Hello! You are listening to Curator on the Go Podcast! Today, I had the pleasure of speaking to Toronto-based artist Jacques Descoteaux**.**

For over 25 years, Jacques was the accountant by day, the artist by night. He came from artistic family and has studied under a number of professional artists - collectively, they all helped Jacques found his artistic voice. From watercolor to pastel to oil paints and a few other media, Jacques’ painting style has evolved over time, but it’s always been influenced by his first studies in watercolor.

His paintings are an exploration of color, of light, of rhythms and patterns, of movement and space. Jacques is inspired by landscape, but his paintings go beyond the landscape – they are about memory and transport you to imagined places, to imaginary moments. Over the years, he presented his work in a number of solo and group shows and sold art to private collectors in Canada and the US.

I met Jacques this august at my career recharge event for artists and he is part of a very special group show I am curating in December. When we recorded this interview, Jacques was at his art residency in Ireland. So, bear that in mind. When he describes what he does and how he paints “here” – he is talking about his art residency.

**Curator on the Go:** Hi Jacques, thank you so much for joining me today. I am so excited to learn more about your unique story.

**Jacques:** Thank you Liza. I think the pleasure is mine.

**Curator on the Go:** Let’s go back in time and talk about your background. You don’t have a formal art degree, but you’ve studied under a number of professional artists. Can you tell us more about that and how this mentorship helped you to grow as an artist?

***Jacques:*** Yes, my background is an accounting. I started taking classes many years ago at the Toronto School Board to use my creative and I started going to the Art Gallery of Ontario where I’ve met a number of wonderful teachers. I also took classes at OCAD U and Toronto School of Art. I had a wonderful experience of being taught by all of these working artists. It was a very practical approach to learning. Many of my friends, who studied at OCAD, found it not a hand on as they might of liked. I’ve been able to gain from their working experience. Not only in the techniques, but also from how they used those techniques in developing their work. The experience I got was very varied and I’ve picked the parts that really fit for me. I tend to work in the abstracted landscape – try to get the feel of the landscape as opposed to literally painting it or drawing it.

**Curator on the Go:** That’s great! You also come from an artistic family. Did your family support your desire to advance your skills in drawing and painting?

***Jacques:*** Yes, they did. There was always the influence of the arts at home. My mother was a very creative person. She did massive pieces in mixed media and she composed music and played. So, we were always surrounded by the arts.

***Curator on the Go:*** How would you define your art practice today?

***Jacques:*** I work in oil, but it’s getting less important than the work it itself. Especially after this residency, I am really enjoying working in acrylics. My work is inspired by the landscape, but it’s not a literal landscape. It’s an abstract landscape – a simplified landscape. I try to get the essence of the place as opposed to the physical looks of it. It’s my own interpretation of what that landscape is.

**Curator on the Go:** How does your creative day look like today when you work as an artist full time?

***Jacques:*** Here it’s a bit different, but in my studio, I’ll get up in the morning, pick up coffee and go upstairs (my studio is on the top floor of the house). I tend to work in the morning. Later in the day, I do some administrative work, some social media. I don’t work in the evenings unless I need to prepare for an exhibition or an art fair. Here, I go out with some other artists, I got back and finished one piece and got ready to start another one.

**Curator on the Go:** What is your preferred art tool? **Is there something you can’t live without in your studio?**

***Jacques:*** I work with paint, brushes, and pallet knives.

***Curator on the Go:*****How do you know when a work is finished?**

***Jacques:*** I will quote a wonderful American artist who I had a chance to meet in NYC for a workshop that he was giving. His name is Wolf Kahn. His description of when the work is done is when he can no longer fix the errors. There are a few works in my studio that I leave as they no longer are talking to me.

***Curator on the Go:*** I’ve checked your website. Well-done and has all the necessary information about you and your works. You also showcase your works on [artworkarchive.com](https://www.artworkarchive.com/). Can you tell us more about this platform, why did you decide to be part of it and does it generate traffic and sales for you?

***Jacques:*** I started to use this platform to track my work. It also has a public section and I can show everything that I’ve done, as long as I want to keep it public. I can see the evolution of each piece and track my progress. It didn’t generate much in terms of sales. I would love to understand how much traffic there is on the platform.

**Curator on the Go:**Do you sell prints or only originals and why?

***Jacques:*** No, I sell only originals. I know there are really good printers that can do wonderful things with the artwork. I have mixed feelings about prints. I am not convinced that this is a way to go.

