



ROYAL WATERCOLOUR SOCIETY

Watercolour Secrets

JILL LEMAN RWS



Denis Ryan

I work from my own photographs; the urban environment offers me a lot of raw material. The current neon series has the metal, glass, stainless steel and strong colours that I find both a pleasure and a challenge to paint. I hope the strong composition and my palette, along with the interesting light sources, which play a pivotal part in all my paintings, create the desired impact, producing a painting full of visual excitement.

I was born in London and studied for an MA in Fine Art Painting at Watford, Hornsey and the Ravensbourne Colleges of Art. I also have a university degree in Art Education. My career began in film animation and, later, illustration, successfully combining both in my work on award-winning films as well as numerous TV and film commercials.

I am now painting full-time from my studio at London Bridge. I exhibit at the RWS and have also exhibited at Cork Street, the Royal Academy, Mayfair as well as internationally in Italy, China and the USA (Charleston, Texas and the OK Harris Gallery in New York).

I fill notebooks with sketches and ideas on my travels, collecting collage material and taking many photographs. I have a strong emotional attachment to the city and the recurrent motifs in many of my paintings reflect this, particularly my recent series of neon signs.

I combine work in acrylic (Liquitex) and watercolour (Winsor & Newton) using the finest sable brushes of varying sizes and working on



Saunders-Waterford paper mounted on board to avoid any unnecessary movement. I begin each painting with a very detailed drawing which gives me the chance to really get to know the geography of the subject so that when I reach for my brushes I know every nut and bolt of what's where. I use acrylic and watercolour in exactly the same way and build up each painting with a series of thin transparent washes to achieve the maximum amount of vibrant colour I require.

My love of abstract painting is reflected in my use of colour. I know my colours are more saturated than the usual palette of realist artists. I think being surrounded by colour in film animation for years must have had a subconscious effect on me: I don't set out to make colourful paintings, it's just the way I see things.

There is a long and illustrious history of watercolour painting in Britain and I was delighted to be elected to the RWS in 2008. I feel that my technique and approach to painting have improved immeasurably since I was elected. The feedback, ideas and encouragement from other members is terrific.

Above: Neon Café Portugal 2010 watercolour
34 x 34cm

Top right: Clear Neon 2012 watercolour 19 x 28cm

Right: Road to Damascus 2012 watercolour & acrylic
34 x 56cm

