



## Preface

Due to its proximity and lack of an obscuring atmosphere, our rocky, cratered, and lava-flooded Moon is the only celestial body that displays three-dimensional form on its surface when viewed through earthbound binoculars or telescopes. All other planets and their moons are either so distant or so cloud covered that there is virtually nothing in terms of tangible surface form to sketch or photograph. In contrast, the Moon provides a surprisingly rich diversity of three-dimensional shapes and contours for the lunar sketcher. From the smallest crater to huge, circular mountain ranges built by basin-forming impact events, and the mare formed by lava flooding those basins, the Moon's rugged and varied topography reflects the history and the violence of impacts and the secondary processes of volcanism. Lit by the Sun during the changing angles of the long lunar day, the dramatic play of shadows and light upon its features are fascinating to observe, sketch, or photograph throughout a lunation.

We are fortunate to live in a period when reasonably priced telescopes and binoculars of good optical quality are available to almost everyone. Each can open lunar vistas of remarkable detail and drama. We can explore the Moon visually while recording the memories in the form of our sketches. Sketching the Moon's complex features is an excellent way to become a better observer while exercising our sketching skills. Sketching gives us time with our subject, inviting us to take a concentrated look at its contours, highlights, and shading. As we observe the Moon, we are often surprised to see features that are puzzling due to lighting or topography. A sketch can capture that scene, helping us convey to others important details of what was noted.

A good lunar sketch is a graphical representation of a visual *observation*. The strongest emphasis should be placed on "observation", being that it is the basis of the activity. The level of concentration required for creating a sketch works to sharpen our observing skills; no activity does this more efficiently. Experience with our chosen media develops our technical abilities to represent those observations. Sharing our sketches demonstrates our various personal styles and teaches us how others handle the subject and media.

Observation experience and media mastery can yield excellent sketches, some of them quite worthy of being called art. However, it is very important to emphasize that we need only create as faithful a rendering as our seeing, equipment, and abilities allow. Creating a work of art is not the aim of lunar sketching, regardless of the fact that there are many who do that routinely! Lunar sketches can be as simple or as intricate as we each decide to make them. The only limits are imposed by time and resolution and, ultimately, our skill developed through practice and perseverance. When we put too much

emphasis on art, it can become quite intimidating to those who have limited experience. And to that extent, art can be exclusive rather than an invitation to the joys of observing. Choose a medium that attracts you the most and begin by reading and following the associated tutorials, starting with “Basic Sketching, A Place to Begin” for a brief instruction on outline sketching and shading. Do not worry about whether your sketch is “artistic” or not. Does it represent your observation? Then it is a good sketch! It’s as simple as that.

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Sketching the Moon

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