

# Sketches from Life

by Toby Wright

*Exploring the Wonders of Nature*

*"The pursuit of drawing is often seen as a steppingstone towards painting: a preparatory study or sketch, to plan and organize a larger project. But drawing can also stand alone as a separate pursuit, for the sake of its own textures and graphic qualities"*

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TOBY WRIGHT - Sketches from Life



**TOBY WRIGHT**  
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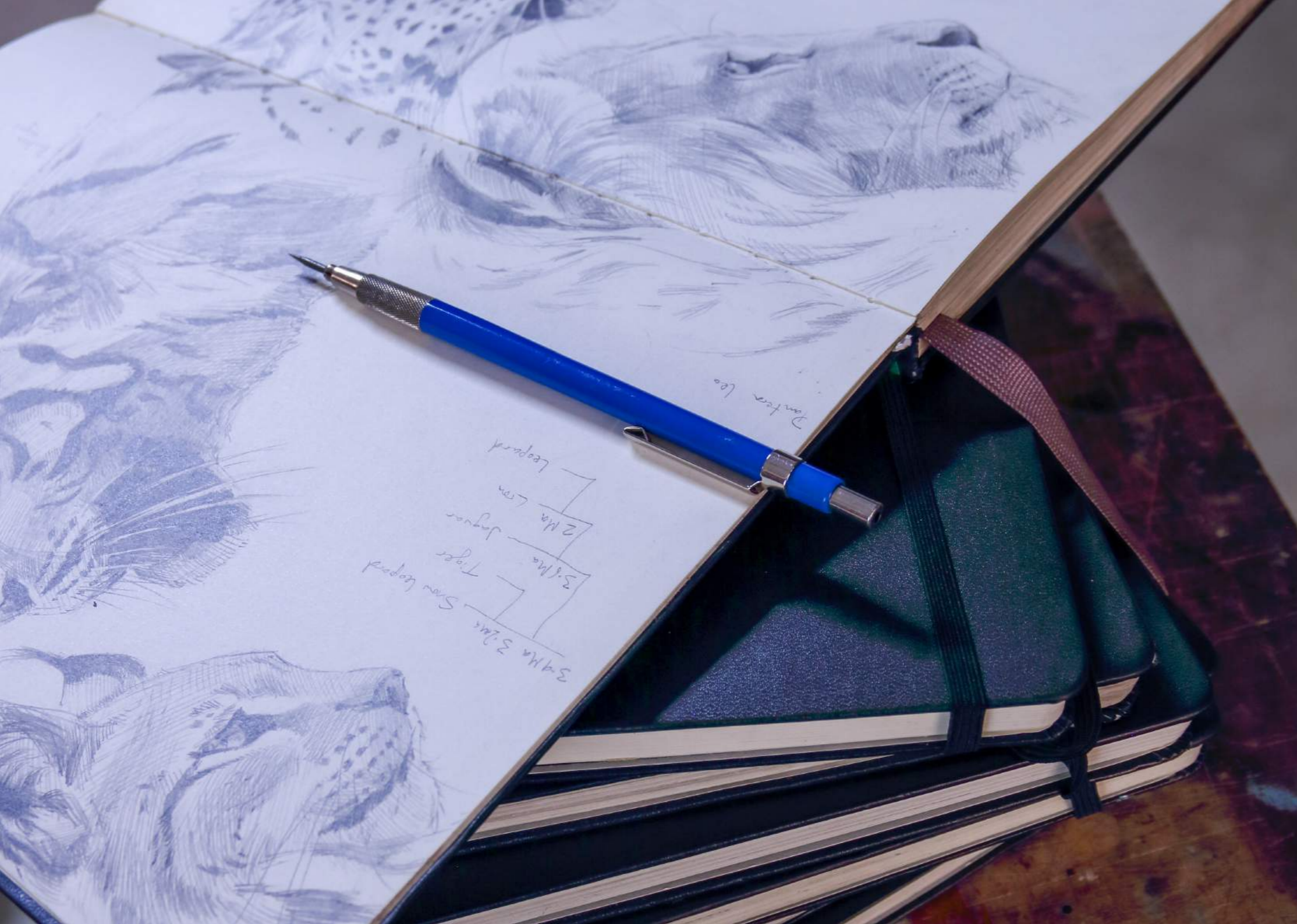
# Sketches from Life

**Toby Wright**

*Exploring the Wonders of Nature*

Presented by Accademia Fine Art





**C**'est par ses portraits que j'ai découvert Toby, étant moi-même spécialiste de peinture ancienne de l'époque Baroque. J'ai tout de suite retrouvé chez Toby la même qualité que celle de la portraiture ancienne.

*En visitant l'atelier de Toby, je suis tombé, par hasard, sur l'un de ses cahiers d'esquisses. Je venais de découvrir là une facette cachée de l'artiste, destinée à sa propre étude, à sa recherche personnelle et qui me dévoila une dimension plus profonde de son œuvre. Toby était non seulement un peintre mais également un explorateur.*

*Même si, aujourd'hui, nous pensons avoir tout découvert, il est intéressant d'entrer dans la vision personnelle que l'artiste a de la planète et de la nature environnante.*

*L'œuvre à l'encre, sur papier, est une prise de vue, dans l'instant.*

*Ses esquisses sont réalisées d'un trait d'une rare finesse. Sa touche sur le papier est rapide basée sur une grande certitude. Il joue avec le clair-obscur.*

*Avec des courtes lignes, il construit des formes qui se dégagent du papier comme l'est une sculpture dans un bloc de pierre. Attentif aux détails tel un botaniste naturaliste des temps passés, il nous fait revivre, avec émotion, la redécouverte d'une nature de laquelle les films et les photos nous ont aujourd'hui détachés et aussi éloignés du crayon.*

*Cette vision ouvre notre conscience pour admirer cette observation du détail et la richesse de ce qu'un trait peut manifester.*

*J'espère que cette exposition sur les esquisses cachées de Toby permettra aussi aux générations présentes et futures de prendre conscience de la fragilité de notre planète et de la nature.*

**Joël Girardi  
Accademia Fine Art**

## Toby Wright et le temps du grand bouleversement

**L'**Anthropocène, cette période géologique où l'Homme surpasse les forces géophysiques et où son empreinte sur la nature est de plus en plus dévastatrice. Si seulement nous pouvions inverser l'engrenage, si seulement une pause salvatrice était possible pour que les plaies se cicatrisent. Toby Wright nous offre une respiration, un espoir, un souffle de vie. Ses tableaux sont des gouttes d'eau qui hydratent notre esprit desséché par cette cruelle réalité.

Puisant son inspiration sur les hauts sommets montagneux ou dans les grands fonds marins, Toby Wright témoigne des changements de ce monde tumultueux. Sa vision sensible de notre monde nous incite à réagir pour protéger notre patrimoine universel.

Notre planète se meurt. Les scientifiques nous alertent mais nous ne changeons pas nos habitudes. Nous continuons à gaspiller nos ressources et alimentons le changement climatique par nos comportements irresponsables et égoïstes. Nous prenons l'avion tout en pleurant les glaciers qui disparaissent. Nous traçons nos routes sur les mers glacées, attristés à la vue de l'ours blanc sur son habitat éclaté. Ils sont le témoin de notre indifférence envers cet environnement si fragile. Pourquoi notre cœur ne bat-il pas au rythme de la planète ?

D'une main, nous classons un animal clef dans la liste des espèces protégées, tandis que de l'autre, nous appuyons sur la gâchette pour réguler la vie sauvage. Sacrifice de la faune pour un simulacre de paix sociale, paradoxe de la nature humaine qui s'émeut de la sixième extinction de masse et participe à la destruction insensée de la biodiversité. Notre cœur n'a-t-il jamais battu au rythme de la planète ?

*Mettre en cage le monde sauvage dans des zoos et aquariums, couvrir de plaies notre Terre pour extraire jusqu'à l'épuisement ses ressources naturelles, détruire des mondes peuplés de merveilles pour notre simple confort. De quels artifices serons-nous encore capables pour étouffer la planète ?*

*Quand les politiques faillissent, quand les scientifiques sont inaudibles, quand les citoyens cultivent le déni, il ne reste que l'art.*

*Toby Wright a fait de cet art un espoir. Par l'émotion de ces œuvres il nous ouvre les yeux. Sa peinture est un miroir qui montre notre fragilité, la beauté du monde, la nostalgie d'une harmonie qui n'a peut-être encore jamais existé. Plus qu'un reflet de notre insouciance, c'est un appel à agir pour sauver cette unique planète bleue. Avec Toby Wright honorons la terre qui nous accueille dans cet immense univers !*

**Philippe Mondielli**

Directeur Scientifique

**FONDATION PRINCE ALBERT II DE MONACO**



**L**e monde dans lequel nous vivons est en train de changer à une vitesse jamais égalée depuis que le genre Homo est apparu sur terre il y a environ 2,8 millions d'années. D'abord lents à partir de la « révolution néolithique », ces changements sont devenus exponentiels depuis le début de l'ère industrielle, et plus encore depuis le milieu du XX<sup>ème</sup> siècle : entre 1900 et aujourd'hui, soit en 122 ans, la population humaine a été multipliée par un facteur 5, il avait fallu les 9 siècles précédents pour obtenir ce même facteur d'augmentation ! Le 15 novembre 2022, l'humanité a ainsi atteint une population de 8 milliards d'humains. L'urbanisation a été multipliée par un facteur 10 durant le siècle passé, notre consommation de pétrole a augmenté d'un facteur 3,5 entre 1950 et 2010, le nombre de voitures est passé de 40 millions au début des années 1950 à près de 1,4 milliards aujourd'hui ! Nos ressources naturelles sont exploitées à outrance. L'homme produit sans arrêt de nouveaux composés chimiques et des polluants persistants qui pourraient ne jamais disparaître, l'usage des pesticides au niveau mondial a presque doublé entre 1990 et 2018, passant de 1,7 à 2,7 millions de tonnes. Le récent rapport publié par le CSM et la Fondation Mindereroo a donné des chiffres alarmants sur l'impact du plastique dont la production a augmenté de 200 fois entre 1950 et 2020, arrivant aujourd'hui à 400 millions de tonnes produits, dont 40% à usage unique. On pourrait continuer longtemps cette liste à la Prévert.

Ces transformations ont des impacts sur notre environnement et sur le climat. Ainsi, la température moyenne à la surface de la terre a augmenté d'environ 1,2°C depuis le début de l'ère industrielle. D'abord lente, la hausse du niveau moyen de l'Océan est aujourd'hui de plus de 3 mm par an, menaçant non seulement la survie de nombreuses petites îles du Pacifique, mais aussi celles de nombreuses cités côtières, dont 6 des 8 villes de plus de 10 millions d'habitants. Ces modifications sont de telle ampleur que le Prix Nobel Paul Crutzen (1933-2021) a proposé en 2000 d'appeler cette période l'Anthropocène\*, l'Ère de l'Homme (« anthropos » homme, et « kainos », nouveau, à l'instar des précédentes périodes géologiques du Quaternaire, Pléistocène et Holocène).

Ces impacts anthropiques affectent en conséquence la vie sur notre globe : la Terre a perdu environ 50 % de sa couverture forestière originale, les populations d'animaux sauvages, insectes, oiseaux, mammifères, s'effondrent, menaçant la terre d'une sixième extinction de masse, les coraux constructeurs de récifs sont menacés de blanchissement de masse et les récifs coralliens pourraient être le premier écosystème à disparaître de notre planète à cause

de nos activités. L'Homme n'est bien sûr pas isolé dans cette « tempête » car il fait partie intrinsèque de la Nature : la seule disparition des récifs pourrait entraîner la migration de centaines de millions de personnes, privées de revenus et de terres.

Si le climat et la biodiversité terrestre ont toujours changé, les scientifiques ont établi avec une probabilité proche des 100% que c'est bien l'homme qui, aujourd'hui, est responsable de ces changements et de leurs conséquences. Déjà le prix Nobel Svante Arrhenius l'avait suggéré... il y a 127 ans. Depuis, les rapports du GIEC, dont le premier date de 1991, analysent les données scientifiques, ce qui permet aujourd'hui d'assurer que les « activités humaines... ont sans équivoque provoqué le réchauffement de la planète ».

Pourtant, la courbe des émissions de gaz carbonique ne faiblit pas... les scientifiques sont à bout de souffle, certains sont prêts à s'enchaîner aux grilles d'un parlement pour tenter de convaincre les politiques de l'urgence de trouver des solutions. Les économistes nous avaient prévenu : déjà Lord Nicholas Stern dans son rapport de 2006 avait prévenu que le coût de l'inaction serait bien supérieur à celui de l'action.

Et si le déclic ne venait pas des scientifiques mais des artistes ? Nombreux sont ceux qui, grâce à leur art, militent aujourd'hui pour convaincre le monde de la nécessité d'agir. Toby Wright est parmi ceux-ci...

Quoi de plus parlant que la comparaison des magnifiques dessins faits à une centaine d'années d'intervalle, ceux d'artistes et ceux peints aujourd'hui par Toby Wright ? Quoi de plus parlant que la beauté de la nature et de ses habitants ?

Tout en félicitant l'artiste pour son travail méticuleux, je fais le vœu que la citation attribuée à Napoléon, « un bon croquis vaut mieux qu'un long discours », trouve ici toute la portée qu'elle mérite.

**Denis Allemand**  
Professeur des Universités  
**Directeur Scientifique du CENTRE SCIENTIFIQUE DE MONACO**

\* Paul J. Crutzen et Eugene F. Stoermer (2000). The "Anthropocene". Global Change Newsletter. 41 : 17-18.

**I**l y a des moments dans l'histoire où l'Art transcende les frontières de l'esthétique pour devenir un cri de ralliement, un appel à l'action, un témoin silencieux de notre époque. A travers son art, Toby Wright explore les merveilles de la nature. A travers son art, Toby Wright a aussi choisi de s'engager. Il est de ces artistes qui ne se contente pas de célébrer la beauté, mais qui nous invite à réfléchir...

Il y a déjà plus de 100 ans, le prince Albert Ier, fondateur de l'Institut océanographique qui mena personnellement 28 campagnes scientifiques, dénonçait la surpêche à la suite de ses observations. Pourtant, nous avons longtemps continué à considérer l'Océan comme infini, inépuisable, inaltérable... ignorant même ce que nous lui infligeons : trop de pêche, déversement incessant de polluants, et, aujourd'hui, un apport massif de chaleur et de CO<sub>2</sub>. Par les tempêtes, par les déferlantes de déchets, par la fonte des glaces, par la montée des eaux, l'Océan menace et nous renvoie nos excès.

Si l'Art, depuis ses débuts les plus anciens, a toujours servi de miroir à la société, reflétant ses aspirations, ses espoirs, ses joies, il a aussi dénoncé ses excès les plus sombres. Sans faire usage du langage, les œuvres parlent, nous parlent. C'est pourquoi le regard d'artistes comme Toby Wright est précieux pour mettre en lumière de manière plus sensible ce qui se joue sous la surface, ou au sommet d'un glacier ! En témoignent les œuvres exposées qui nous rappellent que les paysages que nous admirons aujourd'hui pourraient être transformés à jamais si nous ne prenons pas des mesures décisives.

L'Art pour s'évader, l'Art pour sensibiliser, l'Art pour témoigner... un rôle que le prince Albert Ier décrivait au début du XXe siècle : « [...] La sauvegarde du progrès veut que la culture de la science conserve un certain équilibre avec la culture de l'art. La science doit dominer parce qu'elle pourvoit aux besoins pratiques de la civilisation. L'art enveloppe de chaleur les œuvres de l'intelligence, arrondit les angles, et masque l'obsession du néant [...] ». (Albert Ier, La Carrière d'un navigateur, 1902).

Cette alliance entre l'Art et la Science apparaît fondamentale, vitale, et Toby Wright en a certainement été imprégné durant les nombreuses heures passées à dessiner les espèces

marines du Musée océanographique ou à contempler les œuvres de Louis Tinayre (1861-1942), peintre embarqué lors des campagnes du prince. C'est dans ses pas que Toby Wright se rend à son tour dans les régions polaires pour immortaliser les paysages, et ainsi rendre compte de leur évolution plus de 100 ans après. Un lien renouvelé en décembre 2011, quand il rend hommage au Musée océanographique avec son exposition « Portrait du Temple de la Mer » dans laquelle il attirait l'attention sur un établissement centenaire qui nous rappelle notre devoir envers la Nature.

Chacun de nous bénéficie de la vitalité de l'Océan et de notre planète, chacun de nous en est aussi responsable. Alors, que nous soyons amateur d'art ou un défenseur de l'environnement, portons un esprit ouvert sur ces œuvres, laissons-les nous toucher en plein cœur et envisageons le rôle que nous pourrions jouer dans la défense de notre maison commune.

