

Detail

how much detail should you include in a sketch?

The trick to this part is finding efficient ways of adding enough detail to make sure you look like you have taken care and attention in your work but not so much that the balance of attention moves in favour of incidental items such as tyres, number plates etc. It is sensible to strike a balance and make fast *suggestions* of details and spend the majority of your time on the main form.

All-important to the end result, in many respects you can never have enough attention to detail. Some details are not consciously noticed by the client, customer or even other designers but they will still make all the difference to actual and perceived quality. Any thoughts or inspiration as to possible finished details should be recorded even at early stages because they can drive inspiration in unpredictable ways and sometimes survive to the finished product, becoming very important signature features. Here I will express a few of my thoughts on sketching various exterior details.

If I have an idea for a final detail early in a project, I often like to present it as a detail on its own rather than try to incorporate it on the overall design when the overall design hasn't reached that level of finish yet.

When you are sketching for your own benefit in order to work out overall form,

however, not much detail is required. Sometimes just a few lines are needed to help you think through what you are creating. At this level the work doesn't even need to be attractive in its own right, it's just a tool to achieve an end result. Drawing nice wheels on a thumbnail idea sketch doesn't necessarily achieve anything towards your final goal. Treating development sketching as finished artwork doesn't make a great deal of sense as part of an efficient workflow.

If you are creating work for presentation, detail starts to take on a more significant role. No-one's going to go round with a checklist to see who included tyre tread and brake discs and award extra points. But things like that will have an effect on the overall perception of how resolved the design is and how much the designer believes in it. If the designer looks like they don't believe in the design via its presentation then it is less likely that anyone else will.

Solutions

As mentioned, an efficient way to approach detail is to make suggestions rather than accurate renderings.

Wheels and Tyres

To suggest tyre tread, don't draw every groove. Instead target the most highly lit area of tyre and put a few treads in there, fading them out into the darker areas. Use shadows to your advantage and hide areas that don't matter to the design in darkness. What can be an even more pragmatic solution (although artistically not the most satisfying) when trying to be as efficient as possible is to cut wheels from a photograph and paste them onto your sketch. Working on computer makes this possible because you can tweak and adjust them to fit the ellipses on your design. With this method you have fully detailed wheels and if you can cope with the fact you might not have designed them yourself, you've saved a lot of time.

It can sometimes be tempting to render every wheel to a high level but this is very time consuming. The form of a wheel is usually much easier and more logical to draw than the rest of the car so try not to fixate on it. The last thing you want is the only positive comment about your design to be "nice wheels". All you really need is a wheel design that suits your car and doesn't distract with a relative lack of detail from the rest of the car. The most important thing is that your wheels are positioned correctly and that the ellipses look right. If you get the basics wrong on the wheels then nothing is going to look right in the entire

sketch, no matter how perfect it is. Regardless of styling or rendering, everyone can tell when the wheels look wrong on a car. It's something that is just too familiar to be able to get away with doing badly. However this is not a detail, it's a fundamental part of your sketch and some would say the most important, pivotal part of a car in terms of styling balance.

The amount of time spent on your wheels and tyres should be in proportion to the level of refinement and development in your proposal at the time. Try and avoid unnecessary detail if it will be time consuming. Unnecessary would be something that is not enhancing the illustration of the design. For example a lightweight sports car which needs to look fast might be vitally enhanced by huge visible brake calipers which can be very distinctive design features, where a family sedan might not.

Visible Interior and a See-Through Glasshouse

Like wheels, a correct looking silhouette of an interior will make a much better impression in a sketch than a detailed interior with seats that look wrongly positioned or a steering wheel which is at a strange angle. It is also much easier and faster to do and gives most of the achievable effect. The more detail you render the more accurate you must be.

All you need do is roughly create the outline of seats and the windows on the far side of the car. Darken everything apart from the far window areas and you will have your silhouette. Now work on the glass as you would have done before, on another layer, and the transparent parts will show your suggested interior. A couple of highlights on the steering wheel or the top of the instrument



panel can be added quickly and easily. This will be covered more thoroughly by a future tutorial. It is worth mentioning that if your interior integrates strongly with the exterior form or has a particularly strong feature that would be visible from the outside then it is beneficial that you show this, and if you are drawing a convertible then you have to either commit to rendering your interior or be clever with shadows or viewpoint so that most of it is not visible.

Grille Detail

Having some grille detail in your sketch will give a much more refined impression than just a black hole in the front of the vehicle. Again the issue here is how to achieve a compromise that does justice to your illustration but doesn't take too long and prevent you from working efficiently. One method is to pick out highlights only and let the imagination do most of the work. In the supercar

sketch below the low aperture simply has an array of slats picked out with a light colour and then some sharp highlights suggesting they are metallic. This wasn't time consuming and enhances the slightly up-market feel wanted for this concept.

