

**WIN A TRIP
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MATS ANDERSSON**

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INSPIRATION & INSIGHT
FROM THE WORLD'S BEST
PHOTOGRAPHERS

THE ARTFUL DODGER

Combining a profound artistic flair with a love of analogue darkroom techniques, Swedish legend Mats Andersson has turned his love of wildlife and landscapes into a hugely successful second career.



Mats Andersson is an award-winning art and nature photographer based in Sweden. Starting out as an advertising art director in the late 1980s, his more recent work has been widely exhibited and he's so far published 12 books, including his latest, *Essence*. Plaudits include Wildlife Photographer of the Year 2016 (black & white category) and Nordic Nature Photo Contest winner. matsandersson.nu

How would you describe your work and style to the uninitiated?

My pictures are quite raw and full of contrast – and black & white most of the time. Mono images are timeless, leaving you, as the viewer, to imagine your own colours. I always let my feelings influence how and what I shoot, rather than any technicalities, as feeling is far more important than perfection. My inspirations tend to be fine art photographers rather than natural world or landscape photographers, and include the likes of Sally Mann, Connie Imboden and Michael Ackerman.

You're known for your wildlife images, but landscapes play a big part too...

They certainly do, though they're a recent discovery. I always used to search Sweden's deep forests for wildlife and mysteries rather than big views, but something happened when I visited Iceland with my family for the first time in 2006. The landscape there touched me in magical ways, and I decided to someday return to this fairy-tale island by myself. It took me nine years, but the images I created in Iceland in 2015 attracted a lot of attention when I returned to Sweden and were published in many magazines. I've since returned three times more to the land of fire and ice to create images for my book *Nature Diary*, which was published in 2018.

When did you realise that photography was for you?

I became quite obsessed with cameras as a child, probably when I was around nine years old. Over the years, I've become less interested in cameras and more interested in the picture itself. I studied photography at the University of Gothenburg in the late 1980s and then worked as a photographer and art director in the advertising industry throughout the 1990s and early 2000s. I started to find my own style of imagery when I moved out of the city and into the countryside in 2005, around the same time as I bought a digital camera (Nikon D200) that I thought could measure up to my analogue Nikon F3. Digital technology was extremely important for my development – now I could try to find the desired result and see it instantly.

You obviously like to experiment...

I accidentally discovered the technique of moving the camera during the exposure (ICM) in 2009. I triggered the shutter by mistake while walking in the woods and was amazed by the result – it looked like a painting! For years after I photographed pretty much everything with long shutter speeds and camera movement and even published a book dedicated to ICM in 2012. The book's title was *Photography*, which literally means painting with light. I also started to experiment with

double exposures, where one image was in sharp focus and the other combining long shutter speeds and camera movement. This is how I still often work today.

How much research and planning goes into a Mats Andersson shoot?

In some cases, I plan too much! For example, I sketched many of my Iceland landscapes at home several months before I left for the airport. Once on location, however, I was able to photograph a single subject all night to get the results I was looking for. The dramatic image of the cliffs in the sea at Vik (see p94-95), the southernmost village in Iceland, took almost four hours to get. I started shooting at 11pm and finished at 3am, and finally had a picture that conveyed the feeling I was looking for. The picture is a double exposure where the first shot was taken with a tripod and the second photo with a handheld camera, long shutter speed and camera movement.

What kit would we find in your bag and why?

I mostly use Nikon. It's a brand I've been familiar with since the 1990s. It's also a brand that I think performs well in the dark with its good ISO performance. Currently, I use a D3, D4 and D500, with focal lengths from 14mm to 600mm. I also use a Leica M with 35mm lens and a DJI Mavic 2 Pro drone.

How much is in the edit? Your work features many different layers...