Merci à Toby Wright d'être un observateur attentif de son époque et de cultiver notre relation à la nature.

**Patrick Piguet**

Ancien Directeur du patrimoine

**INSTITUT OCÉANOGRAPHIQUE, FONDATION ALBERT IER, PRINCE DE MONACO**

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**Toby Wright** is a portrait, landscape and expedition painter. Born in Monaco, he pursued his higher education in England, graduating from university with a BA (Hons) in Illustration, and later in Italy graduating from the “Florence Academy of Art”. During his studies in Florence, he was invited to teach in the same school for several years as a principal instructor in the advanced painting program.

Toby Wright strives to work directly from life to capture the full depth of his subject, whether outdoors for his landscapes or with a model in his studio for his portraits. He seeks to create an intimate dialogue between the subject, the viewer and the artist. As an oil painter he searches for a depth and richness of expression through a universal language: Realist classical painting. Through this style, he follows a humanist tradition born out of Antiquity and the Renaissance. His portrait work was recently sought after for a historic painting commissioned by the oceanographic museum of Monaco. It represents the full-length portraits of the 13 members of the counsel of administrators presided by H.R.H Prince Albert II of Monaco. This 3 meter wide painting is on view at the museum, in the “Salon d’Honneur” and is the first painting commissioned of this subject since 1909.

For his landscape and outdoor painting, he participates on missions as an expedition artist with international organizations, as well as pursuing his own personal initiatives. He has taken his easel to the Arctic, the Antarctic, the Himalayas and the Alps at altitudes of over 3500m where he draws or paints on-site, exposed to the extreme conditions. He has also experimented with under-water drawing; sketching marine mammals directly from life in their natural habitat. He has worked with galleries across Europe and America, and his works can be found in various private and public collections and institutions.

Member of the explorer’s club (New York), Alpine club (UK), “Académie des arts & sciences de la mer” (France).



Toby Wright sketching at  
3600m, with Dent du Géant in  
background  
*Photo : Aiden Rhode*





Drawing sealions underwater, Lapaz Mexico.  
Photo: A. J. Stetson

## Introduction

**D**rawing is often seen as a stepping stone towards painting: a preparatory study or sketch, to plan and organize a larger project. But drawing can also stand alone as a separate pursuit, for the sake of its own textures and graphic qualities.

Sketchbook work is yet another practice that often precedes all other parts of the production/creative process and is frequently overlooked. Artists' sketchbooks are more private than the final pieces that are presented to the public. It is a place where ideas are born, grow and evolve. It is a place that allows experimentation that can sometimes lead nowhere, and other times jump off the page and precipitate larger projects.

In Toby Wright's sketchbooks, each page has become a piece that stands alone as a testimonial of a place in time, revealing the beauty of a unique subject. The infinite variety of Nature holds endless inspiration for the artist who wishes to accumulate knowledge of forms, shapes and designs.

Honoring a subject by transcribing it into lines on a page can give it a sense of immortality. Whether a place, an animal, a unique object, it elevates the subject to a status deserving contemplation and admiration through a joyful observation of pleasing shapes of lights and shadows. The sketch is the first and purest connection that an artist has with the world around them.

## The Sketchbook

**T**oby Wright has been drawing in sketchbooks for many years, pre-dating his formal training, and it is still part of his creative process today. The Moleskine © revival of its sketchbooks (1997) came at an interesting time in his personal development. In 2000, he was gifted a small Moleskine by a fellow artist & friend. Since then, Toby Wright has experimented with small, medium to large formats for all his various requirements: jotting down ideas, starting compositions, developing concepts, in-depth studies. They are manageable for travel, and allow the space to develop drawings beyond preparatory studies and into fully rendered vignettes. He has taken sketching into an art form of its own.



## Styles

His sketching styles alternate between impressionistic and scientific. The first approach relates more closely to a painter's approach, when sketching his landscapes: lighting, atmosphere, tonal contrasts, and situational context. The second approach is more akin to a scientific study, recording a plant or animal specimen in isolation, while finding the poetic beauty in the design. These collections in particular resemble a kind of "bestiary", cataloguing a range of creatures that spark an interest in the artist's mind, or that have an ecological significance.

It was in New York when exposed to the painted dioramas of the American Museum of Natural History and the sketches at the Explorers Club, that Toby Wright reconnected with his fascination in the collaborative forces of art & science. In the library of the AMNH, he studied many of the painters who built the tradition of joining art with scientific pursuit to educate society on the importance of our natural world. This is where the pursuit of sketching connects with a history of artists recording the natural world from all angles and horizons.

*Science demands that a phenomena be observed with unemotional accuracy of a weighing machine, while artistic accuracy demands that things be observed by a sentient individual recording the sensations produced within him by the phenomena of life.*

*Harold Speed (1872-1957)*

## The process

Toby Wright's drawing process involves dedicating considerable time on site. Once a subject spikes his visual curiosity, he takes time to analyze it from different angles to look for the most interesting or dynamic viewpoint. He often has to comply with his natural surroundings, which can impose certain limitations. For example, an obstacle may block the best position: a wall, a tree, a busy thoroughfare, unstable ground, awkward seating area, etc. He must adapt as best he can, but sometimes, the harder the challenge, the more enticing the pursuit. Once he has managed to make a compromise between a good view and manageable working area, he can draw for any length of time ranging from 30mn to 3 hours.



Toby Wright sketching at 3600m  
Photo: Aiden Rhode





Toby Wright painting in Fuglefjord, Svalbard.  
Photo: Alex Rose

When “collecting” several elements on a double-page, this may occasionally involve a return visit, to accumulate enough items to accomplish a full display. In contrast, his outdoor sketches are dependent on the elements, and will usually be concluded in a single sitting. He is prepared for unpredictable weather conditions, and will tolerate an uncomfortable rock to sit on.

### Materials

**H**is materials are simple: a pencil and a sketchbook and a kneadable eraser. After several years of experimenting and testing different graphite ranges under varying conditions, he has narrowed down his travelling pencil to an HB. This allows the right hardness to avoid interrupting his flow with constant sharpening, and soft enough to allow shadows to get dark on the page. He prefers a mechanical pencil over the wood pencil as it remains always the same size & weight in hand, regardless how much or how little graphite is left. The choice of pen and ink work allows the same mark-making qualities of his pencil lines, allowing similar immediacy against the paper. It offers an enhanced contrast but with the added risk of not allowing corrections. The ink lines are permanent and cannot be rubbed out, as would be pencil lines. He uses a dip pen with Indian or Chinese ink, on white Canson paper.

### Historical use of sketchbooks

**T**hroughout history, the sketchbook has been the artist’s companion to capture fleeting visions, imaginative concepts. As a visual diary, it helps document and collect thoughts, capture moments of observed phenomenon, and offer a playground to grow and nurture a creative concept. It must be part of every artist’s arsenal in their pursuit of understanding the world around them and capturing moments in their existence as observers of life.

J. M. W. Turner’s (1775-1851) sketchbooks are a marvel of an artist’s testimony in time as he travelled through Italy, France and Switzerland in the mid 1800s. The naturalist Charles Darwin



(1809-1882) made use of a sketchbook to note down his observations throughout his expeditions, as a visual diary for his work in the field. Jean Louis Tinayre (1861- 1895) sketched the various locations and animals he was exposed to when employed by Prince Albert 1st of Monaco on various scientific expeditions. Alpinists were occasionally known to draw and sketch, often as a way to record climbing routes, or establish new ones. Notable alpinist artists include Edward Whymper (1840-1911) and Edward T. Compton (1849-1921). Presumably both travelled with a sketchbook to capture visual impressions on their various climbing expeditions for practical or artistic purposes. However, while the former created illustrations to portray dramatic climbing episodes, the latter seemed more focused on capturing the overwhelming glory of the high mountains from dizzying heights.

These artists, scientists, alpinists are an inspiration to Toby Wright. He holds them all close to his heart, for their various interests and commitments to witnessing the natural world for the benefit of the broader public. Bringing life to a lived experience through drawing was their accomplishment. The viewer is transported to places in time and space, through lines and shadows, shaped by the personal experience of the artist.

### What is Drawing, Dessin, Disegno?

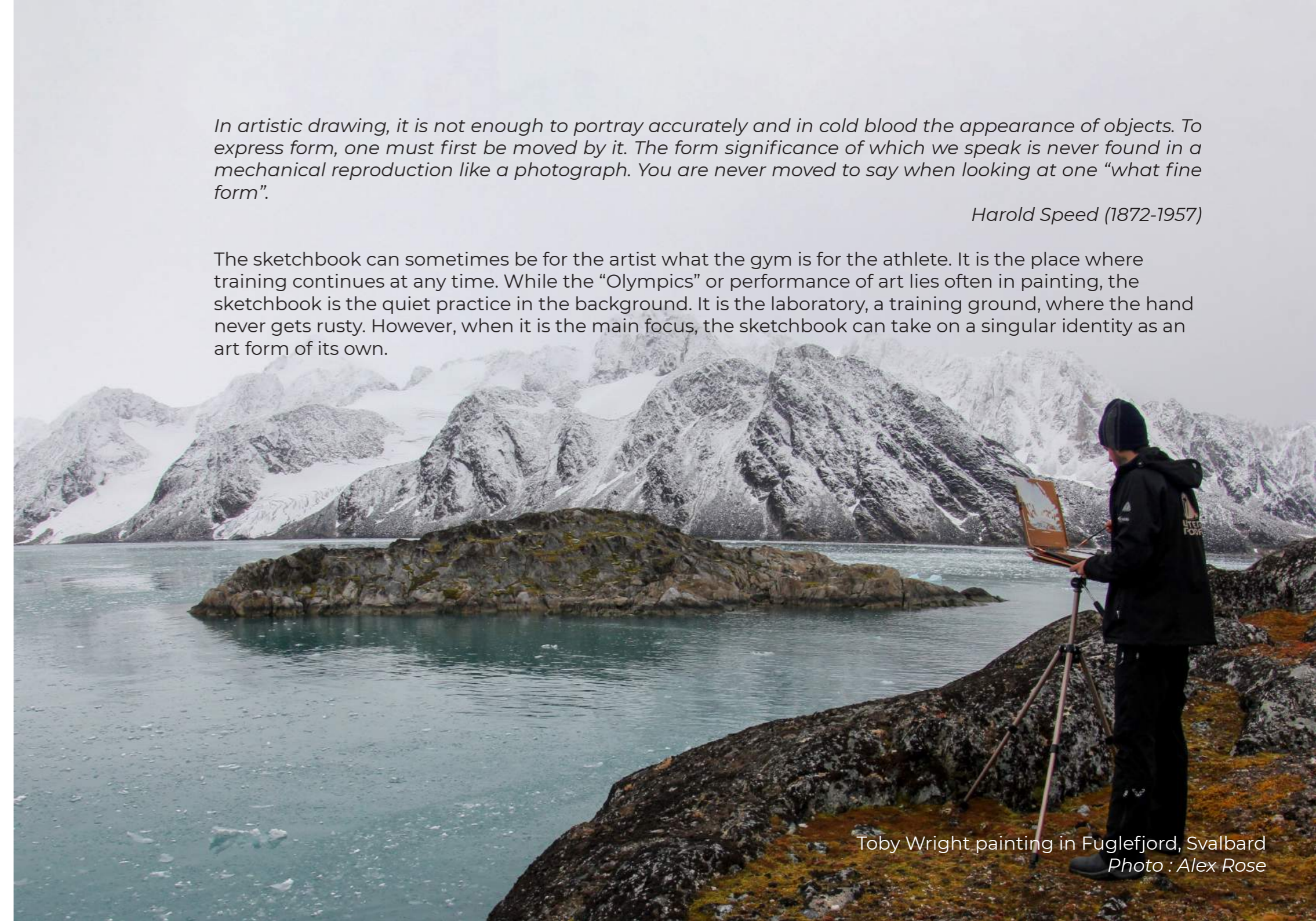
Different languages hear the term “drawing” differently. In English, it commonly denotes the practice of mark making with pencil, charcoal or ink. In French, “dessin” seems to generally follow this same connotation. In Italian however, the word “disegno” has wider implications. It encapsulates the aspect of mark making, but more importantly it also covers the concept of design. The meaning associated with “disegno” allows a much more inclusive understanding of its purpose. For a painter, drawing means design. Design represents silhouette, shape, pattern, balance, rhythm, proportion, outline, integrity, and structure.

The fundamental part of any creative process is design. It is an underlying structure upon which form can find its place. It is a skeleton, where the flesh of form can be placed upon, and come to life.

*In artistic drawing, it is not enough to portray accurately and in cold blood the appearance of objects. To express form, one must first be moved by it. The form significance of which we speak is never found in a mechanical reproduction like a photograph. You are never moved to say when looking at one “what fine form”.*

*Harold Speed (1872-1957)*

The sketchbook can sometimes be for the artist what the gym is for the athlete. It is the place where training continues at any time. While the “Olympics” or performance of art lies often in painting, the sketchbook is the quiet practice in the background. It is the laboratory, a training ground, where the hand never gets rusty. However, when it is the main focus, the sketchbook can take on a singular identity as an art form of its own.



Toby Wright painting in Fuglefjord, Svalbard  
Photo : Alex Rose



### The artist's personal connection

Toby Wright has always had a particular interest in drawing, with a sketchbook by his side from an early age. For him, drawing was a means to connect and understand the world around him. He drew pets at home, plants outdoors, fish at the aquarium, animals in the zoo. Later, when travelling in his early 20s experiencing cultures across the world, his drawings were ways to capture his experiences of sites such as temples, churches, mosques, ruins, museums, outdoor markets, ornate architecture, mountaintops, coastlines, and anything that captivated his attention. It is a practice that requires time, patience and observation. It is a quasi-meditative process, where the observer engages in deep focus, eliminating exterior distractions, peeling away the subject's layers with increasing inquiry, seeking familiarity and understanding to reveal its essence.

We are moved by form, for whatever mysterious reason. It seems to have an influence over us. The feeling one experiences depends upon how much the artist was connected to their subject when crafting the image. It seems to be a process of experiencing life second hand. Being led through an artist's vision can expand our own life experience through adding another perspective on a particular subject.

### Historical use of sketchbooks

Spending any time in Monaco's Oceanographic Museum, one is struck by the collaborative legacy of science and art. The founder of the museum, Prince Albert 1st of Monaco, employed many artists throughout his scientific campaigns (Marius Borrel, Louis Tinayre among others). As from 1888, an artist would be present on board with the task of recording the colours of collected creatures out at sea. Often the artists worked right on the deck of the ship as the specimens were fished out of the water to capture their impression before the colours would fade. These sketches would return to the artist's studio, to create larger detailed illustrations of the various animals, to be published in scientific journals or to join the museum's collection. Many of these paintings and drawings are on display, offering a fertile ground for

inspiration to anyone seeking to observe and record the natural world.

Drawing at the Museum's aquariums and skeleton hall was the beginnings of Toby Wright's interest in the natural world. In his teens he spent long hours in front of a single aquarium at a time, committed to capture the best likeness of the live animals on view ranging from the Caribbean moray eel, black finned reef shark, lionfish, leafy sea dragon, common octopus, and the many colorful tropical reef fish.

His keen interest in capturing the world around him continued at university in England. He would revel in drawing trips ranging from aviation museums to natural history museums, parks, train stations, ports, and various outdoor locations where he could engage with live subjects. Back home, he would focus on drawing in and around Monaco; coastline views, classic yachts, local exotic gardens, lively village markets, animal parks, mountain ranges, pets at home, etc.

The instinct to sketch was a constant activity throughout his university studies in England and the Florence Academy in Italy. It required time outside of his class schedule, which meant his weekends were usually spent exploring subjects away from school. This external work was initially unrelated to his studio work, simply feeding a curiosity in his natural surroundings and exploring cultural sites at his disposal. Eventually, his outdoor sketching would inspire and inform his figurative studio projects, along with keeping his eyes sharp and maintaining his observation skills at the highest level.

The sketchbook has been a corner stone to the artist's early inspiration, his educational development leading to his more mature work. Regardless of where and when he finds himself sitting with his pencil and sketchbook, the common thread for his motivation remains the same: the living world.

Toby Wright is a member of the Explorer's Club, Alpine Club, Académie des Arts et Sciences de la Mer, and regular contributor to the Florence Academy of Art.





