

*Monday, 8 August 2005*



On Saturday night Carla and I went to the outdoor theatre in Vondelpark. The music and dance event was called *Latin Summer Breeze*. It was supposed to be summer but there was a chilly wind, the rain had just stopped and everyone was dressed for late autumn. The exotic stage setting of banana leaves and coconuts somehow failed to create a tropical mood. The small audience was passive and hardly willing to move to the salsa music. The MC's pep talk did not help much.

At the edge of the open space, some homeless people were quickly finishing off one bottle of wine after the other. They were wearing all kinds of hats, turbans and caps. None of them were hatless: they had a hat instead of a roof. It was a good opportunity to draw them without embarrassing anyone. No one really cared any more what was happening on stage. After finishing the tea Carla brought to warm me up, I discovered I could use the tea bag as a watercolour brush to make a basic colour on the paper and create shades. The drawing was made with a special pencil that dissolves in water, or should I say tea. I had to stop the tea painting process when the tea bag broke and the tea leaves scattered on the paper like tobacco from a broken cigarette. One of the homeless guys was sporting a huge summer hat covering most of his face. All we could only see was a big beard. He reminded us of Claude Monet in his Giverny years and our sketches of him looked like we had personally met Monet at his pond of water lilies.

At the end of the evening, a new band began to play. The music was rocking and swinging. Salsa sparks set the crowd on fire. Suddenly the dance floor was filled with experienced dancers. The Amsterdam chill turned into a warm night in Havana. We felt like we were in the middle of a salsa beach. We were impressed by a couple who danced so naturally and so rhythmically, a dark boy and a girl dressed in red. They were born to dance. If I could dance like that I would give up drawing. Seated high in the stands, we could sketch this sea of motion. During this inspirational peak, we hardly knew what we were doing and made more drawings in twenty minutes than in all the hours before. My hands were black from the ink and other art supplies. With black stains on my face, I felt like a miner returning home from work. I guess it was hard to recognize me that night.