

# *The Memory of Trees and Other Things*

A watercolor sketch of a park scene. In the foreground, there's a paved area with some dark, textured shapes. Behind it is a path or lawn with a bench. Several trees are scattered throughout the scene, with one prominent tree on the left and others on the right and in the background. The colors used are mostly blues, greens, and yellows, with some darker purples and browns for shadows and highlights.

"WHEN I LOOK AT MY SKETCHBOOKS, THERE ARE ALWAYS TREES IN MY DRAWINGS." URBAN SKETCHER CHARLINE MOREAU IS A FREELANCE ILLUSTRATOR CURRENTLY LIVING IN NANTES, FRANCE WHO – NOT SURPRISINGLY – LOVES TO DRAW.  
BY **MARK ALAN ANDERSON**

ESPLANADE DU PEYROU, MONTPELLIER



**S**even when I'm drawing in the city, I always need vegetation; I think they are all part of the story. Every tree is a single character, some are old and twisted with their own shape and others are different.” The comparison of trees to stage actors is interesting, and Moreau is clearly intrigued by the variations a four season “stage” such as Nantes delivers. She perceptively points out how the colors of winter – “very cold, like blue and violet” transform into the yellow-greens of spring, with lots of flowers and buildings emerging from a background of fog. Summer hues are bright yellow, and she laughs about the heat and

advises me that sketchers must plan to paint fast because there is little reprieve in the form of shade!

The shadows of Nantes are short and intense, but she speaks ardently of the coming autumn season, cold and rainy and characterized by long shadows, excitedly revealing that “the trees are so different with big shadows on the ground.”

As a freelance illustrator working with architects and landscape designers, Moreau is frequently pressed to create images that aid clientele in imagining what future buildings or grounds will look like. This type of illustration must be done by hand to capture an organic nature: it's difficult to draw plants and trees on a computer without looking clinical and sterile.

Moreau shares with me that she's been drawing “like” an urban sketcher for a few years, having initially discovered USk in a book by Gabriel Campanario. While traveling in Italy her ideas about urban sketching began to crystalize.

“I wanted to keep memories without making photos, like a memory sketchbook. Now, when

I look at these drawings I can remember all the things happening in each moment, when I look at the drawings I can hear people talking in Italian.”

PREVIOUS PAGE – PROMENADE DU PEYROU, MONTPELLIER, FRANCE: Another reason I love drawing trees is because they give life to a subject, they are alive and unique. This fall sketch was made in Montpellier, in November 2017. It was really cold in the Promenade du Peyrou but I absolutely wanted to catch those wonderful colors in my sketchbook. I stopped when I couldn't feel my fingers anymore and after being sure to have captured these shades of gold and the spirit of the place.

RIGHT – LA TERRASSE DES VENTS, ÎLE DE NANTES, FRANCE: My favourite subjects to draw are trees, and one of the reasons is because it gives a natural frame to a stage, with its trunk, leaves and shadow! Put a tree on the foreground of your drawing and you'll give it depth immediately.

I mention to Charline that her sketchbooks sound a little like a sort of travel journal or carnet de voyage. She smiles and nods vigorously. “Yes, like carnet voyage, an experience to remember!”

Moreau reveals that she loves to draw with pens, but will typically start with watercolor first, followed

by inked lines. To her, reversing those tools feels too much like a coloring book. “But I love to draw! Even with watercolor I still love the drawing part, I love the lines and drawing shadows with lines, I like to look at all the details.”

Charline Moreau plans to relocate to Italy at year’s end. Her personal

work is currently focused on Nantes, where she is choosing a different memory to draw every day.



PASSAGE POMMERAYE, NANTES, FRANCE: I love watercolor, but when a subject is full of amazing details like windows, sculptures, capitals, typography or volutes, I can't resist drawing all the straight lines and bends with pens. I came three times for two hours to finish this drawing, sketching with ink directly.