

# THE INDEPENDENT

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East Hampton · Southampton · Riverhead · Southold · Shelter Island

VOL. 14 NO. 42

JUNE 20, 2007

www.indyeastend.com

FREE



## In The GALLERY

By Joan Baum

**"The Annual Hamptons Show: Artists Who Live and Work on the East End" at The Fireplace Project, 851 Springs Fireplace Road, East Hampton.**

On opening a contemporary art gallery in the former Talmage Garage in Springs last year, Edsel Williams, who used to be the exhibitions director of The Green Barn in Sagaponack and of Glenn Horowitz in East Hampton, declared that he would not "represent" artists but "present" them, and that his "project space" would reflect a "non-traditional" approach.

To judge from the unusual exhibit now on view that he has curated, he has been true to his word, except that most of the artists here have been presented before, some in prestigious venues. But his sense of presenting – letting works speak for themselves, rather than promoting them – is manifest in the way the show is arranged. A checklist that features miniatures of each work, by artist, provides details (title, dimensions, medium, price) that typically appear on gallery walls. Thus a viewer confronts the work itself, without perhaps even knowing the artist's name, before looking for identifying information.

and black filings on beige – has exhibited at Longhouse.

Across the room Lynn Kohlman commands a wall with over a dozen striking color photos from her *Unhampton Series* – a dump, construction debris, industrial sites, some shots blurred by rain – remarkable compositions of shape, line, color and unbelievable detail (note the tire, with the leaves caught in the treads).

On a back wall Sally Egbert's abstract oils convey the sure hand of a pro. *Red Sky* (what daring to include a blue slash among the reds and whites!) and *White Branch* (with its odd pale green strokes over thin color) recall earlier days of modernism, while around a corner, Oliver Peterson's mixed media canvases, playful compositions, suggest that clutter is all.

The collages of metal, wood, fabric, pale paint drips, over-painting, graffiti scrawls, fragments of old photos and text delight with their odd, color combinations. Enough diversity? Hardly, for in the center of the Main Room, spread across a makeshift old wooden table (wonderfully crafted by Randy Hoffmann), are Richard Orient's ceramic vessels, verticals, donuts, flat rectangles, some with waxy surface, amazing for their glazed insides as well as for their imaginative and intricately colored, pock-marked exteriors.

If "living and working on the East End" is what holds this show together, that's good enough. The Fireplace Project's Annual Hamptons Show runs through June 27.

The decision to take this tack is especially wise here, given the nature of the exhibit – an extremely eclectic offering of paintings, ceramic sculpture, photographs and mixed media – representational and abstract – that might otherwise seem merely random. The theme is diversity, and in the case of Nick Weber's oils on canvas, diversity of subject matter, as well.

Weber's moody, beautifully painted night landscapes glisten with Hopper-like ambiguity, at once seductive and secretive, as in *Further Lane* where dark-green trees resolve in the distance into an indistinct black arch and haloed orange street lamps light a deserted road with dull cinematic glow.

In *Side of a Road*, a red hydrant is mysteriously lit by an unidentified light source, dark trees brush-stroked into prominence against a darkening blue sky. Who knows what lurks just beyond – a mixed racial group of girls and guys entangled in oral sex? The link between Weber's porno-erotica and his landscapes is there. Is *Gangbang*, with its strategically lighted, carefully painted body limbs, capturing desire or force?

Quite a world away in the same front "wood room" several Patrick McDonough oils, sunny infusions of yellow greens and aqua blues, display various takes on summer scenes, particularly of a slatted brush-stroked deck hovering over sand and water (*Spring Arrives*, a balanced composition of posts and shadows, is nicely engaging).

In the Main Gallery the diversity continues. No surprise to read, later, that Joseph Lapiana, seen here with *Kentic Blow*, a shellac and ink on linen triptych, a decorative design of inkblot