

## The Line That Connects *by Saxon Sigerson, AIA*

This is the meandering story of the drawn line connecting a man in Rome, Italy to a nine-year old girl in Sacramento, California. The distance is great and the time shift no less impressive at 170 years.

We begin on May 8th 2010 with one of our Drawing Safari X attendees having some fun trying to intimidate a couple of new comers by flipping open a large black tome and showing them a sampling of high level drawings from long ago; saying "This is the standard of care for your work today!" Now I do enjoy a good chuckle, especially when the humor involves drawings but I draw the line at striking fear in a pencil slinger's



Can We Emulate Letarouilly's Drawings?

heart. Having experienced my share of performance anxiety around drawing skills, I am always trying to soften the tense grip on a finely sharpened Berol 314 as newcomers join our twice yearly group of urban explorers.

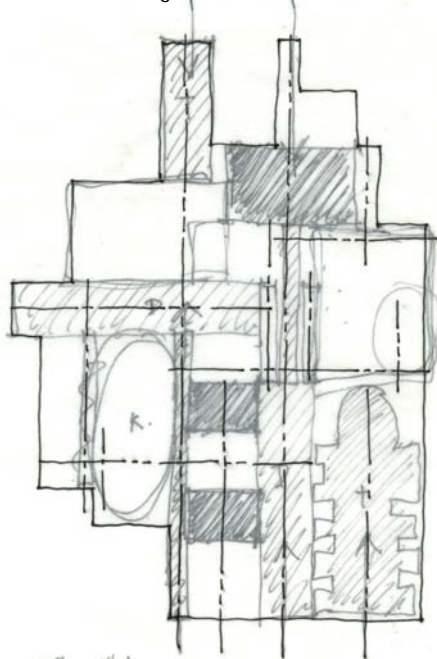
The book of drawings in question is worth looking at with loftier purposes in mind. The Frenchman, Paul Letarouilly devoted 35 years of his life to documenting the Renaissance and Baroque buildings of Rome. What he created was first shown to me back in architecture school as a tool for learning the principles of composition. Soon after, I purchased the student version of the book and have been in a state of continuing discovery every time I pick it up. I love the title, *The Edifice De Rome Moderne*. In 1840 the Baroque buildings were new and the Roman ruins were the old buildings. Now, 170 years later, those "Moderne" buildings look pretty moldy.

I recently used the book to acquire a beer and a hamburger. As I was flipping through it one morning here in the office, I found a building that just had to be shared. The iphone magically transferred the thought and image into the brain of Arturo Levenfeld who responded in a frighteningly pavlovian manner with a salivating need to have libation with the lines on the page. A few

days later we were spilling a lovely Boont's Amber Ale across the trace diagrams being created during our discussion on the Hospice Della Trinita De Pelligrini just north of

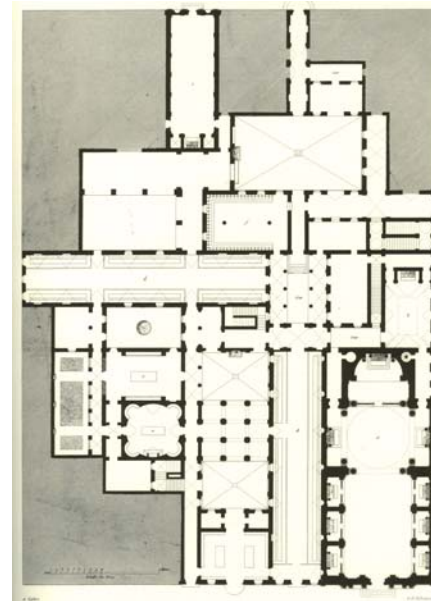


Location Of The Hospice Della Trinita De Pelligrini In Rome.



The Hospice Della Trinita De Pelligrini With Composite Diagrams of Solid/Void, Function and Axes by Saxon and Arturo

the Ponte Sisto over the Tiber River in Rome. What struck me so powerfully about this design was the interlocking layers of space in the plan. The big drivers of the composition are the two long dining halls, (labeled D) one set alongside the church and the other at a right angle and carrying through to the exterior of the building allowing natural light to enter. We poched darkly the three internal courtyards and decided that K marked the spot of the kitchen area. There was an "Oh my gosh" head slapper moment when we saw the lightly toned space to the left of the kitchen and said "Wow, that must be the vegetable garden!" Ah, the delights of architectural sleuthery! Continuing to delight in the plan geometry, I find it endlessly rewarding as I watch the long narrow spaces slip in between the short squat rooms and do their little dance of hierarchy, axis and symmetry. I am sure

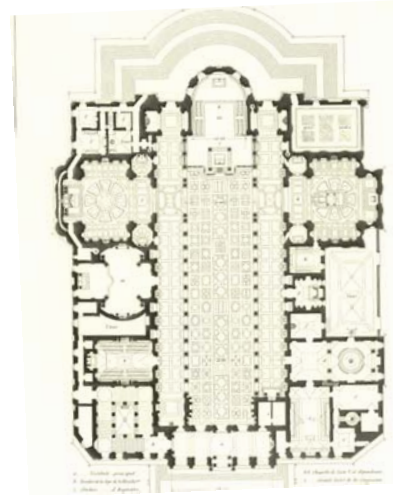


The Hospice Della Trinita De Pelligrini as Drawn by Letarouilly

they all get up and move around at night while we sleep, bumping into each other, slamming doors and hollering out the open windows just to let off some steam. By golly this building is 423 years old, it gets to have its way as an elder statesman of architecture.

