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Carl Larsson, Sweden

by GREG BALAGIAN

Carl Larsson (1853-1919) was a Swedish painter of the Arts and Crafts movement.* He was especially fond of large frescoes and he considered the *Midvinterblot* (*Midwinter Sacrifice*) to be his finest and most important creation.

Painted in 1915, the oil on canvas measures 20 by 46 feet. The fresco had been commissioned for a wall of the National Museum in Stockholm, but it was considered controversial and was rejected by the board of the museum.

The theme of the painting is a legend from Norse mythology about the Swedish King Domalde, who was sacrificed to avert a famine. Various symbolic and eclectic im-

ages reflect Scandanavian and other world cultures.

This painting is the fourth and final version where Larsson added a wizard and two large golden Chinese Imperial guardian lions, or *shisha*, which are standing at the entrance to the temple. *Shisha* "guard" practically every temple, palace and other important buildings in China.

The painting was sold after its rejection by the museum. In 1997, the National Museum purchased the painting from the Japanese collector and installed it permanently at the space where Carl Larsson had intended.

On April 10, 2015, Åland issued a stamp depicting this illustrious piece of art. 🐾

*The Arts and Crafts movement (1880-1910) involved the decorative and fine arts in Europe and North America.



A pair of gold guardian lions or *shishi* are on a stamp from Åland Islands with Carl Larsson's painting, *Midvinterblot* (*Midwinter Sacrifice*).



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