

# Joshua LaRock

## Timeless aesthetics



▲ **Laura in Black**, oil, 20 x 16.

◀ **A Walk in Autumn**, oil, 9 x 12.

WHEN AN unfulfilling stint in the music business proved not to be Joshua LaRock's calling, a chance encounter with the works of John Singer Sargent helped him see a better path. LaRock, who had always dabbled in painting and drawing, soon fell in love with the works of other 19th-century painters and the old masters, too. "There was something they were tapping into that I feel has been neglected in our century, and I feel like that's a shame," he says. "There's something so profound and beautiful about a very well-made painting."

Propelled by newfound inspiration, LaRock enrolled in a full-time classical drawing and painting program at the Water Street Atelier in New York, where his skills advanced rapidly, building one upon the next "like you'd learn an instrument," he says. Today the classical realist painter teaches at the atelier and is collaborating with colleagues on an instructional video business. He's also adding to a growing *oeuvre* of figurative

paintings, portraits, still lifes, and landscapes, all of which allow him to portray narratives through mood and emotion, he says. But for LaRock, whose interest in classical realism will forever trace back to Sargent, figurative works offer the greatest potential. "With people, there's always an immediacy with an emotional response," he says. "We tend to be our most interesting subjects."

When LaRock painted a portrait of his wife entirely from life as the subject of an instructional video, he didn't anticipate that the work, titled **LAURA IN BLACK**, would go on to earn a spot in the 2016 BP Portrait Award competition. It also garnered a purchase award in the 12th International Art Renewal Center Salon Competition. A few years ago, another portrait he painted of his wife appeared in an exhibition at the Beijing World Art Museum, leading to numerous portrait commissions with distinguished Chinese figures.

While LaRock seeks to relate the en-

during principles of classical art, he also wants his works to appeal to contemporary sensibilities. That combination presents a "real tension," he says. "How do I tap into that undercurrent that stands the test of time, but also speak to my era?" He's not out to capture every stitch of clothing or strand of hair. "What it means to be human," says LaRock, "that's what I'm after." —*Kim Agricola*

### representation

**Collins Galleries**, Orleans, MA;  
**Maxwell Alexander Gallery**, Culver City, CA; **Portraits, Inc.**, various locations.

### upcoming shows

**BP Portrait Award 2016**, Scottish National Portrait Gallery, Edinburgh, Scotland, through March 26.

**International ARC Salon Exhibition**, Salmagundi Club, New York, NY, May 12-June 1.