Hospice Della Trinita De Pelligrini was built in 1587, designed by Martino Longhi the Elder. It was intended to care for the poor and the pilgrims traveling to Rome. There is not a lot of history about the building which is ok with me. The real reward is in the drawings and the pleasure of discovery.

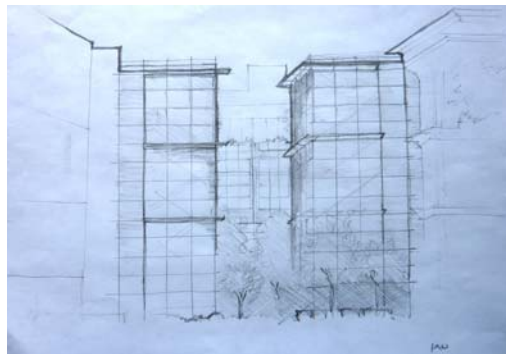
I will share a couple more of Letarouilly's drawings and then come forward to the drawings of 2010. The Church of Santa Maria Maggiore has always struck me as having a ship like quality with the apse in its prow-like form pointing out into the piazza that it fronts onto. It is a unique building



Drawings of Santa Maria Maggiore, Rome 400-1740 A.D. By Paul Letarouilly 1840 From Edifice De Rome Moderne

in that it has two fronts and the plan really seems to invite passage through the building as much as providing a place of rest and reflection. The perspective drawing is exquisitely framed with the trees and the rusticated wall on the left side focusing your view of the ship at rest in its piazza harbor. Digital cameras, eat your heart out.

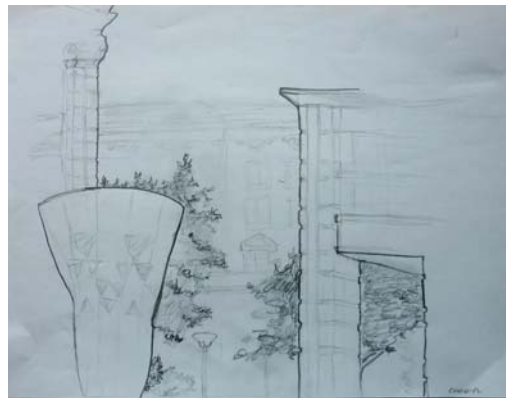
We come next to our Drawing Safari X held on a lovely Saturday morning in May. The subject was open spaces and the buildings that shape them. We had pencil pushers in five teams of two sent out by me to various locations for about three hours of looking and drawing. When we arrived back at Capitol park for the pin up and lunch time discussion, I was delighted by all the lead used up in the name of architectural discovery. It is endlessly pleasurable for me to see how people edit their view of the world through drawing. I am also glad when these adventurers are able to let go of their performance anxiety and share a part of themselves through this exercise. Here is a sampling of the images presented



