

Hidden Gem

An exciting new exhibit

In Fones Alley off of Hope Street, behind a dark door marked only by a bright gold sun knocker, lies a hidden gem of the East Side called The Cade Tompkins Project. Even though this gallery could still be considered in its infancy, the woman behind The Cade Tompkins Project is no stranger to the dealings of art. Ms. Cade Tompkins opened the doors of her gallery on September 25, 2009. Backed by over 20 years of experience, she brings her knowledge and eye for spotting artistic talent to Providence as she continues to exhibit artists that are not only interesting, but worthy of being on a collector's wall.

The experience of visiting this hidden gallery is different from any other in the city. Every person who rings the service bell at the door is personally greeted by Tompkins, who is ready to talk to any visitor about her artists. This experience alone proves how down to earth and devoted this former New Yorker really is.

The Cade Tompkins Project's next exhibit features the work of mid-career artist Tayo Heuser. This exhibit is a combination of work that was made in the past couple years, as well as some never before seen by the public.

Tompkins was introduced to Heuser, a faculty member at Roger Williams University and RISD alum, by artist Kirsten Hassenfeld, herself featured in Tompkins' first gallery exhibit back in 2009. Since this fruitful introduction, Heuser's career has continued to flourish; her most recent success was having her work featured at The Phillips Collection in Washington D.C.

Some of the pieces from that exhibit are also featured in this show, including the striking sculptural drawing *Candy for Rothko*, which not only pays artistic homage to abstract expressionist Mark Rothko, but also has a flavor of Fauvist Henri Matisse in

Heuser's color selection and lines. These sculptural drawings are unlike anything else. Each work appears to be magically floating against the wall; some look like treasure maps drawn on a napkins and others resemble sonar machines from deep sea submarines. It is no surprise that these works appealed to the curators of The Phillips Collection - each plays with color and lines in a way that is truly striking.



Candy for Rothko

Tompkins also included some non-sculptural drawings. In them, there is a feel of not just clean minimalism, but of a gorgeous organic energy that flows from Heuser's shapes. Drawn to the vertical line, even her small drawings are relatively large, but their size only draws further attention to the artist's use of shape and color. Her circles resemble a map of celestial bodies, not just a collection of perfectly drawn circles. Precision is a key ingredient to her work, and one she has clearly mastered.

Another area of Heuser's mastery is her sculpture work in glass. Her collection of three blue glass knots is a perfect addition to any collector's mantel,

bookshelf or windowsill. At first glance it may be a step away from what would be expected after viewing her drawings, but her choice in using glass, an organic material, to represent rope, also an organic material, leaves the impression that even though her subject and material may have changed, her underlying tone is still the same. Her glasswork seems to channel Mother Earth, furthering Heuser's organic electricity throughout this show.

Heuser clearly draws inspiration from nature's shapes, but her work also has a hidden Asian element. Importing paper and ink from Japanese art for her drawings really reiterates how global the art world has become in the 21st century. What used to take a special trip halfway around the world to acquire now has become accessible to so many people, allowing further exploration of materials. Heuser takes full advantage of pigmented inks and Japanese paper to create her own voice. She also finds inspiration from Turkey with a technique called burnishing. This process requires egg whites to give some of her drawings a subtle glow. Despite these international tools and processes, Heuser makes each one her own, maintaining her own voice. Similarly, the artist uses her love of minimalism as a launching pad, but takes a step past it to give the viewer a simplicity that is still somehow complicated and visually engrossing.

Cade Tompkins Project has a very exciting season ahead and is unlikely to remain a hidden gem for long, becoming instead a full-fledged jewel in Providence's crown of galleries.

Tayo Heuser, April 15-May 21
Cade Tompkins Projects
198 Hope Street
751-4888
www.cadetompkins.com