Toby Wright painting Aiguille des Grands Charmoz  
Photo: Bogdan Anghel

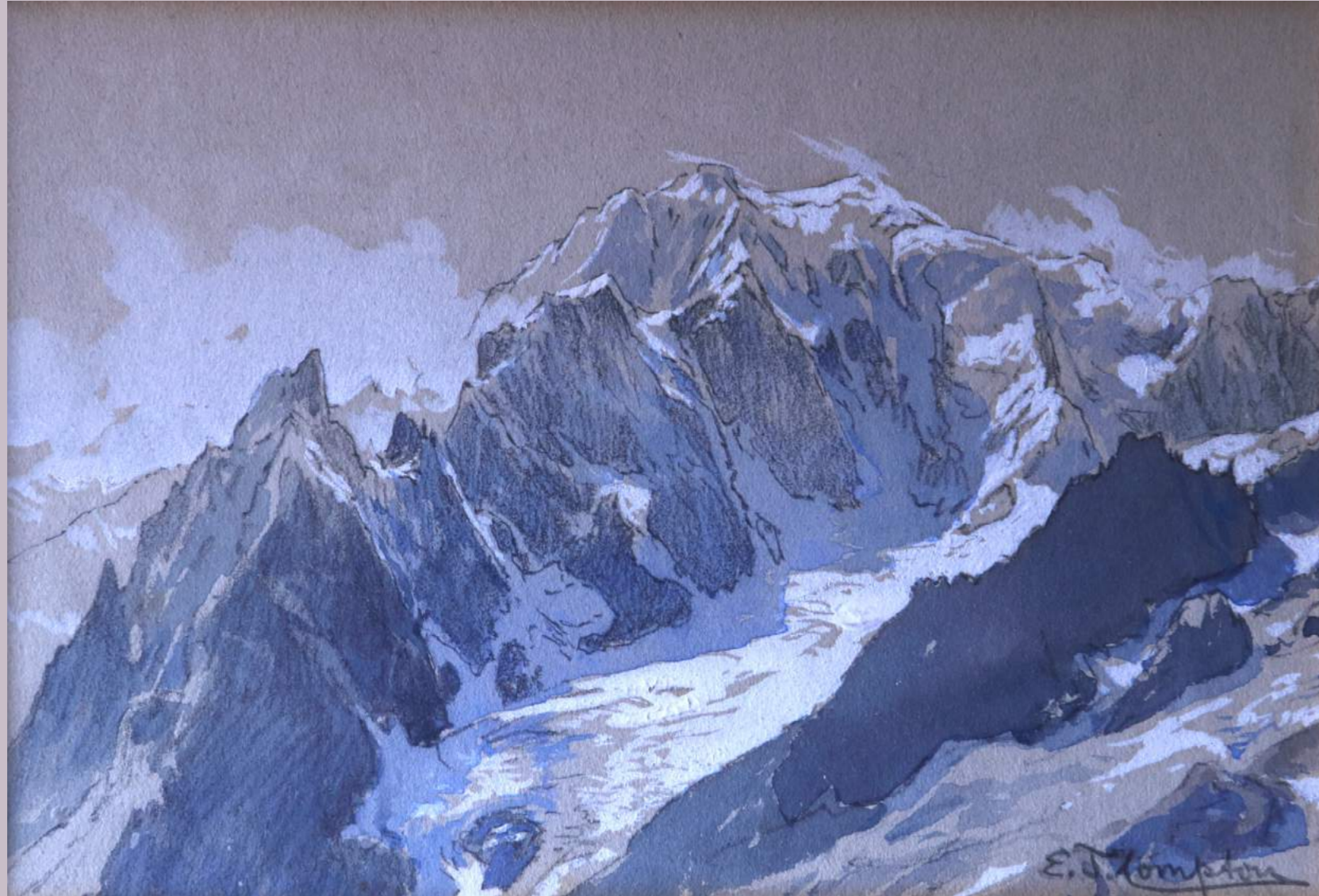
# THE ALPS " PAST AND PRESENT "

*Our environment through the eyes of artists*

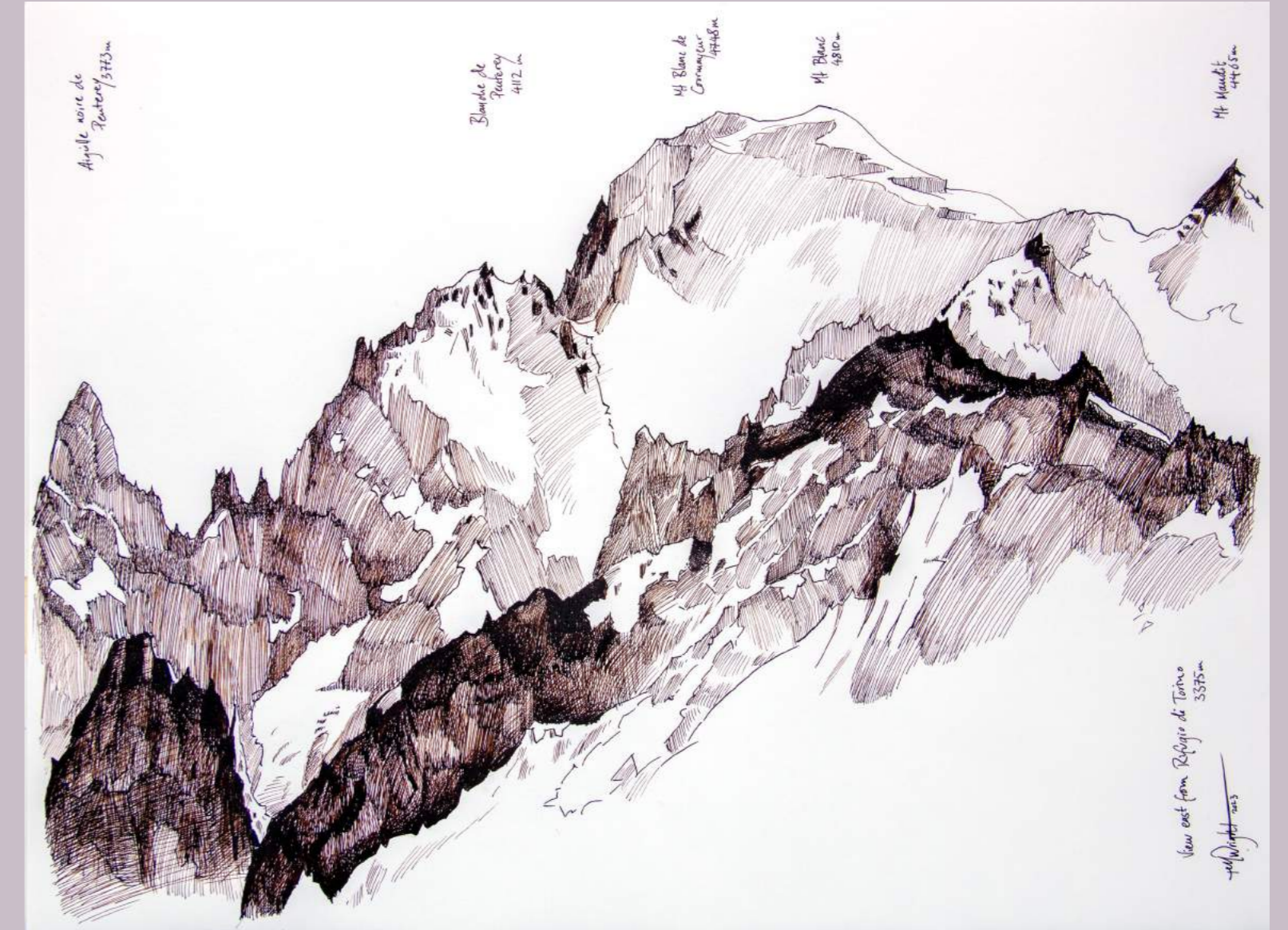


### Mt Blanc, from Rifugio di Torino, 3375m (1910 / 2021)

The exploration of old master painting locations can be a lengthy process and can take you to challenging places. Learning about previous painters in these locations also educates us on their physical capacity, endurance and commitment to their art. It is one thing to follow the signs on a map to locate a painting spot, but it is quite another to be following in their actual footsteps. Part of this journey included testing one's personal capabilities, so Toby Wright hired a guide and climbed the Dent du Géant (4013m) for the purpose of sketching the view from the top. A six-hour ascent was required. For weight and practicality, his materials were pencil and sketchbook, to capture his impressions in a fast and efficient way. Upon returning to the Rifugio di Torino from which they departed that morning, he rested on the outdoor deck and created another drawing. It depicts the various overlapping ridges and legendary climbing routes leading up to the Mt Blanc, in close alignment to E.T Compton's watercolour study of 1910.



**E.T Compton, Mt Blanc from the south 1910**  
(Bergverlag Rother)



**Toby Wright, 2021**



## The Moraine (1906 / 2020)

The journey to witness the Alps began with a single painting. Toby Wright's starting point was triggered by "The moraine" by J.S Sargent (1856-1928), painted in northern Italy during one of his summer landscape painting trips in 1906.

On the 29th May 1910, the Observer wrote:

"The cruel uncompromising truth with which Sargent painted a mass of rocky debris against a skyless background of a threatening glacier portrays one of the most forbidding and terrifying aspects of nature. There is no vestige of life or vegetation in this stony icy inferno, the aspect of which must surely strike even the most unimaginative person with terror".

As a landscape, the composition can be seen as unconventional: no sky, no vegetation, and somewhat claustrophobic with the glacier blocking our eyes from leading out to the horizon. But what might be lacking in these aspects is compensated with a master class of

drawing, design and colour temperature handling among the hundreds of rock shapes, catching the warm September light, with their cold blue shadows contrasting the warm lights. It is perhaps more of a painter's painting, due to the technical abilities on display rather than its picturesque qualities, and this is what captivated Toby Wright's curiosity.

He was determined to search for this place and identify its exact location, as if on a quest to find a treasure. The treasure in question was to stand where J.S Sargent had once stood, to experience the same view and attempt to understand the painter's choices facing the same subject, as if he was attending a master class with a ghost. Sargent's exact spot was not easy to locate, as the glacial moraine had shifted significantly since 1906. A torrent now ran through the place from the glacier's melting, and Toby Wright decided to paint a wider view to encompass the full context of the valley and the Brenva glacier in question.



**J.S.Sargent, The moraine, 1906**  
*(Yale university press)*



**Toby Wright, 2020**



### Brenva Glacier (1908 / 2021)

In continuation from the Moraine, Toby Wright located his next favourite J.S.Sargent painting from this valley, painted from a small hamlet high on the flank of the Courmayeur Valley. The depiction of the Brenva glacier in the distance is an imposing presence with its heavy icy mass flowing down the mountain. That same glacier in 2021 is a depressing sight compared to its glorious cascading ice flow of 1908, with the top half of the glacier today barely making it over the rocky lip.

What started as a journey to learn from past painters and their inspiring landscapes started turning into the realisation of a disappearing world. The more Toby Wright sought out painting locations to learn from, the more he was losing sight of reliable subject matter.

His project began taking a different course, and evolved into becoming a witness to a larger phenomenon of environmental change on a grand scale. He began researching more Alpine painters and comparing paintings of specific locations over a much longer time scale. Photography allows us to observe changes for a limited period, whereas representational Alpine painters can take us back at least four centuries. Some of which were proficient mountaineers in their own right and would challenge any painter alive today to match their commitment of painting in higher altitudes.



**J.S.Sargent, 1908**  
*(Yale university press)*



**Toby Wright, 2021**



### Mer de Glace, France (1874 / 2020)

To introduce himself to the higher mountainous areas Toby Wright ventured onto the Mer de Glace, where many artists over the past few centuries have painted the largest and longest French Glacier. Access to this spot was greatly improved with the completion of the train line in 1909, where the new station of Montanvers allowed passengers to easily reach the glacier, and to walk along its surrounding flanks. The artist Gabriel Loppé (1825-1913) stood out in the middle of the glacier among the crevasses to capture its monumental presence below the peak of the Aiguille des Grands Charmoz (3445m). The ice level in the 1870's was such that his viewpoint would have been approximately from the height of the current train station (1913m).

Toby Wright's painting of the same peak is from the Montanvers train station, in line with the height of Gabriel Loppé's viewpoint. However, the noticeable difference is the complete absence of ice in the lower left corner, with just a small dwindling strip of ice curving around the valley. 150 years separate these two artist's paintings, while 100 metres separates the respective levels of the glacier from 1874 to 2020. The most noticeable change in ice level is observed starting in the 1980's through to the 2000's, losing several metres a year and accelerating further still to this day.



**Gabriel Loppé, Mer de Glace, aiguille des Grands Charmoz, 1874**  
(FYKmag.com)



**Toby Wright, 2020**



**Mer de Glace, Dent du Géant, Dôme de Rochefort, glacier du Tacul (1883 / 2020)**

Venturing farther up the valley in pursuit of yet another Alpine painting pioneer, Toby Wright seeks out the viewpoints of E.T Compton (1849-1921). For this he will need to walk out onto the glacier itself, and hike up an hour or two to locate the painting spots for two particular paintings: “Dent du géant, Dome de Rochefort from the Tacul glacier -1883” and “Dent du géant with Tacul glacier -1903”.

Compared to E.T Compton’s time, the glacier has diminished to such an extent that any current vantage point is 100m lower today. This added a considerable challenge for Toby Wright when attempting to locate the paintings of 1883 and 1903. The alignment of the peaks is the easy part, as these rocks don’t move, but the elevation of the observer’s position and the diminished snow cover can lead one astray. These two studies are at an elevation of 2000m and mark a starting point in understanding how E.T Compton worked and how the environment has transformed in just over a century.



**E.T Compton, Dent du Géant et Dome de Rochefort, 1883**  
*(Bergverlag Rother)*



**Toby Wright, 2019**



**E.T Compton Dent du Géant et Glacier du Tacul, 1903**  
*(Bergverlag Rother)*



**Toby Wright, 2020**

**Dent du Géant and arête de Rochefort**



**E.T Compton , grandes Jorasses, dent du géant, 1918**  
*(Bergverlag Rother)*



**Toby Wright, 2020**

Continuing to Explore E.T Compton’s catalogue of paintings in the area, Toby Wright embarks on an outing at 3800m via the Aiguille du Midi. This leads him down the steep narrow ridge towards the Vallée blanche, past the refuge des Cosmiques (3613m) and across towards the Arête à Laurence where he sets up his easel. The iconic silhouette of the Dent du Géant alongside les Grandes Jorasses catches his eye, and he spends a few hours on site to create a small oil study. This “plein-air” painting combined with his sketchbook material allows him to pursue a larger canvas upon returning to his studio.



## Val d'Aosta (1907 / 2021), and Simplon pass (1911 / 2022)

Further research around J.S Sargent's locations take us to the Italian Val d'Aosta and the Swiss Simplon pass, safely away from the extreme altitudes of E.T Compton. Identifying the name of the painting and studying local maps eventually lead Toby Wright to a particular geographical area. On-site investigation is essential to complete the preliminary research so as to precisely identify the actual standing spot.

Aside from the retreating glaciers, Toby Wright believes he is observing another phenomenon in these mountainous areas. It appears that vegetation is advancing uphill compared to landscapes painted a hundred years ago. Perhaps with the help of a warmer environment, and the retreating of the cold ice masses, plants are finding a new comfort zone to thrive in. In some cases, the presence of trees makes the identifying of painting locations more difficult. Areas devoid of plants and dominated by rocks in the early 1900's are now partially hidden behind a row of tall trees.

In the Val d'Aosta the trees have now spread across an area previously dominated by the moving glacier and its rocky covering.

At the Simplon Pass in Switzerland, the correct vantage point of J.S. Sargent's painting is today changed by a mass of tall trees obscuring the middle foreground. To accomplish a similar composition while retaining a waterfall motif and the mountain's silhouette, Toby Wright hiked one hour farther up to a new location. However, these lower altitudes are less challenging and allowed the artist to carry a larger canvas and easel. This painting (100x70cm) was accomplished over several days on site, rather than only relying on his usual small colour sketch format (30x20cm). The different colour temperatures between the two depictions of the same scene are due to season: J.S Sargent in September, Toby Wright in July.



