

ROCKFORD MADE 4356: DEILL/JULIN
AUG 26–DEC 27, 2011



RAM

Exhibition Teacher Guide

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CURATOR STATEMENT

Pablo Picasso once said, “Every child is an artist. The problem is how to remain an artist once we grow up.” Fortunately for us, Rockford artists John Deill and Jim Julin never grew up! Born on the same day, in the same year—April 3, 1956—and in the same local hospital, *Rockford Made 4356: Deill/Julin* celebrates their creative and collective vision.

Never afraid to experiment and “color outside the lines,” Deill and Julin share a remarkable sensitivity to materials and a keen eye for meticulous craftsmanship. In their hands, an array of everyday objects from second-hand shops, flea markets and salvage yards are transformed into playful and highly personal assemblages. With unmistakable wit and an intense focus on detail, the pair is adept in a wide range of media – including painting, sculpture and mixed-media work. A childlike spirit of discovery consistently underlies their artistic ventures.

A painter with sculptural tendencies, John Deill produces carefully measured compositions of great poetic beauty. Executed in a thoughtful vein, repurposed materials are at home with delicately painted elements; they complement one another in a friendly Yin-Yang way. Thinly applied layers of paint, luminous and translucent, create elegant surfaces. Recurring themes of alchemy, transformation and spirituality stir the emotions and stimulate the intellect. The provocative use of words and text suggest underlying narratives.

With an archive of eclectic materials and figured woods (the grainier the better), Jim Julin pushes the limits of wood grains and stains to new levels. It is not surprising that this bigger-than-life artist produces bigger-than-life work – on a monumental scale. Shields, plumb bobs, cattle horn, antlers, house forms and boats, weighty and masculine, are components of his vernacular. Julin’s symmetrically based compositions project both strength and delicacy.

A personal thank you to the *Rockford Made 4356* collectors for their generosity. Finally, I tip my hat to the stars of the show—John Deill and Jim Julin—for sharing their journey, friendship and birth year with me!

Patty Rhea 112256

Curator, Rockford Art Museum

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ARTIST STATEMENT – John Deill (American, b. 1956)

I like to draw. I like to paint. I like to make something from nothing. Beyond that, my work makes reference to art's ability to make us feel what we are seeing – Bob Welch said it best, "Because there's no explaining what your imagination can make you see and feel."

Working with found objects and found images puts me into that frame of mind. There is something about the everyday that can so easily be taken for granted. But when we place these things into a gallery setting and light them and alter them with paint, other elements and lighting, they can speak to us on a completely different level. If I could communicate this to you in words, I would be a writer. This I am not.

So I make things, and I paint things, and I find things and alter them to speak with and without words to that which is within. Call it the subconscious or the soul or whatever you choose, but that is my goal; to communicate something from nothing to a part of us that I can't put into words. It's not a glamour profession, but it's what I do.

ARTIST STATEMENT – Jim Julin (American, b. 1956)

This show, for me, is a bit like a family reunion of sorts. I've become reacquainted with artwork that I have not seen for 20 years in some cases. Some I had forgotten about completely. It's been fun visiting the homes where these pieces now live and are on display as though part of someone else's family.

I've been surprised by my own reaction to seeing some of these pieces. I tend to look at them—as I suspect anyone else might—from a distance that time away affords. I see them a new way, without the encumbrance of having spent untold hours immersed in the planning, construction and finishing of them. I can allow myself to look at them with a fresh perspective and appreciate the efforts, time and material that are in each one. I must say that, for the most part, I'm delighted to see them; to see how they have stood up to the test of time and how they stand up to my maturing standards and scrutiny.

To paraphrase the band King Crimson, "No matter how I break it down, no matter how I pick it apart, it remains consistent. I do think it's good." And this makes me happy.

I'd like to thank everyone involved with making this show a reality. Many thanks to everyone at RAM, especially Patty Rhea for all her efforts. Thank also to Scott Long and John Deill for all the hard work they do to hang and light every major show at RAM to a standard far above most any museum or gallery, anywhere. Lastly, thanks to John Deill for waiting and letting me be born a few hours ahead of him.

I hope you all enjoy the show.

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EXHIBITION VOCABULARY

Folk art: Art made by people who have had little or no formal schooling in art. Folk artists usually make works of art with traditional techniques and content, in styles handed down through many generations, and often of a particular region. Paintings, sculptures, ceramics, metalwork, costume, tools, and other everyday objects all may be folk art.

Found object: An image, material or object (not originally intended as a work of art) that is obtained, selected and exhibited by an artist, often without being altered in any way. The cubists, dadaists and surrealists originated the use of found images, materials and objects.

Plumb bob: A metal weight—usually made of lead and shaped like a cone, with a pointed tip on bottom—at the end of a *plumb line*. A plumb line is a cord from which a metal weight (plumb bob) is suspended, pointing directly to the earth's center of gravity; used to determine the vertical reference from a given point. Used since at least the time of ancient Egypt to ensure that constructions are "plumb," or vertical. They are used with a variety of instruments (including levels, theodolites and steel tapes) to set the instrument exactly over a fixed survey marker, or to transcribe positions onto the ground for placing a marker.

