

JESSICA DUNNE

School Session, 2015
Oil on linen, 56 x 77 in



COURTESY: THE ARTIST

The Art of the Urban Landscape

Zack Rogow interviews Artist Jessica Dunne on the process of painting and printmaking

Jessica Dunne (born 1952, Santa Monica, California) is a celebrated painter and graphic artist who lives in the Sunset District of San Francisco. In her art she often depicts West Coast scenes, ranging from freeways to the streets of her neighborhood to the tunnels connecting the bridges of the Bay Area. Often present in her work is the action of light at dusk, nighttime, and the poignancy of the urban landscape. Her work has been featured in solo exhibitions at the Fresno Art Museum, the Frye Art Museum in Seattle, and the Los Gatos Art Museum, among many others. Zack Rogow began the interview by asking Jessica Dunne about her family's involvement in the arts.

Zack Rogow: I've heard that you have a legacy in your family of people involved in the arts.

Jessica Dunne: My father was a screenwriter. My grandfather was encouraging him to go into banking, but my father dropped out of Harvard and headed for Hollywood. He didn't consider his work an art. He said, "We were making entertainment."

ZR: You grew up in Hollywood, then?

JD: Nearby.

ZR: What were the movies your father wrote scripts for?

JD: One of my favorites is *The Ghost and Mrs. Muir*. He also wrote *How Green Was My Valley*, which won Best Picture; and a movie called *Pinky* about interracial marriage, directed by Elia Kazan, released in 1949.

ZR: He was ahead of his time in writing about interracial marriage. So, why didn't you go into film?

JD: Not to malign any great directors, but when we watched, say, *The Ghost and Mrs. Muir*, certain little touches would just make my father cringe. For example, they had a sign turned so only people on a beach could see it instead of the ships that were supposed to read it. He also got tired of the critics crediting the director for writing the movie.

ZR: How did that influence your decision to become a painter?

JD: I felt like my drawings were in a place that nobody could touch. Painting was something I could do all by myself and not have to rely on anyone else. Of course, that's a myth, because everything is collaborative. You're relying on framers and photographers and people who hang the shows.

ZR: Your grandfather was also a writer?

JD: He was a political satirist and editor, a Colbert or Doonesbury of his time. He was, weirdly enough, the highest paid writer of his day.

ZR: What was his name?

JD: Finley Peter Dunne. His writing was syndicated in newspapers. I still see him quoted today, but his words are often attributed to someone else. I was furious when Ronald Reagan stole, "Trust everyone, but cut the cards." That was Finley Peter Dunne.

ZR: What topics did your grandfather write about?

JD: His work is very contemporary. He wrote about the