

LOCAL STORIES

## Meet Elisabeth Condon: Visual Artist

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We had the good fortune of connecting with Elisabeth Condon and we've shared our conversation below.

### Hi Elisabeth, how do you think about risk?

Risk is a metric of commitment, containing life force within its demand to leap into the unknown. Returning to school in LA after a hiatus of hanging out at nightclubs, choosing SAIC's multidisciplinary program in Chicago for my MFA, moving to New York because that's where I wanted to live, accepting a professorship at the University of South Florida, and traveling to China for six months at the Swatch Art Peace Hotel are risks that have rewarded me with cultural and aesthetic influences that shape and inspire my work.

In early 2019 I stopped everything I was doing in the studio to devote eight months painting on rice paper with calligraphy ink. Suspending color for black ink felt like an enormous risk. While I wanted to understand ink and brush painting more directly, I wondered if learning a language I could never fully understand was a form of cultural co-optation.

"Tempest", an etching created with Graphicstudio, reflects this period of investigation through a densely patterned landscape of subdued tonality and layers. The painting "Efulgence" extends its compressed, two-dimensional surface into physical layers via wood lattices, birds, and plants, proposing décor as a form of landscape. Lately, pouring flowers amidst hand-painted vintage lattice patterns combine scroll painting, landscape, and décor with techniques from printmaking, brush painting, and abstraction. Interspersing natural and decorative influences provides a way to re-examine American landscape from a wider perspective.



**Let's talk shop? Tell us more about your career, what can you share with our community?**

Landscape and décor intersect in my paintings, scrolls, and installations, creating feminine landscapes inspired by domestic life, Chinese scrolls, and abstraction. Growing up in Los Angeles surrounded by the film industry and living in New York define the landscape as both real and artificial.

I'm really excited by wallpaper as a form of scroll painting, film, and social narrative. I'm also excited by paint itself—how it loads on the brush, how it sweeps on a surface, and how the surface absorbs liquid pours. I love clean, bright colors, and polluting them with ink. I combine poured color with hand-painted patterns, loose and inventive from extensive practice. The color and compositions change in response to where the paintings are made; sometimes they are very dense and other times, spare. I consistently mix paint applications to create a collage-like effect similar to the overlap of physical and digital worlds.

While the paintings change frequently the work as a whole shares an underlying concern with visual rhythm, opacity and transparency, and femininity. Collectively, my work forms a scroll unfurling slowly over time. I'm thinking about ways to extend painting space into lived space, blurring the distinctions between landscape and interior. The evolution of décor in America is an exciting point of departure for research.







#### Who else deserves some credit and recognition?

So many have, and continue, to support my work, but here I would like to acknowledge Emerson Dorsch Gallery in Little Haiti. Brook and Tyler Emerson-Dorsch are true friends of art, fearless in their commitment to excellent programming and presentation. Director Ibett Yaniz de Castillo and Doug Weber complete a dream team that spares nothing to ensure each exhibition is the best it can be. The gallery fosters a dynamic community that enriches and inspires me.



#### If you had a friend visiting you, what are some of the local spots you'd want to take them around to?

In Miami, Emerson Dorsch, Exile Books, and Tom Virgin's print studio, which share a complex in Little Haiti. Then, to major museums and collections including Miami Museum of Contemporary Art of the African Diaspora and Little Haiti Cultural Complex. If time allows we might visit artist studios at Fountainhead, Oolite, Laundromat Art Space, and Bakehouse. Definitely, I'd want to visit Vizcaya, Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden, the Kampong, plus a day in the Florida Everglades.

In New York I live four blocks from the Highline, making the Whitney and Highline our first destinations after espresso and avocado toast at the corner bistro, Malaparte. Take the A to Wave Hill's gardens and galleries in Riverdale to draw majestic trees on the front lawn and the tropical plants in the greenhouse. Visit Westbeth Gallery in the historic building where I live, as well as The Clemente Solo Velez Center for Art, where I work. Galleries everywhere, on the Lower East Side, Chelsea, Midtown, and Bushwick. New York is a walking town, filled with surprises everywhere, so it's impossible to go wrong.



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