



Anna Cipollone

// ART & DESIGN //

Anna Cipollone is a writer and editor based in Toronto. Her work has appeared in magazines like *Chatelaine*, *Canada's 100 Best*, *Festival Style*, *Yoga Journal* and *FASHION*, with topics focused on style, design, yoga, arts and culture. She splits her time between Roncesvalles and the Kawarthas.

# In Conversation With Art Dealer and Gallerist Barbara Edwards

A visionary in the Canadian and international art scene, Barbara Edwards is a contemporary art dealer whose Toronto gallery put its plans to move on temporary hold when the pandemic hit. With the intention to open this fall, her new two-storey gallery space at 319 King Street is directly across from TIFF Bell Lightbox and a quick hop from her BEC Project Space, where she sees clients by appointment. We spoke with the gallery owner on what it's like working with inspiring artists, joining the King West neighbourhood, and how to start a collection.



Ydessa Hendeles, "Prize," 2015, oil painting suspended from painted steel chains, anatomical model, child's table, installation dimensions: 116" x 36" x 24" (part of "Death to Pigs," 2016)



"Abstract Borders" install shot, group exhibition at BEC Project Space, 2019 (pictured: Ray Mead, Kenneth Noland, Guido Molinari).

**What sparked your interest in contemporary art?**

I was in high school and I saw a Gerhard Richter show at the AGO. I was raised Roman Catholic but this was a spiritual experience.

**How would you define the role of an art dealer?**

For the artist, I'm a steward. I can critique work but the artist needs to go in their own direction. To be a good art dealer, you help the artist develop their career, and I really do act like a catalyst. I'm almost like an emissary to the outside world in a way. My mentor, Jared Sabol, taught me that you don't sell art, you create the conditions that allow people to buy. I'm a facilitator.

**What's the process of working with a client?**

There's a real concept that develops organically. I do love to come into homes and just shift the collection around now and then, so the clients are reminded how much they love the piece. I think all of us get sidelined by the day to day and forget to see things around us. If you put another figurative piece next to an abstract piece, a whole new conversation starts.

**What do you love most about your work?**

I'm going in a new direction that I really enjoy for my own creativity that's more curatorial. It doesn't mean I'm going to stop representing artists, but I do love the fluidity of being able to work on private collections. The feeling of finding work for the client, placing it in the home in conversation with other works in the room. I love it.



Sorel Etrog, "Survivors Are Not Heroes," 1967, bronze, 72" high, Copyright © The Estate of Sorel Etrog.




### What do you look for in an artist?

The first thing for me is intuitive. I was trained by art dealer Jared Sabol, who really taught me to see with my eyes and not my ears. Not always am I going to feel the experience that the client feels. Sometimes things just stick with me and I have to go back, and just be open. I'm interested in pedigree too – who are the artist's influences, what is their trajectory. It's a goal of mine to constantly be placing things in museums. To me, Eric Fischl's 'Untitled (Tumbling Woman)' for instance, is a museum-quality piece, because it has that 9/11 story, and it has a lot to do with our humanity. I think of that piece as transcendent. How an artist can transcend a human tragedy to make something beautiful.

### What advice would you give to new collectors?

A lot of people want to get into collecting for investment. I would guard against that thinking. I would pick something you want to live with, and actually, they'll often find that their choices pan out years later when they're ready to divest their collection.

### Why is art important, now more than ever?

What I have found during the COVID-19 lockdown is that people are starting to realize how much their art means to them. This has brought us back into our homes, where we regroup, where we regenerate. And to be surrounded by art and inspired by it is really part of that. Art is the spirit. 



**Barbara Edwards**  
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Eric Fischl, "Untitled (Tumbling Woman)," 2012, glass, 12" x 18" x 14," edition of 10.



William Kentridge, "Universal Archive (Twelve Coffee Pots)," 2012, linocut on non-archival pages from Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, each page mounted on arches velin, 43.5" x 43", edition of 30.