

Cade Tompkins Projects
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SERENA PERRONE
Life Is a Mountain, Not a Beach
An artistic journey to find Shangri-La
by Renée Doucette
East Side Monthly, September 2011



Approach and Descent 2011
drypoint on Japanese paper with hand
coloring, 34 3/4 x 71 1/4 inches
Edition of 7

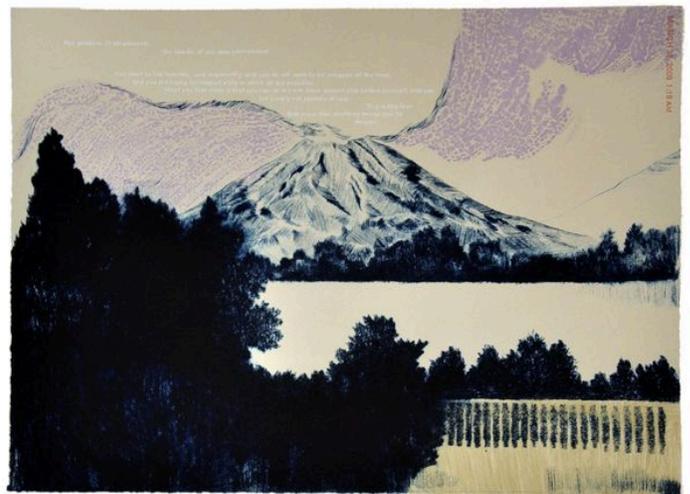
In a city like Providence, there are openings, festivals and activities happening constantly in almost every neighborhood, but during the summer, most of the major players in the city's art community lie low, collecting themselves for the busiest season in the art world. Dealers, collectors and art enthusiasts return from their summer vacations to start the autumn season with a bang. With this in mind, a definite place to make time for this month is Cade Tompkins Projects as she launches her fall season with a brilliant solo exhibition by artist Serena Perrone.

As with many exhibits in Providence, there is a connection between the artist and the city: Perrone attended RISD to earn her MFA in Printmaking. Since graduating in 2006, her work has been showing all over the country. Looking through Perrone's expansive portfolio, it is difficult to pick a favorite work of her art but thankfully, Tompkins' keen eye has assembled a perfect selection of Perrone's work that still leaves a craving for more. Even though websites are informative, these works are with a doubt meant to be seen in person. Her list of exhibitions is impressive, especially because it is uncommon to see so many noteworthy shows so early in an artist's career. There is an immediate sense of skill, maturity and unique innovation.

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Perrone's style highlights a new trend in the emerging art community of being proudly fickle when selecting a medium; why select just one method when the combination of several can create a perfect fusion on the paper? The artist shows her ability to create combinations of woodblock prints, etchings, monotypes, and silver or gold point drawings. There is excellence in her technique. Unlike a canvas that be painted over or a photo that can be manipulated on a computer, each of the mediums Perrone chooses to work with have existed for hundreds of years and are not particularly easy to master. They each require patience, precision, skill and the understanding that if there is even one hiccup in the process, there is no choice but to start over again.

Amidst the different techniques, Perrone weaves a rich, symbolic visual language that can both tell a story for an inquisitive viewer and stand strong without explanation for those just seeking a gorgeously composed work. She has cultivated a dreamlike world that is still based in a recognizable reality that captivates an audience, drawing them in with surreal imagery. An example of this is the masterful Volcano Series. This print series consists of 20 dry point, gouache monotype, silkscreen and letterpress prints of volcanoes, which at first glance are expressive landscapes in which the volcano exhibits a human-like quality. While the work is formidable when taken at face value, a deeper understanding reveals that the series is inspired by the journeys of an award-winning poet named Craig Arnold who went missing during a pilgrimage to visit a volcanic island off the coast of Japan in 2009. Hidden within the volcanoes' plumes of smoke are words taken from the blog Arnold kept during his trip. Each print is date stamped to correspond to the day of a particular blog entry. Though the series is stored in a handmade linen portfolio where the prints are safely stacked, they are best viewed as a gorgeous panorama, as they are in this show. This work is a celebration, but even without the knowledge of this back-story, Volcano Series stands firm, much like its subject, as visual proof of Perrone's passion for and in her work.



A Volcano Pilgrim in Exchange for Fire 2010, Two from a suite of 20 drypoint, gouache monotype, silkscreen and letter press prints with colophon in linen box, 11 x 15 inches each, Edition of 4

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Also worth noting is Perrone's sculptural work, *27 Views of Shangri-La*. This work, created within the past year, highlights her skill in wood burning on slices of a log through a series of drawings featuring businesses named "Shangri-La." All of these drawings show the locations with a plume of smoke as if they were on fire, but they are also physically drawn on wood, which is the likely fundamental building component for each structure. Again, Perrone leaves her work complete and still open to interpretation. It is subtly mysterious, which seduces her audience to explore her imagery and symbolism. It is interesting to see her move away from paper for this work, even though paper is really just another manifestation of wood. Though most of her art still remains silently personal, there is a hint with her recent work that she is beginning to discover the world of her surroundings outside of herself, while still giving her viewers something endlessly fascinating to observe.

As a new season begins and people start to run around to take their kids to soccer practice, pull their sailboats out of the water, or prepare their closets for the pending cooler weather, it is important to not let certain opportunities slip through the cracks. Serena Perrone's talent truly stands out in the fertile field of emerging artists and the chance to see her work in person is not one to be missed.

Serena Perrone: Volcanoes and Voyages

September 10-October 31

Cade Tompkins Projects

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