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**THE
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A MONTAUK
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CANDACE BUSHNELL'S DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE; THE AUTHOR
ON NEW YORK WOMEN, MAKING IT AS A WRITER AND NOT TAKING ANY CRAP

BY **GEORGE GURLEY**



IRONS *in the* FIRE

*An alternative exhibition space
in Pollock territory.*

By Paul Laster

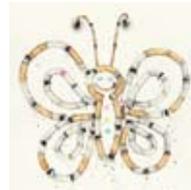
“IT WAS LIKE MEETING THE BUDDHA,” said Edsel Williams of his 2009 interaction with Sir Paul McCartney. Mr. Williams was hosting a Pop-Up shop and art-charity benefit for Sir Paul’s daughter, fashion designer Stella, at his Springs art-exhibition space. “Sir Paul was the first to arrive and the last to leave ... He was an incredibly humble man,” said Mr. Williams. Another favorite moment from the day, Mr. Williams added, was “Gwyneth Paltrow changing clothes in my office.”

Top: Agathe Snow’s Terrestrial Forms Installation. Middle: The Fireplace Project. Below: Aurel Schmidt’s Ecstasy Butterfly.



Most of the time, Mr. Williams’s space is filled with celebrities of the more art-star variety. The former ballet dancer opened the Fireplace Project in 2006 in the abandoned plumbing-and-auto-repair workshop of Richard Talmage, a friend and neighbor of Jackson Pollock. Since then, the simple, pitched-roof space has presented solo exhibitions by some of the hottest art stars overseen by surprisingly big-name curators.

He’s done shows of works by several artists who would later go on to influential museum shows or art-world fame: Martin Oppel, Hernan Bas, Aaron Young and the Bruce High Quality Foundation among them. Not a traditional gallery, he presents artists more than he represents them, he said. Curators Klaus Kertess, Beth DeWoody, David Salle, Anne Pasternak and Neville Wakefield have



overseen the shows. And so far he’s done two “Hamptons Artists” exhibitions, to highlight local talent. He’s also hosted the Pollock-Krasner Lecture series for the past four years; the events are most Sundays at 5 p.m.

Last summer, Mr. Williams announced that the Fireplace Project was closing and even held a show called “The End of the Affair.” But “so much for that idea,” he said, deciding to stick around. “We’ve brought a lot of crazy good things out here. I’m proud of it all. Historically, I have no idea how the cards will fall. I just hope that when it’s all over, which it surely will be one day, people look back fondly on this place and remember how good it felt to come here and see good work.”

That said, Mr. Williams can’t help but name-drop just once more. “I love it when Edward Albee comes to visit, which is often. He has a great curiosity.” ●