



Jeffrey T. Larson at TREE'S PLACE

2008 Exhibition: Saturday, July 26 through Thursday, July 31

"Know what the old masters did. Know how they composed their pictures, but do not fall into the conventions they established. These conventions were right for them, and they are wonderful. They made their language. You make yours."—Robert Henri



Jeffrey T. Larson, born 1962. At the age of seventeen he began his classical studies with traditional atelier training under Richard Lack at the Atelier Lack in Minneapolis, MN. The atelier

method is a rigorous artistic training program handed down from teacher to student that dates back as far as French Salon painter Jacques-Louis David (1748-1825). Lack's school focuses on the traditions of French academic techniques fused with the influences of French Impressionism. This technique was first adopted by the late 19th century American painters, as exemplified by the Boston School. Following his four-year training at Atelier Lack (1980-1984), Larson studied the work of the masters in the United States and abroad. These exercises included sculpting, which granted Larson a superior understanding of volume and form that is evident in his paintings today. Larson

also served as the Assistant Director and Head Instructor at Atelier LeSeur, also in Minnesota (1984-1986).

While his work has garnered significant acclaim given his relative youth—Larson has been featured in *American Artist* magazine, the *Classical Realism Journal*, *Fine Art Connoisseur*, and *American Art Collector*—he has, until recently, sold most



Fish on Bowl, Oil on Panel, 11.5" x 12"

of his paintings directly to a group of collectors in his home region. However, his work has a universal appeal for its classical treatment of contemporary, yet timeless, subject matter and is gaining tremendous response from collectors across the nation. He has had over nineteen solo exhibitions in the Twin Cities area and has participated in group shows in New York, Massachusetts, Virginia, Arizona, and Tokyo. His work is included in many important private and corporate collections throughout the United States and abroad.

Executing most of his work at home—a converted schoolhouse in northern Wisconsin—Larson allows the natural turns of season to dictate his painting schedule. In the warm months, Larson paints exclusively out of doors. Painting in plein-air, Larson captures the fleeting effects of light in short yet expressive vignettes. At first impression, Larson's landscapes register with the viewer as an abstraction—the juxtaposed strokes of color are pleasing in their own right, even before they are appreciated as naturalistic representations of recognizable forms. While both his still lifes and his landscapes proudly display his academic training, it is in the paintings of his family members, set against the backdrop of the south shore of Lake Superior that he has discovered his full range of artistic expression. By re-creating the variations of color intensity in sunlight flooding across form he cre-



Logpile #2, Backlit, Oil on Panel, 8" x 10"

ates well balanced paintings of idyllic moments. What is so inspiring about Larson's outdoor work is the feeling that, as viewers, we are freed of deliberation. The focus is always on the moment and the light that made it.

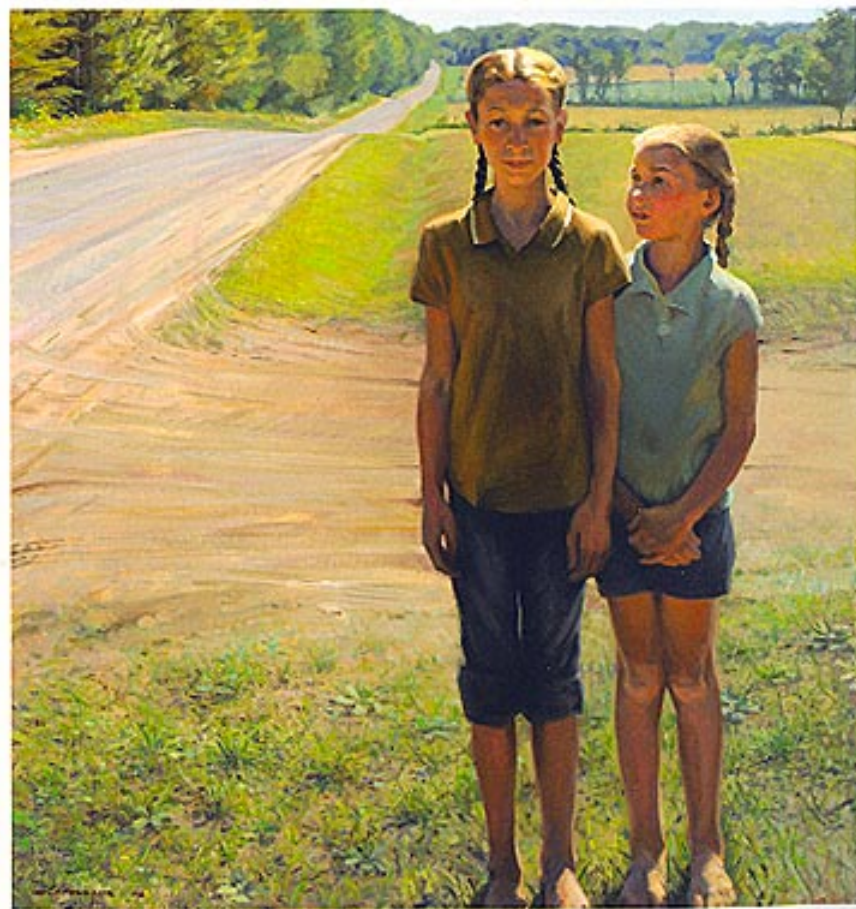
Larson retreats to the cool light of his studio during the winter months, where he employs his singular artistic vision while painting still lifes. In these, more highly finished studio

paintings, the objects he selects are often commonplace, but the way he sees them and translates the experience for his viewers is anything but ordinary. Once again, we are confronted with Larson's ability to elevate his subject matter. In contrast to his outdoor painting, where his focus is on the impression of sunlight, his studio paintings focus on a more contemplative, atmospheric light created by subtle changes in value and delicate brush work. Larson explores objects in the natural light of his studio by examining their shapes, color, textures, and surface, and their spatial rela-



Form and Function, Oil on Canvas, 20" x 28"

tionship to each other. In paying such close attention to the anatomical truth of the object, he educates his viewer about how we see things. Whether outdoors or in the studio, Larson takes something which the eye would otherwise cate-



A Moment in Time, Oil on Canvas, 40" x 42"

gorize as unremarkable, and presents it with such authority that we re-evaluate its artistic integrity, and ultimately find beauty and relevance in the thing itself.

The success of Larson's linear arrangement *Three Rutabagas on a Cardboard Box* is created in part by the visual effect of soft edged lines, color and intensity. With a painterly application, he convincingly re-creates the space in and around his objects, conveying an atmospheric quality that is consistent throughout his entire oeuvre. Second, he carefully selects subject matter, a rutabaga that might have been painted a century earlier, and arranges it on top of a recognizable cardboard box. The details of its corrugation place



Three Rutabagas on a Box, Oil on Canvas, 12" x 20"

the rutabaga in a contemporary context. Finally, the addition of a pin hole transfers this painting above its ordinary state of "nature morte". The pin hole exists as a suggestion for immediacy and keeps you within the painting. This trick of the eye compels us to return to the present, allowing us to revel in a classical work of art for the 21st century.



Gathering Light, Oil on Canvas, 42" x 44"