**J.S Sargent Val d'Aosta 1907**  
(Yale university press)



**J.S.Sargent 1911, Simplon pass**  
(Yale university press)



**Toby Wright, 2022**



**Toby Wright, 2022**







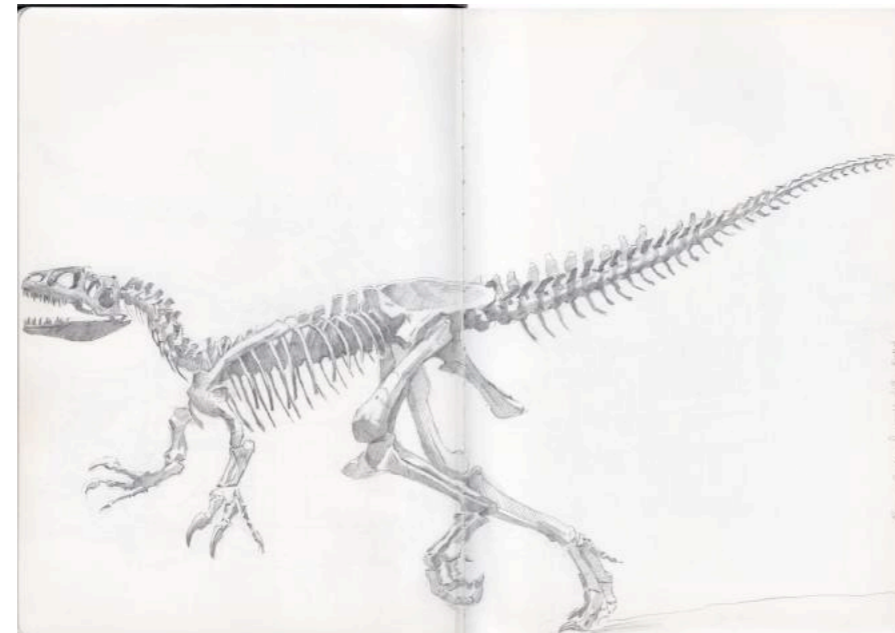
# 1 | Allosaurus

Ink on paper  
50 x 65 cm

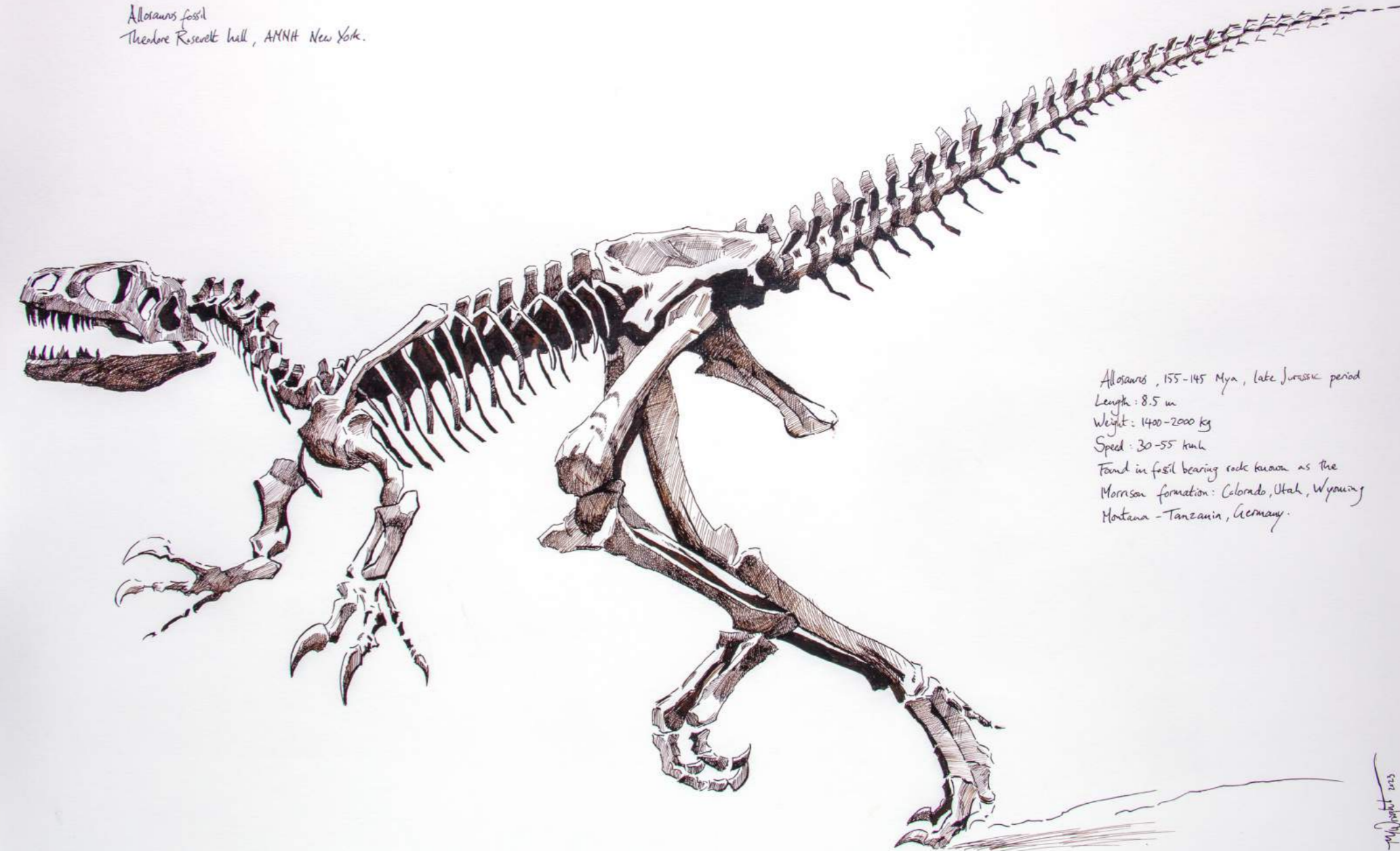
Allosaurus.  
(American Museum of Natural History, New York).

This running mise-en-scene fills the frame in a dynamic diagonal. The thin ribs and tail chevrons almost looking like a filleted fish, the artist studies these delicate spindly forms with meticulous attention.

The balance and gesture are crucial to convey the right amount of dynamism and movement. It requires patience to analyze the forms before committing pencil to paper. The nature of this creature's tail as a counter balance, means that it is surprisingly long, taking up half of its body length and therefore half the composition.



Allosaurus fossil  
Theodore Roosevelt hall, AMNH New York.



Allosaurus, 155-145 Mya, late Jurassic period  
Length: 8.5 m  
Weight: 1400-2000 kg  
Speed: 30-55 km/h  
Found in fossil bearing rock known as the  
Morrison formation: Colorado, Utah, Wyoming,  
Montana - Tanzania, Germany.

2015

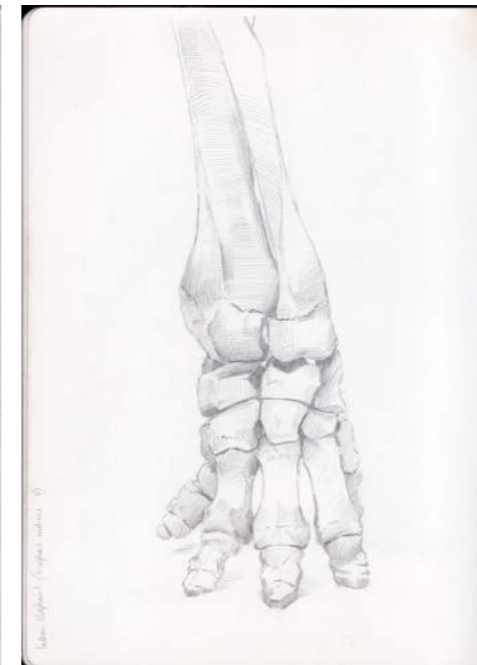


# 2 | Mammoth, Elephant, Rhino

Ink on paper  
18 x 25 cm

Mammoth, Elephant, Rhino.  
GNM (Göteborgs  
Naturhistoriska Museum).

Bones can reveal much of what would normally be hidden under muscle, tendons and skin. The fascinating anatomy of the foot bones reveal that these animals walk on their tip toes. While the mammoth and elephant are predictably similar, the rhinoceros position is surprising. Limited to 3 toes rather than 5, the poised position aligns with a heavy creature able to trot with a spring in its step.



Mammoth



Elephant



Rhino



# 3 | Beetles

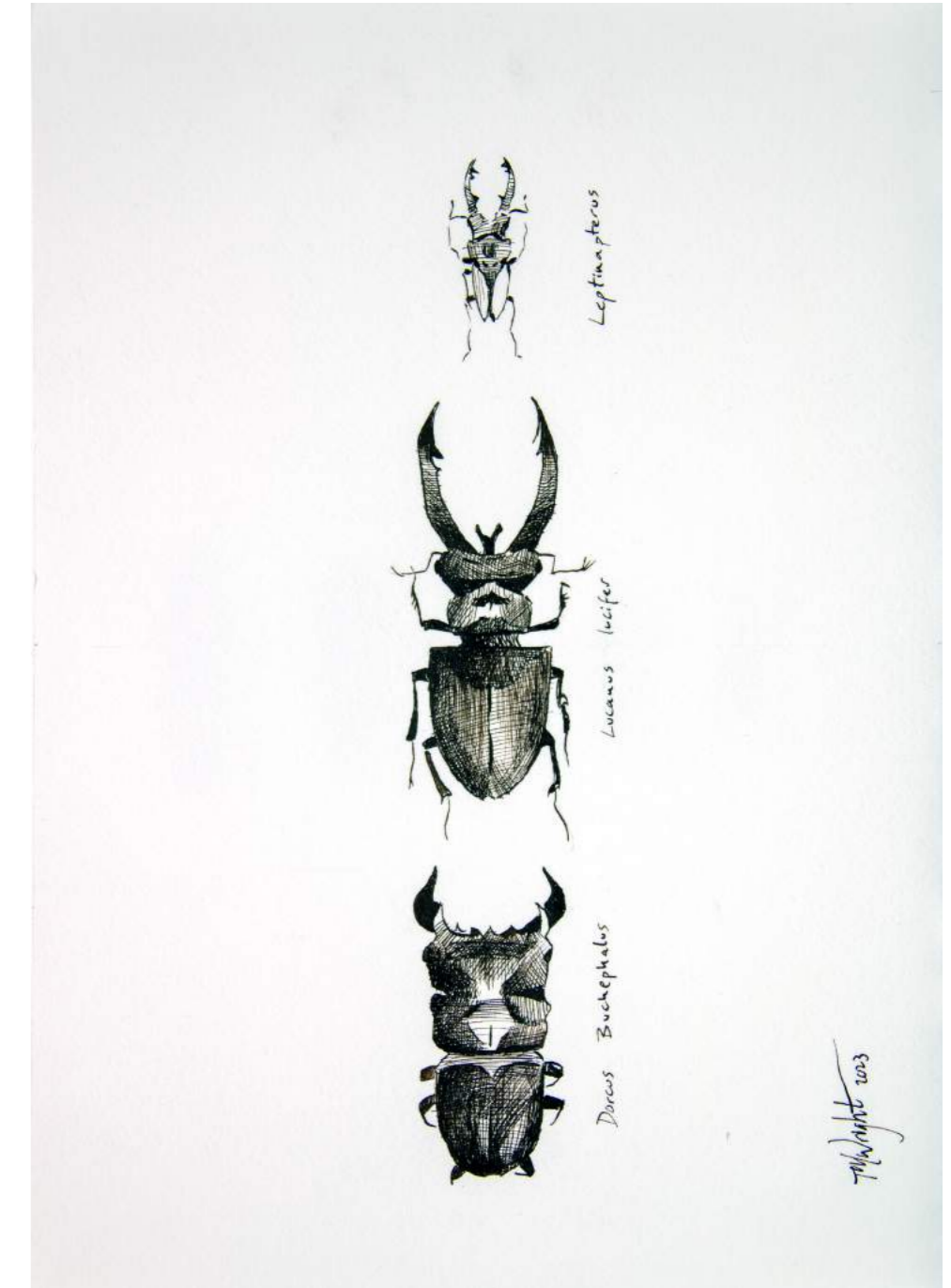
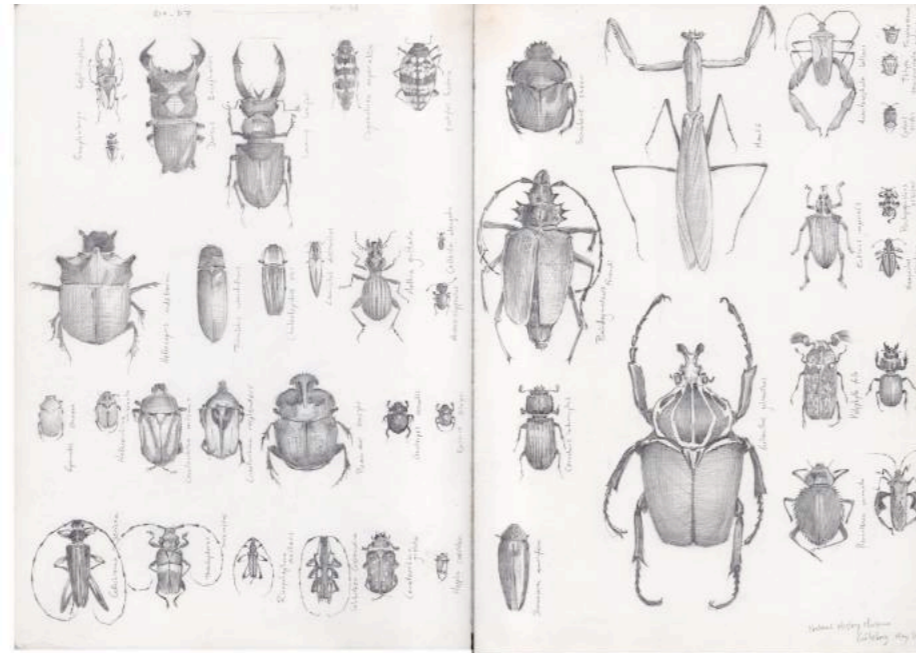
Ink on paper  
18 x 25 cm

Beetles studies.  
GNM (Göteborgs Naturhistoriska Museum).

British evolutionary biologist and geneticist J.B.S. Haldane (1892-1964) quipped that if a god or a divine being had created all living organisms on Earth, then that creator must have an “inordinate fondness for beetles.”

What started as a passing visit with a single row of beetles turned into an obsessive act of “collecting”. Return visits over the course of a few weekends created this marvelous double page of insect natural history. All drawn life size, and annotated, they serve as a visual record of an artist's fascination with shapes and forms. Each insect becomes a precious jewel on display on this sketchbook double-page. Insects account for 80% of animal life on Earth and account for a greater number of species than any other single group of living animal. Approximately one out of every four animal species on Earth is a beetle.

worryingly, both their numbers and diversity are in sharp decline due to several factors: Habitat loss, Use of pesticides, climate change and pollution. Their disappearance would trigger a collapse of all food chains.

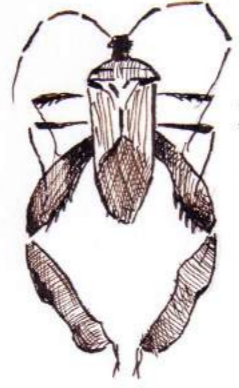




*Ceratorrhina nicensis*



*Ceratorrhina guttata*



*Acanthocephala latipes*



*Ceratorrhina resplendens*



*Eroflus histrio*

1892  
M. H. M.



*Scarabeus sacer*



*Helicopsis indeterm*



*Phanaeus ensifer*

1892  
M. H. M.





*Tetralopys rohdifrons*



*Sternocera acicifera*



*Chalcocrepidius var*



*Chrysocrea imperialis*



*Lemites distinctus*

TM Wright 2003



*Epirinus olivieri*



*Naopidius fulvulus*



*Geophaloxys*



*Pachysynchus orbifer*



*Hoplia lobata*



*Trigonosoma Desfontaini*



*Aristis clypeatus*



*Cyrtus tristis*



*Telyra Semi-punctata*



*Geotraper venalis*



*Heteromira umbrata*



*Callida elongata*

TM Wright 2003



*Geotraper venalis*



*Phaneros eusifer*

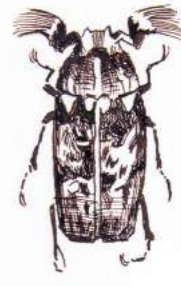


*Epirinus Olivieri*

TM Wright 2003



*Pionithea cornata*



*Polyphylla folio*



*Eutimus imparialis*

TM Wright 2003



# 4 | Big Cats

Ink on paper  
50 x 65 cm

Lynx, Tiger, Leopard, Lion, Cheetah, Caracal.

The unique character of each individual specie is what captures Toby Wright's attention. Feline species vary in proportion, silhouette, coats, and colours. But beneath all these external variations, cats remain essentially the same. Their anatomy is a common structure that has adapted to environment and lifestyles. Some evolved to be small and powerful, while others are leaner and faster. Big cat populations across the globe are all threatened to a higher or lesser degree. Historically poached for their skins, they later suffered increased pressure from habitat loss. But the most recent and insidious threat is their capture and sale as exotic pets. Unknowingly, many tourists pay and pose with captive adult big cats for social media content that have been overbred, mistreated or sedated. In most cases, cubs are killed when they grow out of their cute phase, to get replaced with a new litter.





