis but it is nowhere near as compelling as the drawings, and also this sort of formal drawing analysis is covered well in Ching's other

works. This analysis breaks the tone of the rest of the books, and it's a relief when the analysis ends and the exploration of Japan's urban life begins again.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful.

Wonderful sketches!

By Arcata Red

Sketches from Japan by Frank Ching is a wonderful book of the time he spent in Japan teaching and walking and sketching. The sketches transport you and you experience the many by-ways that he walked and examined. Ching has an incredible talent and you gain from sensing his observations. I highly recommend the book to drawers, travelers, and those who appreciate fine art.

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