Shadowbox: A frame that is deep enough to accommodate a three-dimensional object (deeper than frames needed for two-dimensional works) or for three-dimensional objects that are very shallow. Typically, a shadowbox is faced with transparent glass, Plexiglas, etc.

Woodworking: The act or art of working wood. Wood can be cut, carved (chiseled, drilled, routed, turned, planed, filed, sanded, buffed and polished), or joined (nailed, screwed, bolted, glued, etc.) by artists and craftsmen using special tools.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

IDENTITY BOXES

John Deill's shadowboxes are reminiscent of the artwork of Joseph Cornell. In this lesson, students will discuss symbolism and personal identity, and will create their own shadowboxes in the style of Cornell and Deill.



John Deill, *Double Nickel*

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Activity:

- Bring a few personal items to class (a graduation tassel, baby items, personal mementos, anything that represents something about you). Gather the students together and have them identify the items, what they think their purpose is, or how they were used. Ask students to guess why you might have saved the objects. Do they say something about you? Do they show interests or personal feelings? How do these objects reflect you?
- Begin a general discussion about symbolism. Ask students to draw common, everyday symbols such as a plus sign, peace sign, heart, etc.
- Explain that artists use symbols and imagery that have personal meaning for them but may not mean the same thing to someone viewing their work. Show them work by Joseph Cornell and John Deill.
- Tell students they will be creating their own personal identity box. Have them bring between 5 and 7 objects or items from home that have special significance to them.
- Give each student a cigar-type box or a small shoebox with a lid, and a piece of white paper large enough to cover one side of their box. On the paper, have students draw a self-portrait and attach it to the outside of their identity box.
- Once their self-portraits have been completed and glued to the box, have students decorate the outside of their box using scrap paper, fabric, beads, sequins, paint, craft items, etc. They should cover the entire box (except the bottom) with a variety of materials, colors and patterns.
- Have students line the inside of their box, and place their special items inside.
- Have students place their boxes around the classroom. Tell students to walk around the room and look at each other's boxes. Encourage them to discuss the meaning of the contents of each other's boxes. They should also discuss any meaning attached to the decorations on the outside of the box.
- Ask students the following questions:
 - How does the outside of the box (the external self) relate to the inside (internal self)?
 - How can others really know what is going on inside of us?
 - Did you learn something new about a classmate today?



Joseph Cornell, *Soap Bubble Set*, wood box construction with glass and mixed media, Smithsonian American Art Museum

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Materials:

- personal objects/photos
- cigar-type boxes or small shoe boxes with lids
- variety of small objects
- magazines for collage
- drawing paper
- pencils
- paint
- construction paper
- fabric scraps
- glue
- markers

ISBE Standards: 4AB, 25AB, 26AB, 27AB

OAXACAN ANIMALITOS

Both John Deill and Jim Julin create folk art (art made by people who have had little or no formal schooling in art). In Oaxaca, Mexico, folk artists create wood carvings. These carvings are a wonderful example of Mexican folk art. The carvers of Oaxaca create their sculptures entirely by hand from copal wood. Their whimsical shapes and bright colors have enthralled people worldwide. In this lesson, students will use scraps of wood to create their own version of an Oaxacan Animalito.

Activity:

- Open a discussion about folk art with students: What is folk art? Who makes it? What does it look like?
- Show images of Oaxacan Animalitos to students. Provide them with background information about the process of making animalitos (also called *figuras*). Information about the process and techniques can be found at <http://www.oaxacafinecarvings.com/artoaxacanwoodcarvings.htm>.
- Allow students to pick out scraps of wood to create their animalito. Encourage them to be creative. Sculptures could include a body, legs, head, antenna, antlers, wings, eyes, feet, etc.



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- Once students have their scraps, provide wood glue and have them assemble their animalitos. Glue guns (with supervision) work as well. Allow time to dry.
- Using tempera paint, have students paint their animalitos in the style of Oaxacan artists. Emphasize the use of bright colors and patterns.
- Display animalitos in the classroom.

Materials:

- images of animalitos
- paintbrushes
- tempera paint
- scraps of wood in various sizes (Scraps can be found at various lumberyards, and smaller pieces for decorations can be found at Sax or Dick Blick.)
 - scrap sizes that work well for body: 12x18, 6x6, 8x10 inches
 - block sizes that work well for legs: 2, 3, 5, 7, 10, or 12 inches
 - various shapes and sizes of scraps for heads, wings, antlers, etc.
- wood glue
- glue gun (if desired)

ISBE Standards: 4AB, 25AB, 26AB, 27AB

ADDITIONAL WEB SITES:

Rockford Art Museum: www.rockfordartmuseum.org

Dick Blick Art Materials: www.dickblick.com

Joseph Cornell: www.josephcornellbox.com

Sax Arts and Crafts: www.saxarts.com