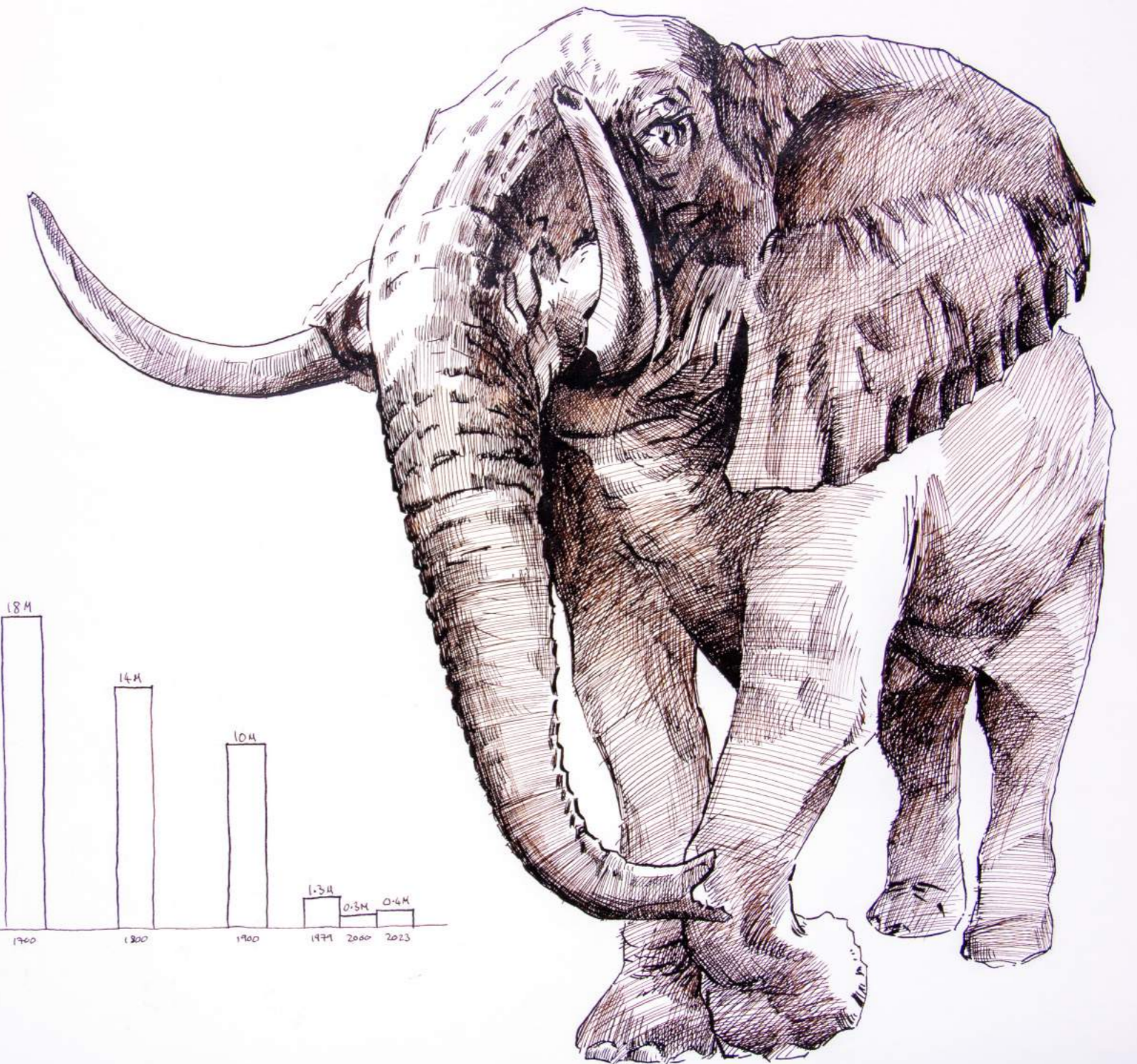
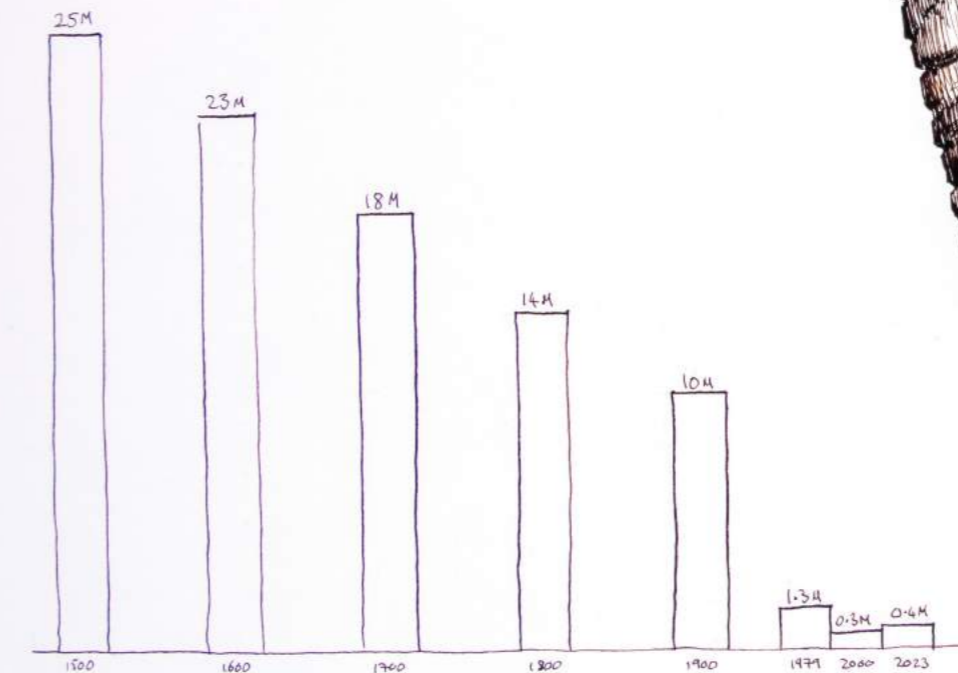
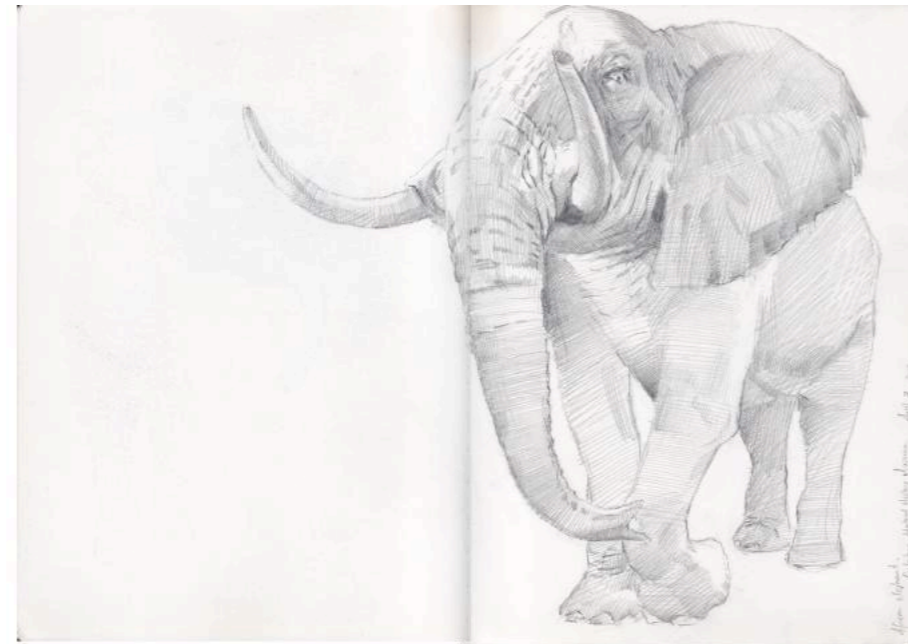
# 5 | African Elephant

Ink on paper  
41 x 32 cm

African elephant.  
GNM (Göteborgs Naturhistoriska Museum).

The largest land mammal, this species has suffered greatly from the ivory trade, trophy hunting, and human populations taking over their habitat, with over 50% lost in the past 40 years. From 25M in the 1500's, they dropped as low to 0.3M in the 2000's. Conservation efforts managed to increase this number to 0.4M.

But over the past decade, numbers are plummeting again with 100 elephants illegally poached everyday, with 30,000 killed every year. With the largest brain and three times as many neurons as humans, they rank as the 4th smartest animal. Elephants help maintain the ecosystem and clear pathways in forested areas, which promotes biodiversity for other species. A matriarch leads them, and when she falls victim to poaching, the herd loses the guidance and knowledge of where to graze, which waterholes or travelling routes are safe. Often the juvenile members of the herd do not have enough knowledge for survival.





# 6 | Coelacanth

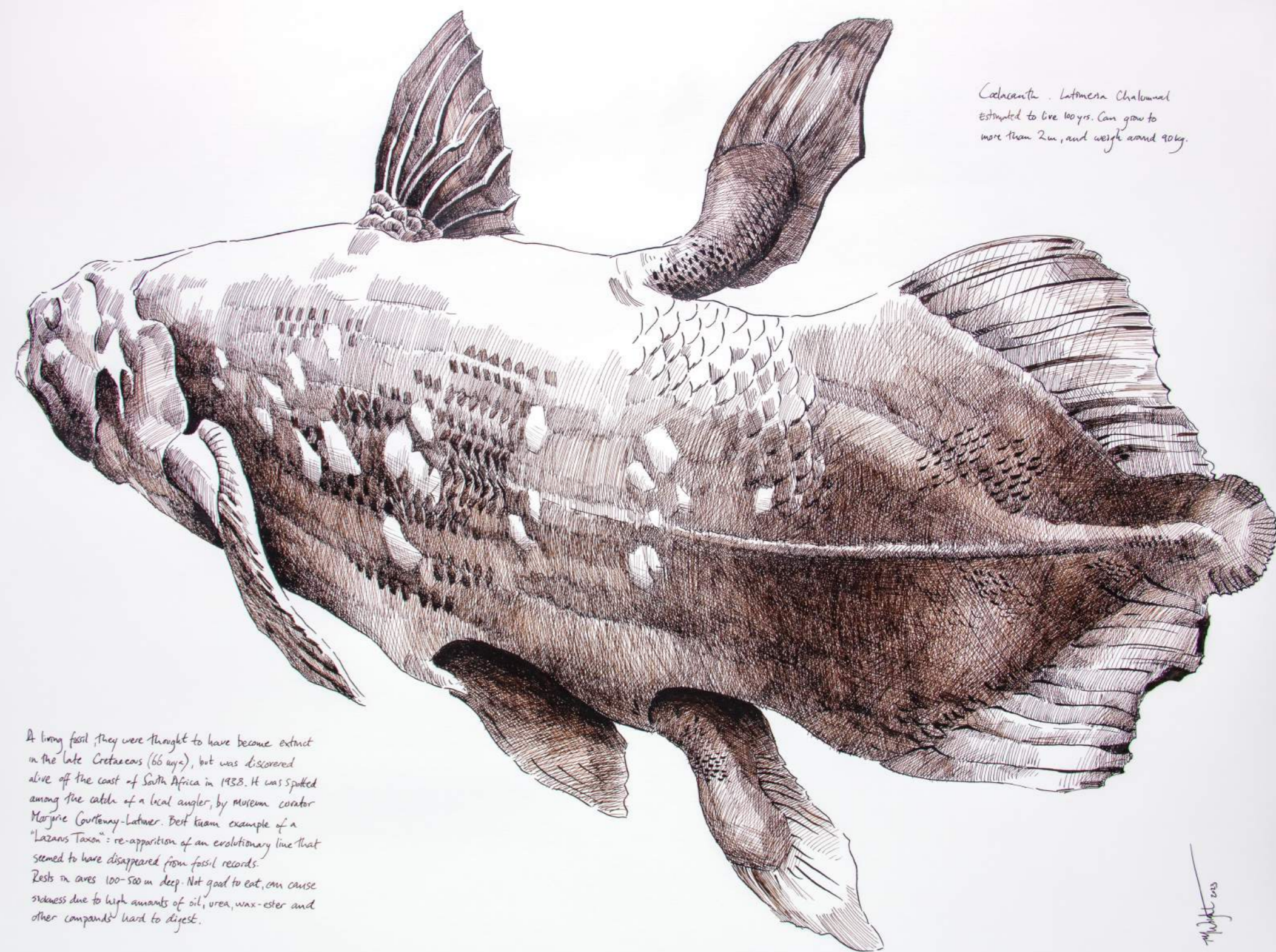
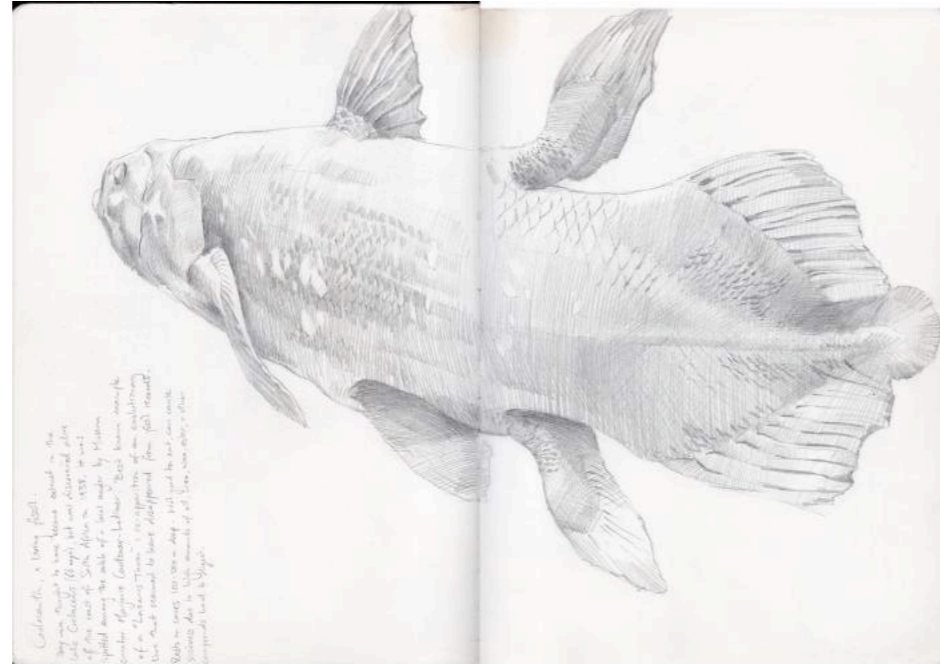
Ink on paper  
50 x 65 cm

Coelacanth: A living fossil.  
GNM (Göteborgs Naturhistoriska Museum).

This fish species is known from the fossil records dating back 360 million years ago, and thought to have become extinct 66 million years ago, in the late cretaceous.

But it was discovered alive off the coast of South Africa in 1938. It was spotted among the catch of a local angler by museum curator Marjorie Courtenay-Latimer. It is the best known example of a "Lazarus Taxon": re-appearance of an evolutionary line that seemed to have disappeared from fossil records.

It rests in caves 100-500m deep. Not good to eat, can cause sickness due to high amounts of oil, urea, wax ester and other compounds hard to digest.



Coelacanth - Latimeria Chalumnae  
Estimated to live 100 yrs. Can grow to  
more than 2m, and weigh around 90kg.

A living fossil, they were thought to have become extinct in the late Cretaceous (66 mya), but was discovered alive off the coast of South Africa in 1938. It was spotted among the catch of a local angler, by museum curator Marjorie Courtenay-Latimer. Best known example of a "Lazarus Taxon": re-appearance of an evolutionary line that seemed to have disappeared from fossil records. Rests in caves 100-500 m deep. Not good to eat, can cause sickness due to high amounts of oil, urea, wax-ester and other compounds hard to digest.

2015



# 7 | Crevasses on Mer de Glace, France

Ink on paper  
41 x 32 cm

Mer de Glace, France

Once considered as gateways to hell, crevasses on glaciers are still terrifying today. They represent a deep-rooted fear in our unconscious, a deep dark chasm where escape seems impossible. In the 1600's, advancing glaciers into public and private land was a real concern for the local population of Chamonix. The glaciers des Bossons was particularly problematic, engulfing farm land and houses. The local authorities reached out to the Vatican and a local bishop was dispatched to "exorcise" the glacier. This may have been one of the few measurable miracles performed by the Vatican. Once as low as the valley floor of Chamonix at 1050m, the glacier has since retreated to 1400m in elevation. Glaciers have sculpted our mountains and valleys over millennia. Today they supply water to communities across all continents. They are an immovable force, with a presence akin to living giants. However, glaciers are considered climate indicators and today they are experiencing long-term recession everywhere on earth, giving us a very clear message on the state of our planet.





