

# I told a story through the light and shade.

The Ice Cream Eaters, acrylic, 20 x 32" (51 x 81cm)



John Atkinson

ARTIST  
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## my inspiration

It was a boiling hot day and I was walking with my family and our dog in Pisa, Italy desperate for something cooling. We spied an old fashioned *gelateria* where we indulged in some very large and fast-melting ice creams. Because the seat outside the shop wasn't long enough for all of us, I stood up — and realized that the three figures, each concentrating on avoiding the drips, and the dog waiting in anticipation, constituted a wonderful image.

## my design strategy

The arrangement of the three figures and the dog happened quite naturally, as they all sat down and started eating as fast as possible due to the melting ice cream. It seemed to me to be a well balanced composition. I liked the contrast of the shop wall and the flooring and the concentration on the faces of the subjects, especially my wife who is looking directly at the viewer.

John Atkinson lives in Norfolk, United Kingdom

## my working process

- Back home in my studio I used numerous photographs and sketches to help decide on my composition.
- Then using a sharpened pencil I sketched out the figures and tried to make sure all the horizontal and vertical lines were square.
- The next step was to redraw everything with a very fine paintbrush using a medium gray mix, rather like the color and consistency you might find in bottom of your brush cleaning jar.
- I used cooler colors (blue/grey) for the shadows and for the folds in the clothing.

## try this tactic yourself

Because we intended to use this painting on a postcard, the canvas was proportioned to a postcard size.

## why I used acrylics

I used acrylic so that I could work quickly and because layering colors on top of one another creates depth — especially when producing folds and creases in the garments.

## the main challenge in painting this picture

The challenge in this painting was to make people look at it and wonder what the story was behind it, where it occurred and who the people were.

## the materials I used

**support**  
Stretched canvas

**brushes**  
Assortment of brushes

## acrylic colors