**Curator on the Go:** Aside from your website,what other platforms you use for promoting your works?

***Jacques:*** Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter. I am not a big fan of twitter because it’s like Instagram stories – if you are not there at the right moment you will never see it. There is a point when it almost becomes a full-time job to manage. I want to spend more time in my studio than managing too many platforms. I have difficulty taking high-resolution images of my work. I invite a professional photographer and we spend a day taking images of my work. I also have a page where I share my photography and the third one where I repost works of the artists I like and admire.

**Curator on the Go:** I know you’ve exhibited your works at many solo and group shows. Let’s talk about a few. Let’s start with bigger ones. You’ve done **Toronto Outdoor Art Exhibition**

and Artist Project. Tell us more about your experience at those fairs and if you are planning to show your works at them again?

***Jacques:*** I’ve exhibited 4-5 times at TOAF. It’s been the best of times and the worst of times. One year I sold 12-14 pieces and the variety of large and small. This year I did it and didn’t sell a piece. This year I’ve given always a lot of cards and talked to so many people, but not a single sale. It is hard work and I find the need to dismantle the booth every night and re-install it in the morning is grueling. Over the years, I’ve damaged a few pieces. Last time I left my work in storage, which was outside, but still, you need to dismantle and set-up the next morning.

The Artist Project is different. It’s indoors and it’s massive. Probably not as many people show up for the artist project, but they tend to be a little bit more interested. I did it for the first time in February 2019 and will be doing it again in 2020. It was a positive experience – I’ve sold a few pieces and I get a call from a Toronto gallery that specializes in decorators and designers.

**Curator on the Go:** You also showcased your works at **Gallery 1313. I wanted to do my thesis exhibit there, but unfortunately, they were fully booked. How was your experience exhibiting at Gallery 1313?**

***Jacques:*** I love gallery 1313. The gallery director is amazing. He is well connected to the people in the art press. After being a member for a short period of time, I joined the board and we made the gallery a registered charity. And eventually, I couldn’t keep up with work and got out. But I still applied for group shows. And eventually, I joined Propeller. I am now a co-chair – it’s a bit of a busy job

**Curator on the Go:** As for the outside Toronto, you’ve showcased your works at **Second-hand Happiness Gallery and HangArt Gallery in Montreal. Does the art market in Montreal differ from the one in Toronto and do you like one more than another and why?**

***Jacques:*** Toronto’s market is much better. I was more successful at it. I was born and raised in Montreal - I left as an adult for work. Some of my sensibilities fit very nicely with the culture in Montreal, but I find it hard to do this stuff from a distance.

**Curator on the Go:** As for the US, you’ve exhibited your works at **Agora Gallery in New York City. How did you get that opportunity?**

***Jacques:*** It’s a huge gallery in Chelsea, NYC. So, it’s pay as you go kind of gallery. It’s curated, but you have to pay some fees to be part of it. It is curated but you still need to pay to be part of the show.

**Curator on the Go:** You are inspired by landscape, sky and the sea and lived in the North and right now doing your art residency on the west coast of Ireland. Tell us more about how you got this art residency and would you recommend other artists to do art residences and why?

***Jacques:*** A few years ago, I traveled with artists. We came to Ireland and traveled along the West coast. We rented a house, went for a walk and landed at an artists’ village. I wanted to come back there. 5 years ago, I’ve applied as I had more time (I retired as an accountant and decided to spend more time on my art). I received a 2-week residency in March 2015. I bought a lot of art supplies (oil paint and raw canvases). The artwork I did the first day I arrived was still wet. I can’t use oil in that environment. I also brought acrylic and graphite powder with me and I created some interesting pieces. I reapplied for this year and got in – that was wonderful.

**Curator on the Go:** One of the hot topics today is the importance of personal branding. Do you believe that artists need a brand or see themselves as creative entrepreneurs to be successful?

***Jacques:*** Selling or being an artist is not much different from people selling other staff, but being an artist requires all of the business skills and branding.

**Curator on the Go:** What one piece of advice would you like to give to emerging artists?

***Jacques:*** Keep the passion!

**Curator on the Go:** Where my listeners can find you online?

***Jacques:*** <https://www.artworkarchive.com/profile/jdcoto-art/about>

<https://www.instagram.com/jdcoto.art/>

<http://www.jdcoto.art/>

<https://www.facebook.com/jdcoto/>

**Curator on the Go:** Thank you very much for sharing your story today! I am excited to see your new works and projects and hope to meet you in person in the near future!