



JULIA JACQUETTE
Scotch, Rocks I 2008
oil on linen: 77 x 100 inches
Image courtesy Cade Tompkins Projects & the artist

Double Legacy at Cade Tompkins Projects

By Renee Doucette

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The relationship between a mentor and mentee is often complex on all kinds of levels. Within any mentoring relationship there can be disagreements, accomplishments, tough love and the inspiration to constantly keep trying. Unlike a teacher/student relationship where one person typically gives and the other absorbs, mentoring

finds that two people, at two different points in their lives and careers, equally ready to give and receive their knowledge. The latest exhibition at Cade Tompkins Projects, **Double Legacy**, focuses on ten artists working in printmaking, painting, drawing, and sculpture who all found each other in various departments at Rhode Island School of Design and formed their own mentoring relationships, which still continued to some degree once commencement gowns were removed because for this show, the mentor or master selected their own mentee/alumni counterpart.

At the first notion of this exhibition, I was a little disenchanted. Spending any time any where in Providence, you are always bound to find a RISD connection. Back in 2009, Providence renamed itself the "Creative Capital." Providence has the highest artist: average Joe ratio, which is no surprise since RISD has been around since 1877, proving that artists have been populating a piece of the 20.5 square miles for over 125 years. I thought that I might just be interested in seeing the RISD alumni work since I assumed that they would be more contemporary, I was wrong. All (but one) of the works by both "Legacy" and "Alum" is recent and all are still visually stimulating. The relationships between the pairings are not obvious outside of the appearance of their names on each other's wall label. Upon further investigation, sometimes there is a similar starting place in the process between the two artists, like Nancy Friese and Sophiya Khwaja, but ultimately their final destinations are completely different making it clear that these masters encouraged their protégés to follow their own paths instead of recreating theirs. One of my personal favorite standouts in the exhibition is **Huckleberry Starnes**, a RISD alumnus who currently resides in Georgia. Even though he eventually went on to receive a masters in Industrial Design from Auburn University, he studied sculpture while here in Providence, a direction he hadn't planned on taking until he met his exhibition Master counterpart, **John Udvardy**, who contributed two of his neo-cubist wooden sculptures. Starnes creates his own version of a diorama and the two works shown from his ongoing Beacon series captures a sense of mystery and history as the artist uses materials that could easily provide a viewer flashbacks to the Dust Bowl. A painting by **Julia Jacquette**, a RISD Master, also was a stand out for me in the show. There is something about her style that makes me think she might have been paying some attention to what Tom Wesselmann and the other pop artists were up to while she was in art school. Her abstraction of scotch on the rocks would have made Edgar Degas' Absinthe Drinker proud. You can envision a cheek on the cold table and a hand around the glass; occasionally lift it to shake the melting ice around the tumbler, and a vision blurred of nothing but what the painting depicts. Whether on a bender or just in happy hour, Jacquette's work definitely let me tell a story.

Walking around the exhibition, a thought sparked in my head. There is an argument that art cannot be taught, that one must already possess a talent, a drive, a hunger, a passion, and courage to embark on the journey to truly be an artist. They are born and not created through classes. Art school, for those who decide to take that route, is more like a nest than a traditional school because you can enter knowing nothing and leave knowing almost nothing. There are teachers who will want to shove you right out of the nest to see if you can actually fly and others who will reach their knowledge right down your throat into your belly to help you. Thankfully, you won't be the only baby bird and collaborations will run amuck. Funny enough, the fastest way to tell who is the master and who is the alumnus is by looking at the price differences for the various works. The master, in their various levels,

always has a higher price point than their protégé counterpart. Wisdom and a longer period of practice have earned them a slightly higher privilege in the pricing department. Some of the alumni have in turn become teachers in their own right and the past will continue into the future with their own students, potential protégés, and pricing schemes.

Almost every show I have seen in Providence in the past two years has some kind of RISD connection and usually all of them feature the same names. Double Legacy pulls some names out of recent obscurity to give them another chance, often years after they last showed in the student galleries at the world renown art school that so many of us, including sometimes myself, take for granted. Lastly, the show is dedicated to the memory of former RISD professor, artist, and mentor, Thomas Sgouros. After spending many years teaching and mentoring artists like David Macaulay who showed us "The Way Things Work" and Chris Van Allsberg of "Polar Express" fame, he proves that the mentoring relationship lives on long after we are gone forever influencing those left behind. Double Legacy is well thought out and evenly curated. For those who are regulars in Cade Tompkins' space, there might be a couple familiar names and themes, but for someone looking to take a ride on a Saturday to see something new and check out our Creative Capital, the show is definitely worth stopping in to see.

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