The Calpers Building by Ian Merker



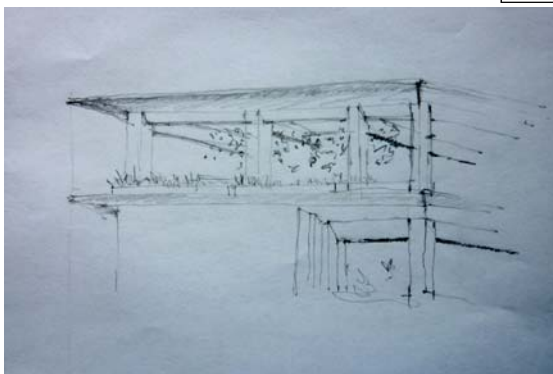
East End By Robert Boucher



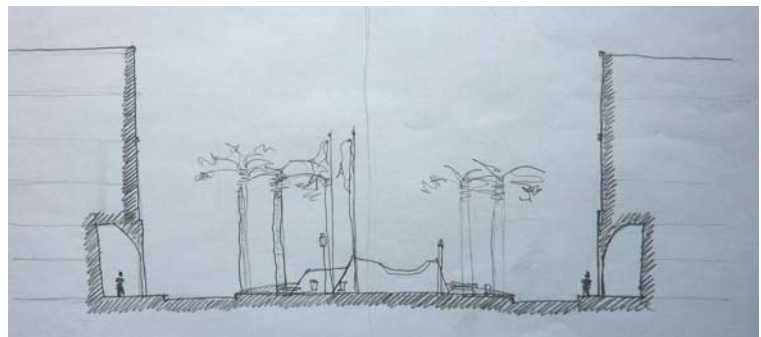
Sacramento City Hall By Cheryl Marks



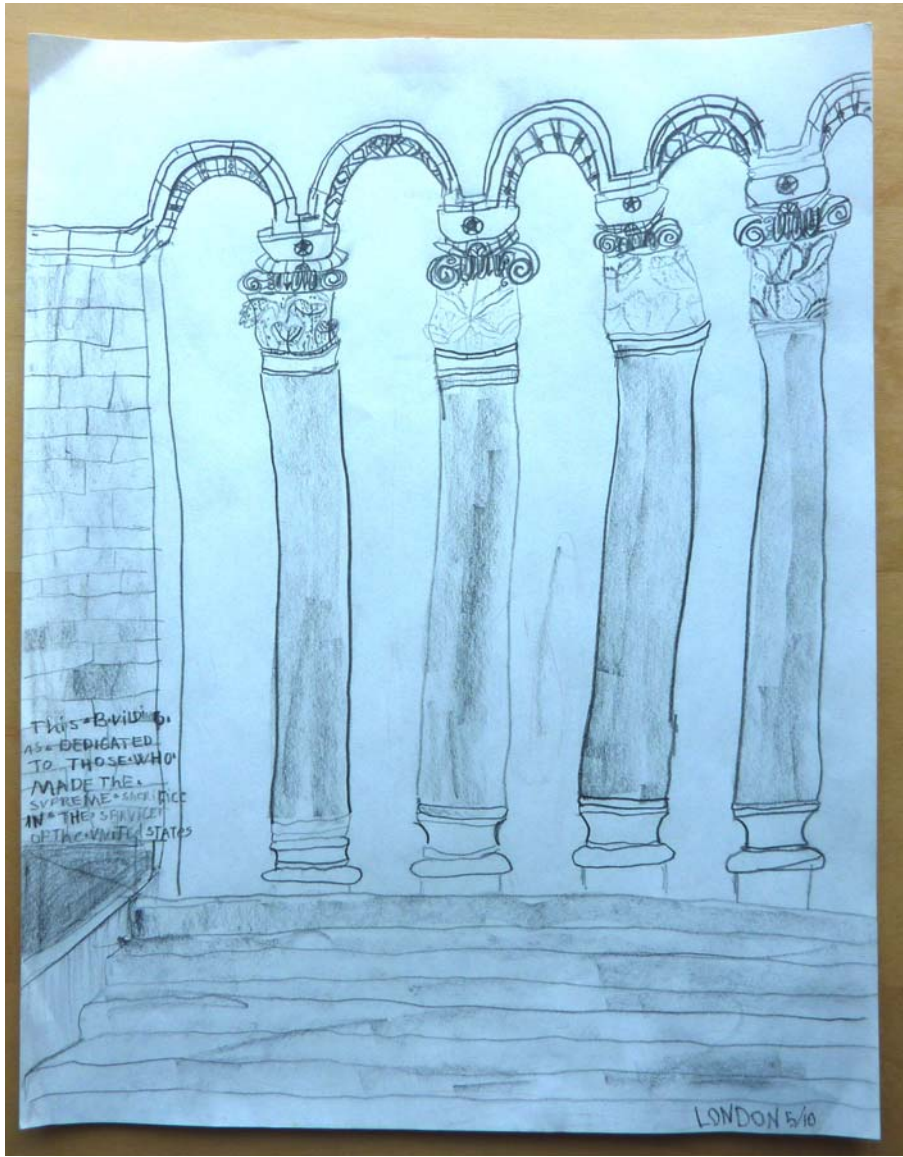
The Crocker by Saxon Sigerson



The Calpers Building by Mari Minimide



East End By Arturo Levenfeld



Memorial Auditorium By London Deutsch (age 9)



London and Richard Deutsch  
Photo by Peter Saucerman



Paul Letarouilly

Amongst the fine drawings pinned up, was one by London Deutsch age 9, that took my breath away. The intensity of seeing and the expressive passion of her line work on the Memorial Auditorium elevation (shown here upper left) was so moving. I love looking deep into this drawing and seeing the effort put into the details around the arches or the tops of the columns. The Greek gods should be so lucky that every person sees columns with such feeling as London expressed. This was actually the second safari that her father Richard brought her to, and I can't help thinking that our French buddy from 1840 would be profoundly moved to see this young girl joining with him in a passion for connecting lines on paper across the span of years for the sake of understanding architecture.

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Sacramento City Hall By Jonathon McMurry



Memorial Auditorium By Richard Deutsch