



Lars Eje Larsson

## Exploring contrasts in watercolor

I painted in oil since the age of 12, but started working with watercolors in the 1970s. It was American painter Andrew Wyeth who helped me discover watercolor's possibilities. In his book *Christina's World*, he showed fantastic watercolors with a lot of values, light and shadow. I was also

fascinated by his watercolor technique where dry and wet parties met.

Since then I have always tried to find exciting expressions where contrasts meet in the picture, such as wet-dry, hot-cold, distinct-diffuse and so on.

My painting has often found itself in the border country: abstract-figurative,

but I have become more figurative in my later painting. I also try to find contradictions or ambiguities in the subject itself, where you can interpret the subject in different ways.

I now work in both watercolor and acrylic, where I also used watercolor techniques in my acrylic paintings.



*Girl with Strelitzia*, acrylic, 80 x 120 cm

In this acrylic I build the tension in the picture on the interplay of the orange-red tones in the girl's back to the right, and Strelitzia to the left. The hard part in this painting was to really get the deep effect in the three rooms you look into. As it is only white walls, I had to use very sublime tones in light gray to describe the spatiality. I have deliberately left large parts of the girl's body unpainted to make her more erratic and alive in relation to the well-arranged apartment.



*Girl in pink dress*, watercolor, 56 x 76 cm

In this watercolor, as in several other of my later paintings, I have taken inspiration from the film world. It might be a movie that fascinated me. I try to re-create a mood that touched me by painting a scene, usually ambiguous, then it is the viewer who completes the picture or "writes the story." In this picture I wanted to contrast the defenseless young girl with a rough and worn environment. She has her innocent white socks, Chinese shoes and a childish pink color on the dress. The pink and white contrast with the rough blue-gray and violet-gray tones in the room. The light, where the girl is heavily illuminated, is also important. With the contrasts I want to create a charge in the image that the viewer himself can interpret.



*The Kiss*, acrylic, 100 x 150 cm

In this acrylic painting (notice the watercolor technique), there is a dramatic charge. It's called *The Kiss*, but you can also interpret it twice here. Is it tenderness or abuse? The viewer decides. Also notice the different painting modes with fairly free "watercolor painting" on the left in the picture versus the pasty orange color in her hair. Also the room and its furniture are painted in alternating covering and lasered sections respectively. Here, too, light is enormously important for creating depth and drama.



By diluting the color thin with water and medium, I can add thin lacquers, and then work with pastels color on top or next to it. In my watercolors, I combine wet with drybrush techniques to produce similar effects as I do in acrylics.

I often start sketching and then build up the picture step by step. I work all over the image area before I find the details. This way, I bring composition and light with me. Light is very important to me. The light conveys the mood in the picture and gives it drama. Even the color tones are something I give a lot of time. I like that pure colors stand against blurry, "dirtier shades," and to name the game between hot and cold colors as well as the contrasts between complementary colors. [Lars](#)

*Girl on green couch, watercolor, 31 x 56 cm*

This watercolor is based on a relatively simple composition, where the large green sofa dominates the look. Its size makes the girl small and lonely. A cool white afternoon light reflected on the empty wall reinforces loneliness/desolation. You can imagine high-rise buildings outside the window. Maybe New York or another big city. The painting in blue and red is not on the wall. Moving boxes to the right in the picture indicate that she has just moved in, alone in the big city, or is moving out, abandoned? Poor? The viewer decides. The difficulty with painting this picture was describing the bright parts. To paint clear colors like the green sofa is not so difficult, but the small differences in light inside and outside and describing the deep window niches were a challenge.



## ABOUT THE ARTIST

As a 12-year-old, I started painting large canvases in oil and already had an ambition to become an artist. After various art schools in the '70s, I trained as an art teacher. My first solo exhibition in 1982 was a success and was followed by several in the coming years. In parallel with my art, I had courses in watercolor, and worked as an art teacher until 1992 when I resigned from the

teaching job to paint full time.

During the 1990s, I had many notable exhibitions around Sweden but also in neighboring countries Norway and Denmark, as well as France. The big breakthrough came in 1996 with a one-man show at the *Stockholm Art Fair*. It was followed up by several separate exhibitions at other art fairs in Sweden and the

Nordic countries such as *Art Copenhagen* 2000 and 2001. During the 2000s, I continued to exhibit at various galleries in Sweden and the Nordic countries, Spain, France, the Netherlands and Greece.

During the 2010s, the internet broke through, and I received many invitations to exhibitions around the world. In China, my paintings have

been shown in some 50 cities, museums and art centers, among others in Shanghai during the last 10 years. I participated in "Masters of Watercolor" in Saint Petersburg, Russia, and was nominated for Biennial International Prize "Fabriano Watercolour" 2018.

In recent years I have reduced the number of exhibitions to get more time for my painting.

I hold a smaller number of watercolor courses per year inter alia in Grebbestad, Sweden, and in Andalusia in Spain. Right now I have a small number of exhibitions in Sweden in the pipeline. I paint to bring together material for a major exhibition in a few years in Sweden or abroad. I am also interested in serious exhibition proposals.

**Contact at**  
info@larsejelarsson.se  
www.larsejelarsson.se

**Find me on:**  
[f](#) /Lars Eje Larsson