# 8 | Arctic ice floe

Ink on paper  
25 x 35 cm

Ice Floes, 83°N.

In the tradition of expedition artists, Toby Wright records his visual testimony of his expeditions into extreme territories. This drawing is noting the forms and designs of ice floes, as well as colour notes for subsequent paintings of this icy world. This drawing was made on board the "Polar Pioneer", on the ELYSIUM expedition across Svalbard, Greenland and Iceland. This line where the pack ice breaks into pieces marks the limit of safe navigation. With warming temperatures, this limit is receding farther north every season.

Sea ice is essential in balancing out the temperatures of the polar oceans that in turn regulate the planet's weather systems. Sea ice reflects about 60% of incoming solar radiation when bare and about 80% when covered with snow.

There is an underlying trend of declining sea ice in the Arctic. Less sea ice reflects less radiation allowing more heat to enter the sea, thus fuelling an accelerated decline in sea ice and a warming ocean. Locally, sea ice is an essential ecosystem for various species that rely on it for living, hunting, giving birth or rearing pups. Globally, sea ice and the Arctic Ocean regulate the planet's weather, which impacts human life.





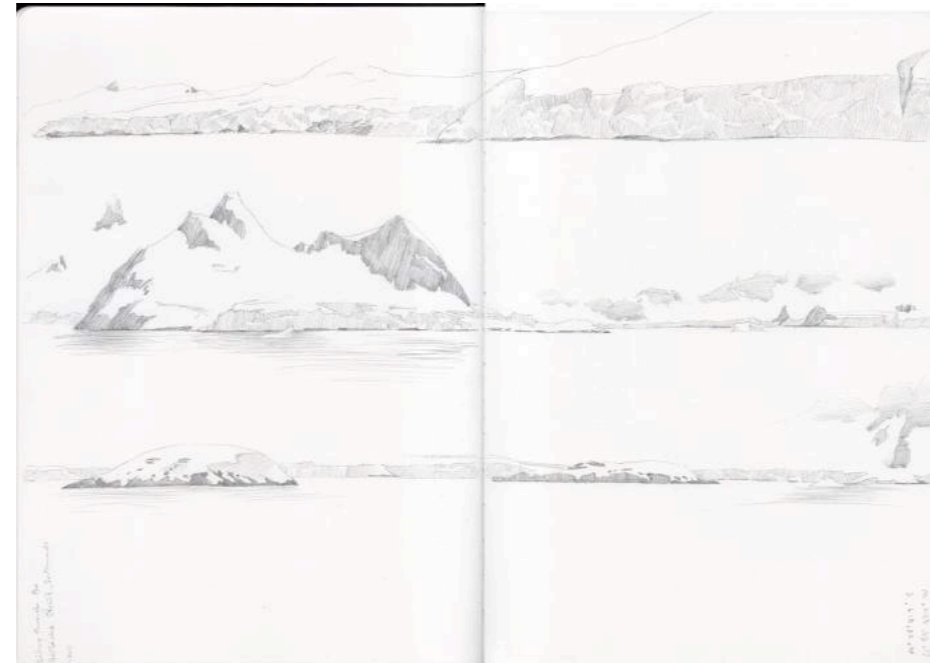
# 9 | Antarctica, Gerlache straight

Ink on paper  
25 x 35 cm

Gerlache straight, Antarctica.  
64°28'41.9"S – 61°59'42.0"W.

These drawings represent a series of coastline observations, made from the deck of a moving ship, while passing through westwards through the Gerlache straight in Antarctica. It features several peaks pushing through the ice sheet, numerous glaciers leading into the water and spiky blue icebergs. Whales are present here along with a number of penguin colonies.

Named after Lt Adrien de Gerlache (Belgium) who explored the straight in 1898.



Travelling westwards through  
the Gerlache straight. Views  
Southwards: 64°28'41.9"S  
61°59'42.0"W



# 10 | La Jonction, glacier des Bossons

Ink on paper  
30 x 40 cm

La Jonction, 2589m, France.

A 3 hour hike from the valley of Chamonix will lead you up to “La jonction”. An endless conveyor belt of ice tumbles down from the Mt Blanc, past the refuge des Grands Mulets, and down towards the village of Les Bossons. The glacier des Bossons crashes up against this rocky outcrop where one can witness it slowly and continuously splitting into two. The split takes part of the glacier down the adjacent valley joining glacier de Taconnaz. The lack of human scale references makes it hard to appreciate the colossal nature of the ice blocks and crevasses. Two hikers on the right flank can be seen, as they make their way up the ice fields to the refuge.



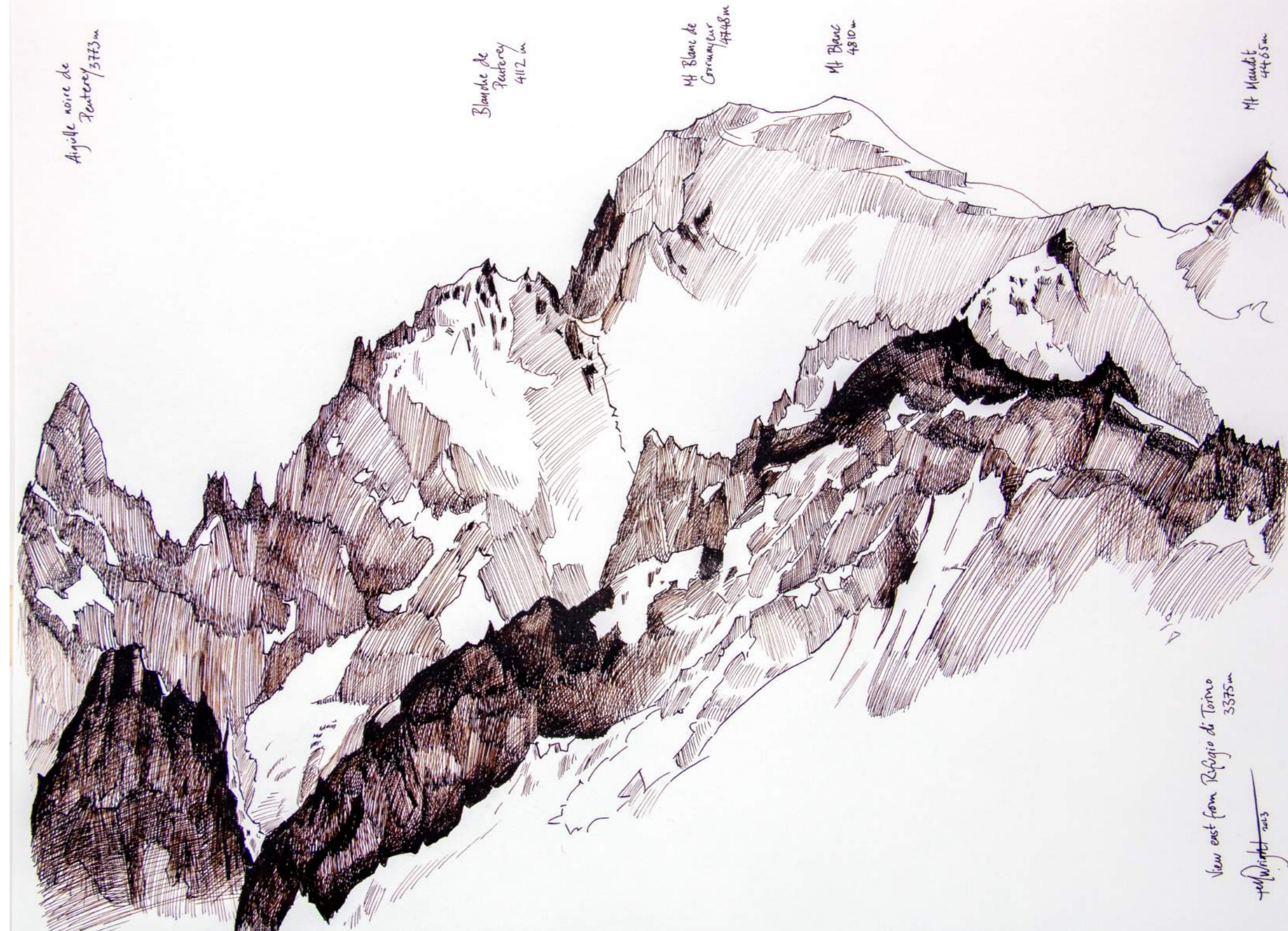


# 11 | View west from rifugio di Torino

Ink on paper  
30 x 40 cm

View west from Rifugio di Torino, 3120 m.

This rifugio, or mountain hut, was the artist's base camp for his ascent of the Dent du Géant at 4013m. Following his 8 hour excursion, he rested on the outdoor deck, capturing into his sketchbook the legendary routes around and below the Mt Blanc (4808m). These faces lead down into the Italian valley of Courmayeur on the left, while France lies over the peaks to the right. Each little crag is studied and brought to life with delicate silhouettes and precise cross-hatching, with distinct overlaps to create a sense of space towards the farthest silhouettes.



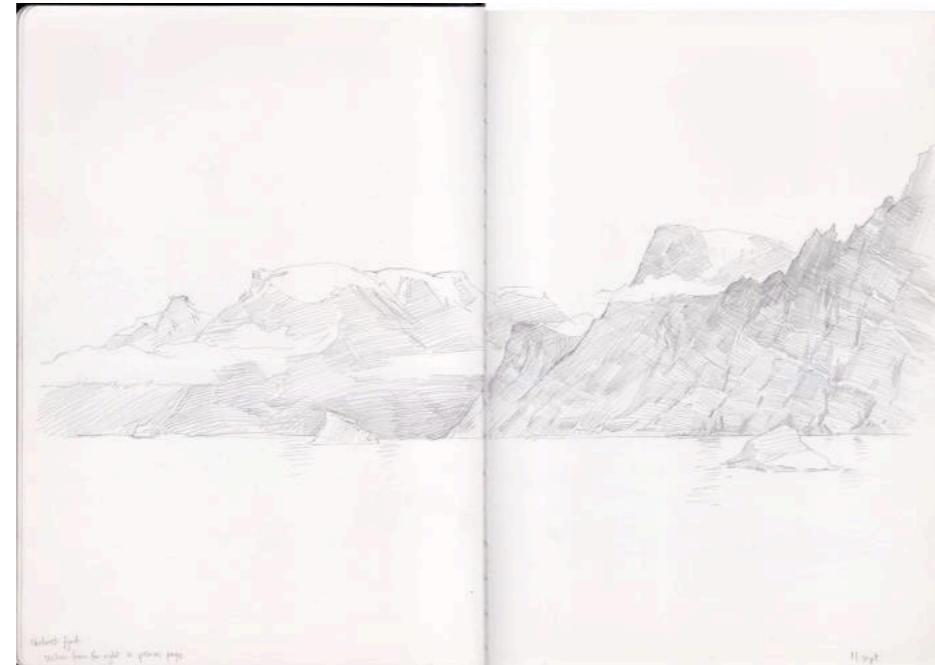


# 12 | Scoresbysund, Greenland

Ink on paper  
25 x 35 cm

Scoresbysund, East Greenland.

Stretching inland from the village of Ittoqqortoormitt, this fjord stands as the world's largest and deepest, spanning an impressive 350km while plunging to depths of over 1500m. Approximately twenty glaciers pour into its crystalline waters, earning it the moniker «ice-cube maker.» Notably, speculation persists that the iceberg responsible for the Titanic's demise might trace its origins to this very fjord. In this untouched and immaculate environment, one can sense a timeless and primordial era. Navigating these icy waters requires a deliberate pace to avoid the numerous icebergs. Toby Wright, stationed on the deck, adeptly captures the character of the shifting mountain silhouettes. His artistic approach adapts to emphasize the essential elements while avoiding excessive intricacies. Linear hatching, chosen for its efficiency, mirrors the geological nuances, effectively suggesting the underlying structural forms.





# 13 | Vajolet towers

Ink on paper  
50 x 65 cm

Vajolet towers, Dolomites.

Following in the footsteps of 19th century mountaineering artists, Toby Wright researches, identifies and locates their painting sites. To see the mountains through the eyes of the old masters, he must engage upon long climbs across various mountain ranges with his sketchbook or easel, and commit to extended time in challenging situations.

The Vajolet towers served as an iconic subject for the painter E.T Compton (1849– 1921), and finding the exact vantage point is the artist's mission in this drawing. On a short reconnaissance trip, he chooses to sit and study the subject in his sketchbook, to explore fully the underlying structure and design. He can later return with his easel to pursue the composition in paint.

This drawing explores the fascinating textures and geological forms of one of the most famous rock formations of the Dolomites. The name of the range derives from the "Dolomite" rock type, composed mainly of sedimentary rocks and limestone. It is essentially a fossilized coral reef from 250 million years ago.





# 14 | Pangolin

Ink on paper  
50 x 65 cm

Pangolin  
GNM (Göteborgs Naturhistoriska Museum).

In his continued interest of the natural world, Toby Wright highlights the pangolin as a testament to evolution's remarkable designs.

This species, resembling a prehistoric relic with its armor plating and formidable claws, defies conventional classification. While its feeding habits mirror anteaters, its genetic kinship aligns more with bears, cats, and dogs.

Very effective at defending itself against predators by rolling into a ball of impenetrable scales, they are unfortunately helpless against poachers, who simply pick them up with their bare hands. Of the 8 species of Pangolin across Africa and Asia all are threatened, with 3 of them critically endangered. The very scales that shield them in the wild have become their curse, coveted in the illicit trade for Chinese traditional medicine, ground into a powder claiming to treat a range of ailments.

China's Wildlife Protection Law seemingly bans protected species' sale, except for «scientific research, captive breeding, exhibition, heritage conservation, and other purposes», a provision traditional medicine manufacturers use via the «special purposes» clause.

Over a decade, traffickers dispatched over a million pangolins. Startling 2019 data underscores that a pangolin is poached every three minutes.





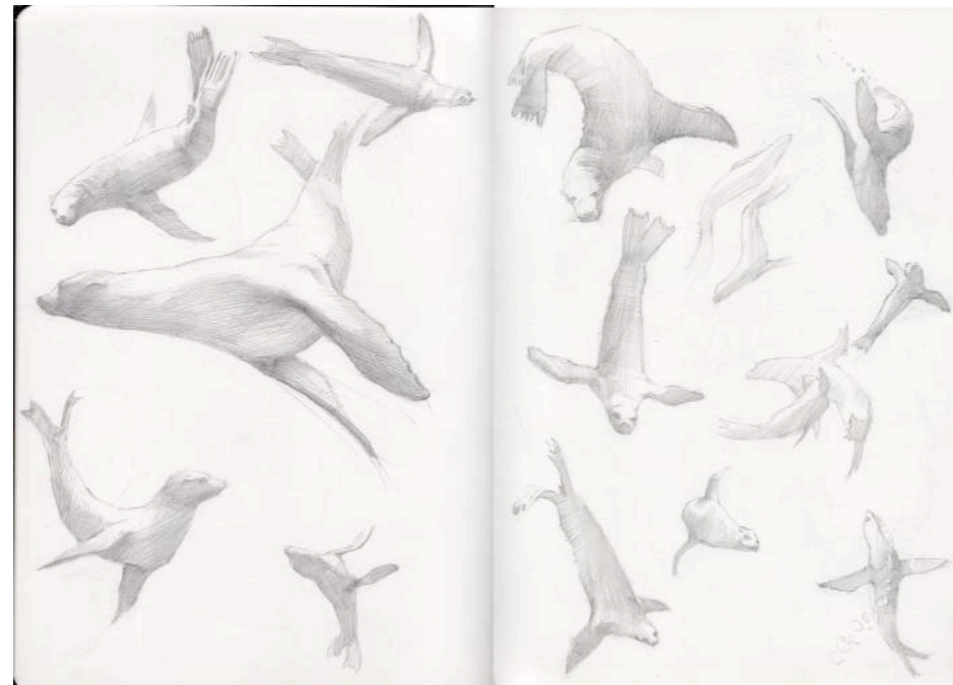
# 15 | Sealions in LaPaz

Ink on paper  
25 x 35 cm

Sealions (Sea of Cortez, Mexico).

