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OCTOBER 31, 2019

# Meet Elisabeth Condon



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Today we'd like to introduce you to Elisabeth Condon.

**Elisabeth, can you briefly walk us through your story – how you started and how you got to where you are today.**

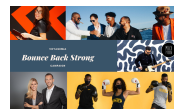
I grew up in LA surrounded by diverse and beautiful landscapes. The Hollywood entertainment industry, including glam rock nightclubs such as Rodney Bingenheimer's English Disco which I visited at age fourteen, provided an unlikely contrast with my strict Christian Science upbringing. Aesthetically, I felt pulled between natural landscapes of desert, canyon, ocean, and artificial television, film and nightclub worlds. These actual and fantastic worlds united when punk bands performed in the desert and we traveled by bus to go hear them. These polarities sharpened my desire to paint synthetic landscapes that are equally fantastic and real. When at ten I studied with Renate Zerner, drawing on large sheets of butcher paper or dripping food coloring on paper, I first identified as an artist.

At university, art school, then graduate school, I slowly forged a body of work encompassing the layers and dualities of landscape. I spent five years in Chicago, often painting outside, moved to New

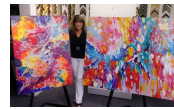
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and Drawing at the University of South Florida. In Florida the subtropical landscape fused with the LA of childhood. This déjà vu correlates with the ink-wash landscape tradition in ancient Chinese scrolls, which depict small humans traversing vast landscapes. Scrolls show space as immersive, engulfing, and unfolding, reflecting the experience of travel. I began to pour paint for unexpected compositions with clear, transparent color to hold and transfix the eye. I traveled to Asia to view scrolls first hand and spent six months in Shanghai as an artist in residence at the Swatch Art Peace Hotel. Shanghai changed my life. I resigned tenure to paint full time, and now maintain studios in Manhattan and Tampa, Florida. My solo exhibition with Emerson Dorsch, *Effulgence*, runs through November 16th, 2019. I hope to see you there!

**Overall, has it been relatively smooth? If not, what were some of the struggles along the way?** My family experienced a significant financial reversal when I attended art school in my early 20s, so I financed my education with jobs including paper delivery and window display. I worked hard and solidified my commitment to art, though at times I felt lonely or abandoned. Ultimately I graduated, repaid my loans, and glad I hung in there even when the days were endless and rent money scarce. Another challenge, after resigning from my tenured position at the University of South Florida to paint full time, was serious illness. Suddenly, in drastic need of health insurance, resigning seemed like a disastrous financial mistake. The only way through was to ask for help despite the fear and pain. Many wonderful events balanced the uncertainty. My solo booth with Emerson Dorsch at the 2015 NY PULSE Art Fair won first prize. I received a Gottlieb Foundation Emergency Grant to help pay for treatment. Support from a wide range of people, including Karl Kelly, Dean Moy from the University of South Florida College of The Arts, my galleries, family, close friends and colleagues,

uncomfortable, but the last few years have been rewarding with grants, public commissions, sales, and part-time teaching.

**Tell us more about your art.**

I work primarily in painting. I am recognized for multi-layered landscapes in which patterns and natural elements combine in liquid space. My recent paintings focus on flowers and patterns and update the Pattern and Decoration movement of the 1980s for today. You could say I paint synthetic landscape through a feminist lens. My materials are primarily acrylic, calligraphy ink, glitter, and pumice on linen and paper. My paintings and works on paper embrace both Asian and Western techniques, assuming elongated, horizontal formats and incorporating ink and wash techniques such as 'splashed ink' or flower idioms. Travel remains a great inspiration as my work responds viscerally to the environment in which it is created. My paintings orchestrate multiple paint applications to translate, even incarnate, the complexity of lived experience. Public commissions expand my understanding of what is possible in art.

