

# 60-SECOND EXPOSURE

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Sexton Larson

Storytelling plays a crucial part in **Rebecca Sexton Larson's** work. Here she talks to Tracy Calder about the importance of sketchbooks, sticking to the less is more approach and what she learned from spending two weeks alone in the woods.



**Fear of Fire, from Book of Fears**

**What role does photography play in your life?**

Photography is a vehicle to document memories, archive histories and capture time. For me, it's about creating visually interesting images that tell a story, either real or imaginary.

**Describe your style in three words?**

Romantic, introspective, storytelling.

**What is your favourite photographic book?**

There are a few: *Hold Still: A Memoir with Photographs* by Sally Mann, *Mike and Doug Starn* by Andy Grundberg and *Photography's Antiquarian*

*Avant-Garde: The New Wave in Old Processes* by Lyle Rexer.

**Tell us about a photographic opportunity you have missed.**

Photographically, I often miss opportunities. I will see a shot and spend too much time debating it in my head rather than taking the picture. On the business side, I'm pretty organised with deadlines, applications and invoicing.

**Tell us your favourite photographic quote.**

*'A picture is a secret about a secret, the more it tells you the less you know.'* – Diane Arbus

**What's the biggest risk you have taken as a photographer?**



**Fear of Falling in Love, from Book of Fears**

A few years ago, I applied for an artist residency in the woods. Two weeks without a phone, internet or television gave me the opportunity to slow down and concentrate on a new project. But it was a challenge to rise above my fear of being totally alone and comfortable with the deep darkness that would blanket my cabin at night.

**Name one item (aside from a camera) that every photographer should own.**

A sketchbook or a journal. The great thing about keeping a sketchbook is that there's no pressure about what's right or wrong – it's an opportunity for free-flowing ideas. Some ideas

may be useful for future image making, others will never make it off the page.

**Who would you most like to collaborate with?**

I would love to team up with Latin American photographer Luis González Palma. I'm intrigued by how he marries different mediums through layering, composition and symbolism. I find his work quite poetic.

**What is your worst photographic habit?**

At times, I overthink a photograph, particularly when I'm composing digital stories. It's very easy to overwork and keep tweaking an



**Miss the Boat, from Man-Made Cloud**

image. I find my more successful images tend to stick to the less is more theory.

**Tell us one thing most people don't know about you.**

Originally, I was a photographer for a local law enforcement agency before becoming a medical photographer and finally working in museums.

**What would you say to your younger self?**

This isn't a race – slow down and enjoy it. Have more self-confidence, too.

**What has been your most embarrassing moment as a photographer?**

A commission I once received involved photographing and hand-painting indigenous trees in Florida. I had multiple places to visit within a single day, so I was worried I wouldn't get everything done. After about three stops, I realised I'd been shooting but not loading film into my medium-format camera. When the day was over, I thanked the client and said goodbye, then drove back to the first three stops to reshoot before the light faded.

**Who would join you in your ultimate camera club (dead or alive)?**

Francesca Woodman, Diane Arbus, Dan Estabrook, Luis González Palma and the Starn twins. These people push the photographic envelope in distinctive ways and tell unique narrative stories.



**One's Heart Sinks, from Man-Made Cloud**



**Every Picture Tells a Story, from Man-Made Cloud**

**Which exhibition could you have spent a month in?**

Over the past 20 years, I've had the privilege of working in museums and experiencing some impressive exhibitions. I would say one of my favourites was Sally Mann.

**What single thing would improve your photography?**

Funding to ship artwork for different opportunities and exhibitions.

**Which Instagram/social media accounts inspire you?**

I love to follow accounts from artists experimenting in different mediums. I always look forward to posts from Dan Estabrook (@damnestabrook), Janet Matthews (@janetmatthews2021), Carol Erb Art (@erb.carol) and Richard Tuschman (@richardtuschman).

**The worst thing about being a professional photographer is...**

Self-doubt can be crippling. You must move beyond the habit of comparing yourself to others and questioning opportunities that can hold you back from success.

**Which characteristics do you think you need to become a photographer?**

Perseverance and the ability to stick with tasks and goals. Also, you need to develop a sense of invulnerability. Everyone has an opinion about your work, and sometimes it's not favourable.

**What are you thinking about when you release the shutter?**

Better shoot a backup, just in case.

*Rebecca Sexton Larson is a Tampa-based studio artist working with photographic processes. She graduated from the University of South Florida with degrees in Fine Arts (painting) and Mass Communications (photojournalism). She was awarded Florida Individual Artist Fellowships in 1998, 2002 and 2008. In 2005, she was commissioned by the City of Tampa to be Photographer Laureate.*

**▶ To see more of Rebecca's photography, visit [sextonlarson.com](http://sextonlarson.com) and Instagram @sextonlarson.**