These drawings are unique in their nature, revealing an artist's determination to capture the gesture of live marine mammals. To accomplish underwater sketching, Toby Wright created his own unique drawing tools, inspired from observing underwater archaeologists and engineers. He cut and prepared a series of Plexiglas panels to serve as a drawing support, and used wax pencils as mark making tools. The waterproof nature of these materials ensured a secure working plan. Over the course of 6 days in the water, spending several hours a day, he created a collection of fast drawings capturing unique poses and gestures. These served as a foundation for developing the best poses, in view of developing a larger singular composition, with oil on canvas.

These drawings have been transcribed from the Plexiglas sketches, and developed to create form through light and shadows. They are the result of days of observation in the water. The movements are observed from life, to enable the artist to choose precisely every moment and distil the essence of the animal's elegance and grace. Direct observation in combination with memory and repeated exposure enables the artist to capture all that he sees.



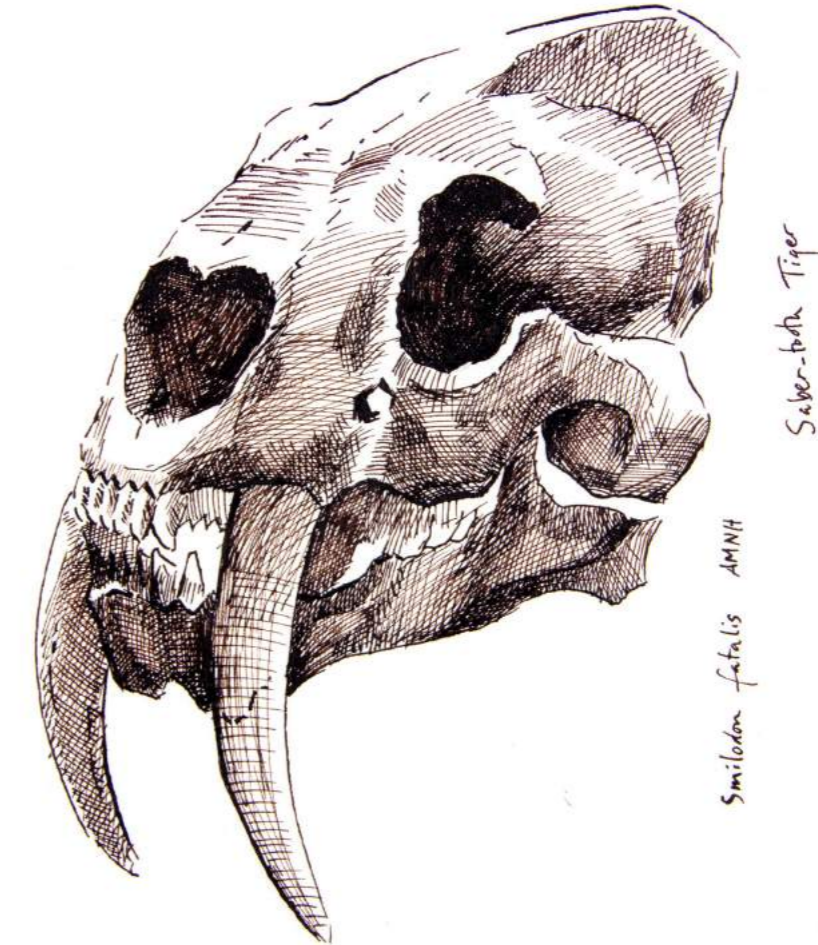


# 16 | Sabre-tooth Tiger skull

Ink on paper  
18 x 25 cm

Smilodon: Sabre-tooth Tiger skull.  
GNM (Göteborgs Naturhistoriska Museum)

Evolutionary biology was an early interest for Toby Wright, from his fascination for Dinosaurs, pre-history and the natural world. Skulls of different species are a fascinating insight into fluctuations and variations in evolution, but also striking similarities. Carefully studying a skull through meticulous drawing allows the observer to learn the subtleties and intricacies of its specific forms. For this Smilodon, an unusually large nasal passage, a pronounced sagittal crest for the attachment of its powerful jaw muscles and the signature oversized canines that give it its name. Sabre-tooth cats lived in Europe and the Americas from 56 million years ago to 10,000 years ago. This means they co-existed alongside our human ancestors, who may have contributed to their extinction, along with climate changes leading to the ice age. They did not give rise to modern cats, but share a common ancestor with a divergence around 18 million years ago.



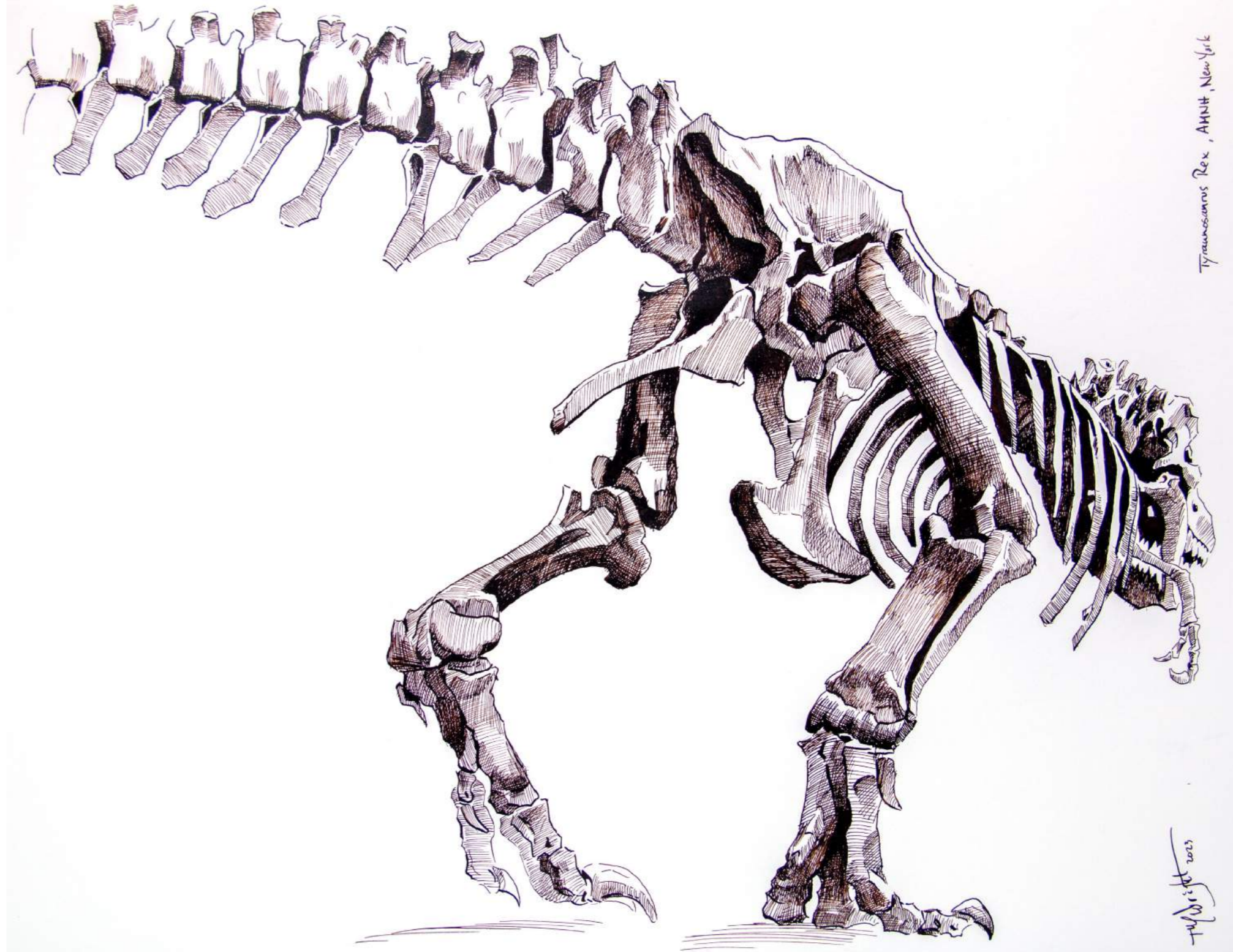
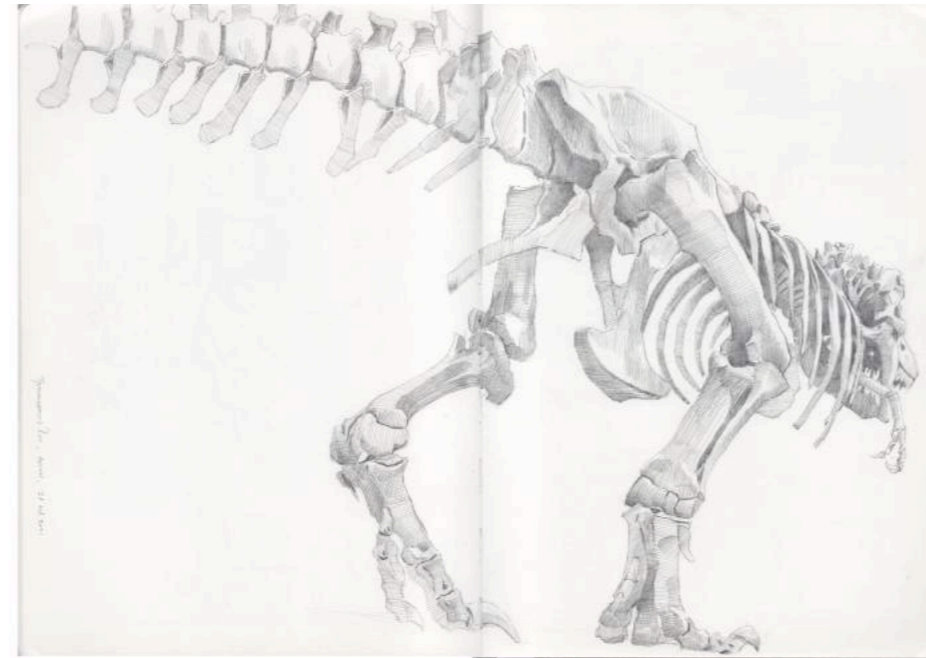


# 17 | Tyrannosaurus Rex

Ink on paper  
41 x 32 cm

Tyrannosaurus Rex, AMNH (American Museum of Natural History, New York).

Dinosaurs seem to be universally fascinating to most little boys. Toby Wright was no different, and maintained his interest for these creatures into adulthood. Fossils remain our only way to experience and witness the size and majesty of giants from a by-gone age, and a great subject for sketching. Before committing to a drawing, one must walk around the subject to explore all angles, before choosing a view. The artist makes use of a strong diagonal for a dynamic composition, and adopts an unconventional proximity to the subject, creating an extreme perspective.



Tyrannosaurus Rex, AMNH, New York

Toby Wright 2013

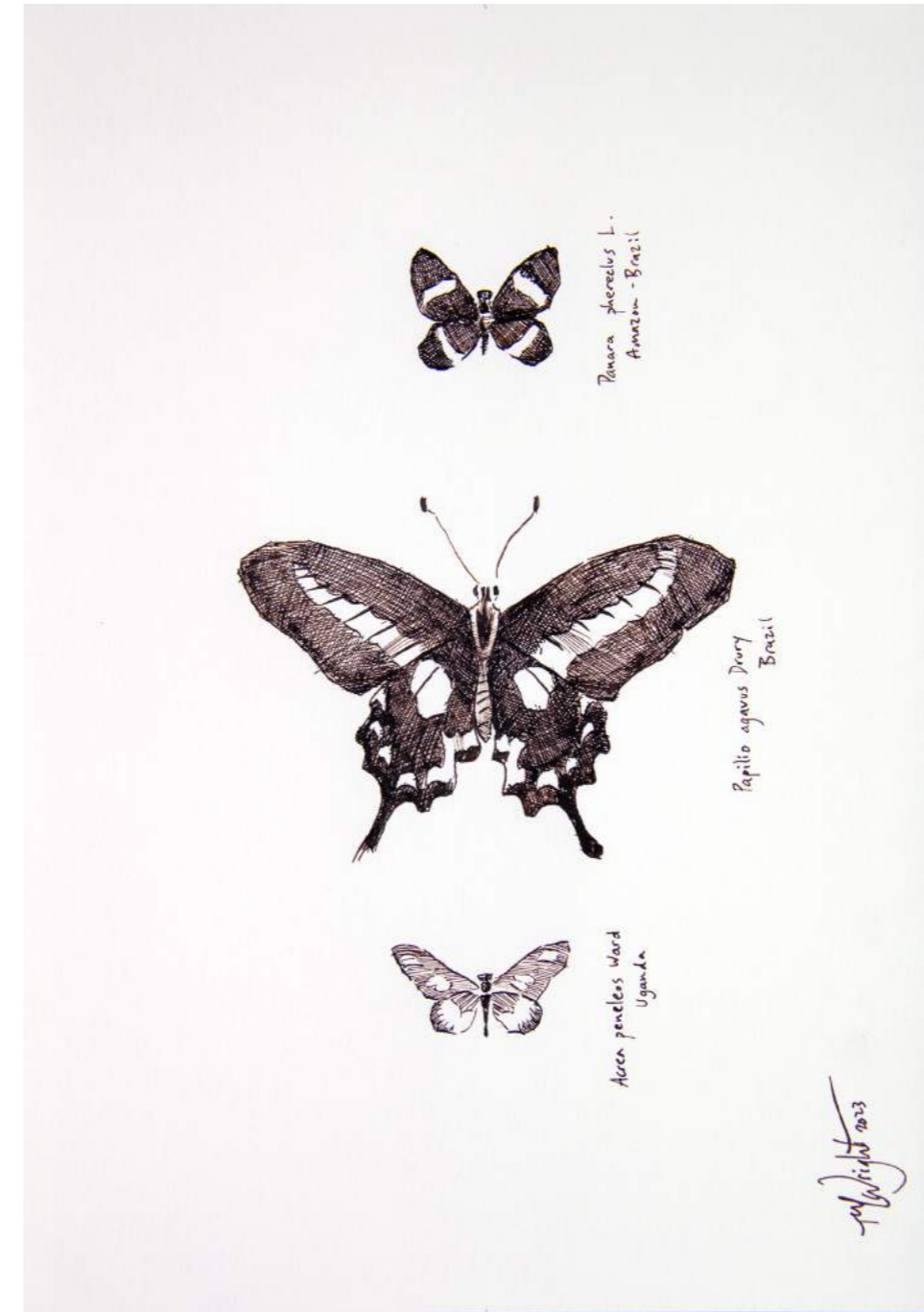
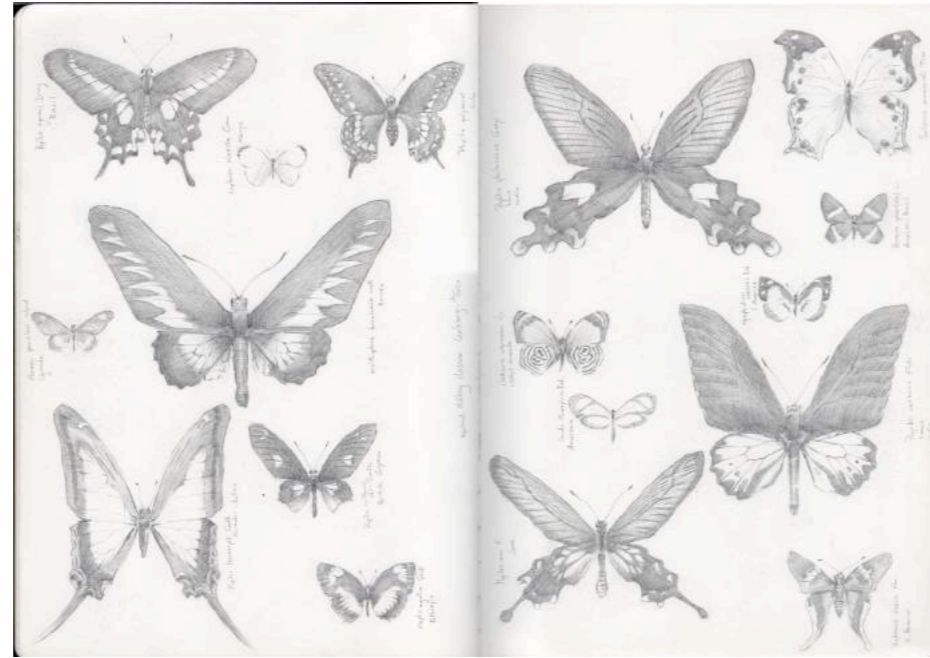


# 18 | World Butterflies

Ink on paper  
18 x 25 cm

Butterflies, GNM  
(Göteborgs Naturhistoriska Museum).

