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03/20/2008: "THE FINE ART OF ART COLLECTING: AN INTERVIEW WITH EDWARD GOLDMAN" by Laurie Lamson

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Every few months, Edward Goldman takes 20 students on a series of Saturday morning art adventures to explore 'backstage' of the contemporary Los Angeles art scene. His students have the unique opportunity to visit and interact with gallery owners and museum curators; private collectors in their homes and artists in their studios.

Mr. Goldman is himself a popular figure on the L.A. art scene, with a reputation as the "Raconteur of Los Angeles" and his Fine Art of Art Collecting classes are a natural outgrowth of his interests and expertise. Since 1988, he's been the art consultant for prominent corporate collections and his distinctive Russian accent has been heard every week on the Los Angeles NPR-Affiliate,

KCRW, with his "Art Talk" program.

LL
How should we begin to talk about art collecting?

EG
So very often people ask me, where we can start, in terms of collecting. There are many starts, and there is no finish. I believe that people can start to collect... or collectors sometimes become passionate even at the gentle age of 9 or 10 or 11. I know people who collect stamps, or some other wonderful small things that boys and girls collect on the beach. Some people have [the] temperament of [a] collector. But some people become collectors very slowly. Sometimes it hits them over the head, or their wife or their husband just force them to pay attention to something that naturally they don't have the inclination for.



Good example is, let's say, Norton Simon, whose museum in Pasadena [is] one of the best



museums of classical art. But Mr. Simon was not very interested in art; his wife was interested in art. And he allowed her to drag him to a couple of exhibitions, and being [a] very bright, very smart man, he got excited to be involved with interesting people, interesting things, negotiating, and the whole story...

So one can start in a very unusual way. But people sometimes ask me personally, "Edward,

how would I start here in Los Angeles?" I would tell them that, first of all, they need just to look at art. Buying art - it's only a side product of being interested in art... Collecting art, first of all, and most of all - being able to see art, a lot, all the time, in museums, in galleries, in the private houses, and to develop an idea, what appeals to you. Not only what you are comfortable with, because what we are comfortable with - with warm water, with a warm bath, to sit in a comfortable chair like I am sitting in right now, but probably wearing a nice warm winter coat, not winter coat, what would be the word...?

LL

A hot toddy? A blankie?

EG

Yes, to wrap yourself in a blanket and just to watch TV. We cannot do anything without challenging ourselves. And when I say challenging, for [a] good collector, it's to acquire, to buy only what [the] person loves. But it doesn't mean [the] person should see only what [the] person likes and prefers to see. You have to see everything.

It's like, you want to marry, you probably want to know, on a personal level, as friends and acquaintances, hundreds of people before you make a choice. You meet good people, you meet not very good people, you meet wonderful people, you meet nasty people. So you learn something about people. You learn about whom you want to spend the rest of your life with.

The same about art. You have to understand not only what you like, [but] what's there around for you. You might be surprised. I believe that if someone likes to drink tea and coffee, and never drank vodka – we are talking about good Russian vodka from the freezer – you might be shocked. It's [an] acquired taste. The same probably for the whiskey. The same for the very spicy food. You're acquiring [a] taste. So you want to look at a lot of art under different circumstances and slowly decide, what kind of new friends you want to make among the art and artists.



LL

Who takes your class?

EG

When I announce my classes, 'The Fine Art of Art Collecting with Edward Goldman,' I never know who is going to sign up. There are thousands of people who receive my weekly radio 'Art Talk' in their computer system, people who listen to my program; so it's my listeners, or people who heard about me through their friends – collectors ... and I am surprised to see that doctors, and

lawyers, and housewives, and already collectors with established reputations, which is slightly intimidating – why they would like to spend time with me and what can I teach them about?

I remember one particular class where I realized that several people came – one lives a half-year in Paris, half-year here, another in London and a half-year here, another person came from Switzerland – not for my class, but her background is Swiss and she's very much still European..., another person came from South Africa. So it's a perfect - not description of the people who are coming to my class - but maybe the diversity of people living in Los Angeles.



Dharshana Bajaj:
Enjoy The Scenery



Dharshana Bajaj:
Enjoy The Scenery



Joao Carita: Joao Carita - Portuguese Artist with an Dark Expressionism Style



Paul Edelstein: New Edelstein Commission for Memphis Church



Abraham Michael Dayan: About my synthesis for a painting of DA VINCI



Mark Brockman: Self -taught



Manuela Facchin Varalda: Poetry and painting



L. Kelen: Quadrupedal...fund raising bike ride...and another one of my drawings.



Virginia Gardner: When it begins to come together...



Doris Kraushaar: I am in Goa



Yucel Donmez: Yucel paints the Taksim underground with his art



Yucel Donmez: Yucel Donmez

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For me it's uniquely cosmopolitan city, not [just] with people who are visiting... but people who came here and live here and just embrace the city with its energy and diversity.

LL

How do you plan your classes?

EG

The way I'm preparing for these classes - like a cook in a good Los Angeles restaurant dealing with the natural foods. So you go to the market in the morning, you're buying the freshest ingredients and you're cooking in the evening, based on what's the best you found in the market.

