

# Creative Space

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## CENTRAL PARK SKETCHING: NEW YORK CITY

Meet the art group dedicated to depicting New York City in all its glory.  
Central Park Sketching organiser **JESSE RICHARDS** tells us more...

You'll find Draftsmen's Congress on the fourth floor of New York's New Museum. Conceived by experimental Polish artist Paweł Althamer, the collaborative exhibit was a white space that visitors have slowly but surely covered with drawings and paintings. Local art group Central Park Sketching was recently asked to leave its mark on the installation, and duly obliged.

Tom Kovalski, with Jesse Richards assisting, founded the group in 2007. Jesse has since taken over organising duties, but its original ethos remains: to provide artists – whether absolute

beginner or distinguished pro – a place to draw regularly, inexpensively and without pressure.

There are no formal critiques. Just an informal "atmosphere of mutual appreciation," Jesse says. People talk. Share ideas. Make friends. Feel like they're part of something.

"I find artists are extremely shy and nervous and embarrassed about the quality of their work," the organiser explains. "It's irrational, and its causes are fascinating to ruminate on. But, on a practical level, it prevents many people from attending anything. A lot of my time is spent reassuring people that we are a non-judgemental community, and



The two great passions in Jesse Richards' life are art and New York, which he combines as organiser of the Central Park Sketching group.

that no one minds if they are the worst artists in the world – and that the concept of best or worst in expressive art doesn't even make any sense."

Jesse is passionate about New York City and what he likes to describe as its innumerable "nooks and secrets, surprising history, stunning architecture and beautiful parks". But before Central Park Sketching there were hardly any groups dedicated solely to drawing the city's landscape. The get-together was a direct response to this.



Draftsmen's Congress: an installation by Polish artist Paweł Althamer, at New York's New Museum.



# Creative Space Central Park Sketching



Incredibly, Draftsmen's Congress was once entirely white space – until visitors and art groups were invited in to decorate.

## ART ATTACK

Central Park Sketching's all-out assault on Draftsmen's Congress



Kerri, from Staten Island, working on a rather rakish-looking dog.



Anika, who likes to work in multiple media, taking it to the walls.



Mercedes Vega Villar says that Central Park Sketching is the perfect excuse to indulge her love of drawing.



Deborah Graham stands proudly by her finished work.



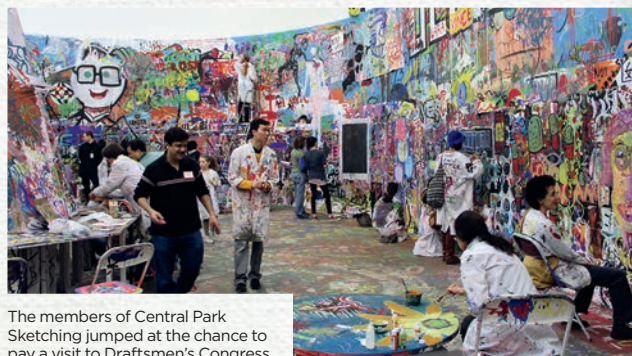
All smiles from Cheri Dannels as she works on her colourful addition to the exhibit.



Whether pro artist or fledgling doodler, all are welcome to make their mark on this unique installation.

However, the group has gradually become a victim of its own success. Once it could sneak into parks and museums unnoticed. Now it turns up in such numbers that arrangements must be made well in advance. Jesse isn't complaining. "We're now the largest art meet-up in the world, and every day more and more people join the group, so I only see it continuing to grow and expand."

For more details on Central Park Sketching, visit [www.meetup.com/sketching](http://www.meetup.com/sketching). To see Jesse's work head to [www.jkrweb.com](http://www.jkrweb.com).



The members of Central Park Sketching jumped at the chance to pay a visit to Draftsmen's Congress.