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With a Nod to Chelsea, 2 East Hampton Galleries Adapt Industrial Space

By HELEN A. HARRISON
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Taking a cue from Manhattan's Chelsea district, with its warehouses and garages reinvented as sleek showcases for contemporary art, two new East Hampton galleries have brought the same look to former industrial spaces on eastern Long Island. One is an adapted commercial unit in a complex that also houses carpentry and landscaping businesses; the other is a former automobile repair shop in Springs.

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The Fireplace Project, at 851 Springs-Fireplace Road, anchors a small commercial strip that includes a liquor store, a pizza restaurant and Hampton Auto Collision. The building, formerly Talmage's Garage, has been handsomely adapted as an exhibition space but retains much of its utilitarian character. The walls in the main gallery are clean white sheetrock, but the original overhead garage door, the knotty pine paneling in what was the office and the bare concrete floor have been preserved. Instead of car parts, the building now houses dusky landscape paintings by David Ryan, and Wayne White's eye-catching multicolored sculpture of welded lettering sits in the front yard.

The gallery, which opened on June 3, is the brainchild of Edsel Williams, a former ballet dancer turned private art dealer and curator. A native of Virginia, Mr. Williams moved to the East End about 20 years ago and supported himself teaching yoga and aerobics, while developing contacts in the art world that eventually led to another change of profession.

"I love curating shows," said Mr. Williams, who operated an informal gallery behind his yoga studio in the 1990's. After that, he organized exhibitions for Glenn Horowitz Booksellers in East Hampton for four years and ran the Green Barn, a gallery in a converted potato barn in Sagaponack, from 2003 to 2005. But he had his eye on the vacant garage, which is just down the road from his home in Springs.

"I thought it would make a great gallery," Mr. Williams said, "but I didn't act on the idea. Then a collector I know encouraged me to do it." The transformation from repair shop to exhibition space was accomplished with the help of a couple of silent partners and the Talmage family, which owns the building and agreed to help finance the conversion.

This season, Mr. Williams plans to feature local artists and those from elsewhere, like Mr. Ryan, who used to live on the East End but is now in upstate New York, and Mr. White, who lives in Los Angeles. His ambitious agenda includes invitational shows organized by guest curators, site-specific projects by individual artists and a biennial group exhibition that he envisions as a mini-version of the [Whitney Museum's](#) contemporary art roundup.

On the other side of town, Salomon Contemporary occupies a garagelike commercial space on Plank Road, off East Hampton-Sag Harbor Turnpike (Route 114). Like the Fireplace Project, it has stark white walls, a concrete floor and a large overhead door that can be raised during

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openings and special events. The gallery premiered informally last July, but this is its first full season, with a roster of five one-person exhibitions through Labor Day.

The director, James Salomon, is also associate director of the Mary Boone Gallery in Manhattan. Although he has Ms. Boone's encouragement, he said, she is not backing his gallery, and he is not currently planning to show the artists she represents.

"It's important for me to establish a strong East End identity," said Mr. Salomon, who is from Westhampton. This season's featured artists — Darius Yektai, Peter Dayton, Mike Solomon, Ned Smyth and Michael Halsband — all live in the area, and Mr. Salomon is planning later shows for two other local artists, Rima Mardoyan and Sally Egbert. His goal, he said, is to foster "a relevant and important art market outside the urban context."

The Fireplace Project, 851 Springs-Fireplace Road, East Hampton, (516) 398-8114. Open Fridays through Mondays from 1 to 6 p.m. and by appointment. Salomon Contemporary, 6 Plank Road, Unit 3, East Hampton, (917) 617-0828. Open by appointment. www.salomoncontemporary.com.

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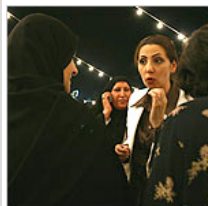
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