



PROFILES



Edsel Williams

Curator, Art Advisor, bookmaker, director of The Fireplace Project
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1. What was the first job you had in the art world?

I've never had an official job, opting instead for lots of "independent contracting."

2. When did you open the Fireplace Project, and how?

The first season of exhibitions was summer 2006. And we're now open six months of the year, more or less. The space that the gallery occupies had sat empty since 1996. With the encouragement of very supportive collectors, who also live nearby in the Springs, I went for it. It wasn't easy to get operations up and running. For a few years before I came in to the picture the family owners were talking with the Pollock-Krasner House about doing an annex exhibition space. When that stalled, the family went with my plan. They're a very old school East Hampton family. The father, who is now dead, was Pollock's close friend.

3. What service do you see The Fireplace Project providing?

Simply to keep putting good and interesting shows out there. So far so good, and hopefully sell enough to survive. I'm always surprised how many people see the shows. We're a real destination. You don't come

Montauk is great too and still original, but far. And there is important art history here. It feels right to be there.

4. Who comes into The Fireplace Project?

Artists, collectors, museum people, writers, actors, star fuckers, musicians, we have a loyal base of interested people. Edward Albee sees most shows; more than one of The Beatles have been here; Lou Reed has been in. We often have guest curators. They pull in fresh people who usually come back. Beth De Woody did a show... Klaus Kertess, David Salle, John Connelly.

5. Who's the weirdest visitor you've gotten?

That would probably be one of the artists, but we love them. Malcolm McLaren was in "Intimacy", which Anne Pasternak curated. He gets my "weirdest" vote.

6. What are your Fireplace Projects plans for the summer?

I'll probably do 5 shows this season. Mostly solo shows like the last season. Last season I did all solo shows because it was right for the climate. They cost less and sell more.

7. What's the most important project you've ever been involved with?

The Cindy Sherman exhibition, when I published "The Early Work of Cindy Sherman". This is the first work she did fresh out of art school. They'd never been shown, amazing works very raw character studies, 32 of them. It happened very organically. We were in her old studio in NY going through the flat files and there they were.

8. How do you advise clients?

Trust your gut, and buy what you can afford and can't live without. Nothing else matters if you're in it for the right reasons. I'm very grateful to work with collectors who are more curious than most kids, they get it and love it. If they don't then our relationship won't stick.

9. What should be the mantra of an adviser?

Do the research, get off the computer and see the shows, meet the artists, and don't be an art snob.

Programming resumes May 2010. The Fireplace Project is located at [851 Springs Fireplace Road](#).

PHOTOGRAPH ABOVE: EDSSEL WILLIAMS, JAY JOPLING, DAMIEN HIRST, ALEXANDRA MOLLOFF

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