

Lars Eje Larsson

Intuitive painting

LARS EJE LARSSON MOVES BETWEEN DIFFERENT WORLDS, FROM ABSTRACTION TO FIGURATION. HIS WAY OF WORKING OSCILLATES BETWEEN INTUITIVE PAINTING, REPRESENTATIONS OF REALITY AND SOMETIMES A MIXTURE OF BOTH. HE TELLS US MORE.



Key Facts

Lars Eje Larsson has been an art teacher and is a member of the following societies: K.R.O, B.U.S, Konstnärscentrum Väst, (KC-Väst), Nordiska Akvarellsällskapet and Göteborgs Konstnärsklubb (President 1993-1998, Honorary President since 1998). Recent exhibitions include "Re-interpretation of International Contemporary Watercolour", in Wien, Lingang International Watercolor Exhibition, in Shanghai, Kina Galleri Maralto, in Smögen (2017).

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The Art of Watercolour: Composition is important in your still lifes: what rules do you follow?

Lars Eje Larsson: I believe that composition plays an important role in the way one absorbs an image. For the viewer, the image needs to feel interesting and exciting and a bad or boring composition can ruin an otherwise skillfully painted picture. Many amateur painters are not aware of this and do not manage to keep the eye within the picture, allowing it

instead to "run all over" it without stopping. Such a picture is often perceived as uninteresting. Unfortunately nowadays, here in Sweden at least, not many art courses and art schools teach the theory of composition, color composition and color harmony, etc.

TAW: How much time do you spend on design?

L. E. L.: A lot of time! Even in my intuitively painted work, I use

Blue vase,
56 x 38 cm

Enamel plate,
42 x 38 cm



Glass can and
urns, 56 x 38 cm

“My still lifes are actually semi-abstract, where I play with, above all, colour combinations.”



Blue and
yellow,
56 x 38 cm

two large pieces of cardboard cut at angles to work out how I should crop the image in order to get the optimal composition. I take into account both shape and colour composition. Such "intuitive" paintings, like these still lifes for example, are apparently simple and may even seem random, but I can spend almost as much time finding the right composition, or enhancing it with accents and complementary colours, as the time it took me to paint the rest of the picture.

TAW: What drives you to paint?

L. E. L.: It can be as simple as coming across some new pigments I want to combine. It can also be ideas that have matured, such as a series of paintings about unequivocal, everyday relationships featuring people sitting or lying on a bed. I called that series "In Bed". In my intuitive paintings like these still lifes, I often rely on chance to find exciting new colour combinations and compositions.



Yellow jug,
56 x 38 cm

Onion dish,
38 x 56 cm



Study in yellow,
56 x 38 cm



Bowls,
56 x 38 cm



The influence of the materials on the way I paint

My painting is characterised by the many possibilities of watercolour. I work a lot with the contrasts between wet and dry effects and I work a lot with different contrasts in general, such as hot/cold, diffuse/distinctive, pure/ muted colours etc. I apply my watercolour approach to acrylics, an artist colleague calls my acrylic paintings "Aquareyles", which seems pretty apt to me.

TAW: Seeing your still lifes, one has the feeling that you could almost switch to pure abstraction...

L. E. L.: I like abstract painting almost as much as figuration. In fact, the colour and shape problems are the same. To produce a good abstract painting requires the same awareness of composition of both form and colour. My still lifes are actually semi-abstract; I play above all with colour combinations and juxtapose light and dark etc.

TAW: How do you find your subjects?

L. E. L.: My more realistic subjects are often inspired by movies. I may have seen a scene in a film with exciting and dramatic lighting. I then freeze the image as it were and start from there, for example I did a whole series of night pictures of American muscle cars from the 60s, like the Ford Mustang, Dodge Charger and others. My starting point was 70s police movies. I worked a lot with dim light and was fascinated by the challenge of portraying the cones of light of the headlights, among other things. The series was called "Night Cars".

TAW: Do you start with a precise idea of the final painting or do you let the watercolour run its course?

L. E. L.: In my intuitive paintings, I don't do an initial sketch or compositional study at all. I start with chaos, splashing paint with large brushes and paint-soaked rags. I then try to bring order out of this chaos. Had I first determined the

shapes by sketching, I would not be able to paint freely. It is much more exciting to try and find hints of shapes in the random splashes of colour. It's like putting together a puzzle. For example, I usually finish a pot by painting the elliptical form of its opening.

TAW: Do you have a traditional, transparent approach to watercolour?

L. E. L.: My watercolour painting is rather unorthodox and I believe that the end justifies the means. In the beginning, my watercolour painting was very strict and I didn't use black or white, but I changed my mind after seeing watercolours by the famous Swedish artist Anders Zorn. He painted a watercolour of two white houses in southern Spain, for one house he preserved the white of the paper, whereas he used opaque white gouache paint for the other creating a vibration between the different white tones. After that experience, my opinion is that everything goes if it makes the painting better. There is no intrinsic

value to being a strict watercolour painter: what counts is obtaining a good and interesting finished painting.

TAW: Do you have any advice for young artists?

L. E. L.: In Sweden today, it is quite difficult for young artists to live from their art. The generation that appreciated and bought art before is now getting older and usually its walls are full! Unfortunately, the interest in buying art seems to have disappeared in later generations. My advice to young artists is to continue painting and exhibiting, but to make sure they have an alternative source of income. There are many talented young artists that I hope will eventually reach their audience. On the other hand, thanks to the internet it is easier today (than when I was young) to reach an international audience. Maybe they can find buyers that way.

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semi-abstraites

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