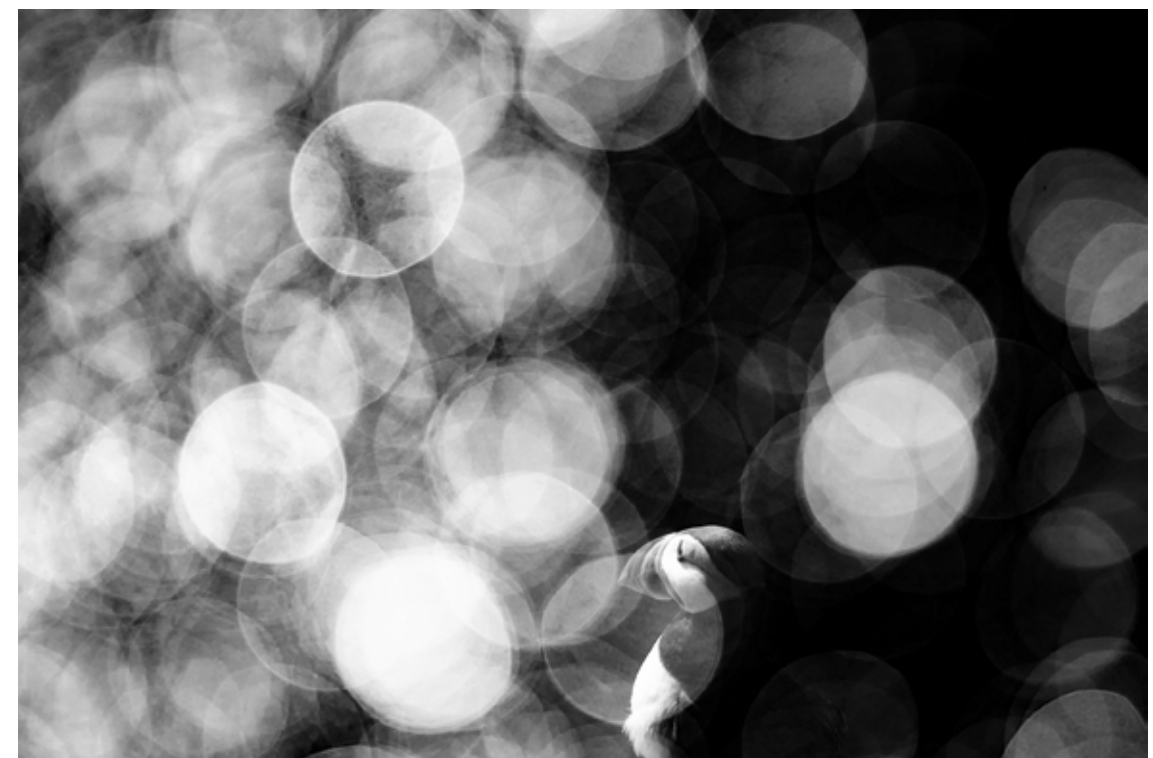
The finishing touches are just as important as the actual photography. Norwegian portrait photographer Morten Krogvold once told me at one of his workshops that 'magic is created in the darkroom' and I do just as much with my pictures



Above An aerial view of an ancient castle on Öland, Sweden, captured with a drone from high above the ruin.

Left A dramatic double exposure of a puffin in the Shetland Islands and patterns of light playing in the waves.

Far left Another double exposure, this time of Kirkjufell in Iceland, with sharp and blurred images combined.



Sombre moment

The making of this image – Moonlight Requiem – is one I'll never forget. Not because the image won the black & white category of the Wildlife Photographer of the Year 2016 awards, but because the image conveys my exact feelings at that exact moment. I had a pygmy owl couple living near to my house, as I live close to the woods. I followed them for a number of days, and suddenly one morning I found one of them dead on the ground. It had been killed by a larger owl and I was utterly bereft. A short while later I discovered the other pygmy owl – it was tilting its head and closing its eyes and looked for all the world like it was grieving, and that's what this photo conveys for me.



as you can do in an analogue photo lab, particularly when it comes to dodging and burning specific areas of shadow and highlight. The analogue look I give my images is created entirely in the digital darkroom. Sometimes the digital noise created by shooting at high ISOs and underexposing can be

effective, but it's not as attractive as genuine film grain. Plus, my DSLRs are too good in low light and create almost no noise. So, I've created an action in Photoshop that allows me to add film grain in a few clicks, which is designed to resemble my favourite black & white emulsion – Kodak Tri-X.

Finally, is photography art?

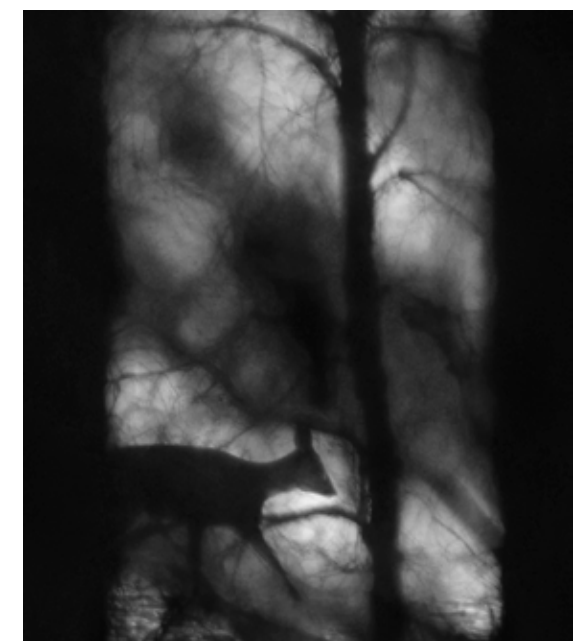
Absolutely! I'm very interested in art and have bought a lot of photo art over the years. In fact, I have a room in my house in which the walls are full of art from me and my partner's photo idols.

“IMAGES WHERE THE BIRD OR ANIMAL FILLS MOST OF THE FRAME DON'T DO MUCH FOR ME”

The art factor is hugely important – images where the bird or animal fills most of the frame don't do much for me. In my opinion, that's not photography – there's got to be something more that moves us as an audience. To me, the surroundings and context are very important in nature shots. When I lecture, I often speak about the obvious picture of an eagle against a blue sky as an example of boring photography. As a viewer I get that image in 1/10sec and then it's 'dead'. Good photography asks questions; great photography makes the audience wonder and try to understand. [PP](#)



Above Is it a bird? Is it a plane? No, it's a... flying squirrel! Taken in the forest near Mats' house.



Left A hungry deer, spied through thick foliage to create a mysterious painterly feel.