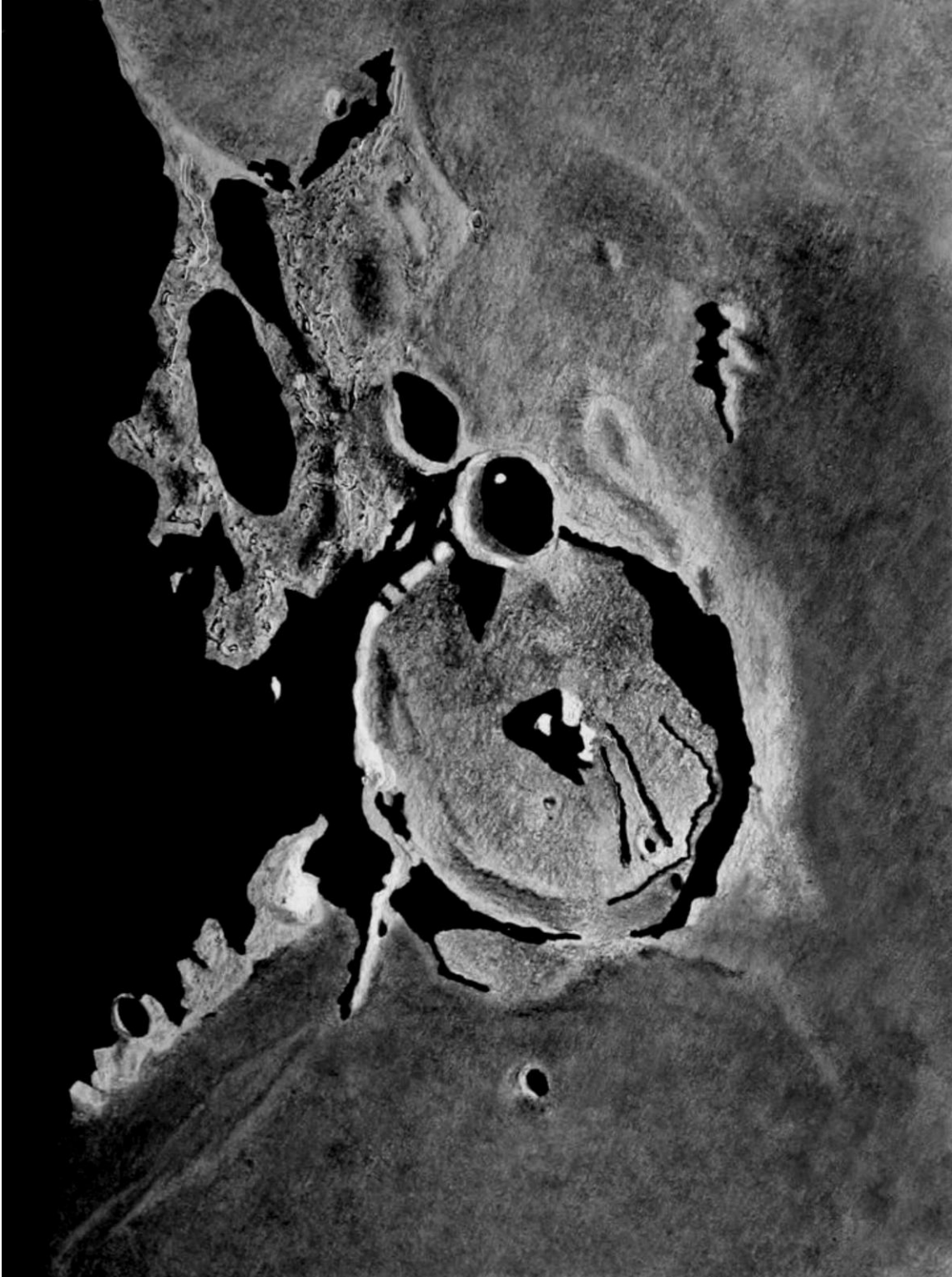


*Gerry Smerchanski on Sketching the Moon*



Gerry's image of the crater Gassendi, which won the RASC 2013 Summer Solstice to Autumn Equinox Edition Astroketching Contest