The 96 x 96-inch painting Verdant Tampa Bay greets travelers at Tampa International Airport's International Arrivals Terminal, near American Airlines. I just completed Urban Idyll, a commission for the Metropolitan Transit Authority Art & Design New York City Transit program. The 36 laminated glass panels are inspired by a Tree of Life pattern and located at the Ditmars Blvd. station on the NW lines in Queens. Working with laminated glass influenced my current work in the solo exhibition Effulgence at Emerson Dorsch Gallery in Little Haiti. The three-panel painting Effulgence situates street pigeons, lattice patterns, scaffolding, and Chinese plant forms in a landscape of pours. These elements are also fashioned in wood, extending painting space into our space. The gallery is transformed into a series of rooms that visitors move through, like a dimensional scroll. Effulgence refers to

and décor. Scrolls, cartoons, wallpaper, and logos abbreviate the natural world in their interpretations. Likewise, in my paintings, lattice and pigeons inhabit an alternate universe that takes climate change for granted. Smashed flowers emerge from pure, dripped color. Nature and culture fuse in visionary landscapes with antecedents in color field painting, and pattern & decoration, the 1980s movement that went global in its references to Islamic, Chinese, and Japanese patterns.

### **What is “success” or “successful” for you?**

Success means freedom to paint and speak for myself through painting. Freedom is rigorous. Because painting has a long history, it must work harder to surprise and refresh. I relish this challenge since it has been done so often and well before. Flowers, as ephemeral forms poured in plastic, become templates for a brave new landscape where form and space converge. I want to paint bilingually, across borders to dissolve them. This is a success for me. As peer recognition constitutes a marker of success, I am honored that artists Cesar Cornejo and Sue Havens have recommended me to Voyage MIA. I am also grateful for the many professional opportunities I enjoy, which include representation in Miami and New York, many artist residencies such as the MacDowell Colony, and a 2018 Joan Mitchell Foundation Painters and Sculptors Program Grant. Painting expands the constraints of space and time. Frank Bowling’s *Traingone*, 1996, or Chen Jialing’s lotus paintings, convey moods and feelings that I well understand. In turn, I hope my paintings actively engage others in this way. When two minds meet through painting, the mutual recognition forms art’s deeper purpose.

### **Contact Info:**

- **Address:** Emerson Dorsch Gallery, 5900 NW Second Avenue, Miami, FL

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- **Phone:** (305) 576-1278
- **Instagram:** @elisabethcondon
- **Facebook:** ElisabethCondonArtist



**Image Credit:**  
paintings – Pat Blocher portrait – Phillip  
Reed  
Effulgence, 2019, ink, acrylic on linen

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(three panels), 72 x 171 inches, courtesy Emerson Dorsch Gallery

## Trending

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Runaway Flowers, 2019, calligraphy ink and acrylic on linen, 40 x 52 inches, courtesy Emerson Dorsch Gallery

Pink Lattice, 2019, calligraphy ink and acrylic on linen, 40 x 52 inches

Pink and Yellow Lattice, 2019, calligraphy ink and acrylic on linen, 30 x 21 inches

Photo credit for paintings: Pat Blocher

Elisabeth Condon portrait: Photo credit : Phillip Reed

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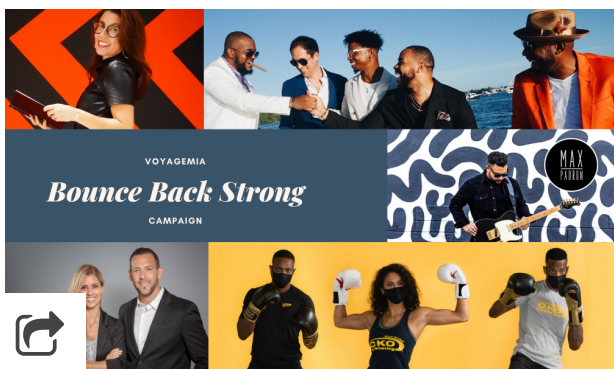
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