I'm looking for interesting exhibitions, for interesting things to show my class. To the very end, literally 24 hours before class starts I am still thinking, 'What I am going to do, what I am going to show them, where I am going to take them?'

We are meeting in one place, I am giving them itinerary for the next several hours and everyone follows me in their cars – to the studio of the artist, to private collector's house to talk about how and what they collect, to museum exhibitions, to galleries. And people trust me enough to get together in one place, let's say at Bergamot Station – concentration of the best art galleries on the Westside. We will meet, we'll introduce [ourselves to] each other, we'll say hello, and... they follow me, but they don't know where we are going, and they trust me enough to come to these classes, like kids, waiting for surprise and not objecting to anything that might happen.

And the funny thing is that, when they come to these four, five meetings in a row, they say, "Oh Edward, please tell me what's going to be next week, because I have to decide, I have to go to the East Coast, to New York, and I want to decide – do I want to miss this class or not? – based on what you're preparing."

And I say, "I swear, I don't know myself." So when I come in front of my students on one of these Saturday mornings I feel, as an actor who has a certain kind of plan and text prepared, but I am improvising, and I am trying to create a sense of excitement and novelty. And it's not only for them a surprise, it's for me a surprise, because how the conversation between me and them, all of us and the owner of the gallery, all of us and the owner of the house and his collection, how it's going to happen – I hope for the best, and most of the time, let's knock on the wood, very good things happen.

LL

Are you teaching your students any particular philosophy about art? About collecting?

EG

When New York Times last year honored me with a profile with a headline, the article had a title, "(Art) World According to Edward Goldman" or as I like to say, Edward, with his Eleventh Commandment about art and the importance of art in our lives. For me, and I think for all of us, art shouldn't be a luxury. Art is expression of our human collective experience, of our collective soul.

When I think about collecting, definitely I think about how to make our life more interesting. It's like a cultural artistic blanket that surrounds us as a second skin, which explains [to] us who we are, what the world is all about... It's not just the warm glow of the fire in the fireplace on a cold night. It's there for you all the time, even when you close your eyes.

I think about art collecting, if you do it smartly, not to invest money, I'm not interested about that, and I'm not able even to advise people on that. I'm interested in investing yourself, your soul in collecting art, the way you invest yourself in building friendship, which lasts, you hope, for the lifetime.

So, imagine, imagine yourself being a good friend, and celebrating your fortieth, fiftieth birthday, and your friends come to your house. And when you look at them, you know that you have life experience with these people. And you have ten, twelve people sitting at your

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table. That's friendship – you cannot buy it for your money, you have to put your time, you have to invest yourself to have [the] luxury of friends around you.

I think that the most sophisticated, the most dedicated collectors – not necessarily with a lot of money – [but] with a kind of sense of passion for collecting, they end up with a collection which becomes almost parallel to having your friends around. [A] collection can not be bought for money, it can be done only if you invest your passion, energy and time... the process, that's what's the most interesting, but what is the most challenging about collecting art. And you'll end up with a party – with art on your walls –going 24/7.

Edward Goldman's ART TALK audio and text archives available on KCRW.com:

<http://www.kcrw.com/etc/programs/at>

Laurie Lamson is a writer and filmmaker based in Los Angeles. She produces and directs mini-documentaries for neighborhoods, causes and organizations, and is currently raising funds to make a documentary about the Fine Art of Art Collecting classes. You can send a comment to laurie@jazzymae.com.

Replies: 5 Comments

on Monday, March 24th, gilbrtsgifts@sbcglobal.net">Abdel said

Thank you for giving me the opprtunity to read this interview. Mr. Goldman knows his Art obviously and he seems to have a lot more to share with both the Art Lover and the ordinary person. I hope to read more about him and to see a documentary on him soon.

on Sunday, March 23rd, [Susan](#) said

Hi Laurie,
Thanks for sharing this article with me. Mr. Goldman sounds like a gem!
susan

on Sunday, March 23rd, gmamella@inwind.it">Gia said

Fascinating interview.

Mr. Goldman sounds like an absolute gem, and his appeal is in his down-to-earth, informed approach to art. A program with him as our guide would be an invaluable contribution to the art world.

on Thursday, March 20th, walt said

Thank you Laurie. Can't wait for the documentary ...and we need more like Mr. Goldman who understand how vital and how intimate art is and should be to us all...not just us artists...we already know, we are the choir, and we are singing!

on Thursday, March 20th, [josé](#) said

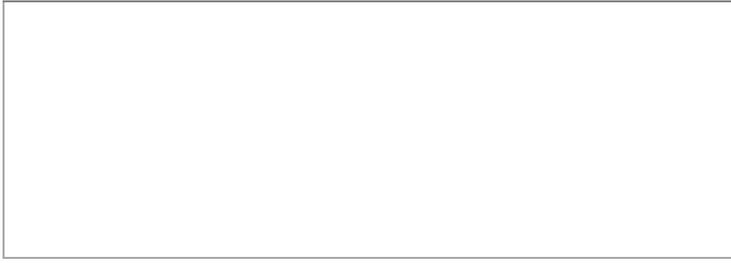
Enjoyed reading this blog, thank you Laurie.

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