Natural history is a subject that has captivated Toby Wright since his earliest years. He returns to this love for nature's infinite variety when travelling to Natural history museums across the world. A visit of 3 hours enables him to complete a row of about 3-4 butterflies. What started as playful exploration of exotic shapes turned into an almost obsessive "collecting" of specimens into his sketchbook. Some specimens have such intriguing and unexpected shapes that they seem very unlikely contenders for flight. All across the world butterflies contribute as pollinators in the wild. Most species are not migratory and are confined to home ranges as small as a football field. They are in decline due to loss of habitat through invasive agriculture, climate change and pollution. We can help by eliminating generic lawns both privately and in public spaces, favoring wild grasses and butterfly specific plants.



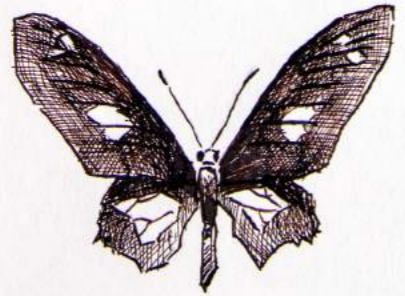




Papilio polyxenos  
Cuba

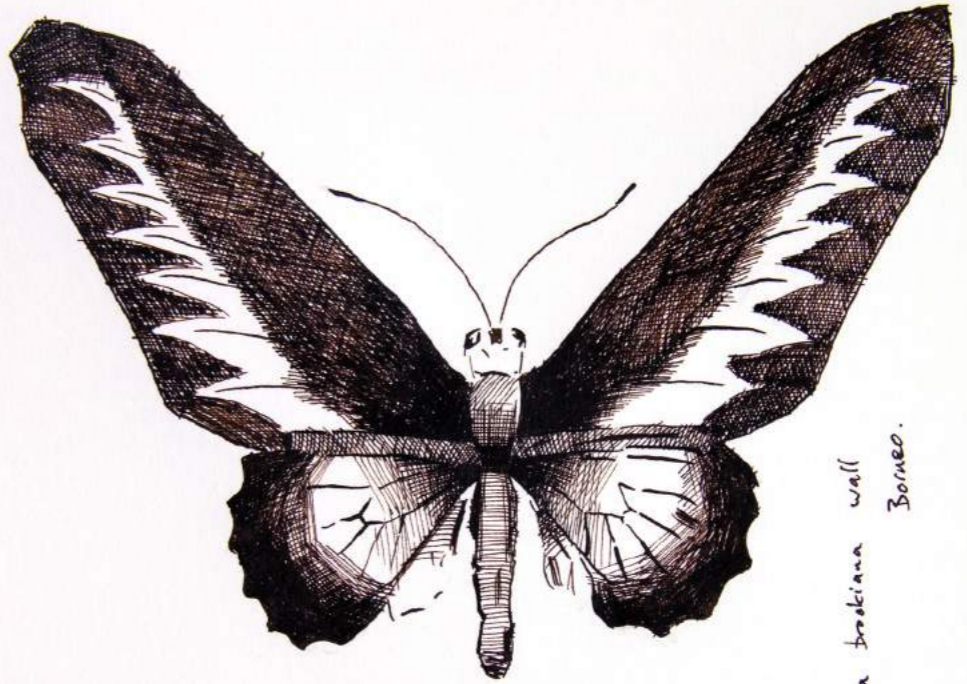


Papilio cerberus Fldr  
India



Papilio nitharus Gr-Smith  
British Guyana

1500  
M. Wright 2013



Omithoptera trobiana wall  
Borneo.

M. Wright 2013



Ty Pitt 2013



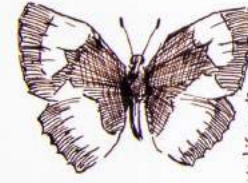
Neptis agathis Stoll  
Ethiopia



Papilio mithras Gr-Smithe  
British Guyana



Panara phereclus L.  
Amazon, Brazil



Neptis agathis Stoll  
Ethiopia



Leptosis alceste Cram  
Kenya



Calliore clymena Cr  
USA, S. America



Acraea penelopeus Ward  
Uganda



Eudamus chalcio Hbn  
S. America



Sinda theopha Bat  
Amazonia

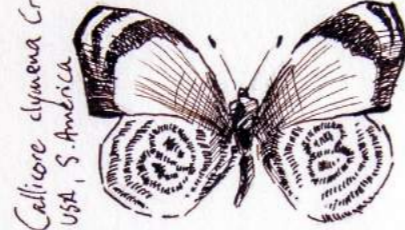
Acraea penelopeus Ward  
Uganda



Acraea penelopeus Ward  
Uganda



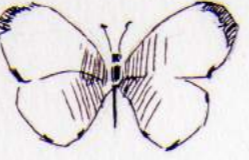
Nymphidium nymphina Gr  
USA, S. America



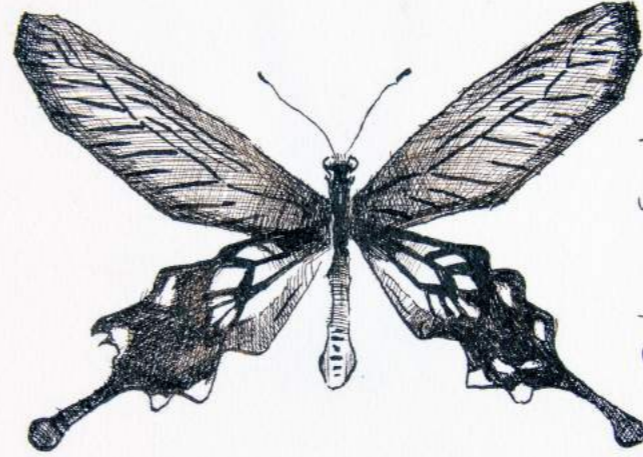
Calliore clymena Cr  
USA, S. America



Panara phereclus L.  
Amazon - Brazil



Leptosis alceste Cram  
Kenya



Papilio coon F. Java

Ty Pitt 2013



Papilio phloxenus Gray  
India

Ty Pitt 2013



# 19 | Bird studies

Ink on paper  
25 x 35 cm

Birds from the Specola museum  
(Florence, Italy).

Birds are a great subject to draw gesture, rhythm and line due to their rich variety of shapes and postures. Both anatomy and feathers combine to create the uncanny wispy elongated silhouettes of birds of paradise, to the more lumpy and rounded ducks.

The extreme gestures of birds can be challenging to capture for artists. It is often assumed that we know what birds look like, until we actually commit to drawing one accurately. The pronounced S-curve of a cormorant's neck, or the oversized bill of a Toucan or hummingbird will be enough to make you look twice and appreciate how rich Nature's variety can be. It was this very same variety, and more specifically in the Finches' beaks of the Galapagos islands, that helped Charles Darwin propose the hypothesis that later established his theory of evolution.





Toby Wright, born 1976

### Higher education

Graduate of the Florence academy of art, Florence Italy:  
1999-2004

BA (Hons) degree in Illustration. University of art and design,  
Swindon,  
England: 1995-1998

Foundation Diploma, University of Westminster, London, England:  
1994-1995

### Teaching experience

Florence Academy of art, Florence, Italy: 2003-2010.

Assistant teacher in the drawing program.

Director of the sculpture drawing department.

Principal instructor in the advanced painting program.

Guest speaker as Art history lecturer.

### Current position

Member of explorer's club NYC.

Member of the Alpine club, UK.

Member of "Académie des arts et sciences de la mer", France.

Guest speaker/ instructor "Florence Academy of Art"

### Exhibitions / events / expeditions

#### 2023

Expedition to Antarctica, aboard the Sylvia Earle. For ACE (Antarctic Climate Epic). Snorkeling, hiking, painting, drawing. Argentina & Antarctic mainland.

Patagonia plein-air painting and drawing. Chile.

Exhibition "Lost-Found", with Gallery Miranova, (Kyev Ukraine), hosted by AIAP Monaco.

Lecture: "Mountaineering artist", hosting British association of Monaco. Toby Wright fine art studios, Monaco.

#### 2022

Lecture: Florence academy of art. "Une délicieuse obscurité", the paintings of Théodule Ribot (exhibition at musée des beaux arts de Caen, France).

Workshop: Still life painting, Toby Wright fine art studios, Monaco.

Workshop: Portrait drawing, Toby Wright fine art studios, Monaco.

High altitude painting expedition, Massif du Mont Blanc. Plein-air painting at 3800m, with Bogali productions.

Mountaineering sketching, Dolomites, in the footsteps of E.T.Compton.

MMM museums, Dolomites. Special permission to photograph art collections.

High altitude painting exploration in the Himalayas at 3000m. Harsil, India.

Article for Ocean Geographic magazine: "Art in conservation communication".

#### 2021

High altitude painting expedition, Massif du Mont Blanc. Plein-air painting at 3800m, with Bogali productions.

Lecture: Explorer's club, New York. (Monday night lecture series, TEC)

Lecture: contributor to webinar, NED group investments (South Africa)

"Sketch for survival", Explorers against extinction exhibition, UK.

#### 2020

COVID

High altitude painting expedition, Massif du Mont Blanc. Plein-air painting at 3800m.

#### 2019

Workshop: Figure, portrait, landscape. Stowe school, Buckinghamshire, England.

Workshop: Portrait. Florence Academy of Art Goteborg, Sweden.

Lecture: Expedition painting & diorama painters, Florence Academy of art Goteborg, Sweden.

Snorkeling expedition, for underwater drawing: sea lions, coral reefs, Sea of Cortez, Mexico.

Snorkeling expedition, for underwater drawing: Sardine run, South Africa.

Princesses Grace foundation, fund raising auction, Fairmont Hotel, Monaco.

Pink Ribbon awards Monaco, trophy design (based on the artist's drawing "peacock's regrets"), Metropole hotel, Monaco. Awards to Jodie Foster & Pamela Greene.

#### 2018

Commission for the oceanographic institute of Monaco, representing the counsel of administrators presided by Prince Albert II of Monaco, 200x300cm, oil on canvas.

Snorkeling expedition, underwater drawing: sea lions, coral reefs, Sea of Cortez, Mexico.

Plein-air exhibition, academy New York, U.S

Workshop: Figure, portrait, landscape. Stowe school, Buckinghamshire, England.

Workshop: Animal painting, Florence Academy of Art, Italy.

Workshop: Portrait. Florence Academy of Art Goteborg, Sweden.

Lecture: Expedition painting & diorama painters, Florence Academy of Art N.J, U.S.

Magazine Pratique des Arts, annual competition, 5th place overall.

#### 2017

Elysium: Artists for the Arctic exhibition, ION art, Singapore.

Workshop: The classic portrait. Florence Academy of Art Goteborg, Sweden.

Workshop: Figure, portrait, landscape. Stowe school, Buckinghamshire, England.

Workshop: Portrait Alla Prima, Florence Academy of Art, Florence, Italy.

Art Residency Monaco, portraits series: "artistes de Monaco". Ateliers d'artistes, Quai Antoine 1er, Monaco.



## 2016

Arctic expedition artist, Gladwell & Patterson gallery, London.

Gender hopes exhibition, Columbus hotel, Monaco.

Forum des artistes de Monaco, auditorium Rainier III, Monaco.

Lecture: “Expedition painter in the Arctic”, Explorer’s club, New York, USA.

Lecture: “Expedition painter in the Arctic”, Florence Academy Metro, Jersey City, USA.

Snorkeling expedition, underwater drawing: orca, hump back whales, Arctic Norwegian sea.

## 2015

Salon 2015, Comité National Monégasque de l’A.I.A.P- U.N.E.S.C.O.

Salle d’exposition, 4 quai Antoine 1er, Port de Monaco

Arctic lecture open to the public, Florence Academy of Sweden, Göteborg.

Elysium: Artists for the Arctic. Embarking on a tour of the arctic, with a team of 50+ comprised of scientists, researchers, cinematographers, photographers, and artists. The route includes Spitsbergen, Arctic circle, Greenland, Iceland. The mission plan outlines the expedition’s conservation & global awareness endeavour.

Workshop: Figure, portrait, landscape. Stowe school, Buckinghamshire, England.

Lecture at Stowe School. «Inspirational techniques from yesterday, for today»

Inauguration of the U.S branch of the Florence Academy of Art, with exhibition of Alumni members.

Inauguration of the breast cancer screening centre in Monaco, and unveiling of Toby Wright’s drawing, «Inner strength», hanging as a permanent collection.

## 2014

The Richard J. Massey foundation for arts and sciences, 601 West 26th street, New York. Selected work from the Florence Academy of Art

Stowe school, FAA summer course.

Pink Ribbon Monaco & CHPG Monaco, donation of drawing, permanent collection in breast cancer center, CHPG Monaco.

Forum des artistes de Monaco. Auditorium Rainier III, Monaco. Reportage Monaco channel

## 2013

Art en Capital, Grand Palais, Paris.

Salon 2013, Comité National Monégasque de l’A.I.A.P- U.N.E.S.C.O.

Salle d’exposition, 4 quai Antoine 1er, Port de Monaco

Workshop: Figure, portrait, landscape. Stowe school, Buckinghamshire, England.

Official 2013 New Year greeting card of the State Ministry of Monaco. S.E.M Roger.

## 2012

Salon 2012, Comité National Monégasque de l’A.I.A.P- U.N.E.S.C.O.&nbsp;Salle d’exposition, 4 quai Antoine 1er, Port de Monaco. Awarded the «public vote»- Reçu le «prix du public»

Lecture & exhibition: «Inspiration, creation. The life of a painter». CREM (Club des résidents étrangers de Monaco), Résidence

Mirabeau II - 1, avenue Princesse Grace.

International art project:»The image of Russia». Hosted by the Russian government, Rossotrudnichestvo, Moscow.

Interview in LUXE IMMO, Luxury Real Estate & Contemporary Art. N°25.

Italian embassy of Monaco welcomes the painting «Astrological Globe»

Self-Portraits II, Eleanor Ettinger Gallery, 57th Street, New York.

Forum des Artistes de Monaco, Auditorium Rainier III, Monaco.

Artistes de l’AIAP-UNESCO de Monaco, Casa de Vacas, Parc de Retiro, Madrid.

6th Florence Academy Alumni Show, Palazzo Corsini, Viale Porta al Prato 37, Florence, Italy.

Featured in: Lessons in Classical Drawing: Essential Techniques from Inside the Atelier, Juliette Aristides. Watson-Guptill Publications, NY.

## 2011

«Portraits du Temple de la Mer», Musée océanographique de Monaco.

«Florence Academy Alumni». Galerie Michael, 224N. Rodeo drive, Los Angeles, USA

Art Renewal Center 2010/2011 international Salon, Figurative Category winners: 3rd Place for «The journey».

Viva, avec la marraine du festival, Shani Diluka.

«En Croisade», Comité National Monégasque internationale d’arts plastique auprès de l’U.N.E.S.C.O, Monaco.

## Quick overview and highlights

### Exhibition venues:

- Gladwell & Patterson, London, U.K.
- Ann long fine arts, Charleston, South Carolina, U.S.
- Eleanor Ettinger gallery, New York, U.S.
- Forbes gallery, New York, U.S.
- Gallerie Michael, Rodeo drive, Los Angeles, U.S.
- Grenning gallery, Sag Harbor NY, U.S.
- Musée Oceanographique, Monaco.
- Richard J. Massey foundation for arts and science, New York.
- Solomon gallery, Dublin, Irlande.
- Immortal works, Goteborg, Sweden.
- Publication «lessons in classical drawing », 2012 Watson-Gutpill NYC.
- Art en Capitale 2013, Grand palais, Paris, France.
- Image de la Russie, ministère de la culture Russe, Moscow, Russia.

### Painting Expeditions:

Arctic: Svalbard 83°N, Greenland Scoresbysund, Iceland.

Antarctic: Antarctic peninsula: Drake passage, Dundee island to Beascochea bay.

Alps: Dent du géant 4013m, Arête de Laurence 3500m.

### Lectures.

Painting on top of the world: Arctic expedition painting

Art and conservation

Diorama painters of the AMNH.

Mountaineering painters witnessing climate

Locations: Explorers club monday lecture series. Florence academy in Italy, Sweden, United States. On board Aurora expedition vessel in Antarctica. Various locations on invitation: galleries, art studios, online conferences.

Awards:

ARC international salon 2011, 3rd place figurative.

AIAP salon MONACO : Prix commission nationale 2010, Prix du publique 2010, Prixdu publique 2012.

“Magazine Pratique des arts”, 5th place, annual competition 2018.

ARC finalist 2018.

ARC finalist 2020

### Public collections / commissions:

- Ministry of State, MONACO, 2013.
- Pink Ribbon/CHPG MONACO, 2014.
- Institut Océanographique de MONACO, 2018.
- Pink Ribbon awards, MONACO, 2019.
- Princess Grace Foundation, MONACO/U.S, 2019.
- Image de la Russie, ministère de la culture Russe, Moscow.



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