Gassendi is found on the 'north shores' of Mare Humorum and is a very complex structure. South rim seems inundated by the Mare while the crater itself exhibits rilles, central peaks, craterlets wall breaches and it is found between Mare and highlands. Sketch was done on Sept 15th 2013 from 21:00 to 23:00 CDT from Teulon, Manitoba Canada. Viewed through an old Celestron Ultima 8 with binoviewer at ~150x to 300x (exact power hard to determine as barlows are separated from eyepieces) Seeing was quite good (Antoniadi 2)

Sketch done using graphite pencils, ink and "whiteout" on smooth white paper. "Whiteout" is used not only to get those brilliant peaks and white patches, but to create roughness so as to simulate rougher terrain which is then sketched over with pencils. I rather like the effect (seen in my sketch up to the left of the main crater) as it is quick and effective when using smooth paper, but it is done to simulate rough terrain rather than actually plot exact features. I think of this as being similar to just making a lot of dots to simulate a globular rather than plotting each star. These lunar scenes contain far more data than I can plot so some compromises are taken:-\). The sketch was photographed and flipped to proper view with North up and West to the right. The usual contrast and brightness were applied to compensate for the imaging process and to make it appear more like the visual experience.

This sketch was done some 37 years after my first sketch of Gassendi. It's an old friend that still holds much interest.

There only a few aspects of sketching where I feel I can add to what's already out there, but they all come down to address one big issue for sketchers: *time*. One aspect is obvious: the more you sketch, the more pleased you'll be with the results as you get more proficient at getting the rough outlines done and you know how to get those shadows locked in early etc., etc. But it's more than just practice making you faster/better that helps here. It is that your standards of what satisfy you evolve and you demand more of yourself. For instance, I used to be content with seeing the grain of the paper coming through in my sketches of smooth terrain of the *maria*. Then it became a distraction to me and I wanted it to look as smooth as it appeared in the eyepiece. I sought out better blending stumps and then smoother paper (paper made for the old dot matrix printers was especially nice to use for this).

But then I was finding that sketching in rougher terrain became a chore as the rougher paper had made that part easier. So I then found that my "Whiteout" pen, with its fine tip, can be used to lay down a rough layer of squiggles and more defined shapes on top of my smooth paper so that I could shade in rough areas. In fact, the fine tip allows for some actual documenting of certain rough features that took a long time to do otherwise or which you'd just represent with a rough shading. In fact you can also simulate the lighting angle by pulling the pencil's flat side from only right to left over the rough whiteout to simulate light falling from the left and draw the pencil from left to right to simulate light falling from the right hand side. Wow that saved a lot of time and gave such a nice effect even if it wasn't a totally faithful documentation of all the

features seen. With this time saved I felt I had more time to address to more features and spend more time at adding more detail.

The amount of detail is very important to me, and I pick only areas of the moon where I feel I can devote enough time to getting a decent amount of detail done. For example, I have yet to attempt to do a sketch of the Crater Copernicus as I find it too intimidating (I am in awe of people like Alexander Massey and Erika Rix who seem to capture so much detail so efficiently in their sketches). Someday, perhaps, but right now I feel I don't have the time to devote to a satisfactory effort. But it can rightly be said that every part of the moon has enough detail to be intimidating and one has to then find a scale of image that allows one to tackle it satisfactorily. I did a nice sketch of the Aristarchus region a few years back but when I look at it I am reminded of all the details I left out. due to time: <http://www.asod.info/?p=7374>

But it was that sketch where I started using other efforts to save time. I realized that 1.5 to 2 hours at the eyepiece(s) was not enough time for a complete sketch, and the problem was so much time was spent colouring in certain areas such as shadows, terminators and bland *maria*. So starting with that sketch, what I did was spend my time at the eyepiece creating a detailed colouring-book page to be filled in once inside. So lots of notes are taken around the image and things like brightest spots are noted and sample grey levels are placed in certain areas to allow me to fill it in properly later. Doing this saves a lot time as I am a very slow sketcher and have to work at getting it the way I like. I spend almost as much time filling in my “colouring book page” as I do at the eyepiece (that saved time is used to get more details into the sketch). The colouring book part that comes later is rather therapeutic as well—pretty much as it was when we were kids;-).

One other thing that I found helpful is to use a binoviewer and observe with both eyes. Spending long periods of time at the scope staring at one scene can be very tiring and using only one eye makes it more onerous. Binoviewers also allow the depth and 3 dimensionality of the scene to become evident. If you haven't viewed the moon through binoviewers yet, you are missing out.