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Woman of Style: Edgy Lee - artist and documentary filmmaker

Edgy Lee is a fifth generation Hawaii-born artist and filmmaker. Her most recent film, "The Hawaiians - Reflecting Spirit," a documentary film shot in hi-definition format, premiered at the national opening of the Smithsonian's Museum of the American Indian in Washington, D.C. Lee also recently produced two films on methamphetamine in unprecedented prime time commercial-free simulcasts (11 television stations) through out the State of Hawaii; and is currently co-producing a series of short drug prevention and education videos created specifically for various industries. In Fall 2005, she also executive produced and directed a special investigative news show called "The Levi Report."



Edgy Lee

Her feature documentary work includes "Waikiki In the Wake of Dreams," (2002 New York International Independent Film & Video Festival awards for Best Cinematography and Best Editing - Documentary Categories); Chicago International INTERCOM Gold Plaque - Documentary - History). "Paniolo O Hawaii - Cowboys of the Far West," a tribute to America's first cowboys (National Geographic Channels Worldwide) currently re-broadcasts on PBS (APT). Veteran *Los Angeles Times* film credit Kevin Thomas wrote, "What Lee has done in irresistible fashion is a splendid example of the enduring power of the traditional documentary. The kind that brings alive an unfamiliar world in a straightforward manner that is as entertaining as it is informative." We caught up with Edgy at the Chicago premiere of her movie "The Hawaiians - Reflecting Spirit" to get a behind the scenes look at the film and to talk fashion with the artist and filmmaker.

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FACTIO MAGAZINE: Give us an inside look at your career as an artist and filmmaker and give us a behind-the-scenes look at your most recent film, "The Hawaiians - Reflecting Spirit".

EDGY LEE: Behind the scenes? Imagine starting the hike at 3:30am, in the dark of night to hike into a volcanic crater to the seashore in time for sunrise, carrying 900 lbs of high definition equipment, dolly, and tracks and it's pouring rain and windy. Where's the glamour behind making pictures?! A lot of hard work but often so satisfying.

FM: Describe your signature style.

EL: I think the doc films I've made are not easily pigeonholed. They've got authoritative scholarship like a PBS Ken Burns film but they're not so dry. There's always a human element that makes these films a little different than the traditional documentary.

At the same time, my films are not guerrilla in your face. They're more crafted, small budgets but there is production value and that sets them apart from the anticipated. It's the unexpected interview in the midst of what you begin to think is a traditional history telling, that brings reactions from the audience that are often unanticipated.

FM: What are your personal favorite shops worldwide? (for anything from the home to beauty to fashion and accessories, etc)

EL: Aveda products are some of my favorite. I love Kieh'l's products as well. I like shops that are consistent and high quality and I love flea markets, antique shops and off the beaten path local places.

FM: Where are some of your favorite places to travel and what do you always pick up for your wardrobe? What about your home?

EL: I love small towns, villages, and little side street restaurants and shops -- the antithesis to the corporate anywhere USA retailers. No matter where I am, I always seem to find a pair of shoes or a unique purse and when I used to collect more "things", I'd find Bauer ware and other 1930s - 40s ceramic bowls, Japanese block prints, and dragonflies. Images of dragonflies are one of my favorite collectibles.

FM: What are you always on the hunt for?

EL: A good museum and gallery and a place to have a glass of wine where artists hang out and you can people watch.

FM: What women and men (from which city worldwide) have great style and

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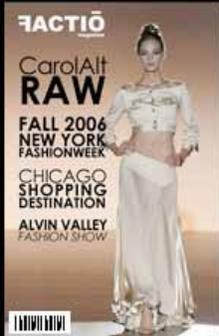
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EL: Women from different cultures have different styles and they can all be appreciated. I think Italian women have great style. They know how to be casually chic without looking sloppy. They can be dressed seriously but they carry themselves so naturally. Tahitian women can wear a single piece of fabric (a pareau), a pair of shell earrings, coconut oil and no makeup and that's it -- they look like a million dollars. It's in the way they walk, talk and it's their attitude. Very french, in that they're coy and flirtatious, yet so Polynesian which makes them softer, playful, and very feminine. All cultures have style -- It's just a matter of what style strikes your sense of good taste.

FM: Do you think money and style go hand in hand or can style never be bought? Is it something you just have?

EL: Style can be acquired, to a point. Then some women just have it. They could be wearing a \$50 dress and a Prada bag from 3 years ago and still look fabulous. It's in their attitude and the way they carry themselves. Self confidence has so much to do with the feeling you emit and don't think people don't pick up on it. Money always helps. However, some of the worst dressed women I've known have been some of the richest.

FM: What would people be most surprised to know about you?

EL: I think it might be that in all the work I've done I still struggle sometimes working with men who can't quite accept taking orders from a woman.

FM: If you weren't in this business, where would you be?

EL: Painting.

FM: What tips would you give women and men in general to be well rounded, balancing out life and career?

EL: Find a career that allows you to laugh a lot, have fun and tap into your creative side. Everyone has a creative part of them whether it's law or medicine or the arts that you've pursued. We just need to remember how it was when we were kids. We just forget so much.

FM: Where do you see yourself in five years? What are your ultimate goals?

EL: I'm not sure where I see myself in five years, but that is the joy in what I do. I have specific goals but they are mutable. I suppose that's the nature of working in arts and entertainment. You begin on one path and find that your direction may change slightly or sometimes drastically and most often it's something that is heart felt and intuitive, not a decision made by intellect.

- Interview by Melissa Maynard, editor-in-chief/founder Factio-magazine.com.

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