

Tutorial: Graphite Lunar Sketch

- Tom McCague

This is a graphite sketch that did not make it into our book: "Sketching the Moon: An Astronomical Artist's Guide" because of page limits.

Before 2006 all the sketching I did was in graphite pencil or graphite pencil and india ink on white paper.

Since 2006 I prefer to sketch the Moon in pastel on black paper. I do on occasion sketch craters and other features in graphite pencil.

Sketching Materials:

HB, 2B, 6B Faber Castell graphite pencils (5B - 8B pencils are soft and dark, B grade pencils are better than H grade for lunar drawing)

Acid-free medium weight (150 g/m²), 9" x 12" (A4 size) white sketching paper (paper weight – copy paper is about 80g/m² and is OK for practice, but 150-200 g/m² is much tougher paper, paper size is a personal preference), Pencil sharpener or sanding block to keep pencils sharp,

Good quality erasers some sketchers like kneadable erasers (putty rubber) but I like white Pearl and several of them that can be shaped with a sanding block, Blending tools: blending stump or tortillion and I also like small twisted pieces of paper towel material, a small brush may be useful to remove eraser crumbs.

I should add that unlike charcoal sketching, graphite doesn't require extra tooth or roughness to the paper. Graphite does have the drawback of being shiny when heavily applied.

Clipboard, Bright white lighting is OK because dark adapting is not necessary for lunar sketching.

Telescope used 10" f/5.7 Dobsonian on an equatorial platform a 9mm eyepiece 161x was used.

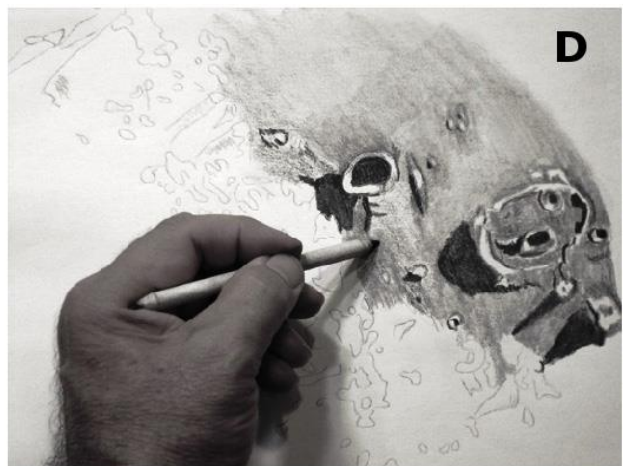
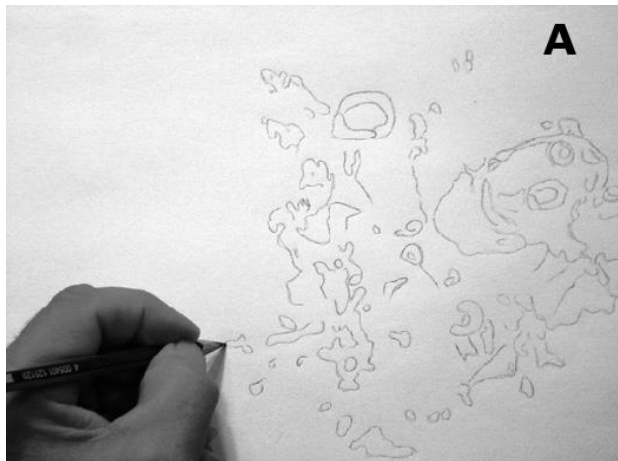
All sketching was performed at the eyepiece which was occasionally interrupted long enough to go indoors to photograph the sketching progress.

Sketch was made in the early morning of July 7th in 2009.

The region chosen for this sketch includes mountains and craters.

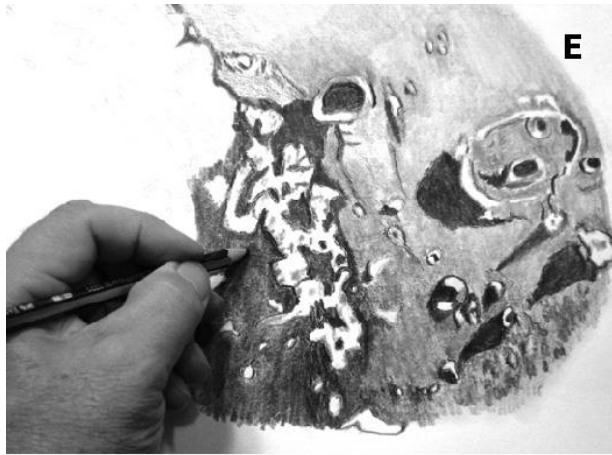
The first step is to make a light rough outline drawing of the features included in the sketch.

You want it light because you may need to erase and correct as you go. I went a little heavy so I could photograph the progress. I drew light region edges and dark shadow outlines. Some sketchers number these but I find that unnecessary. See image A and then image B. Next begin shading in the dark and darker regions with the soft and softer pencils respectively. See image C. As needed use blending stumps loaded with graphite from the pencils used to blend away the pencil lines and unevenness. See image D.



Now continue in this manner sketching with the soft pencils and blending with the blending stumps.

See images E, F, G, and H. You may need to go over the entire sketch to darken regions if the final sketch looks too light. With practice this will not be necessary. You may likely find that the lightest area have become smudged so eraser action will be necessary.



Images I and J show the final sketch, the last with some features labelled.

